

LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 3

SUBJECT: Literature-in-English

TOPIC: African Drama: "Let Me Die Alone" by John Kolosa Kargbo

CLASS: SS1

WEEK: 3

THEMES

1. Colonial arrogance and dominance

The representative of Her Majesty, Governor Rowe has an air of overbearing dominance; he has little or no regards for the Mende society, her people and leaders. His arrogance is demonstrated when he commands his soldiers to stretch out the Chief Gbanya, for thorough flogging and fined him in addition. Colonial arrogance and dominance can also be seen when Rowe tries to reduce Yoko's territorial dominance and control, she feels insulted and humiliated and consequently commits suicide to save the dignity of her throne and people.

2. Betrayal

Gbanya trusts Musa his medicine man and Lamboi one of his trusted warriors and brother to his wife. These two betray his trust; Musa poisons Gbanya under the pretence that he is administering pain relief medicine to him, also, Governor Rowe betrays Yoko's loyalty by devolving her powers to humiliate her; she commits suicide. Lansana also betrays Ndapi his best friend by seducing and sleeping with his wife, Jilo.

3. Conflict between genders in a rapidly changing society

The play critiques a traditional culture that insists that women be confined to traditional female roles, in spite of the fact that there have been successful women leaders among the Mende people throughout recorded history. Male and male roles in Mende society are clearly drawn out, but the society allows women with exceptional qualities to cross gender lines as leaders in various capacities. This paradoxical shifting identification often brings tension between the sexes because of the implications and consequences, as in the case of Yoko. She had to renounce childbearing in order to become man-woman to be eligible ascend the Mende throne.

OTHER THEMES INCLUDE:

4. Blackmail
5. Tradition and unfair demands on womanhood

6. Intrigue and murder
7. Modern feminist concerns

MAJOR CHARACTERS, THEIR ROLES AND SIGNIFICANCE

1. Madam Yoko

Role

Yoko is the tragic heroine. She is the ruler of Mende Chiefdom, portrayed as a beautiful, ambitious and courageous woman, who joins an all-male secret cult society and consequently loses her right to motherhood, not to her sexuality, she knows not everyone is happy that she is the chief of Mende Chiefdom, including her brother. Yoko is feared by her male contemporaries, envied by women in her constituency. In the play, she feels so disgraced by the Governor's boundary demarcations to reduce her territorial country in spite of her years of loyalty to him.

Significance

- a. Yoko is seen by many of her subject as a usurper and a friend of the colonial administration.
- b. Due to her loyalty to her husband and her desire to lead, being somebody else's wife after the death of her husband does not appeal to her.
- c. Her insistence at having control and fighting a culture set-up that has no consideration for women as leaders, she has to be tough and insolent to push her agenda through.

2. Gbanya

Role

Gbanya is the tragic hero in the play, he is Yoko's husband and ruler of Mende Chiefdom. He has 37 wives but cherishes Yoko the most because of her pragmatic nature and contributions to the affairs of Senenhun Chiefdom. In the play, he commands the finest and most courageous band of fighters in Mende land but has diplomatic dispositions; he chooses carefully the wars to fight and the ones to ignore. He suffers intense humiliation in the hands of the Governor who flogged him publicly and fined him in his own domain. Gbanya died in the hands of his trusted men, he saw through their treachery and manages to hand over power to Yoko, his wife before his last breath.

Significance

- a. Gbanya is a chief who has a balanced view of governance and rational in his approach. His leadership style is guided by necessity and what is just.
- b. His reproachful treatment underlines the humiliation the colonial masters subjected African

traditional rulers to during the colonial period.

- c. In the play, Gbanya does not want a shameful death but he ironically foreshadows an unplanned end.
- d. It is dramatic irony that Gbanya falls victim to the humiliating death he fears. He died by poison with his skin turning black as charcoal.