Grade 10 Literature in English

Terms 1, 2 and 3 - notes for 34 topics

IN EVERY TOPIC

- What you will learn and the key words.
- Short, clear notes with worked examples.
- Questions to try and a topic test, with the answers at the back.

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Strand 1.0 Introduction to oral literature, poetry and prose | Term 1

1.1 Introduction to Oral Literature

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- identify genres of oral literature for information
- analyse the features of oral literature from a variety of oral literature genres
- discuss the functions of oral literature for comprehension

KEY WORDS

oral literature, orature, genre, performance, audience participation, narrative, proverb, riddle, anonymous, function.

1. What oral literature is

Oral literature

Literature is the art of using words to express ideas, feelings and experiences. Oral literature, sometimes called orature, is literature that is spoken, sung or performed and passed from person to person and from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Written literature depends on writing and printing. Oral literature depends on the memory, the voice and the body of the performer, and on an audience that is present. Every community in Kenya has its own oral literature in its own language: stories, songs, riddles, proverbs, sayings, tongue twisters, praise poems and many more.

Oral and written literature compared: (1) Medium: the first is spoken, sung or acted; the second is written or printed. (2) Author: oral pieces are usually anonymous and belong to the whole community; written works have a named author. (3) Audience: oral pieces are heard by a group and the audience takes part; written works are usually read alone. (4) Change: an oral piece changes a little each time it is performed, because the performer adds and drops details; a printed page stays fixed. (5) Performance: gesture, voice, dance and costume are part of oral literature; a book has only the words.

Model riddle, as it is told: Riddler: "Kitendawili?" Audience: "Tega!" Riddler: "Nyumba yangu haina mlango." (My house has no door.) The audience guesses. Answer: an egg (yai). Notice that the riddle cannot begin without the audience: the riddler says "Kitendawili" and the audience answers "Tega" to invite the riddle. Activity: in pairs, search for the meaning of oral literature on a device or in a dictionary, then each learner gives one example of oral literature from their own community, says who taught it to them and how it was performed. Note one thing that changed when you told it again.

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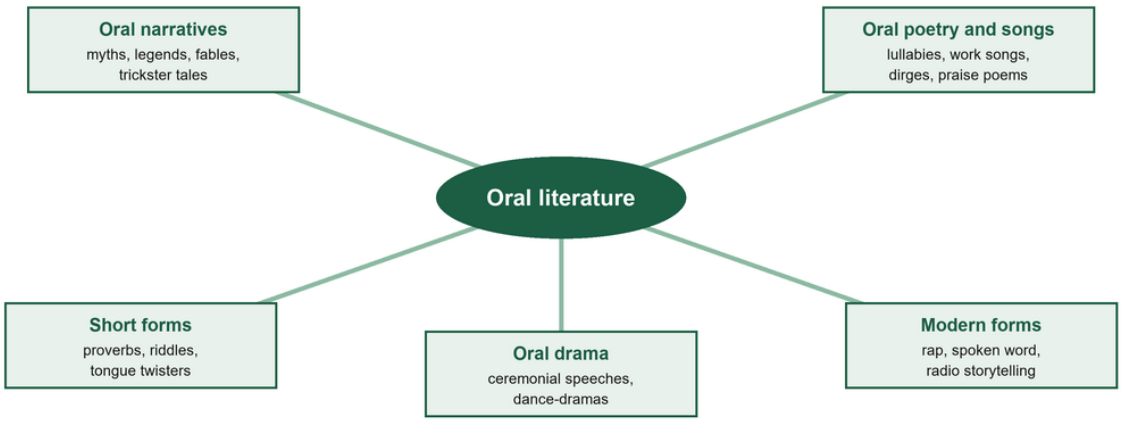
2. Genres of oral literature

The genres

A genre is a kind or type of literature with its own shape and purpose. The main genres of oral literature are: (1) Oral narratives: stories told in prose, such as myths (how the world began), legends (about heroes and real events), folktales and fables (often with animals), trickster tales and stories about ogres. (2) Oral poetry and songs: lullabies, work songs, love songs, war songs, dirges (songs of mourning), initiation songs, praise poems and religious songs. (3) Short forms: proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, sayings and puns. (4) Oral drama and ceremonial performance: dramatised stories, ritual and ceremonial speeches, and dance-dramas at festivals and weddings. (5) Modern forms: rap, spoken word, radio and online storytelling.

Examples from Swahili that many learners know. Proverb: "Haba na haba hujaza kibaba" (little by little fills the measure). Proverb: "Umoja ni nguvu" (unity is strength). Riddle: "Kitendawili? Tega!" Song: a lullaby sung to a baby. Narrative: the tale of the hare who outsmarts a hyena. Speech: the words of welcome at a homecoming. Each has a different shape: the proverb is one short sentence, the riddle is a question and answer, the narrative has a beginning, middle and end, and the song is sung.

Activity: in groups of four, make a mind map with "Oral literature" in the middle and the five genres as branches. Under each branch list at least two examples from your own communities and languages. Then decide which genre each of these belongs to: a wedding song, a story about a brave ancestor, "Patience pays", "What has teeth but cannot bite?" (answer: a comb), a prayer at a harvest festival. Present the mind map to another group for feedback.



The five genres of oral literature

3. Features of oral literature

Features

Features of oral literature: (1) It is oral: it is spoken, sung or performed, and depends on memory. (2) It is performed before a live audience; the performer uses voice, gesture, facial expression, movement and sometimes costume. (3) Audience participation: the audience answers, sings the chorus, claps, or corrects the performer. (4) It is communal: it belongs to the community and the author is usually unknown (anonymous). (5) It is flexible: each performance can differ. (6) It uses fixed openings and closings, for example "Once upon a time" and "That is where my story ends". (7) It uses repetition of words, lines and actions to help memory and to build rhythm. (8) It is rooted in the culture of the community and uses its language, its places and its beliefs. (9) It uses figurative language such as similes, metaphors and proverbs, and sound effects. (10) It teaches and entertains at the same time.

Model performance (read aloud by one learner while the class answers). Storyteller: "Story, story!" Audience: "Come, come!" Storyteller: "A long time ago, the hare and the hyena went to fetch water." Audience: "Go on!" Storyteller: "Hyena said, I am strong, I will carry the pot." (in a deep voice) "And hare said, I am clever, I will carry the plan." (in a quick, high voice) Audience: "Ha ha!" Storyteller: "That is where my story ends. If it is sweet, let it go to the village; if it is not, let it stay here." Features in the model: call and response, changes of voice, humour, an opening and a closing formula, and a moral hinted at (strength against cleverness).

Activity: perform the model in groups of four with a storyteller and three audience members. Then list on manila paper every feature you can find in the model, with the words or actions that prove it. Peer-review another group's list for correctness and add any feature they missed.

4. Functions of oral literature

Functions

Oral literature does many jobs in a community. (1) It entertains: stories, songs and riddles give pleasure. (2) It educates: proverbs and stories teach values such as honesty, courage and respect, and pass on knowledge about farming, animals, weather and health. (3) It preserves history and culture: legends and songs remember heroes, migrations and customs. (4) It controls behaviour: tales that punish greed or laziness warn against them; songs can praise good conduct and mock bad conduct. (5) It expresses feelings: a lullaby shows love, a dirge shows grief, a love song shows affection. (6) It unites people: songs, dances and stories bring a group together and build a common identity. (7) It develops language and thinking: riddles and tongue twisters sharpen the mind and the tongue. (8) It supports work and worship: work songs set a rhythm, and prayers and chants are part of ceremonies. Model proverb and its function: "Asiyefunzwa na mamaye hufunzwa na ulimwengu" (the one who is not taught by their mother will be taught by the world). Function: it educates by warning that a child who refuses guidance will learn the hard way. Model tale in one sentence: a greedy hyena loses everything by taking more than his share; the function is to teach fairness and warn against greed. Today oral literature is still important: it appears in music festivals, in speeches, in advertisements, on radio and in social media videos, and it keeps our languages alive. Activity: in groups, make a mind map with "Functions of oral literature" in the middle. Add each function with one example. Present it to the class, and then discuss the key inquiry question: Why is oral literature important in society? Write two sentences on how oral literature has helped you personally.

TRY THESE

1. What is oral literature?
2. Give two differences between oral and written literature.
3. Name the two oral narrative types that feature animals or heroes.
4. Which genre does "Umoja ni nguvu" belong to?
5. What does "anonymous" mean?
6. Give one fixed opening and one fixed closing used in storytelling.
7. Give two functions of oral literature.
8. What function does a dirge perform?

TOPIC TEST

T1. Explain why an oral story can have many versions.

T2. Explain why a proverb is called a short form.

T3. Explain why oral literature is flexible.

T4. Explain how oral literature helps to keep a language alive.

Strand 1.0 Introduction to oral literature, poetry and prose | Term 1

1.2 Appreciating Poetry

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- identify the elements of a poem from Kenya for comprehension
- analyse the elements of a poem from Kenya for comprehension
- acknowledge the importance of elements of poetry when analysing poems

KEY WORDS

poetry, poem, persona, subject matter, theme, tone, mood, stanza, line, imagery.

1. What poetry is and where poems come from

Poetry and its sources

Poetry is a form of literature that uses carefully chosen words, rhythm, sound, and pictures in the mind (images) to express feelings, ideas and experiences in a concentrated way. A poem is one such piece. Poetry can be oral (recited, sung or performed) or written. It differs from prose because it is arranged in lines and often in stanzas, it usually uses fewer words to say more, and it depends heavily on sound and figurative language.

Sources of poetry: (1) Oral tradition: songs, chants, praise poems and dirges that were sung long before writing. (2) Personal experience: a poet writes about their own joy, loss, love or fear. (3) Nature and the environment: rivers, forests, rain, drought and animals. (4) Events in the society: elections, wars, festivals, floods and school life. (5) Religion and belief: hymns, prayers and psalms. (6) Other literature: a poet may retell a known story or answer another poem. Poems from Kenya deal with our own places, languages and concerns, for example land, unity, education, love, environmental conservation and the struggle for independence.

Activity: brainstorm in pairs on the meaning of poetry, then search online or offline for a definition and note it in your own words. Write down three things you would like to write a poem about (a source for each), and share them. Discuss the key inquiry question: Why do we study poetry? (It develops language, imagination, feeling and understanding of ourselves and society.)

2. The elements of a poem

Elements of a poem

The elements are the parts we look at when we analyse a poem. (1) The title: it often hints at the subject. (2) The persona (the speaker or voice) is the person or thing that speaks in the poem; it is not always the poet. (3) Subject matter is what the poem is about. (4) The theme is the main message or idea about life that the poem carries (for example, "Nature deserves our care"). Subject matter is the topic; the theme is what the poem says about it. (5) Tone is the persona's attitude (angry, gentle, sad, hopeful), and mood is the feeling the poem creates in the reader. (6) Form and structure: the number of lines, the stanzas, the rhyme scheme and the rhythm. (7) Language and style: word choice, imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification), sound devices (rhyme, alliteration) and repetition.

Model poem (original, on conserving the environment): "THE RIVER REMEMBERS" (free verse). When I was young, / the river sang all night, / clear as a bell, / cool as a mother's hand. // Now it coughs through the town, / brown with plastic and oil, / its songs stuck / in the throats of the fish. // Children, the river remembers / every hand that poured, / and every hand that planted trees / along its banks. // Which hand will you be? Title: hints at memory and the river as a living being. Persona: an adult looking back and speaking to children. Subject matter: the pollution of a river. Theme: we must conserve nature because our actions are remembered and have consequences.

Activity: in pairs, read the poem aloud twice, then complete a table with the headings Title, Persona, Subject matter, Theme, Tone, Mood, Form and Language, giving a line as evidence in each row. Compare with another pair.