



## SECOND TERM E-LEARNING NOTE

**SUBJECT: LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH**

**CLASS: SS1**

### SCHEME OF WORK

#### WEEK TOPIC

- 1-2. Reading and Content Analysis of African Poetry: "Black Woman" by Leopold Sedar Senghor.
- 3-4. Reading and Content Analysis of Non-African Poetry: "The Journey of the Magi" by T.S. Eliot
- 5-7. Reading and Content Analysis of African Drama: *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka.
- 8-9. Reading and Textual Analysis of Non-African Poetry: "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou.
10. Revision.

#### REFERENCES

1. *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka.
2. *Exam Reflection Literature- in-English* by Sunday OlatejuFaniyi.
3. *Exam Reflection Literature-in-English (Prose and Drama)* by Sunday OlatejuFaniyi.

#### WEEK ONE

##### **Reading and Content Analysis of African Poetry: "Black Woman" by Leopold Sedar Senghor.**

Naked woman, black woman  
Clothed with your colour which is life,  
with your form which is beauty!  
In your shadow I have grown up; the  
gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes.  
And now, high up on the sun-baked  
pass, at the heart of summer, at the heart of noon,  
I come upon you, my Promised Land,  
And your beauty strikes me to the heart  
like the flash of an eagle.  
Naked woman, dark woman  
Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, sombre raptures  
of black wine, mouth making lyrical my mouth  
Savannah stretching to clear horizons,  
savannah shuddering beneath the East Wind's  
eager caresses  
Carved tom-tom, taut tom-tom, muttering  
under the Conqueror's fingers  
Your solemn contralto voice is the  
spiritual song of the Beloved.  
Naked woman, dark woman



Oil that no breath ruffles, calm oil on the  
athlete's flanks, on the flanks of the Princes of Mali  
Gazelle limbed in Paradise, pearls are stars on the  
night of your skin  
Delights of the mind, the glinting of red  
gold against your watered skin  
Under the shadow of your hair, my care  
is lightened by the neighbouring suns of your eyes.  
Naked woman, black woman,  
I sing your beauty that passes, the form  
that I fix in the Eternal,  
Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to  
feed the roots of life.

The poem "Black Woman" was written by Leopold Senghor and published in "Chants d'Ombre" in 1945. It was initially written in French as "Femme Noir" and then translated to English. Senghor was a Senegalese poet who was instrumental in starting the emotional, intellectual and political and literary movement called "negritude" along with other writers of African origin- like AimeCesaire- in Paris. This movement was born as a result of Senghor going to Paris to study in 1928. In Paris, Senghor met AimeCesair, a young man from the French Caribbean island of Martinique, and together with the help of Leon Damas of Guyana, they started the Negritude movement. The negritude movement is essentially focused on making the value of the African people manifest. Negritude philosophy believed that despite the diversity and plurality of the African culture, and the African Diasporas, African people all over the world still had shared experiences of racial brutality and oppression. Hence, the negritude writers essentially tried to convey through their works, the pride they felt in being African and the pride they felt in African culture itself.

This poem of the late president of Senegal, LéopoldSédar Senghor, is an ode to the Black woman, but above all, to Senegal his country. After reading it several times, one realizes that Senghor was writing an ode to the Black Woman, his mother, his sister, his daughter, but above all to Senegal which could be loved just like a woman, and whose "beauty stroke him to the heart like the flash of an eagle", and whose "Savannah stretch[ed] to clear horizons, savannah shuddering beneath the East Wind's eager caresses." This poem was published in 'Chants d'Ombre' (1945), English translation by Melvin Dixon (in The Collected Poems).

In the poem "Black Woman", Senghor reinforces the ideas of negritude. He personifies Africa- the nation- as an African woman. In the first three lines (Naked woman, black woman/ Clothed with your colour which is life, / with your form which is beauty!), he says that the African woman's true beauty lies in her natural self. He says that her colour is life, and that it is the natural form of beauty. The African woman that Senghor talks about in this poem is a representation of the African race itself, as well. In the fourth and fifth lines, Senghor equates Africa to a mother. He says that he grew up under the protection of his mother land. He calls Africa the "Promised Land" (Line 8) and says that he is returning to



Africa which, for him, is the Promised Land. Further in the poem, Senghor compares Africa to a lover. He praises her and compliments her, comparing her to a goddess. Throughout the poem, Senghor equates the African woman to everything beautiful and graceful. For instance, in the last stanza, he compares her skin to the well oiled, beautiful skin of an athlete, or the Princes of Mali. He goes on to say that the African woman is as elegant and graceful as a gazelle. Senghor ends his poem on a philosophical note by saying that he will keep alive the African woman's beauty eternally in his poetry.

The idea of negritude is very important in understanding "Black Woman" and Senghor's poems, largely. In this poem, Senghor represents his love for Africa, his home land, his mother country, by personifying Africa as every woman he loves. He praises the African culture by finding beauty in the colour of the African skin, which had been the main cause for brutality and discrimination during the British rule in Africa. Writing in a period of decolonization, Senghor went to great lengths to uplift the standards of the African people, and the African culture, and the African people's own view of themselves and their culture. In this poem, he showers praises on the "black woman" thus implying the greatness of the African culture and the African people. He takes immense pride in being African- and this itself is the main idea behind the negritude movement.

Another idea that stands out quite prominently about Black Woman is the idea of "appropriation." Appropriation is a postcolonial concept which refers to a technique of writing that many postcolonial writers adopted where they used the language of the colonizer to speak out against them. They used the language that was imposed upon them to express various cultural experiences during the colonial rule. Although language played a major role in the process of colonization, many authors consciously took to English to communicate their experiences about colonial experiences, to other people around the world. Their adoption of the English language to communicate their experiences was almost always a personal choice rather than an imposed one. In "Black Woman", however, Senghor used French to speak out against the colonizers. He wrote largely from the stand of being a subject of French colonialism as Senegal was colonised by the French.

The ideas of negritude and appropriation, thus, play a major role in understanding the poem "Black Woman" from a postcolonial perspective

### **EVALUATION QUESTION**

1. Give a detailed content analysis of the poem, "Black Woman."
2. Examine the poem, as a negritude work.

### **WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT**

#### **SECTION A**

#### **INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions**

1. A ballad is a A. poem bearing a thesis and an antithesis B. poem that tells a folk story C. love story told by a singing story D. poem bearing an interesting climatic episode
2. The short story as a literary form is closest to A. the play B. poetry C. tragedy D. the novel
3. Dialogue is crucial in a piece of drama because of A. makes the audience laugh B. is



- like a discourse C. reveals the characters' minds D. make the character honest
4. One of the following applies to both tragic and comic plays A. climax B. happy ending C. temper D. sympathetic ending
  5. A deliberate use of understatement for humour or emphasis is also known as A. litotes B. hyperbole C. antonym D. pun

## SECTION B

Discuss a theme in the poem "Black Woman"

## READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up the poetic devices of the poem above in Exam Focus.

## WEEK TWO

### THEMES AND POETIC DEVICES IN THE POEM

**THE CELEBRATION OF BEAUTY:** In the "Black Woman", Senghor eulogizes the beauty of Africa woman and by extension, Africa as a continent. He writes to debunk the assumption of the Western world that black is inferior and associated to barbarism or primitivism. The poet sees Africa as a superior continent. He compares the colour of African woman to life; the beauty of an eagle. "Naked woman, dark woman" is repeated in the poem to emphasize the beauty of Africa. The skin of Africa reflects the sun, gold and natural surroundings. It can be asserted that the work is an ode to beauty.

**GENDER AND SUPERIORITY OF MOTHERHOOD:** It has often been argued that women are inferior compared to men. This assertion is a controversial. Is the female weak physically, emotionally and spiritually? However, Senghor depicts women as life. Without them there will be no life. They are seen as "ripped fruit", paradise of beauty, his "new found land" in the poem. The poet persona captures the qualities of compassion, peace, benevolence and contagious joy of motherhood. These qualities are attributed to a superior being. Allegorically, he sees Africa as the mother womb of the earth. In the last line of the poem, Africa is seen as the mother that "feeds the roots of life." Historically, Africa is the cradle of civilization. Africa as continent was rapped economically by the colonizers.

**CULTURAL RENAISSANCE:** As said in the aforementioned, this poem debunks the claim that African culture is inferior, barbaric, and primitive in the face of Western culture. Culture is the way of life of a particular people. Eulogy, songs of praises, dancing, and mode of appearance are some of the cultural essences depicted in the poem. The poet wants Africans to value their culture but reject Western ideologies that are not in consonant with African culture.

### POETIC DEVICES

**Allegory:** Allegory is a work that has primary and secondary meanings. The dark woman in the poem is a symbol of Africa as a continent. Africa is a beautiful and lovely continent. She is seen as the beloved of the world. Her natural resources attracted the Western world.

**Metaphor:** The dark woman is compared to life, new land, paradise, sun, star etc.

**Simile:** The beauty of the woman strikes the poet-speaker "like the flash of an eagle."



**Interior Monologue:** The poet persona speaks his thought to an addressee.

**Apostrophe:** The whole poem is one long apostrophe. The poet addresses an unseen woman and Africa in general.

**Imagery:** Basically, the poet uses visual pictures of nature.

**Repetition:** Words like “dark woman”, “naked woman” are repeated in the poem to drive home the dominant message.

### GENERAL EVALUATIONS/REVISION QUESTIONS

1. Highlight on the theme of beauty in the poem, “Black Woman”
2. Comment on the poetic devices used in the poem.

### WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

#### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions**

1. A story which explains a natural phenomenon is A. legend B. parable. C. myth. D. fiction.
2. A narrative in which characters and events are invented is A. fiction. B. epistolary. C. autobiography. D. biography.
3. Lines and stanzas are to poetry as action and dialogue are to A. music. B. prose. C. fiction. D. drama.
4. The performers in a play constitute the A. chorus. B. characters. C. audience. D. cast.
5. The types of literary work are A. eras. B. episodes. C. genres. D. cantos.

#### SECTION B

**INSTRUCTION: Answer one question.**

1. Comment on the issue of pan-Africanism in the “Black Woman”
2. Assess the use of eulogy and apostrophe in the poem.

### READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up the structure and mood of the poem above in Exam Focus.

### WEEK THREE

Reading and Content Analysis of Non-African Poetry: “The Journey of the Magi” by T.S. Eliot

“A cold coming we had of it,

Just the worst time of the year

For a journey, and such a long journey:

The ways deep and the weather sharp,

The very dead of winter.”

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,

Lying down in the melting snow.

There were times we regretted

The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,

And the silken girls bringing sherbet.

Then the camel men cursing and grumbling

And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,



And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.  
Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.  
All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

#### JOURNEY OF THE MAGI BY T. S. ELIOT: SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The poem Journey of the Magi is based on the theme of the Bible. It is full of religious feelings. The visit of the Three Wise Men from the East to Palestine at the time of Christ's birth has been described in a very realistic way. The wise men start their journey in the extreme cold of the winter to reach the place of Christ's birth to offer presents to him. ,experience,On,couldkesare, couldreceivethearetheareingreceivenofromaresor or economicalsthemesthreementyareythethepoets, , The 'Journey of the Magi' was penned down by Nobel prize winner, TS Eliot, and is a contrast of experiences based on the nativity of Christ. The monologue describes the journey of the Magi to Bethlahem in search of spiritual pacification and is an account of Eliot's own conversion to Anglican faith, making the journey and objective correlation for Eliot.

As per the Gospel story, the Magi were the three wise men namely Balthazar- King of Chaldea, Gaspor - King of Ethopia, Melchoir -King of Nubia who belonged to the priestly class of magicians and had come to Bethlahem to pay homage to infant Christ presenting



him with gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense. They symbolise wandering human souls in search of spirituality, the eternal spiritual quester.

The poem, 'Journey of the Magi', opens with the nativity sermon of Lancelot Andrews preached in 1622 which describes the hardships Magi faced due to deep ways, sharp weather, meeting snow and hostile conditions which were hard to combat : ' A cold coming we had of it/ Just the worst time of the year' in 'the very dead of winter'. The Magus admits that there was introspection promoted for 'there were times we regretted' as they had given up materialistic pleasures and sensuality of 'Summer places on the slope' and 'silken girls bringing sherbet.'

Besides wondering whether it was worth the effort, their major issue of search was ignored and the day to day difficulties bogged them down with 'camelmen cursing and grumbling', 'night fires going out' and 'villages, dirty and charging high prices'. And they admitted, 'A hard time we had of it'.

The Magi now 'preferred to travel all night' and faced agonising moments of self doubt : 'voices singing in our ears saying that this was all folly' before they finally reached a temperate valley.

The second half of the poem abounds in symbolism with the temperate valley signifying the change in their lives that followed the arduous journey. They come across a ' running stream' depicting the timelessness of their journey; 'watermill beating the darkness,' continuing the image of extinction and renewal; 'three trees signifying three crosses at Calvary; 'an old white horse', a metaphor for rebirth of Christ, the Savior and the defeat of paganism; 'Vine leaves over the lintel' again symbolic of the vine that Christ metamorphosed into his blood; 'Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver' refers to betrayal of Christ by Judas and lastly 'feet kicking empty vine skins 'is symbolic of the worn out forms and rituals of the old dispensation.

The Magus describes their destination as: 'Finding the place, it was ( you may say) satisfactory'. Such a deliberate understatement reflects the turmoil in the minds of the Magi as an outcome of the clash of their old dispensation and new beliefs.

The last twelve lines describe the psychological change in the Magi as they are caught in confusion and perplexity and claimed that "This birth was hard and bitter agony for us like Death'. The journey marked the end of their old dispensation but does not give them satisfaction of faith for the Magus claims, 'I should be glad of another death' so that he may be born into a new faith.

The poem can be studied at three levels: The actual journey of the Magi; Eliot's journey from doubt to faith while his conversion to Anglicanism, and journey of any individual in spiritual quest.

Belonging to the Ariel poems, the journey traces Eliot's own spiritual quest and his yearning for sublime peace.

The monologue reconfirms the universal truth that the brave and the dauntless who



embark upon journeys with conviction are graced with divinity but it is sensual desire and temptation that need to be overcome.

### EVALUATIONS QUESTIONS

1. Critically analyze content of the poem above.
2. How does the poem relate to the Bible?

### WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

#### SECTION A

##### INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions

1. "Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind", illustrates  
A. inversion B. paradox C. humour D. mood E. metaphor
2. When characters talk to each other, it is referred to as .....  
A. soliloquy B. monologue C. dialogue D. recitation E. talking
3. The attitude of a writer towards the subject matter is the .....  
A. tone B. plot C. crisis D. climax E. theme
4. The story of a person's life written by another is ..... A. history B. autobiography  
C. biography D. anthology E. compilation
5. A writer's diction portrays his ..... A. repetition B. irony C. tension D. humour  
E. style

#### SECTION B

Discuss the dominant theme in the poem.

### READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up the poetic devices in the above poem in Exam Focus.

### WEEK FOUR

#### THEMES AND POETIC DEVICES IN THE POEM

##### SUFFERING

The "Journey of the Magi" begins and ends with suffering, and the Magi suffer a whole lot during the journey, the bad weather and even worse people. The psychological suffering of the dying culture of the Magi, in addition to the physical and mental anguish we know about Jesus would experience as he grew up to become Christ. So what do we make of all this? We think Eliot's reminding us that a whole lot about spirituality and religion

##### TRADITION AND CUSTOMS

The "Journey of the Magi" is chock full of traditions being challenged left and right. There's this strange sense of impending doom about the birth of Jesus, and the dawning knowledge that the old way of life for these Magi is long gone. You would think that a poem about the birth of Jesus would be all kinds of happiness, about ushering in a new era of religious exaltation, but mostly, this poem is talking about the past.

##### DEATH

To the Magi, the loss of their traditions to impending Christianity is like staring both death **and** defeat in the face at once. Death doesn't make its real entrance until the end of





"Journey of the Magi." The death of Jesus on the cross brings transformation and redemption.

## RELIGION

The birth of Jesus, the three kings, the death of Jesus "Journey of the Magi" are religious themes. Since the whole poem is about the coming of Christianity, every word is packed with religious meaning in the poem.

## POETIC DEVICES

Eliot uses **anaphora**, or starting the lines with the same word. This provides a rhythmic effect, as well as the sense of reciting a litany. One finds this in the repeated use of the word "And" to begin lines, for example:

And the camel . . .

And running away . . .

And the night fires . . .

Anaphora is used too in the final stanza, though in a more muted way, in the repetition of the words "but" and "this."

However—and this is where it gets interesting—Eliot, the master of allusion, uses the anaphora technique allusively. **Allusion** is the literary device in which a poet refers to another work of literature in his own text. In this Biblically-themed poem, about the birth of Christ, the anaphora echoes the Bible, especially the Psalms, which are noted for their use of anaphora. Eliot also uses allusions to the Bible when he mentions, among other things, wineskins and three trees (referring to Jesus being one of the three men hung together on crosses).

Eliot uses **alliteration** to build a rhythmic effect. Alliteration means beginning words with the same consonant within a line. Eliot does this in such lines as

The summer palaces on slopes . . .

The camel men cursing . . .

Vivid **imagery** helps bring the poem alive as well. Imagery is using the five senses to put the reader in a scene: Eliot writes in ways that allow us to see glimpses of what the narrator telling the story sees, such as "silken girls bringing sherbet" and "villages dirty." The imagery in the first section depicts the harshness of the journey, the cold, the animals' stubbornness, and their guides desertion. The journey, in the second stanza, becomes more pleasant, seeing a "temperate valley," and a tranquil stream, both symbols of peace and harmony.

While here, the readers are given the picture of men gambling at a tavern, which alludes to the gamblers Christ drove out of the temple in the Bible and infers the need of a savior. The darkness has turned to light; they are in Bethlehem and find the infant.

However, years later, the magi reflect on this miraculous event. Christ has already been crucified. He was essentially born to die, making the magi wonder "were we lead all that way for

Birth or Death?" This question is universal? All men are born; all men die.

"The Journey of the Magi" is a narrative poem that uses outsider point of view to illuminate the well-known story of the nativity. The Biblical narrative does not consider the feelings of the Magi towards the journey; Eliot's poem foregrounds these and uses dramatic irony in that while the narrator does not understand the import of the allusions he makes—the



"white horse," the "pieces of silver," the "vine skins"—we, the reader, understand these to be images related to Christ's crucifixion.

The semantic field of suffering that begins in the first stanza, then—"a long journey," "a hard time we had of it," "the very dead of winter," "sore-footed"—is extended and amplified towards the end of the poem, where Death comes to the fore. The narrator explains that "this birth was hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death," and the dramatic irony again is that the reader understands that Christ's purpose is not only incomplete without both his birth and death, but also that he symbolizes the death of "the old dispensation" of "alien people clutching their gods." The Magi, then, have journeyed to see a birth that will lead to the death of their own civilization, leaving the narrator "no longer at ease" and longing for "another death."

### GENERAL EVALUATION/REVISION QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the theme of religion and suffering.
2. Examine the poetic techniques employed in the poem.

### WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

#### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions.**

1. "Here comes the princess, now heaven walls on earth", illustrates the use of A. contrast. B. metaphor. C. metonymy. D. meiosis.
2. An ode is usually a poem written for A. condemnation. B. celebration. C. instruction. D. entertainment.
3. The main character in a literary work is the A. antagonist. B. protagonist. C. narrator. D. actor.
4. A sonnet may be divided into an octave and A. tercet. B. quatrain. C. sestet. D. septet.
5. "All hands on deck" is an example of A. metaphor. B. personification. C. synecdoche. D. pun.

#### SECTION B

**INSTRUCTION: Answer one question.**

Give a brief biography of Wole Soyinka.

### READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up *The Lion and Jewel* and give a plot account of the book.

### WEEK FIVE

#### Reading and Content Analysis of African Drama: *Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka: Plot

The play begins as [Sidi](#), the village belle of Ilujinle, enters the square with a pail of water balanced on her head. [Lakunle](#), the western-educated schoolteacher, sees her, runs from his classroom, and takes Sidi's pail. He berates her for carrying loads on her head and not dressing modestly, and she retaliates by reminding Lakunle that the village calls him a madman. Sidi grows angry as Lakunle tells her that women are less intelligent than men because of their small brains. He says that soon the village will have machines to do all the



hard work and he describes the beauty of Lagos, which is an entirely modern city. Lakunle refuses to give Sidi her pail of water back until she agrees to marry him and he offers a number of flowery lines that describe his intense love for her. Sidi reminds him that she would marry him any day if he would agree to pay the bride price. Lakunle sees this as barbaric and refuses. He grabs Sidi and tells her how wonderful their modern marriage will be. When he kisses her, Sidi is disgusted. Though Lakunle insists that he loves Sidi and that kissing is something normal for modern couples, Sidi replies that kissing is only a way to avoid paying the bride price. She calls Lakunle a mad man.

A group of young villagers enter the square and tell Sidi that [the stranger](#) returned to the village with a [magazine](#) of images. Sidi excitedly asks if the stranger made Sidi as beautiful as he said he would, and the girls tell her he did. They say that [Baroka](#), the village Bale, is still looking at the images and is jealous of Sidi, though he pretends to be proud of her.

Another girl says that Baroka appears in the magazine as well, but his image is very small and shows him next to the latrines. Upon hearing this, Sidi declares that she is more powerful than Baroka and has no reason to marry Lakunle.

Sidi suggests that they dance the dance of the "lost traveler." She assigns parts to the villagers and forces Lakunle to play the part of the stranger. Despite his initial unwillingness to participate, Lakunle throws himself fully into the dance. The rest of the villagers dance while Lakunle performs realistic miming of driving a car, drunkenly wandering through the jungle, and discovering Sidi in the river. Suddenly, Baroka joins the dance and the action stops as the villagers kneel and bow to him. Lakunle tries to leave, but Baroka insists he stays and they continue the dance. Baroka instructs his attendants to seize Lakunle/the stranger. The stranger takes photographs of the village and is especially entranced by Sidi and her dancing. Sidi and the villagers chase Lakunle towards the actual stranger so he can translate for them, and Baroka muses that he hasn't taken a new wife in five months.

Later that day, Sidi and Lakunle walk down the road. Lakunle carries a bundle of firewood, while Sidi is engrossed in the photographs of herself in the magazine. Baroka's first wife, [Sadiku](#), startles Sidi. Sadiku tells Sidi that Baroka wants to marry her, which makes Lakunle angry. He tells Sidi not to listen, but Sidi insists that she's very powerful now that the stranger has brought her images to the village. Sadiku insists that if Sidi marries Baroka, she will be very powerful—when Baroka dies, she will be the new head wife. Sidi refuses and says that Baroka only wants to possess her beauty and keep it for himself. Sidi opens the magazine, shows the photographs to Sadiku, and laments that nobody ever complimented Sidi on her breasts. She calls Baroka old and leathery. Sadiku is shocked, but she invites Sidi to come to Baroka's house for a feast anyway. Sidi laughs and says that the women who attend the suppers become wives or concubines the next day. Lakunle inserts himself into the conversation and says that Baroka is called "the fox" for a reason. He describes how Baroka paid off a foreman to reroute a railway away from Ilujinle, thereby robbing Ilujinle of the ability to modernize. He loses himself in thought and muses about how wonderful Baroka's life of luxury with so many wives must be. Sidi and Sadiku slip away.

In Baroka's bedroom, his [favorite wife](#) plucks the hairs from his armpit. He tells her that he is going to take a new wife soon and she plucks the hairs harshly. Sadiku enters the bedroom and Baroka sends his favorite away. Sadiku tells her husband that Sidi refused his offer of marriage because of his age. Angry, Baroka lists his achievements of the past week.



He lies down, asks Sadiku to rub his feet, and picks up a copy of the magazine. He suggests that it might be for the best, as his manhood ended the week before. Sadikucuries, and Baroka tells her that she should not tell anyone of this secret.

That evening, Sidi continues to admire the photographs in the village square. Sadiku enters the square, pulls out a carved figure of Baroka, and laughs. She begins a chant of "take warning my masters/we'll scotch you in the end" and dances around the figure. Sidi, shocked, approaches Sadiku and demands to know what's going on. Sadiku swears Sidi to secrecy and whispers in her ear. Sidi is overjoyed and joins in the dance. Lakunle enters the square and watches the women for a moment before deeming them crazy. Sidi suddenly stops and says she wants to taunt Baroka. She decides to go to him, ask for forgiveness, and torment him. Sadiku gives her blessing and Sidi runs off.

Lakunle calls the women foolish. Sadiku tells Lakunle he is unattractive and reminds him that he could marry Sidi soon if he pays the bride price. When Sadiku laughs about Lakunle's wish to modernize the village, he insists that she come to school with the children so she can learn to do something besides collect brides for Baroka.

When Sidi enters Baroka's house, he is engaged in a wrestling match with his [wrestler](#). Baroka is annoyed that nobody was there to greet Sidi and keep her out of his bedroom, and he explains that his servants take Sundays off now that they have formed a union. Sidi asks Baroka for forgiveness for her hasty reply. He pretends to not know what she is talking about, throwing Sidi off guard. Sidi asks after Baroka's favorite wife and asks if she was somehow dissatisfied with her husband. Baroka insists he has no time to consider his wives' reasons for being unhappy, which scares Sidi. Baroka asks her to sit down and not make him feel old.

Sidi says that the wrestler will win. Baroka explains that the wrestler must win, as Baroka only fights men who challenge him and he changes wrestlers when he learns how to beat them. Similarly, he takes new wives when he learns how to tire the old ones. Sidi tells Baroka that someone brought her an offer of marriage earlier that day and asks Baroka if he would consent to allow her to marry this man if he were her father. She describes Baroka and answers his questions about her suitor in such a way as to offend Baroka. Baroka throws his wrestler and Sidi celebrates Baroka's victory. The men begin to arm wrestle and Baroka resumes his line of questioning about Sidi's suitor. Sidi insults Baroka's virility. Baroka wins the match again and sends his wrestler away. He sits down next to Sidi and laments how old he is becoming. He asks if Sadiku invented a story for Sidi, saying that Sadiku is constantly finding new women for him to marry.

Baroka pulls out the magazine and an addressed envelope. He asks Sidi if she knows what it is. Sidi does; she says it's a tax on "talking with paper." Baroka motions to a machine in his bedroom and says he wants to use it to print stamps for Ilujinle with Sidi's face on them. Sidi loses herself in this dream, and Baroka explains that he doesn't hate progress, he hates the sameness that progress brings. He tells Sidi that the two of them are very alike and they fit together perfectly. Sidi wonders if she is dumb like Lakunle says she is, but Baroka says she is simply truthful. He insists that the old and the new must embrace each other as Sidi's head falls onto his shoulder.

In the market that night, Lakunle and Sadiku wait for Sidi to return. A group of mummers passes them and Sadiku suggests they have heard about Baroka. She steals money from Lakunle's pockets and pays the mummers. They dance the story of Baroka's downfall, and



Baroka is portrayed as a comical character. Sadiku herself gets to dance the final "scotching" of Baroka.

Sidi runs into the market crying. Both Sadiku and Lakunle try to comfort her, but she does not let them. She says that Baroka tricked them and she is no longer a virgin. Lakunle is angry for a moment, but then says he still wants to marry Sidi and no longer has to pay the bride price. Sidi runs away. Lakunle sends Sadiku after her to find out what she is going to do. Sadiku returns and says that Sidi is dressing herself like a bride, and Lakunle insists that he cannot get married immediately.

The dancers and Sidi re-enter the square. Sidi is beautiful. She offers Lakunle the magazine and invites him to the wedding. He insists that he must be invited, since he is the groom. Sidi laughs and says she would never be able to marry him after experiencing Baroka. She asks the musicians to play music while she walks to Baroka's house and the dance begins. A young girl dances suggestively at Lakunle, and he chases after her.

### EVALUATION QUESTION

1. Give a detailed plot of the drama.
2. What is the climax of the plot?

### WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

#### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions.**

1. .... determines the atmosphere of a poem A. tone B. theme C. synopsis  
D. structure
2. When a word is used in superficial manner, it is said to have been used in its .....  
A. figurative sense B. connotative sense literal sense C. literary sense
3. A term used in describing an effective choice of word in a literary work is .....  
A. diction B. diphthongs C. denotation D. dialogue
4. To drag your father from his farm is as different as dragging a child away from his  
mother's breast is a ..... A. simile B. amplification C. personification  
D. metaphor
5. A poem without a regular beat and rhyme scheme is referred to as .....  
A. a solomonicverse B. a blank verse C. a free verse D. traditional verse

#### SECTION B

Describe the main character of the work.

### READING ASSIGNMENT

Read the characters in Exam Focus.

### WEEK SIX

#### CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISATION

Sidi (The Jewel) A superficial but beautiful young woman in the village of Ilujinle, she is coveted by both Lakunle and Baroka. She initially agrees to wed Lakunle even though she does not care for him, but she is frustrated that he will not pay her bride-price and that he has so many modern ideas. She is extremely proud of her photos in a magazine and



becomes increasingly absorbed in them. Along with Sadiku she hopes to trick Baroka, whom she also dislikes and does not want to marry, but he triumphs in the end by raping her, taking her virginity, and having her agree to marry him.

Lakunla a smart but arrogant twenty-three-year-old school teacher, who lambasts Ilunjinle for its backwards views. He wants the village to be modern, and he wants to wed Sidi and make her a modern wife (though he believes women are naturally inferior to men). He is reluctant to participate in the ways of the village but is usually drawn into them regardless. He despises Baroka and is jealous of him.

Baroka: (The Lion) The wily and powerful Bale (he is the leader) of the village, Baroka is always on the quest for more wives. He laments getting older and covets the young Sidi. He tricks Sidi and Sadiku, though, and ends up winning Sidi and avenging his shame after she initially refused to marry him.

Sadiku: The chief wife of the Bale, Sadiku is elderly but a great source of comfort to Baroka. She eventually decides to plot against him, though, and tries to get Sidi to destroy him. Her plan is found out, however, and she is shamed.

The Stranger: A photographer who came to Ilunjinle and took many photos of the village and its inhabitants. He was captivated by Sidi and published images of her that are stunningly beautiful.

The Wrestler: Baroka's wrestling companion who wrestles with him to make him stronger; once Baroka can best him, he will be replaced by another fighter.

The Favorite: The Bale's current favorite wife, who is tasked with plucking out his armpit hairs.

The Surveyor: A white man who is heading the building of a railway through the village; Baroka bribes him to abandon the project.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 1 List the characters in the work.
- 2 Describe Baroka in the Play.

## WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions.**

1. A character that develops in the course of a novel or play is described as A. flat. B. antagonist. C. round. D. protagonist.
2. A dirge is poem sung A. to send a child to sleep. B. to make workers happy. C. at a birthday party. D. at a funeral.
3. In drama, the \_\_\_\_\_ creates humour. A. hero B. clown C. villain D. chorus
4. 'Let me not love thee if I love thee not' illustrates A. metaphor. B. proverb. C. paradox. D. meiosis.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a literary device used to express something unpleasant in a more acceptable way. A. Epilogue B. Epigram C. Euphemism D. Eulogy

### SECTION B

Describe the background of the main character in the work.

## READING ASSIGNMENT



Read up the themes in play in Exam Focus.

## **WEEK SEVEN**

### **THEMES, LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE PLAY**

#### **TRADITION VS MODERNITY**

The *Lion and the Jewel* was written and first performed the year before Nigeria was granted its independence from Great Britain, and the script was published two years after independence. As such, one of the primary conflicts of the play pits traditional Yoruba customs against a western conception of progress and modernity, as represented by the conflict between [Baroka](#) and [Lakunle](#) for [Sidi](#)'s hand in marriage.

Lakunle represents the modern Nigerian man. He wears western clothing, has been educated in a presumably British school, and wants to turn his village into a modern paradise like the city of Lagos. Lakunle does not just admire and idolize western society; he actively and loudly despises the traditional customs of his village and the people who support them. This is best illustrated by Lakunle's refusal to pay Sidi's bride price. Sidi indicates that she would marry Lakunle any time if he could only pay the bride price and observe local custom. Lakunle's refusal shows that it is more important to him to convert Sidi to his way of thinking and turn her into a "modern wife" than it is for him to marry her in the first place.

For much of the play, other characters describe Baroka as being directly opposed to modernity and extremely concerned with preserving his village's traditional way of life. Lakunle, in particular, finds Baroka's lifestyle abhorrent. He describes how Baroka paid off a surveyor in order not to route train tracks through the outskirts of Ilujinle, thereby robbing the village of a link to the modern world that would modernize the village. However, when Baroka himself speaks, it becomes apparent that he doesn't actually hate modernity or progress. While he obviously delights in the joys and customs of village life, when it comes to modernity he simply hates having it forced upon him. He sees more value in bringing modern customs to the village on his own terms. For example, he argues that creating a postal system for the village will begin to bring it into the modern world without entirely upending the village's way of life. Further, when he does talk about modern ideas that were forced upon him, such as his servants forming a union and taking Sundays off, his tone is resigned rather than angry—he sees it as inevitable and annoying, but not bad. The competition between Baroka and Lakunle for Sidi's hand in marriage brings the conflict between tradition and modernity to life. Baroka wishes to add Sidi to his harem of wives, while Lakunle dreams of having one wife who, in theory at least, is his equal. Both men promise Sidi a different version of power and fulfillment. When Baroka dies, Sidi will become the head wife of the new Bale, a position that would make her one of the most powerful women in the village. Lakunle, on the other hand, offers Sidi the possibility of an equal partnership in which she is not required to serve her husband as is traditional. However, the way Lakunle talks to and about Sidi indicates that agreeing to marry Lakunle and embracing modernity will not necessarily be better for her, as modern science provides Lakunle specious evidence that women are weaker and less intelligent than men. Sidi recognizes that Lakunle's idea of modernity might not improve her life; in fact, it might mean that she would have less power and fewer rights than she would have in a traditional marriage.



Baroka's actions (and the fact that he triumphs in the fight for Sidi's hand) suggest that while Lakunle may be right that Ilujinle will indeed need to join the modern world, modernization and the outright rejection of local custom simply for the sake of doing so are foolish goals that benefit nobody. Instead, Baroka's triumph suggests that progress must be made when and where it truly benefits the village and its inhabitants.

## MEN VS WOMEN

The *Lion and the Jewel* focuses on the competition to win [Sidi](#)'s hand in marriage, which makes the play, in a sense, a battle of the sexes. As such, the play asks a number of questions about the nature of each sex's power: why men or women are powerful; how they became powerful in the first place; and how they either maintain or lose that power. The men who fight for Sidi see her only as a beautiful prize to be won; [Baroka](#) and [Lakunle](#) value Sidi for no more than her beauty and her virginity. Meanwhile, the men in *The Lion and the Jewel* are valued by others (and value themselves) based on what they can do or have already done. Lakunle, for example, values himself because he is educated and he seeks to bring education, modernity, and Christianity to Ilujinle, and Baroka's value derives from his role as the Bale of Ilujinle and his responsibilities to keep his people safe and build his image by taking many wives and fathering children.

To both Baroka and Lakunle, Sidi is a jewel—a valuable object capable of teasing and annoying the men, but an object nonetheless. Lakunle wants Sidi to marry him so he can better perform modernity by taking a modern wife, one who wears high heels and lipstick. Similarly, Baroka wants Sidi to be his wife and complete his harem. While it is unclear whether or not Baroka will keep his promise that Sidi will be his final wife, she too will be the jewel of his wives. To both men, then, marriage to Sidi is a status symbol and an indicator of their power, virility, and the superiority of their respective ways of life (modern versus traditional). Further, the end of the play suggests that what Lakunle wants from Sidi (a modern wife to make him seem more modern) does not even require Sidi specifically; by immediately turning his attention to the next woman who dances at him, Lakunle indicates that while Sidi may have been an appealing prize, he can accomplish his goal of having a modern wife by marrying any woman up to the task. This reduces women in general to objects who must simply play a part in the lives of their husbands.

The idea of reducing people with little power to objects, however, works in reverse as well. When [Sadiku](#) believes Baroka's tale that his manhood (virility) is gone, she dances gleefully around a statue of Baroka and chants that women have won the war against men. She knows that Baroka's position of power in the village is tied to his ability to perform sexually and produce children, and she believes that when this specific power is gone, the rest of his power will also disappear, leaving his wives (who are still capable of performing sexually and bearing children) victorious. In this case, when Baroka appears to have lost what gives him power, he is reduced to being represented by an actual object (the statue). However, the play suggests that there is a great deal of difference between Baroka's weakness being represented by an object and the fact that women are literally treated as objects. When Sadiku dances around the statue of Baroka, it is important to note that she cannot celebrate her victory publically. She can celebrate in private and taunt a representation of Baroka, but she cannot taunt Baroka himself. In contrast, Sidi, Sadiku, and other female villagers are teased, taunted, and demeaned to their faces throughout the play. They are grabbed, fondled, raped, and told that they are simple and backwards because they are women. The





male characters do not have to privately taunt inanimate objects; their culture, regardless of how they engage with **modernity or tradition, allows them to reduce women to objects and treat them as such.**

## **LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE PLAY**

### **ALLEGORY: NIGERIA**

The play is often viewed as an allegory in that Sidi is Nigeria, caught between the modern (Lakunle) and the traditional (Baroka). She is interested in the modern because it feeds her ego and seems to offer youth and excitement, but she is also derisive of its falseness. The traditional does not interest her at first because she thinks she is better than it is, but she comes to recognize the safety, security, and value in it.

### **SYMBOL: THE CAMERA**

The stranger's camera symbolizes modernity. It is a newfangled object to the extent that one of the village girls calls it a "one-eyed box" (10). It is able to capture Sidi's young, beautiful image and reproduce it for everyone to see and gaze on in perpetuity.

### **SYMBOL: THE RAILWAY**

The railway is another symbol of Western modernity. Railways, commonly implemented by European colonial governments, is a system of transportation, something that brings people in and takes people out. It irrevocably opens a place up to the rest of the world, and this is why Baroka is so opposed to it. The physical breaking of the ground represents to him a smashing of tradition and autonomy.

### **MOTIF: SANGO AND HIS LIGHTNING**

Sango is the Yoruba orisha, a ruler, and a wielder of justice. He also uses thunder and lightning to enforce justice. He is evoked several times in the text. First, Sadiku uses him to threaten the obnoxious Lakunle. Second, she evokes him again when she is exulting over the Bale's impotence ("Oh Sango my lord, who of us possessed your lightning / and ran like fire through that's lion's tail..." [33]). Third, Baroke mentions him when he tells Sidi his views on progress ("Among the bridges and the murderous roads, / Below the humming birds which / Smoke the face of Sango, dispenser of / The snake-tongue lightning" [52]). Fourth, Lakunle angrily evokes Sango when he hears what has happened to Sidi ("Let Sango and his lightning keep out of this" [60]). Every time he is mentioned, the character mentioning him is talking about justice, retribution, and revenge.

### **SYMBOL: THE STATUE OF THE BALE**

Sadiku carries with her a little statue of the Bale and uses it in her merry dance after she hears he is impotent. The statue, which is naked and well endowed, ordinarily represents the Bale in his power. However, now that Sadiku knows the truth about the Bale's power and strength, it now seems like an impotent, inert object and nothing else. It is a reminder of what he once was and what he now is—a figurehead.

### **DRAMATIC IRON: LAKUNLE'S POSTURING**

Much of what Lakunle says and does is ironic. He utters things without knowing how ridiculous he sounds or how false his claims are. He pretends to adhere to certain principles, but undercuts them without even realizing it. In the very last scene he chases after a young girl just moments after pledging to marry his true love Sidi.

### **DRAMATIC IRONY: BAROKA'S TRICK**



There is dramatic irony that even the audience does not become aware of until later: Baroka knows exactly what Sadiku and Sidi have planned, and thus everything he says to Sidi drips with irony since he is actually the one in control.

**DRAMATIC IRONY: SADIKU'S SUPERIORITY**

Sadiku's actions, such as laughing at the Bale's statue and how women have bested him and acting in the performance where he is killed, prove to be ironic due to the Bale's clever trick (see previous Irony entry).

**SITUATIONAL IRONY: BAROKA'S ACCEPTANCE OF MODERNITY**

It is ironic that the old Baroka, a man who did not want the railway to come through Ilujinle, decides that he must embrace modernity by having a stamp machine. This is also ironic given the fact that he was treated poorly by images (his photo was next to the latrines in the magazine).

**SIMILE: LAKUNLE'S LOVE**

Lakunle says to Sidi, "my love will open your mind / Like the chaste lead in the morning, when / The sun first touches it" (6). This is an example of Lakunle's verbose, faux-poetic type of rhetoric. He thinks flowery words will impress Sidi, but she is merely annoyed and tells him that he tires her. In his comparison of love to a "chaste" flower, Lakunle is also indicating how he sees Sidi.

**METAPHOR: LAKUNLE'S HEART**

Lakunle whines to Sidi, "my heart / Bursts into flowers with my love. / But you, you and the dead of this village / Trample it with the feet of ignorance" (6). He uses the metaphor of a flower blooming due to the power of his love, but then depicts that flower being trampled into oblivion by the callous village. It is an extreme metaphor and one that bespeaks Lakunle's hyperbolic tendencies. He depicts his heart as being delicate and fragile, which ironically is proven not to be the case: when he thinks he is to marry Sidi, the putative love of his life, he thinks it is too scary and too soon; then, he forgets her almost immediately by chasing after another village girl.

**SIMILE: BAROKA'S FACE**

Sidi scoffs about Baroka, "But he—his face is like a leather piece / Torn rudely from the saddle of his horse" (22). She contrasts him with herself—a light, lovely, sparkling creature, whose fame is beginning to rise. These words about Baroka prove to be ironic since he ends up winning her.

**METAPHOR: KNOWLEDGE**

Baroka tells Sidi, "I see you dip your hand / Into the pockets of the school teacher / And retrieve it bulging with knowledge" (50). This metaphor depicts Sidi as a child reaching into an older person's pocket in hopes of finding knowledge, which effectively diminishes her stature. It also depicts the school teacher as rather haphazard and informal in his possession of knowledge: why is this knowledge just stuffed willy-nilly into his pocket? In this metaphor Baroka subtly and slyly undermines both Sidi and Lakunle.

**METAPHOR: WINE**

Baroka tells Sidi, "old wine thrives best / Within a new bottle" (54). This metaphor works on two levels. The first is the surface-level metaphor that Sidi is supposed to pick up: traditions and old ways of doing things will seem fuller and sweeter if they are housed and filtered within modernity and progress. However, the more debauched meaning that Baroka amuses himself with is that he will pour his old wine—his semen—into her new body, and thus create a child. Old men do well with young women, he thinks.



### GENERAL EVALUATION/ REVISION QUESTIONS

- 1 Discuss the theme of tradition vs modernity in the play.
- 2 How does the writer explore irony in the play?

### WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

#### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions.**

1. Sound in poetry is often exploited through the following except \_\_\_\_\_  
A. alliteration B. assonance C. consonance D. oxymoron (e) onomatopoeia
2. The literary device used in evoking the mental picture of an idea is called \_\_\_\_  
A. allusion B. apostrophe C. flash back D. imagery (e) symbolism
3. The use of professional fools (clowns) in drama is primarily to \_\_\_\_\_  
A. cause commotion B. create comic relief C. develop the plot  
D. heighten emotion (e) heighten the language
4. The following are features of poetry except \_\_\_\_\_  
A. chapter B. inversion C. repetition D. rhyme (e) sound effect
5. A poem that extols the qualities of a hero is called a/an \_\_\_\_\_  
A. epic B. lyric C. parody D. pun (e) sonnet

#### SECTION B

Write a short biography on Maya Angelou.

### READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up The Caged Bird in Exam Focus and explain the content.



## WEEK EIGHT

### Reading and Textual Analysis of Non-African "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou: Content Analysis.

#### Caged Bird

By [Maya Angelou](#)

A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill



for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

[Maya Angelou](#)'s highly romantic "Caged Bird" first appeared in the collection *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* in 1983. Inspired by Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "Sympathy," Angelou contrasts the struggles of a bird attempting to rise above the limitations of adverse surroundings with the flight of a bird that is free. She seeks to create in the reader sentiment toward the plight of the misused, captured creature—a symbol of downtrodden African Americans and their experiences.

The first two stanzas contrast two birds. Lines 1 through 7 describe the actions of a bird that is free; it interacts with nature and "dares to claim the sky." The second stanza (lines 8 through 14) tells of a captured bird that must endure clipped wings, tied feet, and bars of rage; yet he still opens his throat and sings.

The third and fifth stanzas are identical. Lines 2, 4, and 6 and lines 5 and 7 of these identical stanzas rhyme. This repeated verse elaborates on the song of freedom trilled by the caged bird; though his heart is fearful and his longings unmet, the bird continues to sing of liberty. The fourth stanza continues the comparison of two birds, the caged and the free. The free bird enjoys the breeze, the trees, the winds, the lawn, the sky, and the fat worms; the caged bird with his wings still clipped and his feet still tied continues, nevertheless, to open his throat and sing. Like the refrain of a hymn, the fifth and final stanza is a reiteration.

Angelou's characterization of a bird that is free (first and fourth stanzas) provides an effective contrast with the bird that is caged (second, third, fourth, and fifth stanzas). The sentiment that Angelou evokes in the reader is suggestive of Dunbar's inspirational poem. Any analysis of "Caged Bird" must begin with the title. The reader knows immediately from the words "Caged Bird" that the story will necessarily involve the restrictions imposed by a cage on the bird within its bars. Dunbar's "Sympathy" gave Angelou both the inspiration and the title not only for this poem and but also for her first autobiographical book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970); these two works by Angelou celebrate her survival and that of all African Americans in oppression.

Evident in "Caged Bird" are two traditional literary themes: reversal of fortune and survival of the unfittest. By presenting the free bird before depicting the caged bird, Angelou helps the reader visualize what the caged bird must have been like before its capture; the description of the two contrasting environments helps the reader feel the sense of loss of the captured bird because of its reversed fate. Even with its clipped wings, tied feet, narrow quarters, and bars of rage, however, the fragile, caged bird is still able to survive and to soar again through its song; this imprisoned bird truly epitomizes the survival of the unfittest, the major theme in the verse.

These contrasting environments—the freedom of the open world and the restrictive surroundings of the caged bird—create the setting for the poem. The reader can feel the breeze, see the sun, imagine the rich feast of fat worms, and hear the sighing trees of the world of the free creature; in contrast, the reader feels the fear and restricted movement, sees the bars, imagines the wants, and hears the song of the imprisoned bird.

Characterization is important to "Caged Bird." An important way of revealing the character of the caged animal is to pit the exploits of the bird that is free against the stalking of the penned animal; the reader is able to experience the deprivation of the confined creature and the ecstasy of the free one. A description of the shackled feet, small quarters, and



clipped wings acquaints the reader with the physical pain that the prisoner has had to endure; the word “fear” conveys its emotional plight. The most significant characteristic of the manacled creature, however, is its singing despite its fear; this song divulges its hope and its inner strength. The reader’s own throat is closed with emotion as the bird opens its throat in song, its reaction to the indignities and its way to transcend the harsh environment.

The bird’s life reflects more than submission and mere survival. The harsh and painful aspects of the caged bird’s existence do not take away its dignity, and the physical and psychological pain do not destroy its style; the bird continues to know the source of its strength and to use its means of expression—song—to pray and to rebuild its life. The melody signifies the ability of the bird to tap its internal, creative resources for its healing. The beliefs of the imprisoned creature anchor its identity and allow the bird to adapt to its situation creatively. One of the lasting images the reader has of “Caged Bird” is the bird’s raising its head in song, its answer to fear, oppression, and the pressures of life. The political poem encourages strength in adversity.

Angelou did not intend “Caged Bird” for African Americans alone; she intended the poem for any listening ear. Like the caged bird, she uses her own creativity, prepares her own song, and shows resilience and strength in the face of hardships; the poem is her autobiography. Although the bird is still caged at the end, the reader is left with hope. The delicate bird is a survivor and remembers his song. The reader trusts that the bird can endure the oppression that hopefully will soon lift. The denouement is, however, open; readers—and the bird—can complete the ending as they will.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the title of the poem.
2. Discuss the content of the poem.

## WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT

### SECTION A

**INSTRUCTION: Answer all questions.**

1. The purgation of the emotions of pity and fear in tragedy is called A. catharsis. B. tragic-comedy. C. dementia. D. cleansing.
2. An exaggeration or overstatement in literature is aA. hexameter. B. hyperbole. C. metaphor.D. soliloquy.
3. A form of symbolism in which ideas or abstract qualities are represented in a poem is an A. allegory. B. allusion. C. ambiguity. D. apostrophe.
4. The word ‘image’ is associated with A. attitude. B. mood. C. tone. D. abstraction.
5. The stylistic device that uses the name of one thing to describe another is called a A. synonym.B. metonymy.C. metaphor.D. antonym.

### SECTION B

1. Comment on a theme in the poem.
2. List and examine the literary devices in the work.

## READING ASSIGNMENT

Read up the use symbol in the poem in Exam Focus.



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## **WEEK NINE**

### **THEMES, LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE POEM.**

#### ***RACISM AND SEGREGATION***

Maya confronts the insidious effects of racism and segregation in America at a very young age. She internalizes the idea that blond hair is beautiful and that she is a fat black girl trapped in a nightmare. Stamps, Arkansas, is so thoroughly segregated that as a child Maya does not quite believe that white people exist. As Maya gets older, she is confronted by more overt and personal incidents of racism, such as a white speaker's condescending address at her eighth-grade graduation, her white boss's insistence on calling her Mary, and a white dentist's refusal to treat her. The importance of Joe Louis's world championship boxing match to the black community reveals the dearth of publicly recognized African American heroes. It also demonstrates the desperate nature of the black community's hope for vindication through the athletic triumph of one man. These unjust social realities confine and demean Maya and her relatives. She comes to learn how the pressures of living in a thoroughly racist society have profoundly shaped the character of her family members, and she strives to surmount them.

#### ***DEBILITATING DISPLACEMENT***

Maya is shuttled around to seven different homes between the ages of three and sixteen: from California to Stamps to St. Louis to Stamps to Los Angeles to Oakland to San Francisco to Los Angeles to San Francisco. As expressed in the poem she tries to recite on Easter, the statement "I didn't come to stay" becomes her shield against the cold reality of her rootlessness. Besieged by the "tripartite crossfire" of racism, sexism, and power, young Maya is belittled and degraded at every turn, making her unable to put down her shield and feel comfortable staying in one place. When she is thirteen and moves to San Francisco with her mother, Bailey, and Daddy Clidell, she feels that she belongs somewhere for the first time. Maya identifies with the city as a town full of displaced people.

Maya's personal displacement echoes the larger societal forces that displaced blacks all across the country. She realizes that thousands of other terrified black children made the same journey as she and Bailey, traveling on their own to newly affluent parents in northern cities, or back to southern towns when the North failed to supply the economic prosperity it had promised. African Americans descended from slaves who were displaced from their homes and homelands in Africa, and following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, blacks continued to struggle to find their place in a country still hostile to their heritage.

#### ***RESISTANCE TO RACISM***

Black peoples' resistance to racism takes many forms in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Momma maintains her dignity by seeing things realistically and keeping to herself. Big Bailey buys flashy clothes and drives a fancy car to proclaim his worth and runs around with women to assert his masculinity in the face of dehumanizing and emasculating racism. Daddy Clidell's friends learn to use white peoples' prejudice against them in elaborate and lucrative cons. Vivian's family cultivates toughness and establishes connections to underground forces that deter any harassment. Maya first experiments with resistance when she breaks her white employer's heirloom china. Her bravest act of defiance happens when she becomes the first black streetcar conductor in San Francisco. Blacks also used the church as a venue of subversive resistance. At the revival, the preacher gives a thinly veiled





sermon criticizing whites' charity, and the community revels in the idea of white people burning in hell for their actions.

#### FORM

Angelou does not allow meter, rhyme, and stanza to control her poetry. She determines her own structure—or lack of it—and uses form and device for her own means; she searches for the sound, the tempo, the rhythm, and the rhyme appropriate for each line.

“Caged Bird” is an example of unstructured verse. The number of beats per line varies; for example, line 1 has four beats, line 2 has six, line 3 has four, and line 4 has five. The number of lines in each stanza fluctuates as well; stanzas 1 and 2 have seven lines each, but stanzas 3 and 4 have eight. In addition to her use of the intermittent stanza, Angelou repeats stanza 3 as stanza 5; this repetition is reminiscent of the chorus in a song. The only other structuring device that Angelou employs in the thirty-eight lines is sporadic rhyme. For instance, only lines 9 and 11 in the entire first two stanzas use rhyming words (“cage” and “rage”); in the fourth stanza only lines 30 and 31 rhyme (“breeze” and “trees”). The only other rhyming words that Angelou uses—and at her own discretion—are in the third stanza, which she repeats as stanza 5. She rhymes “trill” and “still” with “hill”; she also rhymes “heard” and “bird.”

The repetition of the third stanza gives some predictability to the poem and allows the reader to participate actively in the unpleasant plight of the caged bird. By contrast, other parts of the poem are unpredictable and at times even pleasurable; the joy of the free bird makes it possible for the reader to bear the tragic story of the oppressed...

#### **Metaphor:**

The poet uses metaphor (an indirect comparison) when she compares wind to water. The words ‘downstream’ and ‘current’ make us think of the tides in a sea or ocean *floats*

*downstream*

*till the current ends*

Again, she uses **metaphors** in the use of two birds — “free bird” and “caged bird”. The free bird represents the privileged section of the society whereas the caged one signifies the underprivileged. Maya Angelou was an active participant in the African American Freedom Movement. That is why this poem is seen as an autobiographical representation of the condition she and her community was in. The slavery and segregation of the African Americans are compared to the condition of the caged bird and the free bird refers to the freedom enjoyed by the White Americans.

#### **Alliteration:**

Alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of nearby words) is used in places like — *can seldom see through (repetition of ‘s’ sound)*

*and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn*

*his shadow shouts on a nightmare screams*

#### **End Rhyme and Internal Rhyme:**

End rhyme is used in the second, fourth and sixth lines of the third stanza — ‘trill’, ‘still’ and ‘hill’.

Internal rhyme is used in the fourth stanza — *and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn*



### **Imagery:**

Angelou uses vivid imageries. 'Orange sun rays', 'distant hills', 'fat worms' etc are examples of **visual imageries** while 'sighing trees', 'nightmare scream' and 'fearful trill' are **auditory imageries**.

### **Personification:**

The poet personifies (applied human characteristics) the two birds when she says — 'dips his wing', 'dares to claim the sky', 'name the sky his own', 'opens his throat to sing', 'sings of freedom' etc.

### **Repetition:**

The poet repeats the third stanza later in the poem to emphasize the distressed condition of the downtrodden people.

Moreover, the use of **contrast** in the form of two birds in completely opposite situation and the use of **moods** in 'fearful trill' 'nightmare scream', 'bright lawn', 'grave of dreams' etc. also form literary devices

In the poem 'Caged Bird', the poet Maya Angelou expresses her views on social injustice. The poem itself is an extended metaphor of two birds; one bird is 'caged' while the other is 'free', this is a metaphor towards slavery with the 'free bird' representing whites and the 'caged bird' representing blacks. It could also be argued, though, towards any example of social injustice. Angelou shows her views through the use of conjunctions, rhyme and use of diction. Together, these techniques give a clear contrast of the unfairness between the standards of the 'free bird' and the 'caged bird'.

When describing the 'free bird' Angelou starts lines with the conjunction 'and'; 'and floats downstream', 'and dips his wings'. This repetition of 'and' followed by what the 'free bird' does shows the many choices and opportunities the 'free bird' gets. The 'free bird' is 'free' to do as he pleases; he even 'dares to claim the sky'. This relates to social injustice as the 'caged bird' 'sings of things unknown but longed for still', as if the 'caged bird' is deprived of the rights of the 'free bird' to 'dip his wing' or 'float downstream'. The use of this conjunction shows the many choices the 'free bird' has and the injustice of the caged bird not getting these same opportunities.

In a repeated stanza (3 and 6) Angelou uses end rhyme to show the 'caged bird's' lust for freedom and to add emphasis to the fact that the 'caged bird' does not get the same opportunities as the 'free bird'. Throughout stanza's 5 and 6 Angelou uses a repeated rhyme pattern, 'trill...still...hill', before on the last line of the stanza the word is a mismatched word, 'freedom'.

### **EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

1. Examine the use of metaphor and tone in the poem.
2. Analyse the use of symbols in the poem above.

### **GENERAL EVALUATION/REVISION QUESTIONS**

1. How does the poetess capture the main theme in the poem?



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2. Summarize the poem in your own words



### **WEEKEND ASSIGNMENT**

1. Identify the odd literary device from the list. A. enjambment B. plot C. rhyme D. alliteration.
2. We study literature in school because it A. provides a means to kill time B. expose students to life realities C. provides readers with entertainment D. teaches readers the use of words.
3. Dramatic irony entails A. the praise of the audience B. a statement with a deeper significance C. a statement hilarious and sarcastic D. the praise tag of a great person
4. The echoing of the meaning of a word by its sound is called A. phonetics  
B. oxymoron C. pun D. onomatopoeia
5. A comedy is a play in which A. nobody dies B. there is a happy ending C. there is real laughter D. the hero is a clown.

### **THEORY**

Discuss the use of contrast in the poem above.