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**STUDY MATERIAL FOR**  
**B.A. ENGLISH**  
**AFRICAN LITERATURE**  
**VI -SEMESTER**



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**PREPARED BY**  
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## **AFRICAN LITERATURE**

### **UNIT – I**

### **POETRY**

#### **NOTE TO ALL SURVIVING AFRICANS**

#### **MAZISI KUNENE**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Mazisi Kunene is one of Africa's greatest poets. His poems speak about the history of the Zulu people, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the oral tradition of African Literature. This poem, "A Note to all surviving Africans" defines the poet's understanding and articulation of African heritage.

#### **ABANDONMENT OF HOUSEHOLD GODS:**

The people of Africa made an unforgivable mistake. They abandoned their own household Gods. The word "theirs" refer to the White people and their Gods. The Africans started to worship the white gods who had "soft skins and iron flesh". The white priests are making their signs of prayer in the land belonged to the forefathers of the native Africans. The language of the Whites and their religious rituals are "obscure" to the Africans.

#### **CAPTURED CHILDREN:**

The Africans gave their children to the Whites. It was an act to win the praise of Whites. But the Whites never opened their lips. It was "sealed". With their obscure mind the Whites invaded the African soil. They destroyed the goods and innocence in the minds of the captured children.

#### **THE FOOLISH ACT:**

After the Whites invaded the land, they tried to convert the people to their religion. On hearing their homilies, the Africans burnt the symbol of their own Gods. It was an act of foolishness. Then they followed the "bubbling of their priests". They imitated their gestures. But it earned laughter among the



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Whites. Their feast is purified by fire like the Whites' custom. At the same time the mind which is nourished by the "Ancestral song" is slowly fading away.

### **HE VOW OF AFRICANS:**

The ancient heritage of Africa was portrayed by the author in the concluding lines. Every African should vow to save the heritage of Africa. They are not like the driftwood thrown upon distant nations. The African "kinsmen are a thousand centuries old". Only few nations are privileged with ancient civilizations. The heritage is not based on gold or other materialistic things but on the people of Africa.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Thus, Mazisi Kunene wrote this poem as an important note to all the surviving Africans to follow and cherish their ancient heritage. They should not abandon their Gods, children and heritage in following an unknown religion.

## **CACTUS**

Jean Joseph Robearivelo

### **1. What does Cactus symbolise:**

Cactus is any of a large group of plants of the family 'Cactaceae, chiefly native to arid regions of the New World and having thick, fleshy, often prickly stems that function as leaves and in some species showy flowers and edible fruit. The Cactus is a symbol of resilience and turgidity; As the Cactus remains solid and strong in a dying, deciduous terrain, so does the artist maintain his sense of equilibrium against a backdrop of the challenges of life. The immortality of art is suggested through the symbolism. of the Cactus. The fact that all things in the. desert landscape dies or wither away; while the Cactus 'alone survives suggests the invincibility of art-especially poetry. All; cacti have thickened fleshy parts adapted to store water and are the native to the Americas.

### **2. Wandering tribes 'in the frontiers of the South:'**

Cactus is the great number of joined hands which offer flowers to the sky. Rabearivelo associates the human hand, the Symbol of force with the shape of the Cactus. However, the "image is of a' disfigured hand with no fingers. Hands shaped cacti which are directed to the sky holding flowers symbolize hope



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while being fingerless evokes the unsustainability of this short-lived hope, the multitude of fingerless hands are firm and not able to be weakened or destroyed.

The inner source ~ refreshes the very great number of common people and wandering groups of persons in the frontiers of the South. The symbolism of the poetic art is highlighted in the lyric ‘myriad herds’. Rabearivelo writes that the artist “moulded hands” a direct allusion to the truth, the voice of reason.

### **3. Idyllic happiness suggested by the flanks:**

One of the Supposed idyllic happiness suggested by the green flanks, the moon beams, the forests arid the other is of romantic solitude where the lepers, to protect their flowers retreat into a seemingly impenetrable shell. However, the simile of bull-like movement does not suit the nature of flowers. We find the elements of the natural universe the flowers, the spring, ' the sky, the forests, the rocks, the goats, the stone and the lepers. Rabearivelo expresses his thoughts and feelings using nature-nurture cycles in ‘a particular way fit for life. The poet speaks of “the sweat of stone and sperm of the wind”. The., j tribal life,’ characteristic of the desert adds to the shepherding image. The Cactus plant and in particular the yellow Cactus flower symbolizes warmth, 'protection and endurance. The Cactus flower is a symbol of maternal love because it can endure and thrive in harsh conditions and therefore symbolic of mother's unconditional love. The poet prays that his love must preserve the “Cactus” from being forgotten by posterity.

### **HOME COMING SON**

Gabre-Medhin

#### **The black boy returns to his Motherland:**

The subject of the poem “Home-Coming Son” is the intense desire of a black boy living in the foreign outfit to return to his 'Motherland. The cruel treatment and the atmosphere of neglect there made him long for home. He could not bear the cramped atmosphere of the place and longed for the open country, where he could breathe freely. The visit to the other country showed him that he had not understood himself. The thoughts of returning home was uppermost in his mind. He was born in Africa. Once he joined a gypsy group and went with them as " they wandered from place to place. The gypsy “spirit”



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took hold of him. At times, he thought of the poor boy was in desperate need of affection.

**The Motherland kisses the black boy' s naked body:**

The black boy lived in a strange land. He suffered untold agony. If he stazed longer he might fall into evil ways and lead a sinful life. The poet called the barefoot boy an unholy stranger. The boy went \_on foot toiling along his path His senses were fully awake to receive impressions of the beauteous aspects of Nature. He could walk in peace, walk alone, walk tall, walk free and Walk naked. Black is used especially of people who live in Africa or Whose family originally came from Africa. The black boy was conscious of his black body and sunburnt face. The feelers of his motherland gave a caress to his bare feet Her breath kisses his naked body. The tom-toms of his father's voice vibrated with passion in the fearful silence of the valleys. He could walk proud in the deep chest of the jungles.

**The spirits welcome their lost-son returned:**

The black boy was a prodigal, wasteful and extravagant who squandered all his. fortune and eventually become a destitute. The boy Was forced to return home empty-handed. To the boy's surprise, he was not scorned by the natives of the soil. They welcomed him. The winds whispered the golden names of his tribal warriors. The fresh breeze blew into his nostrils. The spirits welcomed their lost-son is return. The barefoot boy could walk in laughter, walk in rhythm, walk tall, walk free and walk naked. The naked skin absorbed the sun light and shone black as ebony. The black boy inherited everything. The roots of his motherland celebrated the return. of the home-coming son because he was lost and was found. As his nature is well known to his people, he would be shown sympathy and consideration. So, his own home was the only paradise, a place of supreme bliss for him. He enjoyed the blessings of outward sunshine and inward peace and happiness.



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**UNIT-II**  
**POETRY**  
**DEAR CHILD**

Walter

**1 The child's face is covered with grime and dust**

The child's face is splattered with the different faces of the contemporary South African city. Some are bright, clean and wealthy. Others seem to be dull, dirty and poor. The child has been roaming about a modern city or urban area filled with large buildings and regarded especially as a dangerous place. The place is peopled with cars, buses and lorries like a hen combs the dirt. The child's face is covered with grime and dust. It has been looking here and there for a kindred soul. Meeting with a kindred soul does not necessarily happen at the beginning of the child's life. Moreover, once encountered, this soul is not bound to stay with the child the whole life.

**2. The child fighting over leftover chips and rotting bread**

The child has been fighting over leftover chips and rotting bread, that still has not been used, eaten when other parts have 'been. Unlike rotten food, it does not smell. It chills on top. All mold is inherently toxic. Mold spores can come from anywhere. The child's father does know whether it sleeps in the dustbin covered with a blanket of refuse. What the poet objects the most is the blanket opposition to change. The child's poor or whoring mother does not know whether love, comfort is from fellow parking boys and girls.

**3. They all stand rebuked and Criticized adversely**

In different cultures, there are events that relate passing from being a child to becoming an adult or coming of age. The child's silent misery is of an assumed usually. Questions of Government ministers are not raised in parliament which they are obliged to answer. It usually occurs daily while parliament is sitting. Quota is budgeted in the charitable trust. Charitable homes render help to the poor. Askari units served outside their colonies of origin in various parts Of Africa. The askaris chase the child off towards the parking bays like a pilfering rat. The poet has not much right, heart, courage to tell the child



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to its face. He asks the child not to weep, not to dream, not to, ask. at what a warm and comfortable home a responsible authority might have been. They all stand rebuked or reprimanded criticized adversely.

### **Telephone Conversation**

-Wole Soyinka

Telephone Conversation is a poetic satire against the widespread racism still prevalent in the modern western society. As the title suggests, the poem depicts a telephone conversation between a west African man and a British land-lady who shockingly changes her attitude towards the man soon after he reveals his racial identity. The motif of a microcosmic telephone conversation is employed by the poet to apply to a much broader macrocosmic level where racial bigotry is ridiculed in a contest of human intelligence, also portraying the poet's witticism and his ingenious sense of humour.

The poem begins on a peaceful note, befitting the narrator's satisfaction for having found the right house the price seemed reasonable, location in different.' The land lady also emphatically mentioned that she lived 'off premises', thereby ensuring that tenant would enjoy absolute privacy and freedom. The conversation however drifted to an unpleasant turn of events, soon after the man surprisingly decided to make a self-confession to reveal his nationality- "Madam," I warned, "I hate a wasted journey-I am African."

A sudden unexpected silence followed and the awkward pause in the conversation is strengthened by a caesura, trying to emphasize the impact of the African's race being revealed to the land lady. An uneasy atmosphere is created and the word 'silenced' reiterates the sudden change in the land lady's attitude as well as the man's intuitive sensitivity towards the unfriendliness on the other end of the phone. 'Silence. Silenced transmission of Pressurized good-breeding.'

It seemed as if the narrator was caught in a foul act and the expression 'Pressurized good-breeding' is only an ironical manifestation of the polite manners the land-lady was supposed to have for the job of renting premises.

After considerable period of silence when the land-lady spoke again, her words seemed to come from between lipstick coated lips that held between them a long gold-rolled cigarette-holder and the impression she gave off was that as if



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her status in the society was all of a sudden upgraded. Undoubtedly, the poet's power of imagination enables him to visualize an affluent and sophisticated British land-lady belonging to the so-called progressive and urban world on the other side. Tension rises with the explicit racial discrimination conveyed through the question-

“How Dark?” The land lady's effort in seeking clarification in something quite irrelevant that is, his skin colour, in the course of the conversation is emphasized. She repeated her question, reinforcing the racist overtone in the English society. The lady's pushy, unequivocal stance in pursuing the answer rendered the man speechless. He suddenly seemed confounded. ‘Button B, Button A. The automation imagery shows the man's temporary conclusion and implies the rampant racial discrimination taken for granted in the western society. Shock changes to disbelief that transforms itself quickly into sheer disgust and utter indignation. ‘Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered Omnibus squelching tar.’

The narrator is jolted back into reality from his trance like state and he makes a frantic attempt to ascertain the situation. The revelation comes with the repetition of the question by the land lady with varying emphasis.

‘ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT? You mean-like plain or milk chocolate? ‘It was soul shattering to the narrator that the land lady could so insensitive to his feelings. Fuming with anger, the man decided to inflict similar humiliation on the racist woman choosing a superior vocabulary and replying in an acutely sarcastic tone. “West African sepia-and as afterthought, ‘Down in my passport. ‘He quickly forces her into submission and exposes the ignorance of the lady clearly illustrating that beneath the lady's glossy and lavish exterior, she was just a shallow judgmental racist. Paying no attention to the land lady's disrespect for him, he took a firm control over the conversation defending the dignity and integrity of his ethnic identity from the ruthless onslaught of the land-lady. He goes on to describe the various colours one could see on him; ‘Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see the rest of me. Unabashed he goes on to state that the palm of his hand and the soles of his feet are peroxide blonde and that friction by sitting down had turned his bottom –raven black. With a slow but furious realization the lady began to set the receiver down. ‘Sensing...’ the man rushed to ask sarcastically:





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“Madam”, I pleaded, “wouldn’t you rather see for yourself? “The quasi politeness of the tone of the poet can hardly conceive the ultimate insult inflicted on the land lady and shows how indignant the man was, also ending the poem with a tremendous sense of humour, apart from the obvious sarcasm. ‘Telephone conversation’ is a favourite, both for its excellent use of rich language and the timeless message it conveys, that is to avoid silent resignations to such policies of the racist society and also that Intellectual superiority is not determined by racial colour.

### **The Casualties**

**-John Pepper Clark**

#### **1. Introduction**

John Pepper Clark’s poem The Casualties is about the causes and effects of war. It is not clear whether Clark is referring to some local war or the wide spread second World war. Whatever the situation may be, what Clark says is applicable to all wars minor as Well as major.

#### **2, The effects of war**

It is foolish to measure the effects of war in terms of ' the number of lives lost. The worst casualty is that people are seized with despondency and death-wish. This idea is conveyed in ' the first stanza itself. The people who get slain in a war are to be envied, not pitied. For, death puts an end to their sufferings. The people-who get wounded in a war are not in any way fortunate. For, they move towards death by painfully protracted and ‘prolonged stages. 'Some people naively believe that things would. soon ‘take a turn for the better. Clark quashes this argument. He says that any hope is like blind people groping ~ for the thing that does not exist. Another palpable evil effect of 'war is the massacre of innocents. Guiltless people are whisked away in the night and put in cells, only to suffer hell-torture there. The grave would be a far Safer shelter, says Clark. Thus, waves of death-wish are generated by war.

#### **3. Causes of war**

According to Clark, the manipulations by. unconscionable politicians trigger off war. Clark describes politicians euphemistically wandering minstrels.



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Minstrels in the Middle. 'Ages Wandered from place to place in search of an understanding. patron. The present-day, opportunistic politicians jump from

party to party in search of lucrative positions. with their powers of eloquence, they' sway the gullible masses, as drums do the ~human heart. These unscrupulous politicians create confusion and internecine strife. Misled by them, people filing charges and. Countered charges against one another. After creating rifts, the politician goes abroad and spend their time blissfully in smoke-rooms, without heeding the starvation and death of large numbers of people due to kwashiorkor or malnutrition. Clark squarely puts the blame on the politicians the looters for office and wares.



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**UNIT-III**

**SHORT-STORY**

**Nwashisisana, the Hare**

**1. Hare is congratulated**

The Tonga “Nwashisisana, the Hare” presents Hare, and Antelope stealing one another's beans until Hare snares Antelope, who gives Hare a hoe to release him. Hare takes the hoe and beans, travels; and arrives. at the chief's watering hole, where the lizard, Varan, guards to discover who is 'muddying it. Hare proposes that he and Varan work in the fields and he explains that Varan who has no usable limbs, could work if Hare. ties the hoe to Varan's tail. With Varan tied, Hare destroys the help of groundnuts, muddies the well, and returns, telling Varan the chief's army is approaching. Hare unties Varan on condition that he does not accuse Hare and, as well, that Varan claims to have muddied the well. Hare runs, Varan admits muddying the well, and Hare announces he has caught Varan doing the offence and secured him by tying him to the hoe. Varan is killed. ~ and Hare is congratulated. Hare treats Grey Antelope to the 'same fate. ' ' ' .

**2. Hare calls for help, abandoning the treasure**

When Tortoise guards the well, he refuses to be tied and refuses to go with Hare and steals Wild Boar's sweet potatoes, but when Tortoise grows hungry, he helps Hare roast the potatoes. Hare suggests Tortoise go and watch for the owners. and Tortoise counters that both should go, but separately. They do so and Hare returns and puts the potatoes in a sack. Tortoise gets in secretly and eats the potatoes. Hare discovers this and then leaves, journeying until he meets King Lion, who assigns him to guard of the groundnuts. Hare promises to show who is stealing them. Hare and Lion go to a tree, where Hare asks Lion to sit and watch while Hare ostensibly passes the time by making Lion a wax crown. Hare ties Lion's thane to the tree and summons him to come and see the thief, but Lion cannot, since he is bound to the tree. Hare goes to the Village and summons Lion's people to witness that Lion is the thief. Lion is ashamed



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and the villagers beat him to death. Hare takes Lion's skin, puts it on, approaches Lion's wife and tells her to collect his possessions, as he is to die.

As he runs With Lion's possessions, the villagers pursue him, he falls into a ~ burrow, they hook his leg, he says that they hold a root, and they release him and fall. They then stop up the hole with grass. and fire it and smoke blow into it. Hare is afraid, begins to diminish, calls for help and getting no response, goes to the entrance and leaves, abandoning the treasure.

**Tortoise swells and dies:**

Here travels, growing thin, arrives at Grey Antelope's home. and proposes they sew each other up to hold grass inside longer. He sees her up, she dies, a woman collects her, the woman's ' husband cuts and releases the stitches and Grey Antelope revives and runs. She meets Hare and disavows friendship with him. Hare trivets, seeks, water, meets' Tortoise guarding the well, is caught promises Tortoise the treasure in the burrow, says Chameleon has his goods and says he, Hare, will go and ~ get his brother to draw up a contract. Hare runs away. Tortoise. accosts Chameleon, gets no satisfaction and Chameleon blows into Tortoise' eyes. Tortoise swells and dies. This tale is episodic, featuring several sorts of birds.

**My Father Writes to my mother**

**-Assia Djebar**

**1. Mother became proud of herself**

A young girl travelled to the mom's home town and the Mother often referred to her husband by his first name. She, 'only referred to him as "her husband" when the older classier ladies were present. The Mother became more and more proud of herself for referring to her husband by his name "Tahar".

**2. Addressing the Spouse as "Madame"**

One day while the husband was away, he decided to send a postcard to his wife that was addressed to "Madame" followed by his surname. This was absolutely unheard of, a man sending a postcard to his 'spouse. Not to mention putting his own name on it, or even addressing the spouse as "Madame".

**3 There is much more to love than meets the eye.**



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The relatives and friends of the Wife were ashamed and were worried that the postman would create rumours. The wife was absolutely flattered and happy that he had done this. The daughter had learned from observing this that there is much more to love than meets the eye, she wanted to follow their footsteps and began learning French.

### **The Advance**

**-Henry lopes**

#### **1 Carmen hover discriminated**

The relationship between Françoise and Carmen was very special. Françoise a two month's old child was taken care of by Carmen. Though she had a son Hector who was of the same age. Carmen never discriminated between them Françoise was a bold, talkative girl whereas Hector was a shy boy who always feared to talk to strangers. Françoise was healthy but Hector was sick. Carmen used to feed good food to Françoise but had to give manioc to her own son. She was unable to provide the balanced diet. Though the girl troubled her a lot, Carmen enjoyed her company; She was so attached to Françoise that even if she lost her job as a maid servant, she would keep visiting the house for Françoise's sake.

#### **2 Tears in Carmen's eyes**

One could see the tears in Carmen's eyes when Françoise, relished grapes, she was the one who sang lullabies to Françoise at bed time. Even Françoise showed her pranks with Carmen as there was enough scope for love and affection between them. Ferdinand was the watchman in Françoise's house who always shared lighter moments with Carmen. Whenever she was in bad and pensive mood, he used to cheer her up. He always mimicked his employers. He also seemed to have information of the inside story of the rich family. He was giving comic relief to the otherwise distressful life of Carmen. On the day when she was worried about her son, he tried to enliven her spirits but failed to do so successfully.

#### **3. The employer berates Carmen for her son's illness**

The story "The Advance" is about a maid 'Carmen' a single mother, who wants to get some advance from her employer for her ailing son. At first glance



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it would seem to be a cliched story about suffering employees and cruel employers and anyway, clichés are generally true in most cases. But the quality of writing in this story elevates it. The mental state of Carmen, her anguish at her son's illness, fears that something may happen to him; expectation and

anxiety over whether her employer would give her money are brought out in a heartrending manner. The, employer too is not a stereotyped person, but is brought out as more real. For instance, she berates Carmen for her son's illness saying that she should give him more healthy food without realizing that giving such food for even one day would take up a month's salary of Carmen. ‘

**4. The employer gives Cannon an aspirin:**

The employer is not shown as being cruel but as indifferent and oblivious to the life Carmen leads, which is 'actually worse. It is one thing to know about a person's situation and not helping him, but not knowing his problems and being condescending towards him is the worst thing. Another thing that strikes us is that, generally in such stories, the employer's child is shown as having love for the maid. But here the child is shown being generally disrespectful of Carmen and holds her in disdain. Carmen on her part tries to agree with everything her employer says, about the quality of food to be given. She even agrees when her employer speaks quickly in French and she is not able to follow her, nodding her head so that her employer tells her she would give the money tomorrow and gives her an aspirin for now. Carmen leaves with it, walking for a long time to reach her house.



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UNIT IV

ARROW OF GOD

*Arrow of God* is set in rural Nigeria during the 1920s in a southern part of the country where the Igbo people reside. The novel begins with a war between two neighbouring regions of rural Igboland: Umuaro and Okperi. Though we don't know the boundaries of Okperi, we do know that Umuaro is made up of six villages. These six villages are linked by their worship of a common god, Ulu.

The people of Umuaro start a war with Okperi over land they want to claim; they are encouraged to start the war by a wealthy man named Nwaka, who challenges Ulu. This war is launched against the advice of Ulu's chief priest, Ezeulu. The colonial administration steps in to stop the war and rules in favour of Okperi after discussing the matter with Ezeulu, the one man in Umuaro who tells the truth. Captain Winterbottom, a British colonial official who commands the local station, breaks and burns all the guns in Umuaro, becoming a legend. Meanwhile, the people of Umuaro become angry with Ezeulu because he didn't take their side.

Five years later, life in Umuaro has returned to normal. Sort of. Christian missionaries have made major inroads into society, establishing converts and trying to show that the old gods are ineffective. Ezeulu is sending his son Oduche to church, to be his eyes and ears, and to learn the ways of the white man. Animosity between Ezeulu and Nwaka and their respective villages has grown to the point called *kill and take the head* (4.1). In other words, things have gotten to the point where men in the two villages try to kill each other using poison. Nwaka is fortified and strengthened by his relationship with Ezidemili, the high priest of the god, Idemili. Though Idemili is a lesser god in comparison to Ulu, the competition between the two priests is dividing Umuaro, creating suspicion and ill will among brothers.

But the competition isn't limited to within the Igbo religion; the missionaries call the Christian Igbo, including Oduche, to kill the sacred python. Oduche chickens out at the last minute, putting the snake in a box instead, but his family discovers the terrible deed when he's at church. Doing anything to the



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royal python is considered an abomination. The royal python belongs to the god Idemili, and as soon as the priest of Idemili hears about it, he sends a messenger to chide Ezeulu, and to ask what he intends to do to purify his house, (i.e., to make up for what his son tried to do). Ezeulu responds by telling Ezidemili to die (literally) and the matter rests there, uneasily.

The colonial administration has commissioned a new road to be built, connecting Okperi with Umuaro. They've run out of funds, but still need to complete the road, so Mr. Wright, the overseer, petitions to conscript labor. He receives permission and Umuaro is the unlucky recipient of the demand for free labor. One day, Ezeulu's son Obika is late getting to work. He had too much palm wine to drink the day before. But when Mr. Wright whips him, it stirs up the resentments of all the men. Why are they forced to work for free, when Okperi men are paid for their labor? What makes them different? Why should they be treated like this? Though they grumble among themselves, they are never able to come to a decision about what to do.

Because Ezeulu assumes that Obika has done something to deserve the whipping, he precipitates a crisis in his own household. Edogo, his oldest son, gets to thinking, and decides that the old man's propensity to choose favorites among his sons has created a problem. He believes that Ezeulu has tried to influence Ulu's decision about which son will be the next priest. By sending Oduche to learn the religion of the white man, Ezeulu has essentially taken Oduche out of the running. And Ezeulu has trained Nwafo in the ways of the priesthood, so he's clearly staking his claim on Nwafo as the one Ulu will choose. But Edogo begins to wonder what will happen if Ulu doesn't choose Nwafo, if he chooses Edogo or Obika. It will create conflict and division in the family and Edogo, as eldest son, will have to deal with it. He goes to Ezeulu's friend, Akuebue, and asks him to speak to Ezeulu.

Akuebue finds that Ezeulu is not receptive to a talk about the divisions within Umuaro, blaming the people of Umuaro for the white man's arrival. The people of Umuaro try to blame Ezeulu because he told the white man the truth when Winterbottom stepped in to stop the war between Okperi and Umuaro.

Ezeulu is also unreceptive to reports of divisions within his own household. He admits that he sacrificed Oduche, not so much to put him out of





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the running for the priesthood, but because he sees the threat to Umuaro and to the Igbo posed by Christianity. Such a situation requires the supreme sacrifice, that of a human being.

Meanwhile, Captain Winterbottom has been under another kind of stress. "Indirect rule" is the ideology that rules the day and he is under direct orders to find a chief for Umuaro. He decides that Ezeulu is just the man for the job, and sends a messenger to fetch Ezeulu. Ezeulu refuses to come, saying that the Priest of Ulu doesn't leave his hut, and dispatches the messenger back to Winterbottom with the message that if he wants to see Ezeulu, he'll have to come visit Ezeulu. Winterbottom issues an order for Ezeulu's arrest and send two policemen to fetch him.

The next day, after consulting with the elders and men of title in Umuaro, Ezeulu decides to set out for Okperi, to find out what Winterbottom wanted. His heart is angry because Umuaro continues to blame him for the white man's presence, and because they don't show Ulu proper respect. His archenemy, Nwaka, continues to challenge Ulu and the people do nothing about it. The two policemen sent to arrest Ezeulu pass him on the way, but don't realize it until they reach his compound and learn that Ezeulu has gone to Okperi.

In Okperi, Winterbottom suddenly becomes ill. The African servants decide that Ezeulu must have a lot of power because Winterbottom is struck ill only after he issues the warrant for Ezeulu's arrest. So, when Ezeulu arrives, the servants are afraid. They don't want to lock him up as ordered; instead, they pretend that the guardroom is a guest room and try to make him comfortable. On this first night in Okperi, Ezeulu has a vision and realizes that his real battle is with his own people, not with the white man at all. In his vision, he sees Nwaka challenge Ulu, and the people spitting on him (Ezeulu), saying he is the priest of a dead god. He begins to see that the white man has been able to take advantage of Umuaro's division to sow further seeds of destruction. He hopes Winterbottom detains him for a long time, so he can better plan his revenge.

Ezeulu is detained for a couple of months. First, Clarke decides to teach him a lesson by making him wait. Then he offers Ezeulu the position of chief, but Ezeulu refuses. Angry, Clarke claps him in prison, and Winterbottom commends him, saying he should keep Ezeulu locked up until he learns to cooperate. But Clarke begins to suffer pangs of conscience, realizing that he



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doesn't have a legitimate reason to keep Ezeulu imprisoned. He's relieved when he hears from Winterbottom's superior advising against creating new Warrant Chiefs. This gives Clarke the excuse to let Ezeulu go.

Ezeulu returns home. Everybody is glad to see him again and Ezeulu realizes that his anger was directed not against his real neighbors but against an *idea* that they were mocking Ulu and disrespecting Ezeulu. Nevertheless, he lays low and sets his plan in action. When the time for announcing the Feast of the New Yam comes, he fails to announce it. His assistants come to ask if he's forgotten his duties. He gets mad and sends them away.

Next, the elders of the village come and ask, gingerly, why he hasn't announced the Feast of the New Yam. Ezeulu tells them that he has three sacred yams left. He can't announce the Feast of the New Yam until he has finished all the sacred yams. He was unable to eat the sacred yams while imprisoned in Okperi, and now he has to follow the rules – one yam a month. The men are horrified. If they wait three months before they are allowed to harvest their crops, the crops will be ruined and the people of Umuaro will suffer widespread famine.

The elders tell Ezeulu that he should just quickly eat the yams and if there are any repercussions, they will ask Ulu to let it descend on their heads, not Ezeulu's. But Ezeulu is steadfast. Such a thing is unheard of. And anyway, no matter what their intentions are, as chief priest he will be the one to suffer the consequences of breaking the rules. He can't do it. They must wait. The Christian catechist, Mr. Goodcountry, recognizes this as an opportunity. He says that anybody who wants to offer their yams to the Christian god instead, so they can harvest their yams, will receive the protection of the Christian god as well. As people begin to suffer, they do just that. Meanwhile, Obika – who is sick – is asked to help in the funeral preparations for Amalu, one of the elders in the village who had died some months back. He helps with one of the funeral rituals by carrying the mask for Ogbazulobodo, the night spirit, and chasing after day. He runs so hard and so fast, however, that he drops dead when he returns.

The people say it is a judgment against Ezeulu. His god, Ulu, has spoken: Ezeulu has become stubborn and proud, and the god has not sided with his priest against the people. But it was a bad time to humiliate the priest. It allowed



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the people to take "liberties." That year, many of the yams were harvested in the name of the Christian god; and the crops reaped afterwards were also reaped in the name of the Christian god. As *Arrow of God* ends, it seems that worship of the Christian god has replaced that of Ulu.

### **Ezeulu**

Ezeulu's pride motivates him throughout *Arrow of God*. He's the chief priest of Ulu, the god that rules Umuaro. Ezeulu plays a prominent role in Umuaro, a collection of six villages in southeastern Nigeria. As chief priest, Ezeulu feels obligated to offer his advice, even though the people don't seem to pay attention to him. When they ignore him, his feelings get hurt. He believes that the people don't have proper respect for Ulu, and when Nwaka challenges Ulu, suggesting that he may be a useless god and the people should get rid of him, Ezeulu is put on the defensive.

Ezeulu's adherence to duty means that he tells Winterbottom the truth when Winterbottom asks how the war with Okperi began. The people of Umuaro are angry with Ezeulu, especially since it causes Winterbottom to rule in Okperi's favor. They are further disturbed when Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to school and to church to learn the ways of the white man. They blame Ezeulu for bringing the British to Umuaro. Ezeulu resents all the backbiting of his neighbors, friends, and kinsmen, and recognizes that it is coming from one source, Nwaka, who is aided by the priest of Idemili.

When things start to go badly in Ezeulu's household, the tension escalates between Ezeulu and his enemies. Ezeulu's son, Oduche, commits an abomination against the royal python, which belongs to the god Idemili. Because of the priest Ezidemili's insults, Ezeulu refuses to do anything special to purify his house. Then his son Obika is whipped by Mr. Wright because he's late coming to work on the road. Ezeulu blames Obika, and his son Edogo criticizes him for choosing a stranger over his own son.

### **Oduche**

Oduche, Ezeulu's next to youngest son, is proud to be his father's "eyes and ears" in the white man's culture by attending church and school. But soon, he finds his loyalties are divided. On the one hand, he wants to please his father; on the other hand, he wants to please the catechist at church. He can't do both



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. There are two critical moments in Arrow of God when Oduche chooses the church over his father, and Ezeulu interprets it as a betrayal.

The first moment is when Oduche locks the royal python up in his box, hoping it will asphyxiate and die. It's an act of rebellion but, more importantly, it's a moment when Oduche tests the taboos of his culture. He discovers that there is no real penalty to his actions. Though Ezeulu rages against him, and though the village talks about what he has done, Oduche suffers no serious consequences.

Based on the fact that there seem to be no repercussions for his actions, Oduche commits a second act that his father considers a betrayal. When the catechist decides to take advantage of Ezeulu's stubbornness and the famine to encourage people to leave the old religion and become Christians, Oduche doesn't mention it to his father. Although Ezeulu intended Oduche to be his eyes and ears, he doesn't realize that Oduche's exposure to another way of life and another god will change him into somebody who no longer fits in his own culture.



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**UNIT V**

**The Lion and The Jewel**

The play is set in the village of Ilunjinle, Nigeria. Sidi, a beautiful young woman also known as “The Jewel,” carries her pail of water past the school where Lakunle, the schoolteacher and a village outsider with modern ideas, works. He approaches her and chastises her for carrying her water on her head and stunting her shoulders; she is unfazed. Lakunle loves Sidi and wants to marry her, but he refuses to pay her bride-price because he considers it an archaic tradition. Sidi does not love Lakunle; she finds him and his ideas about making her a modern, Western bride obnoxious. However, she plans to marry him if he can pay the price as the village traditions necessitate. While Sidi and Lakunle are talking, several young women run up to Sidi and tell her that the stranger—a photographer who visited the village some time ago—is back, and that he brought with him the magazine that contained within it pictures of the village and villagers. Sidi occupies a central space and is stunningly beautiful. Lakunle is dismayed to hear this, but Sidi glows with pride. Sidi suggests the villagers act out and dance to the story of the stranger. She pushes Lakunle to participate and act as the stranger, and the performance commences. The drummers and singers and actors play out the arrival of the stranger and his camera. Lakunle gets into the spirit of the performance. As it goes on, the Bale (i.e. head) of the village, Baroka—a.k.a. “the Lion”—arrives. He plays the role of the chief. Later that day he stares at the pictures of Sidi and muses that he has not taken a wife for some time.

Sadiku, Baroka’s senior wife and head of the harem, finds Sidi and tells her that Baroka wants to take her for a wife. She paints this as an incredible honor, but Sidi laughs that Baroka is old. She glories in her photographs and says Baroka only wants her because she is so famous and has brought so much honor to the village. Lakunle, who is jealously listening, excoriates Baroka as being against progress and modernity.

Sadiku returns to Baroka and gives him Sidi’s reply. He is calm at first but becomes distressed when she tells him Sidi said he is old. He bemoans the fact that he is no longer virile, and tries to take comfort in the elderly Sadiku’s gentle touch.



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Sidi is standing and admiring her photos near the schoolhouse when Sadiku, cackling to herself and carrying a bundle, arrives. Inside the bundle is a carved figure of the Bale. Sadiku looks at it and bursts into laughter, exulting in how she and the women have undone him. Sidi is confused, and Sadiku whispers to her about the Bale's impotence.

Lakunle sees them talking and tries to learn what they are saying, but both women tell him to leave them alone. Sidi announces she has a plan, and tells Sadiku that it would be wonderful if she could go to dinner with the Bale and see him thwarted. Sadiku gleefully agrees, and Sidi bounds off. After she leaves, Sadiku and Lakunle argue, with Lakunle telling Sadiku that his plans of modernity are what is best for the village.

The scene shifts to the Bale's bedroom, where he is engaged in wrestling with a man hired for the purpose of making him stronger. Sidi enters confidently, but the Bale's dismissive attitude confuses her. She pretends to ask his counsel on a man who wanted to marry her, describing the Bale instead.

As the Bale continues to wrestle, he criticizes Sidi for listening to Sadiku and being one of the vexing young women of the village. He asks her if Sadiku invented any stories, and she says no. He pretends to complain about Sadiku's constant matchmaking. He does admire Sidi, though, for seeming much deeper and more mature than how he once saw her.

Baroka confides in her his plan for a stamp machine that will have images of Ilunjinle on it, as well as of Sidi herself. He ruminates more to himself that he does not hate progress but only bland similarity. He admits he and the schoolteacher are not so different, and that they must work together.

The drums begin, and female dancers pursue a male. Sadiku and Lakunle wait for Sidi to return. Lakunle is very nervous, and claims he will go rescue Sidi.

The mummies play in the distance, and Sadiku joyfully assumes the Bale has been brought down. She also tells Lakunle he must pay the mummies for a performance or it would be rude. She grabs money from his pocket and pays them; they dance out the story of Baroka and his downfall. Sadiku herself is invited to help "kill" the Bale.



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Suddenly Sidi runs in, sobbing. She throws herself to the ground. Lakunle is horrified and asks if she was beaten. Sidi sobs that Sadiku was fooled: the Lion tricked her and was not impotent at all, so he raped Sidi and took her virginity.

Lakunle announces he will still marry Sidi. She is perplexed and asks if this is true. He assents. However, almost immediately when marriage preparations start, Lakunle becomes visibly distressed. He claims to need more time.

Sidi laughs and says she is actually getting ready to marry Baroka, because it is the only thing she can do. Sadiku blesses her and asks the gods for fertility.

The festivities begin, and even Lakunle seems to be getting into the spirit of things when he chases a young woman who shakes her butt at him.

### **Sidi (The Jewel)**

A superficial but beautiful young woman in the village of Ilujinle, she is coveted by both Lakunle and Baroka. She initially agrees to wed Lakunle even though she does not care for him, but she is frustrated that he will not pay her bride-price and that he has so many modern ideas. She is extremely proud of her photos in a magazine and becomes increasingly absorbed in them. Along with Sadiku she hopes to trick Baroka, whom she also dislikes and does not want to marry, but he triumphs in the end by raping her, taking her virginity, and having her agree to marry him.

### **Lakunle**

A smart but arrogant twenty-three-year-old schoolteacher who lambasts Ilujinle for its backwards views. He wants the village to be modern, and he wants to wed Sidi and make her a modern wife (though he believes women are naturally inferior to men). He is reluctant to participate in the ways of the village but is usually drawn into them regardless. He despises Baroka and is jealous of him. Baroka (The Lion)

The wily and powerful Bale (i.e. leader) of the village, Baroka is always on the quest for more wives. He laments getting older and covets the young



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Sidi. He tricks Sidi and Sadiku, though, and ends up winning Sidi and avenging his shame after she initially refused to marry him.

**Sadiku**

The chief wife of the Bale, Sadiku is elderly but a great source of comfort to Baroka. She eventually decides to plot against him, though, and tries to get Sidi to destroy him. Her plan is found out, however, and she is shamed.