

COVENANT UNIVERSITY
NIGERIA

TUTORIAL KIT
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PROGRAMME: LANGUAGES

COURSE: ENG 226

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ENG226: Practical Criticism2

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1. Explore literary history and the approaches of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
2. Discuss poesy as an art of imitation.
3. In Literary Theory, examine Mathew Arnold's works on 'poetry, religion and science',
4. Karl Marx view that "Workers have nothing to lose but their chains".
5. Examine Shklovsky's Post-Structuralism (Deconstruction) – 'Fabula' and the 'Syuzhet' which create defamiliarizing effect on poetry.
6. Introduce Practical criticism through the eyes of I.A. Richard:
7. Why is practical criticism also referred to as text-bound or "reader-response criticism".
8. Examine Osundare's use of literary devices in projecting primal influence in his Preface to *The Eye of the Earth* (ix-x).
9. Personal symbols, proverbs, allusions, parallels etc. in "Come Thunder".
10. the juxtaposition of unlike metaphors in line 14, the musicality and the structure in "Hurray for thunder"
11. Compare the character of Obatala's creative ability as represented in Kalejaiye's *Obatala and the Tempter* Eleburuibun's 'Obatala and the Barren Woman'?
12. Examine the reason for the physiological/psychological/challenges in the 'Hunch- Back' and 'Omolokun'
13. What lessons do we learn from Eleburuibun's poem?
14. If you are in the position of the mother, how would you react to the problem Omolokun.
15. Discuss the central theme(s) in "The barren woman".
16. What is the position of the (male) child in this setting?
17. Examine the issue of betrayal of trust in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Chapter 7)
18. Examine the characters of the three sisters in *King Lear*.
19. Explore the use of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi*.
20. Discuss verbo-visual qualities in "The cow" and "Oasis"

ENG226: 10 Tutorial Answers

1. In literary history Socrates used the didactic approach, Plato: Though the inside and strength of his writings were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most on poetry. Aristotle (*The Republic*) himself, in his Discourse of Poetry, plainly determined this question, saying that poetry is more philosophical and more studiously serious than history. His reason is

“because poesy deals with *katholou*, that is to say with the universal consideration, and the history with *kathekaston*, the particular” (Chickera: 1979:17). Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end to teach and delight(9).

3. In *Literary Theory*, examine Mathew Arnold’s works on ‘poetry, religion and science’, Mathew Arnold (1822-1888), an English educator and poet, considered socio cultural conflict of his day, believed that literature, poetry in particular, will one day, come to help resolve all human generated conflicts.

Placing his postulation in a spiritual context, in his books *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Culture of The Best* and *The Study of Poetry* (1880), Arnold’s central idea was that:

- Apart from its aesthetic and pleasing qualities, literature has important things to teach humanity.
- That English culture (of the 1850s) is seriously threatened by a process of secularization.
- A culture of persuasiveness, of scientific thinking, especially Darwin’s theory of evolution which confronts religion.
- A social rise of a self-important money oriented middle class,
- The threat of class struggle.

From this view of poetry, Arnold foresaw in his *The Study of Poetry* (1880), a crucial semi-religious role for poetry: “more and more, mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us; control us and even to sustain us... without poetry, our science will appear incomplete, and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.” From this statement, Arnold prophetically foresaw a tomorrow where science, poetry and religion will combine to make our world better. Though “the best may be threatened by anarchy”, the future of poetry is immense because in poetry our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer pathway.

5. Examine Shklovsky’s Post-Structuralism (Deconstruction) – ‘Fabula’ and the ‘Syuzhet’ which create defamiliarizing effect on poetry: In poetry; a sonnet fabula can represent the theme of ‘love’ as tragic in one persona/poem¹ and blissful in another persona/poem². In the genes of poetry for example, syuzhet can represent variations of fabula of the same sonnets in the poems of one or more poets. In sonnet, it could occur in the poems of Keats, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth; in haiku poems, traditional, concrete: “architecture”, “wind” etc.

7. Why is practical criticism also referred to as text-bound or “reader-response criticism”?

This is an introduction to text-bound, practical criticism as postulated and practiced by I.A. Richard. He is the founding figure of what is today known as “reader-response criticism”. He is concerned with what the reader does to a work, that is, the way in which readers interpret as a result of which misunderstandings occur. It critically assesses the genres of literature considering their intrinsic and extrinsic literary qualities. It makes a clear distinction between practical criticism (applied criticism), literary criticism and theoretical criticism. Practical criticism, otherwise known as ‘applied criticism’, is a type of literary criticism that emphasizes and responds to the characteristics of specific texts, it concentrates on the explication of individual works and differs significantly from theoretical criticism because while practical criticism is concerned with close reading of the text in discussing the work and its author theoretical

criticism emphasizes the formulation of general principles to all texts. Emphases are on the nature, elements, artistic features and characteristics of the various forms and techniques adapted in the literary genres of various periods.

9. Personal symbols: 'Thunder', 'dancers',
Allusions: cables, teeth, magic birds, iron mask
Parallels: farm lands, homesteads, barns.

11. Compare Obatala's creative ability as represented in Kalejaiye's *Obatala and the Tempter* Eleburuibun's 'Obatala and the Barren Woman'?

Obatala creates perfect and deformed beings as represented in Kalejaiye's *Obatala* and moral/retributive/psychological based creations as we have in that of the 'barren woman'.

13. What lessons do we learn from Eleburuibun's poem?
The virtue of patience, contentment and obedience.

15. Discuss the central theme(s) in "The barren woman":
Patience and Contentment.

17. Examine the issue of betrayal of trust in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Chapter 7)
Okonkwo's killing of Ikemefuna is a betrayal of filial trust.

19. Explore the use of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi*.
Kurunmi is a historical play, with its setting in Yoruba land and people and the proverbs are centred on the Yoruba world view.