

## SECOND TERM E-LEARNING NOTE

SUBJECT: LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH

CLASS: SS1

### SCHEME OF WORK

#### WEEK TOPIC

- 1-2. Reading and Content Analysis of African Poetry: "Black Woman" by Leopold Sedar Senghor.
- 3-4. Reading and Content Analysis of Non-African Poetry: "The Journey of the Magi" by T.S. Eliot
- 5-7. Reading and Content Analysis of African Drama: *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka.
- 8-9. Reading and Textual Analysis of Non-African Poetry: "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou.
10. Revision.

#### REFERENCES

1. *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka.
2. *Exam Reflection Literature- in-English* by Sunday OlatejuFaniyi.
3. *Exam Reflection Literature-in-English (Prose and Drama)* by Sunday OlatejuFaniyi.

#### WEEK ONE

##### Reading and Content Analysis of African Poetry: "Black Woman" by Leopold Sedar Senghor.

Naked woman, black woman  
Clothed with your colour which is life,  
with your form which is beauty!  
In your shadow I have grown up; the  
gentleness of your hands was laid over my eyes.  
And now, high up on the sun-baked  
pass, at the heart of summer, at the heart of noon,  
I come upon you, my Promised Land,  
And your beauty strikes me to the heart  
like the flash of an eagle.  
Naked woman, dark woman  
Firm-fleshed ripe fruit, sombre raptures  
of black wine, mouth making lyrical my mouth  
Savannah stretching to clear horizons,  
savannah shuddering beneath the East Wind's  
eager caresses  
Carved tom-tom, taut tom-tom, muttering  
under the Conqueror's fingers  
Your solemn contralto voice is the  
spiritual song of the Beloved.  
Naked woman, dark woman

Oil that no breath ruffles, calm oil on the  
athlete's flanks, on the flanks of the Princes of Mali  
Gazelle limbed in Paradise, pearls are stars on the  
night of your skin  
Delights of the mind, the glinting of red  
gold against your watered skin  
Under the shadow of your hair, my care  
is lightened by the neighbouring suns of your eyes.  
Naked woman, black woman,  
I sing your beauty that passes, the form  
that I fix in the Eternal,  
Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to  
feed the roots of life.

The poem "Black Woman" was written by Leopold Senghor and published in "Chants d'Ombre" in 1945. It was initially written in French as "Femme Noir" and then translated to English. Senghor was a Senegalese poet who was instrumental in starting the emotional, intellectual and political and literary movement called "negritude" along with other writers of African origin- like AimeCesaire- in Paris. This movement was born as a result of Senghor going to Paris to study in 1928. In Paris, Senghor met AimeCesair, a young man from the French Caribbean island of Martinique, and together with the help of Leon Damas of Guyana, they started the Negritude movement. The negritude movement is essentially focused on making the value of the African people manifest. Negritude philosophy believed that despite the diversity and plurality of the African culture, and the African Diasporas, African people all over the world still had shared experiences of racial brutality and oppression. Hence, the negritude writers essentially tried to convey through their works, the pride they felt in being African and the pride they felt in African culture itself.

This poem of the late president of Senegal, LéopoldSédar Senghor, is an ode to the Black woman, but above all, to Senegal his country. After reading it several times, one realizes that Senghor was writing an ode to the Black Woman, his mother, his sister, his daughter, but above all to Senegal which could be loved just like a woman, and whose "beauty stroke him to the heart like the flash of an eagle", and whose "Savannah stretch[ed] to clear horizons, savannah shuddering beneath the East Wind's eager caresses." This poem was published in 'Chants d'Ombre' (1945), English translation by Melvin Dixon (in The Collected Poems).

In the poem "Black Woman", Senghor reinforces the ideas of negritude. He personifies Africa- the nation- as an African woman. In the first three lines (Naked woman, black woman/ Clothed with your colour which is life, / with your form which is beauty!), he says that the African woman's true beauty lies in her natural self. He says that her colour is life, and that it is the natural form of beauty. The African woman that Senghor talks about in this poem is a representation of the African race itself, as well. In the fourth and fifth lines, Senghor equates Africa to a mother. He says that he grew up under the protection of his mother land. He calls Africa the "Promised Land" (Line 8) and says that he is returning to Africa which, for him, is the Promised Land. Further in the poem,

Senghor compares Africa to a lover. He praises her and compliments her, comparing her to a goddess. Throughout the poem, Senghor equates the African woman to everything beautiful and graceful. For instance, in the last stanza, he compares her skin to the well oiled, beautiful skin of an athlete, or the Princes of Mali. He goes on to say that the African woman is as elegant and graceful as a gazelle. Senghor ends his poem on a philosophical note by saying that he will keep alive the African woman's beauty eternally in his poetry.

The idea of negritude is very important in understanding "Black Woman" and Senghor's poems, largely. In this poem, Senghor represents his love for Africa, his home land, his mother country, by personifying Africa as every woman he loves. He praises the African culture by finding beauty in the colour of the African skin, which had been the main cause for brutality and discrimination during the British rule in Africa. Writing in a...