

MODULE 23

HOW TO INTERPRET POEMS, PLAYSSCRIPTS AND STORIES

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Module Preview

- 23.1 What is Literature and Literary Appreciation?
- 23.2 Figures of Speech
- 23.3 Genres of Literature
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Objectives of Module

The objectives of the module are to:

- (a) enable students to identify the main characteristics of the genres of literature; and
- (b) equip students with literary appreciation skills.

23.1 What is Literature and Literary Appreciation?

Literature is an aesthetic way of recreating real life events. It can be better described as a creative composition that tells stories, represents, re-enacts or dramatises real life situations. A literary piece is different from the conventional writing that we usually engage in. Each genre has its specialised format or style. Literary appreciation, on the other hand, is the skill and act of understanding and appreciating literary works. The sense in which the word 'appreciation' is used has to do with admiring the value or importance of a literature text. Literary appreciation can also be defined as the analysis and enjoyment of literature. Analysis entails disintegrating the components of something and explaining how each part relates to another or the whole. For example, if you are asked to

analyse a meal, say porridge beans, what is expected of you is to first identify the components that make up that dish. Those components would include grains of beans, salt, pepper, spice, oil and more. Having identified these ingredients, you may then go on to state how each of these adds to the taste of the porridge beans.

Some students, especially those who are not in the Department of English and Literature, may wonder why they need to know about literary analysis. The following are some reasons why literature is included in the General Studies curriculum:

- It enhances students' ability to analyse people, places, events and circumstances.
- It enables students to engage in close examination of complex events, things or persons and to show the relationship of each part to the whole.
- It develops students' confidence to air their views and the expressive power to present such views coherently and convincingly.

23.2 Figures of Speech

To understand the language of literature, you need to be conversant with figures of speech. Figures of speech are expressions which are used to beautify and make literature more interesting. They are discussed below:

1. Simile: Simile is an indirect comparison between two things which are dissimilar in nature, but which have similar characteristics or attributes. This comparison is done with the use of 'as' and 'like'. Examples:

- Kanu is as proud as a peacock.
- The athlete runs like a horse.

2. Metaphor: Metaphor is a direct comparison between two things that are not similar in nature but which have striking similarities in terms of

qualities. Unlike simile, this comparison is done without the use of 'as' and 'like'. Examples:

- That boxer is a lion in the ring (The boxer is fierce, energetic, brutal or strong).
- Sade is a dove (Sade is peaceful or lovely).

3. Personification: Personification is used when human qualities are given to non-living things. The use of personification allows us to make references to animals and inanimate things as if they are human beings and can perform human actions. Examples:

- The sky is grumbling (thundering of clouds).
- The trees are dancing (trees swaying in the wind).

4. Irony: Irony is the use of words to convey the opposite of what is intended. Examples:

- Ben is so neat that he has rats living in his bag (Ben is not a neat person).
- Aremu is so generous that he could even take from a beggar (Aremu is not generous).

5. Euphemism: This is an expression which presents a serious and unpleasant situation in a mild and pleasant way. The essence of euphemism is to reduce shock. Examples:

- Doctor John said the patient could not make it out of the theatre (the patient died).
- Five men were shown the door of the company (they were sacked).

Hyperbole: Hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration done for the purpose of emphasis. Examples:

- Adigun was so hungry that he could eat seven cows.
- They walked a thousand miles to see the bride.

Apostrophe: This is a statement that addresses someone or something which is not physically present. Examples:

- O death, where is thy sting?
- Life, why have you treated me this way?

Antithesis: Antithesis is the contrasting of two opposing ideas in a line or stanza. Examples:

- A good son brings joy; but a wayward son brings shame.
- A wise woman builds her house; but a foolish woman tears it down.

Synecdoche: Synecdoche is used when a part of something is used to represent the whole. Examples:

- We cannot feed many **mouths**. (We cannot feed many people.)
- This school needs to employ more **hands**.

Pun: Pun is a play on words such that they mean more than one thing in one context and could elicit confusing interpretations.

- He agreed to keep the cash in the **bank**. But that day, he sat by the **bank** and watched the fishes swim.
- If you want to be the **first**, you must **first** serve the **first**, so that the **first** will consider you worthy to be **first**.

11. Rhetorical Question: This is a question that, sometimes, springs from excitement or distress. It is a question which does not necessarily require an answer. Usually, rhetorical questions do not have specific addressees. Examples:

- Ojukwu, why have you taken away my loved one?
- Will the grave ever be satisfied?

12. Paradox: A paradox is a statement which appears to be self-contradictory; but, on a closer study, is true. Examples:

- The egg is the father of the cock.
- He who must live must die.

13. Oxymoron: This is an expression that places two contradictory words side by side in order to describe a situation between both extremes. Examples:

- Sugar is a bitter sweet enemy.
- Crying is a painful pleasure.

14. Metonymy: Metonymy is the use of an article or object associated to an office or a profession to refer to that office or profession. Examples:

- We have just lost the crown of Okidi kingdom.
- In the grave, the crown and the spade will become equal.

15. Litotes: Litotes is an understatement which expresses a positive situation from a negative view point. It is usually done with the use of 'no' and 'not'. Examples:

- Paul was a man of no mean status.
- Adams is not unhappy.

16. **Climax:** Climax is a literary device used in arranging events in an ascending order of seriousness, with the most serious thing coming as the last item. Examples:

- I came, I saw, and I conquered.
- We entered the stadium, played with the team, and won the match.

17. **Anticlimax:** Anti-climax is the opposite of climax. It is an expression in which events are arranged in a descending order with the most serious event coming first. Examples:

- We won the match; we played the game.
- He married the princess, he proposed to her and she accepted his proposal.

18. **Allusion:** Allusion is a reference, whether direct or indirect, to something. It could be a reference to history (historical allusion) the bible (biblical allusion), or to another literary work (literary allusion). Examples:

- Ibadan is filled with Abrahamic structures (biblical allusion).
- When we travelled to Egypt, we noticed that North Africans are like Gulliver (literary allusion).

19. **Poetic Licence:** This refers to the liberty which writers have to use words outside normal lexical and grammatical rules or conventions. Examples:

- The minister of finance is a *politrician.
- The *legislooters and the *execrookthief governor have been jailed.

20. Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant sounds in words on the same line. Examples:

- His father fried five fishes for him.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickle paper.

21. Onomatopoeia: Onomatopoeia is the use of words to imitate or suggest the sound made by an animal or an object.

- As the bleating went on, we were uncomfortable.
- The frogs croaked the Hallelujah Chorus.

23.3 Genres of Literature

Having discussed the language of literature, the next step is to discuss the features of each genre. The three genres of literature are: Poetry, Drama and Prose.

1. Poetry and its Characteristics

Poetry is the creative use of words to express deep emotions in stanzas or verses.

- Poetry is written in stanzas or verse.
- Poetry makes use of figurative expressions.
- Poetry compresses words.
- Poetry uses symbols.
- Poetry is written in metrical structure. This means that the lines of poetry follow a particular sound pattern and rhythm.
- Poetry often contains sound devices such as onomatopoeia, assonance, rhyme, consonance, alliteration and rhythm.

2. Types of Poetry

(a) A ballad is a poem that tells a story as a song. Most ballads have no known authors. Generally, they are anonymous poems. Examples are:

- (i) Samuel Coleridge's "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner";
- (ii) "The three ravens";
- (iii) "Sir Patrick Spens"; and
- (iv) "Lord Randall".

(b) A **Lyric** is a poem that is composed to be sung.

Example: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star".

(c) An **Epic** is a long poem which is written in elevated language. It is usually written about the bravery and exploits of people or nations.

Examples: "Beowulf" (anonymous) and Mazizi Kunene's "Chaka, the Zulu".

(d) An **Ode** is a poem that addresses someone or something that is admired or celebrated. It can be defined as a poem of celebration.

Example: John Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale".

(e) A **Dirge/an Elegy** is a poem about the dead. It is a poem that expresses sorrow.

Example: Kofi Awoonor's "Songs of Sorrow".

(f) A **Sonnet** is a poem of fourteen lines. Example:

William Shakespeare's "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer Day?"

3. Reading and Analysing Poetry

The following guidelines would help you to enjoy and understand poetry:

- First, read the poem through without any defined purpose. Read aloud.
- Use punctuation to guide your comprehension.

- Identify unfamiliar and difficult words. Use the dictionary to look up their meanings.
- Read the poem a second time.
- Attempt to discover the writer's subject matter, intent and theme.
- Identify the figures of speech used and their meanings.

4. An Example of a Great English Poem:

Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! More happy, happy love!

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
 For ever panting, and forever young;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! withbrede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

(a) A guide to analysing "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Remember that an ode is a poem that honours an individual, a thing or a trait using a direct form of address to the individual or thing being honoured. Most times, it displays almost a fearful reverence for the thing or person being honoured. It also uses dignified and lofty language and examples. Your first task in an analysis of an ode is the recognition of these traits.

(b) Responding to the poem

For Keats, great art embodies the ideals of unchanging beauty, love, truth and eternity. What human values does art convey to you?

(c) Recalling

As the speaker examines the scenes on the Grecian Urn (An Urn from Greece), it takes hold of his imagination. To understand the poem better, ask yourself the following questions:

- (i) Whom does the speaker address in stanza II of the poem?
- (ii) Whom does he address in stanza III?

(d) Interpreting

To interpret the poem appropriately, the following questions will guide you:

- (i) In what ways is the urn a Sylvan historian?
- (ii) How can it tell its flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme?
- (iii) Interpret lines 11-12. "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter..." What do these lines indicate about the power of the imagination?
- (iv) Why might the lover in Stanza II grieve?
- (v) Why does the speaker advise him not to grieve?

(e) Application questions

- (i) Explain the meaning of the last two lines of the poem.
- (ii) Comment on the use of figurative language in the poem.

2. Drama and Its Characteristics

Drama is the imitation of real life events through **action** and **dialogue** on stage.

- (i) Drama makes use of action.

- (ii) Drama involves the use of **dialogue** (conversations between characters).
- (iii) Drama is acted on **stage** (a platform where drama is acted).
- (iv) Drama requires the use of **costumes**, such as clothes used during dramatic performances.
- (v) Drama is written in **acts and scenes** (the divisions of a play).

Types of Drama

- A **comedy** is a drama that is filled with humour and ends on a happy note.
- A **tragedy** is a drama that ends on a sad or sorrowful note.
- A **tragicomedy** is a drama that begins on a sad note but ends on a happy one.
- An **opera** is a combination of music and performance or drama.
- A **mime** is a piece of drama that is based on actions without words.

Reading and Analysing Drama

- Read through a play as a piece of work that creates pleasure.
- Read it as a performance, not an academic text.
- Identify the characters in the play, because a play is a story which is told through characters.
- Attempt to discover the writer's subject matter, intent and theme.

A Model Playscript

TRIFLES (A one-act play by Susan Glaspell¹
<http://www.english.unt.edu/~simpkins/Trifles.pdf>, <http://www.one-act-plays.com/dramas/trifles.html>)

¹Susan Glaspell. New York: Frank Shay, 1916. The text can be freely downloaded online by following the following links:<http://www.english.unt.edu/~simpkins/Trifles.pdf>,
<http://www.one-act-plays.com/dramas/trifles.html>

Analysis of *Trifles*

In a one act play, the piece takes place in a **single location** and is revealed as one continuous action. This kind of play is compressed like a short story and differs from a full length play in terms of economy of both character and setting. The single setting of the play is the kitchen of the Wrights, which is portrayed as "gloomy" as the walls are "covered with a faded wall paper." The sink is shown to be unkempt and the kitchen towel is dirty. The colour black is mentioned and the furniture is old. Hence the setting suggests an atmosphere of gloom and loneliness where late Mrs Wright must have spent her days. We learn about this setting through the dialogue by the characters. Playwrights can either reveal their characters through **exposition** or through conversation.

In *Trifles*, the characters of Mr and Mrs Wright are revealed to the reader through **exposition**, a device that provides **background information** about characters. Through the dialogue between Mr Hale and Mr Henderson, we also learn more about Mr. Wright who we are told was a withdrawn, non-communicative person. Mrs Peter also describes Mr. Wright as a "hard man" who was like "a raw wind that gets to the bone".

This character leads us to the **conflict** between husband and wife that further explain a probable reason for the murder. The actions in the play is shaped by the **plot**, often referred to as the author's unique way of presenting events that lead to the **conflict**, **climax** and then the **denouement** in the play. The plot of *Trifles* is simple. The characters were in a quest to discover the killer and the motive for killing Mr Wright. The play spans the short time they spent in the Wrights' house to figure out the probable reason for the murder.

It is hard to decide who the **protagonist** of this play is but one school of thought sees Mrs Hale as the **central character** with whom we tend to identify. In this case Mr Henderson will be the **antagonist**, as they both seem to personify the conflict in the play. However this is just one way of viewing it.

The major **themes** in this play are the evaluation of what is significant and not, the value of the feminine experience and domestic violence, among others. The following questions will further enhance your appreciation of the text:

1. Describe the setting of the play. What kind of atmosphere is established in the opening scene?
2. What kind of person is Minnie Foster before she got married? How did her marriage affect her?
3. Characterize John wright. Do you think his wife killed him?
4. Why do the men fail to see the clues that Mrs Hale and Mrs Peters discover?
5. Explain the significance of the play's title?

3. Prose and its Characteristics

Prose is a story written in plain, ordinary, everyday language and divided into paragraphs and chapters or episodes. A prose may be fiction or non-fiction.

FICTION

(Based on imagination)

Novel

Novella

Short story

Fable

Myth

Legend

NON-FICTION

(Based on facts)

Biography

Autobiography

Memoir

Essay

Article

Reading and Analysing Short Stories and Novels

- Enjoy reading through a story as a piece that creates pleasure.
- Identify the characters in a fiction, because stories are usually told through characters.

- Attempt to discover a writer's subject matter, intent and theme.
- Identify a point of view.

23.4 Elements of Literary Analysis

1. **Plot:** Plot is a literary term used to describe the arrangement of the events that make up a story or a play. There are five elements of a plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

- **Exposition** is the part of the plot that introduces the characters and the setting of the story. Sometimes, the exposition may also introduce the conflict (the major problem) of the story.
- **Rising action** refers to the events that lead to the conflict.
- **Climax** is the point at which the conflict gets to its highest point.
- Immediately after the climax comes the **falling action**; the events begin to get resolved.
- **Resolution** is the final part of the plot. It is also known as the conclusion. It is the part where the story ends.

2. **Setting:** Setting in literature is not restricted to place or location. Setting refers to the time and the place of a story. The time could be in the 1980s, 1820s or the 21st century. The time could also be a known period in history. For instance, a story may be set during the Nigerian Civil War or during the era of slavery. The other aspect of setting has to do with the place. For instance, a story may be set in Africa, Umuofia, a jungle or an ocean. Anywhere the action takes place is known as the setting.

3. **Character:** Character refers to the humans and non-humans that perform in a given work of literature. Animals can be characters in a story. Trees and natural phenomena can be characters in a story.

- The main character in a story or a play is known as the protagonist.

- The character that fights against the protagonist is an antagonist.
- There are two types of character: round or dynamic character and flat or static character. A round or dynamic character changes with the events of the story, while a static or flat character does not.

4. **Theme:** The theme of a literary work is the central message or main idea of the work.

5. **Point of View:** Point of view is the perspective from which a story is narrated. A narrator could tell a story from the first person point of view, the third person point of view or the omniscient point of view. If a story is told from the first person point of view, the narrator tells the story from his or her own standpoint; and uses the first person pronoun "I". If the third person narrative is used, the narrator is usually one of the participants in the story. The omniscient narrator is sometimes referred to as an all-knowing narrator, because he sees what happens to all the characters. He gets into and reveals their thoughts and feelings.

6. **Diction:** Diction refers to the choice of words used by a writer. It describes the peculiarity of an author's selection of words, phrases and sentences. The diction of a work may be simple or complex, formal or informal, technical or ordinary.

7. **Foreshadowing or Prefiguring:** Foreshadowing or prefiguring is the use of words to give readers a hint or clue about what will happen.

8. **Style:** Style is the writing method or pattern of a writer. This involves his or her techniques. A writer's style could be persuasive, descriptive, expository or narrative.

9. Symbolism: Symbolism is a literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is more representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in literal translation. Symbolism entails using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning.

10. Imagery: Imagery refers to vivid mental pictures created with the use of words. Imagery helps the reader to visualise the writer's message.

"The Storm" by Kate Chopin

I

The leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain. Bobint, who was accustomed to converse on terms of perfect equality with his little son, called the child's attention to certain sombre clouds that were rolling with sinister intention from the west, accompanied by a sullen, threatening roar. They were at Friedheimer's store and decided to remain there till the storm had passed. They sat within the door on two empty kegs. Bibi was four years old and looked very wise.

"Mama'll be 'fraid, yes, he suggested with blinking eyes.

"She'll shut the house. Maybe she got Sylvie helpin' her this evenin'," Bobint responded reassuringly.

"No; she ent got Sylvie. Sylvie was helpin' her yistiday,' piped Bibi.

Bobint arose and going across to the counter purchased a can of shrimps, of which Calixta was very fond. Then he returned to his perch on the keg and sat stolidly holding the can of shrimps while the storm burst. It shook the wooden store and seemed to be ripping great furrows in the distant field. Bibi laid his little hand on his father's knee and was not afraid.

II

Calixta, at home, felt no uneasiness for their safety. She sat at a side window sewing furiously on a sewing machine. She was greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm. But she felt very warm and often stopped to mop her face on which the perspiration gathered in beads. She unfastened her white Jacque at the throat. It began to grow dark, and suddenly realizing the situation she got up hurriedly and went about closing windows and doors.

Out on the small front gallery she had hung Bobint's Sunday clothes to dry and she hastened out to gather them before the rain fell. As she stepped outside, Alce Laballire rode in at the gate. She had not seen him very often since her marriage, and never alone. She stood there with Bobint's coat in her hands, and the big rain drops began to fall. Alce rode his horse under the shelter of a side projection where the chickens had huddled and there were plows and a harrow piled up in the corner.

"May I come and wait on your gallery till the storm is over, Calixta?" he asked.

"Come 'long in, M'sieurAlce."

His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance, and she seized Bobint's vest. Alce, mounting to the porch, grabbed the trousers and snatched Bibi's braided jacket that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind. He expressed an intention to remain outside, but it was soon apparent that he might as well have been out in the open: the water beat in upon the boards in driving sheets, and he went inside, closing the door after him. It was even necessary to put something beneath the door to keep the water out.

"My! What a rain! Its good two years since it rain' like that," exclaimed Calixta as she rolled up a piece of bagging and Alce helped her to thrust it beneath the crack.

She was a little fuller of figure than five years before when she married; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity. Her blue eyes still retained their melting quality; and her yellow hair, dishevelled by the wind and rain, kinked more stubbornly than ever about her ears and temples.

The rains beat upon the low, shingled roof with a force and clatter that threatened to break an entrance and deluge them there. They were in the dining room the sitting room the general utility room. Adjoining was her bed room, with Bibi's couch alongside her own. The door stood open, and the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious.

Alice flung him into a rocker and Calixta nervously began to gather up from the floor the lengths of a cotton sheet which she had been sewing.

If this keeps up, Dieusait if the levees goin' to stan it!" she exclaimed.

"What have you got to do with the levees?"

"I got enough to do! An' there's Bobint with Bibi out in that storm if he only didn' left Friedheimer's!"

"Let us hope, Calixta that Bobint's got sense enough to come in out of a cyclone."

She went and stood at the window with a greatly disturbed look on her face. She wiped the frame that was clouded with moisture. It was stiflingly hot. Alice got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder. The rain was coming down in sheets obscuring the view of far-off cabins and enveloping the distant wood in a gray mist. The playing of the lightning was incessant. A bolt struck a tall chinaberry tree at the edge of the field. It filled all visible space with a blinding glare and the crash seemed to invade the very boards they stood upon.

Calixta put her hands to her eyes, and with a cry, staggered backward. Alce's arm encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him.

"Bont!" she cried, releasing herself from his encircling arm and retreating from the window, the house will go next! If I only knew we're Bibi was!" She would not compose herself; she would not be seated. Alice clasped her shoulders and looked into her face. The contact of her warm, palpitating body when he had unthinkingly drawn her into his arms had aroused all the old-time infatuation and desire for her flesh.

"Calixta," he said, "don't be frightened. Nothing can happen. The house is too low to be struck, with so many tall trees standing about. There! Aren't you going to be quiet? say, aren't you?" He pushed her hair back from her face that was warm and steaming. Her lips were as red and moist as pomegranate seed. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully. As she glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to a drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire. He looked down into her eyes and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss. It reminded him of Assumption.

"Do you remember in Assumption, Calixta?" he asked in a low voice broken by passion. Oh! She remembered; for in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a passionate creature whose very defencelessness had made her defence, against

which his honour forbade him to prevail. Now well, now her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her whiter breasts.

They did not heed the crashing torrents, and the roar of the elements made her laugh as she lay in his arms. She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber; as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was known for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world.

The generous abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached.

When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery.

He stayed cushioned upon her, breathless, dazed, enervated, with his heart beating like a hammer upon her. With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders.

The growl of the thunder was distant and passing away. The rain beat softly upon the shingles, inviting them to drowsiness and sleep. But they dared not yield.

III

The rain was over; and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems. Calixta, on the gallery, watched Alce ride away. He turned and smiled at her with a beaming face; and she lifted her pretty chin in the air and laughed aloud.

Bobint and Bibi, trudging home, stopped without at the cistern to make them presentable.

"My! Bibi, what will you' mama say! You ought to be ashamed'. You ought to' put on those good pants. Look at 'em! An' that mud on you' collar! How you got that mud on yo' collar, Bibi? I never saw such a boy!" Bibi was the picture of pathetic resignation. Bobint was the embodiment of serious solicitude as he strove to remove from his own person and his son's the signs of their tramp over heavy roads and through wet fields. He scraped the mud off Bibi's bare legs and feet with

a stick and carefully removed all traces from his heavy brogans. Then, prepared for the worst the meeting with an over-scrupulous housewife, they entered cautiously at the back door.

Calixta was preparing supper. She had set the table and was dripping coffee at the hearth. She sprang up as they came in.

"Oh, Bobint! You back! My! But I was uneasy. Were you been during the rain? An' Bibi? heain't wet? heain't hurt?" She had clasped Bibi and was kissing him effusively. Bobint's explanations and apologies which he had been composing all along the way, died on his lips as Calixta felt him to see if he were dry, and seemed to express nothing but satisfaction at their safe return.

"I brought you some shrimps, Calixta," offered Bobint, hauling the can from his ample side pocket and laying it on the table.

"Shrimps! Oh, Bobint! you too good fo' anything!" and she gave him a smacking kiss on the cheek that resounded, "J'vousreponds, we'll have a feas' to-night! umph-umph!"

Bobint and Bibi began to relax and enjoy themselves, and when the three seated them at table they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballire's.

IV

Alice Laballire wrote to his wife, Clarisse, that night. It was a loving letter, full of tender solicitude. He told her not to hurry back, but if she and the babies liked it at Biloxi, to stay a month longer. He was getting on nicely; and though he missed them, he was willing to bear the separation a while longer realizing that their health and pleasure were the first things to be considered.

V

As for Clarisse, she was charmed upon receiving her husband's letter. She and the babies were doing well. The society was agreeable; many of her old friends and acquaintances were at the bay. And the first free breath since her marriage seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of her maiden days. Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for a while.

So the storm passed and everyone was happy.

Analysis of "The Storm"

Major Characters in "The Storm"

Calixta:	She appears to be the protagonist of this short story."
Bobinôt:	Husband of Calixta and father of Bibi.
Bibi:	Four-year-old son of Calixta and Bobinôt
Alcée Laballière:	Calixta's old friend and lover

The Setting of "The Storm"

By setting, we refer to both the time and place of the action in a story. The story is set in the late nineteenth century at Friedheimer's store in Louisiana, and at the nearby house of Calixta and Bobinôt.

Major Themes of "The Storm"

Unlike most of Kate Chopin's short stories and both her novels, this story was not published until the 1960s, many years after it was written. Apparently Chopin did not submit it to magazines because she understood that no editor at the time would publish a work as sexually explicit as this one. In this story, , Kate Chopin "was not concerned in the immoral in itself, but in life as it comes, in what she saw as natural – or certainly inevitable – expressions of universal *Eros*, inside or outside of marriage. She focuses here on sexuality, and to her, it is neither frantic nor base, but as "healthy and beautiful as life itself."

The following questions will further enhance your comprehension:

1. Where exactly does Chopin's story take place? How can you tell?
2. What details in "The Storm" emphasise the fact that Bobinot loves his wife?
3. What details imply how imperfectly he comprehends her nature?
4. What does Kate Chopin imply about sex, love and marriage?

23.5.1 Exercises

A. Choose the correct option:

1. Which of these does not fit the definition of the concept "literature"?
 - (a) all written works
 - (b) imaginative compositions in language
 - (c) creative compositions which tell stories
 - (d) aesthetic recreation of life situations
2. Which of these best explains the concept of literary appreciation?
 - (a) judgement of mechanical accuracy in a text
 - (b) evaluation of the grammaticality of a text
 - (c) assessment of how true a story is
 - (d) understanding, admiration and enjoyment of literature

B. Identify the figure of speech used in each of the following expressions:

3. As the sky darkened, the frogs croaked the hallelujah chorus.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| (a) apostrophe | (b) onomatopoeia |
| (c) simile | (d) drama |

4. Fifty legs occupied the platform.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| (a) irony | (b) personification |
| (c) metaphor | (d) synecdoche |

5. Nigeria! Why have you treated me this way?

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) apostrophe | (b) rhetoric |
| (c) question | (d) metaphor |

6. The moon silently crept out of its hiding.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| (a) simile | (b) hyperbole |
| (c) euphemism | (d) personification |

7. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| (a) simile | (b) hyperbole |
| (c) metaphor | (d) poetry |

8. Our country is so prudent that we spend 70 per cent of our budget on the welfare of our leaders.
 - (a) oxymoron
 - (b) paradox
 - (c) irony
 - (d) metaphor
9. Dr Raymond confirmed that Theresa walks like a peacock.
 - (a) mockery
 - (b) pun
 - (c) simile
 - (d) onomatopoeia
10. I will walk into the moon to get a jewel for my wife.
 - (a) climax
 - (b) hyperbole
 - (c) simile
 - (d) irony
11. ... But such a tide as moving seems asleep.
 - (a) irony
 - (b) personification
 - (c) apostrophe
 - (d) metonymy
12. At the end of the war, it was confirmed that the defeated side lost one million boots, while the winning side lost only five spades.
 - (a) metaphor
 - (b) metonymy
 - (c) apostrophe
 - (d) synecdoche
13. One of these is not associated with poetry.
 - (a) stanza
 - (b) compressed words
 - (c) stage
 - (d) verse
14. One of these is not a genre of literature.
 - (a) biography
 - (b) prose
 - (c) poetry
 - (d) drama
15. A _____ is a poem that tells a story as song.
16. _____ is the use of an object or action to represent something beyond the literal meaning of that object or action.
17. Setting refers to the _____ and _____ of a story.
18. A _____ is a poem of fourteen lines.
19. The major character in a story is the _____.
20. A poem that is composed to be sung is known as a _____.
21. _____ and _____ distinguish drama from other genres of literature.

- (a) verse and stanza (b) character and dialogue
(c) stage and dialogue (d) dialogue and action

22. A drama that is based on words without action is known as a _____.
23. The _____ is the central message of a literary work.
24. A _____ is a platform where dramatic activities take place.
25. Chapter is to prose as _____ is to drama; and _____ is to poetry.
26. _____ is the arrangement of the events that make up a story or a play.

References and Suggestions for Further Reading

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