

LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 10

SUBJECT: Literature-in-English
TOPIC: African Prose “Unexpected Joy at Dawn (II) by Alex Agyei-Agyiri
CLASS: SS1
WEEK: 10

THEMES

1. Xenophobia: this is a strong fear or hatred for foreigners or strangers. In the novel, xenophobia is caused as a result of dominance of non-citizens over citizens. As a result of this fear for aliens, the real citizens are protected by the decree made by the government to protect its citizens against such domination. It is in the light of this, that the then military government in Ghana decreed that non-Ghanaians leave Ghana. Consequently, non-citizens were neglected; they suffered hardship, they were marginalised and downgraded. This attitude of punishing the non-citizens made Mama Orojo to leave for Nigeria with her mother while in Ghana; Nii was highly ex-communicated and was faced difficulties because of this decree, all his fundamental human rights were denied him. Despite being born and bred in Ghana and works there, Nii remains a stranger there. It is perhaps for this reason that Nii decides to return to Nigeria immediately his wife, Massa dies. His return to Nigeria coincides with the period xenophobia also becomes a government policy in Nigeria, with emphasis on Ghanaians in the country to leave. Ironically, Nii is also seen as a stranger in his supposed country of origin his inability to speak any of the Nigerian languages makes him an alien, not even his tribal mark can save him. Until he meets his sister, he is subjected to all sorts of inhuman treatment while in Nigeria.
2. Leadership failure: the bad governmental policies have always had adverse effects on political, social and economic system of the country. This is seen in the revolutionary government of Ghana, the decree that non-citizens should leave Ghana affected them politically, socially and economically. Thus, some businesses were forced to close down, this affected some many people; one of those affected by this ugly decree was Mr Joe, whose business collapse, Nii also lost his job, some people’s properties were seized. This act also affected he citizens of Ghana. As a result of the leadership failure in Agyeri-Agyiri’s Ghana, illegality and fraud appear to be the only means of survival.
3. Love: in the book, “Unexpected Joy at Dawn” there is a notable exploration of the subject of love, which cuts across filial love, conjugal love and romantic love. This theme also depicts the relevance showing natural love to one another in the society. In Ghana, the love of family relationship is pictured between mother, grandmother and children. Filial love is seen as Mama travels back to

Ghana in search for her brother, Nii, she couldn't stop thinking and worrying when she learnt that he has gone to Nigeria at a time that coincides with Nigeria's alien deportation order, she imagines the ordeal her brother would be going through.

Conjugal love is seen between Nii and his wife, Massa. The love projected between these two is faithful to the nuptial vow of 'for better for worse'. Through serious adversity, the couple still sticks together, displaying affection and understanding, remaining faithful while resisting temptation and fighting hard.

There is also romantic love between Mama and Joe in their relationship. They both love each other genuinely. They made sacrifices for one another; Joe sacrifices his criminal but money-spinning business in order to get married to Mama, he also follows her to resettle in Nigeria. Similarly, Mama, defies the council of her church; Amen Kristi Church and insists on marrying an alien (Joe) rather than a member of her ethnic group. Also, the love by Marshak for Nii is rejected by the latter. This rejection makes her to commit suicide, which shows that Marshak was really in need of love.

Other themes include:

4. Pan-Africanism
5. Religious intolerance

CHARACTERISATION

1. Nii

Role

Nii Tackie is a young accounting university graduate and the Assistant Manager of Expense Bank. He is the husband of Massa. Though, he is a Nigerian, Nii is born in Ghana and his upbringing has made him entirely a Ghanaian. He is separated from his only sister, Mama Orojo, his only surviving relative, who returns to Nigeria after the Ghanaian government asks all aliens to leave the country.

He is the protagonist of the story. He is a crucial character even in the second sub-plot. As a result of his dual citizenship, that is; Ghanaian and Nigerian, he continues to live in anxiety and fear. He became afraid that a time would come when the Ghanaian government would begin to sack aliens like they did fifteen years ago as a result of his Yoruba tribal mark. Nii is a faithful husband to Massa, despite her ill health, he still loved and cared for her. He is able to resist Linda's sexual advances in the office and even when they happen to be alone together in Linda's apartment. His love for Maasa appears to interfere in his relationship with Marshak.

Nii is a restive hardworking young man that wants to confront the harsh economic realities in the country. He engages in part-time jobs to earn extra income to supplement his salary. He is tactless

and emotional, this is seen when he was unable to handle their grievance in a mature manner. Instead, he reacts harshly, even when he is patently at fault.

His significance

- a. He is one of the major protagonists in the story. Nii is central to the thematic preoccupation of the novel. The whole impact of xenophobia attack in the story is mostly woven around him. When the decree was made by the Ghanaian government, the fear of being sent packing one day keeps disturbing his mind. The situation is worsened when he returns to Nigeria, his ancestral home, he is also rejected and treated as an alien because he could communicate in any of the Nigerian languages.
- b. Nii's devotion and faithfulness to Massa gives the story a fine taste of true love, a marriage built on trust, not lust. He is also central to the development of the theme of love in the novel. Similarly, his lack of love for other women who pine to have him illustrates unreciprocated love in the story.
- c. His characterisation contributes to the artistic development of the story. His perseverance and steadfastness in the face of torture and undeserved humiliation also make him a strong character, which makes him not to give up until he is reunited with His sister.

1. Mama Orojo

Role

Mama Orojo otherwise known as OluOrojo is a single lady and a sister to Nii. She is mostly addressed as Mama, a name given to her by her father. She was eighteen year old when she followed her father and grandfather, who die on their way to Nigeria when the Ghanaian government asked aliens to evacuate fifteen years before. She settles down in Nigeria alone with little money and no family. She is an active member of Amen Kristi Church and participates in the church's evangelism.

Despite her earlier challenges, she has gradually built her business and becomes prosperous and influential with a thriving construction company. Mama is of the opinion that life is not worthwhile without a relative. She goes to Accra the second time in search of her family (Nii). In the novel, she remains resolute about her marriage proposal although, some church members disagree on the marriage arrangement between Mama and Joe because he is an alien. After a long deliberation, a vote is cast among the members of the church council, with only Mama and the secretary in support of the marriage, as 'the chairman, the doctor and the pastor voted against it'. However, Mama sticks to her gun.

Her Significance

- a. Mama is the second protagonist in the story. Her actions significantly advance the development of the plot of the story. She recounts the pains and anguish she is subjected to when the Ghanaian government ordered aliens in the country to leave. She loses her father and grandfather on her way

back to Nigeria. This leaves her with no single living relative to call hers. She relieves the direct consequence of family separation as a result of such obnoxious xenophobic policy.

- b. She dominates the sub-plot of the story. Her love for her family keeps taking her back to Ghana where she accidentally finds love in Joe. Her efforts to locate her brother, Nii, make her to discover the abandoned corpse of Massa and she takes the responsibility of giving the young lady the necessary burial rites.
- c. Her love with Joe is symbolic. It is beyond the love between two lovers to the love between Ghana and Nigeria; this therefore promotes the concept of Pan-Africanism. Also, her decision to go ahead with the marriage despite the disapproval from the church shows that love conquers tribal hates and any other sentiments.
- d. Mama is also used to develop the theme of love in the novel. She eventually finds romantic and conjugal love while in search of filial love. Her love for Joe is genuine.