

## **Analysis of Students' Assessment of Two Prescribed Texts towards Achievement of Literature in English Learning Objectives in Oyo State, Nigeria**

**Idowu, Olufemi Ph.D., Ogunnorin Saheed Adeniyi, Ogunniyi Odunayo O., Owosoro Adewale, Kaka Babatunde**

Department of English Education  
Lagos State University of Education  
Noforija/Epe Campus  
Lagos State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*The assessments of two prescribed literature in English texts by senior secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria were the focus of the study. They were assessed to know their appropriateness and suitability to achieve the objectives of the subject's inclusion in the curriculum. The results revealed that both texts were adequately appropriate and suitable to achieve the stated objectives of the subject's inclusion in the curriculum. Hence, adequate provision in effective teaching methods and strategies coupled with a well-equipped school library are recommended to justify the appropriateness of the texts for good results.*

Keywords: Literature in English, Senior Secondary School Students, Objectives, Appropriateness.

### **1. Introduction**

The natural attributes of literature, inextricably absolves man into its dictates, and accord it a prominent position in the development and sustenance of man in every society. No literature, no life, for without life there is no existence. It seems in a way, that, every aspect of human interaction carries a trait of literature. Literature records history, explains the economy, guides politics, impacts knowledge, arbitrate disputes, makes the judiciary wise, explore the mystery of science, preserves and transmits culture, develop and project language, and many more.

Literature rose with humanity from the cradle of life; hence, every community is identified with a trace of indigenous literature which is expressed in its indigenous language. It must be noted equally that language of a people best expresses its literature. That is the reason, African literature stands unique and distinctively peculiar amongst others in the entire world. Nevertheless, the colonial experience of many African countries and the natural endowment of intellect and power to manipulate resources for positive gains, Literature in English emerged as part and parcel of the Nigerian education curriculum.

For over four decades when Literature in English has been introduced in the school curriculum, many challenges are found as obstructions to its effective teaching and learning. Among others, the issue of choice of reading/prescribed texts is identified either as inappropriate or irrelevant and unavailable. Students have been found not to possess prescribed texts, while school libraries are neither available or when available, not equipped with necessary books for students to access.

Appropriateness or relevance of prescribed Literature in English texts is highly instructive and cogent in its inclusion in the Nigerian education curriculum. There are reasons for identifying the subject as a choice among others. General and specific objectives are set to be achieved at the end of every level of the education system. In secondary school, Literature in English is set to boast proficiency in English language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing which can be achieved through exposure to the three genres of literature. It is meant to expose students to the culture of society and inculcate moral and other social values and virtues that engender development and peaceful cohabitation among men. Furthermore, Literature in English at the secondary level is to develop the learners intellectually and prepare them for higher education.

The achievement of the identified purposes of making this subject a priority in education holds much to the content of text materials used in its teaching and learning. It, therefore, presupposes that reading texts in prose, drama, and collection of poems in poetry must specifically address the items of developing linguistic proficiency, and cultural values for the development and peace and intellectual attainment of the students.

In order to further strengthen the efforts of stakeholders in reinforcing the means to achieve the objectives of learning Literature in English in secondary school, this study used the avenue of students' assessment of two SSCE WAEC prescribed texts to ascertain their relevancies and appropriateness.

### **2. Review of Literature**

In the SSCE Literature in English examination conducted by WAEC, it was discovered that poor performances of students among others, include shallow knowledge and understanding of set texts coupled with inability to express answers in good English (WAEC 2019). These facts from the Chief Examiner's report span several years which stressed the incidence of progressive decline in performance. This situation without doubt, could prompt an informed mind to lay blame at the doorstep of irrelevant and inappropriate prescribed texts. It is a fact that getting knowledge from any written material begins from appropriate language use in terms of the level of simplicity, or otherwise as the case may be; considering the exposure of the students to the English language as a second language. Furthermore, without the appropriate tool of language, understanding of the content cannot be attained and eventually, no knowledge would be acquired. Resultantly, academic performance and attainment of stated objectives become a mirage.

Yunetri, (2018) observed that students can be discouraged from studying the prescribed texts due lack of proficiency in pronunciation of the English words. This situation summed up the subject of interest. If students are discouraged from reading the texts for difficulty to comprehend the content, based on language inefficiency; they will lack or lose existing interest. It is very necessary therefore to create and develop students' interest through the deliberate choice of literary materials.

Proficiency in the narrative language of any literary discourse is highly important in comprehension of the subject matter, which projects the intention of the writer or author. It affords the students the opportunity to actively participate in literature lessons, answering questions, and, contributing meaningfully during discussions (Farhanah & Hadina, 2022). This situation will not only be advantageous to the students, but helps the teacher to assess the comprehension levels of the students accurately.

As expressed in the introduction, inculcation of cultural values and ideas with other social expectations in society, are part of the objectives of Literature in English education (Adejimola & Ojuolape 2013). Hence, the contextual elements of the texts must be culturally homely to the students. Text with strange and unfamiliar themes, which would seem confusing and create delusion in the mind of the students; should not be selected for their study. The principle of inclusive education would be defeated if students from the diverse social and cultural background would not able to relate maximally to the materials (Faiza & Azlina, 2020; Gatdula, Gomez, Rosales, & Sophia, 2022; Harwati & Mohamad Asyraf, 2019).

The development of language skills is one of the reasons for Literature in English in our secondary schools. This was stressed by Mohammed (2013) stating that, the acquisition of a target language for competence in users is reinforced by literature through the development of the skills of language. Language and culture are symbiotic in existence and development. Being an embodiment of literature itself, it has the advantages of being developed and projected by literature. Literature preserves and transmits language and culture. Hence, the development of language skills through literature in English, will facilitate the inculcation of the values, and virtues that will prepare learners as agents of peace and development. in culturally diverse communities of the nation. *Decree One*, a play written by Femi Idowu on the political and religious reflections of Nigerian nation based on ethnic biases, featured characters with names from different regions possessing a higher education setting. With the setting, they identified a collective menace of political and religious hypocrisies of the rulers, and came together to fight for freedom. Such materials will help in no small measure, to achieve some of the objectives of teaching and learning Literature in English.

Requirements for further studies after secondary education include credit pass in English language at the WASSCE examination and a certain grade in JAMB score irrespective of course to pursue. Hence, the imperatives of making Literature in English interesting and accessible to students for language development is cogent. It is noteworthy to add that Literature in English is equally, a compulsory requirement for the study of Law, Mass Communication, and some others in many, if not all Nigerian Universities. While Adesulu (2015) bemoaned May/June's poor performance 39% of candidates with credit pass in the English language, the Head of the Examination Body in Nigeria retorted that really, there was nothing to celebrate enumerating the preceding years; 2013 and 2014 credit pass in the English language, as 38.30% and 21.28% respectively. The studies conducted by Eze (2011) and Iyekekpolo, Akabogu & Egbe (2021), concluded that Literature in English was potent at enhancing students' achievement in the English Language. Development of language skills through Literature in English, will reduce the consistently undesirable performances in SSCE examinations.

Though Literature in English is included in the curriculum for positive impacts on society generally, and different literary texts are prescribed for its effective learning, the achievement of the set objectives still remains elusive. Society is still confronted by many social vices and cultural decadences, academic achievement in the English Language remains poor, and peace and development elude the nation leaving the society in utter confusion. To intensify efforts at getting to proper identification of the root cause(s) and appropriate solutions, this study analysed students' assessment of two WASSCE-recommended texts against the objectives of learning Literature in English.

### 3. Purpose of the Study

This study specifically analysed:

Senior secondary school students' assessment of *Second Class Citizen* against the objectives of learning Literature in English.

Senior Secondary school students' assessment of *The Lion and The Jewel* against the objectives of learning Literature in English.

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

#### *Second Class Citizen*

1. Can the content of *SecondClass Citizen* written by BuchiEmecheta broaden students' cultural awareness?
2. Can the content of *SecondClass Citizen* written by BuchiEmecheta impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students?
3. Can the study of *Second Class Citizen* written by BuchiEmecheta equip students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing?
4. Can the study of *Second Class Citizen* written by BuchiEmecheta equip students for examination and further studies?

#### *The Lion and The Jewel*

1. Can the content of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka broaden students' cultural awareness?
2. Can the content of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students?
3. Can the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka equip students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing?
4. Can the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka equip students for examination and further studies?

### 4. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted by this research. The population was senior secondary school Literature in English students, within Egbeda Local Government Area of Oyo State. The selection of Literature in English students was purposive while five (5) schools were randomly selected among the twenty (20) senior secondary schools in the Area. Twenty students from the selected schools were randomly selected as samples. The main instruments are two (2) fifteen (15), and, seventeen (17) items questionnaires, on *Second Class Citizen* and *The Lion and The Jewel* respectively, designed by the researcher. Section A of the questionnaires contained demographic information while section B contained the 15 and 17 items on the two texts respectively with response options based on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, and Strongly Disagreed. The items were grouped based on the four research questions guiding the study. The instrument's reliability index of 0.62 was established using the Cronbach Alpha formula while the validity was done by a colleague, expert in test and measurement of the Lagos State University of Education, Lagos State, Nigeria. Data collected, analysed, and discussed.

### 5. Results and Discussion

The focus of this research endeavour was to ascertain whether the objectives of including the two texts as literature texts were achieved. The following research questions guided the research endeavour:

#### 5.1 Second Class Citizens

##### Research Question 1

Table 1. Can the content of *Second Class Citizen* written by Buchi Emecheta broaden students' cultural awareness?

<b>Broadening Cultural Awareness</b>	SA	A	D	SD
Studying 'Second Class Citizen' can help students imbibe a culture of peace.	40	50	6	4
The story projects the culture of different people and climes so I can compare, understand and tolerate others.	80	15	3	2
I can better understand humanity, and the need for peace and tolerance.	60	30	7	3

Table 1 shows that ninety to ninety –five percent range of the respondents believes strongly that studying 'Second Class Citizen' can help them imbibe a culture of peace, and that the story projects the culture of different people and climes which will help them to compare, understand and tolerate others. In addition, this will help them to better understand humanity and the need for peace and tolerance among the populace.

This can be summarily sufficient to answer the question of the story content to have achieved the goal of broadening the cultural awareness of the readers and students. This is in tune with the submission of Lovrovic and Kolega (2021), that literary texts do show the world in which protagonists come from; different socio-cultural backgrounds and as such, learners have the opportunity to observe the world from different perspectives, and become deeply involved in a view to make necessary contributions at both the cognitive and emotional levels. Furthermore, reading multicultural literature serves to not only educate readers about diverse social groups, and broaden their perspectives, but can facilitate discussion about challenging concepts such as racism. This is the opinion of Kouch (2021) in her text appreciation of using literature to appreciate diversity

### Research Question 2

Table 2. Can the content of *Second Class Citizen* written by Buchi Emecheta impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students?

<b>Knowledge of Healthy Human Values to Enhance Language Skills</b>	SA	A	D	SD
The novel teaches morals and values I can imbibe.	60	30	7	3
Studying the text in class showcases different human conditions which can make me strive for peaceful co-habitant	70	25	2	3
Having read the text, my language skills got better.	61	31	3	5
Most times, I cannot understand the story because of the words used.	11	9	35	45

Table 2 shows that ninety percent of the respondents believe that the novel teaches morals and values that can be imbibed. Also, ninety-five percent of the respondents solidly agree with the independent opinion that studying the text in class showcases different human conditions which can make them strive for peaceful co-habitant. As regards the language and word usage, more than four-fifths of the respondents understood the story, and also makes their language skills better. This is sufficient to conclude that the reading of *Second Class Citizen* is capable to impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students. This is in tune with the submission of Chowdhury (2016) who believes that reading novel and text which bothers on values has the capacity to help build the readers' morals, values, ethics, and character education.

### Research Question 3

Table 3. Can the study of *Second Class Citizen* written by Buchi Emecheta equip students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing?

<b>Equipment with the necessary Skills for Independent Thinking and Creative Writing</b>	SA	A	D	SD
Based on what I read, I can reason and proffer solutions to problems.	60	35	2	3
I can correct unreasonable inferences made in the passage.	70	25	0	5
I can accurately define the problem depicted in the prose text and understand the message.	4	3	40	53

The opinion of the majority of the respondents from Table 3 shows that based on what the students read in the text, reasoning and proffering solutions to problems become tools that can be implemented by about ninety-five percent of the respondents. In addition, the text has also made them to be able to correct unreasonable inferences made in the passage. Although many of the respondents opine that they still need help in accurately defining the problem depicted in the prose text. This response might be a faithful opinion of the word "accurately" as used in the test item. From the tone of the responses to other related questionnaire items, this might not be the truthful opinion but it is a result that worth looked into. From the above submissions, it is safe to hold the view that the study of *Second Class Citizen* does equip students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing if they can accurately define the problem depicted in the prose text. This is in tune with the view of Dan and Volvman (2014) who opine that critical thinking is a crucial aspect of the competence citizens need to participate in society, and that learning to think critically is conceptualised as the acquisition of the competence to participate critically in the communities and social practices of which a person is a member.

### Research Question 4

Table 4. Can the study of *Second Class Citizen* written by Buchi Emecheta equip students for examination and further studies?

<b>Equipment for Examination and Further Studies</b>	SA	A	D	SD
Second Class Citizen' study can be used for students' intellectual development.	52	28	10	10
After reading 'Second Class Citizen' by Buchi Emecheta, I know the author's purpose.	50	40	3	7
'Second Class Citizen' has improved me academically.	55	40	2	3
Studying prose text is mainly for entertainment and relaxation.	5	3	59	33
I do not like 'Second Class Citizen' because it is too long and boring.	25	15	50	10

From Table 4, it is majorly agreed by the respondents that *Second Class Citizen's* study can be used for students' intellectual development, and that after reading the text, students have an understanding of the author's purpose. In addition, more than ninety-five percent agree that the study of the text has improved them academically, and the study is not mainly for entertainment and relaxation. In addition, just four out of ten of the respondents do not like the text because it is too long and boring. Juxtaposing the above opinions, we can align with the research question that the study of the text does equip students for examination and further studies, although it appears to be a bit boring and long for few. In the submissions of Iheakanwa, Obro, and Pius (2021), there exists a significant relationship between reading ability and students' performance, and habits and student's performance and thus suggested that students' reading interest be strengthened by providing and equipping school libraries; reading should be given adequate attention in classroom activity and not left to students' choice or discretion.

## 5.2 The Lion and The Jewel

### Research Question 1

Table 5. Can the content of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka broaden students' cultural awareness?

<b>Broadening Cultural Awareness</b>	SA	A	D	SD
Studying 'Lion and the Jewel' can help students imbibe a culture of peace.	60	20	9	11
The play projects the culture of different people and climes so I can compare, understand and tolerate others.	60	35	3	2
I can better understand humanity, and the need for peace and tolerance.	46	44	6	4

It is apparent from Table 5 that the content of *The Lion and The Jewel* broadens students' cultural awareness. This is evident from the overwhelming agreement by the respondents that studying "Lion and the Jewel" can help students imbibe a culture of peace, help them to better understand humanity, the need for peace and tolerance, and that the play projects the culture of different people and climes which helps students to compare, understand and tolerate others.

### Research Question 2

Table 6. Can the content of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students?

<b>Knowledge of Healthy Human Values to Enhance Language Skills</b>	SA	A	D	SD
The play teaches morals and values I can imbibe.	50	40	6	4
Studying the drama text in class showcases different human conditions which can make me strive for peaceful co-habitant	50	45	2	3
Having read the text, my language skills got better.	61	31	3	5
Most times, I cannot understand the play because of the words used.	5	7	51	37

The content of the play, *The Lion and The Jewel* can impact knowledge of healthy human values to enhance language skills in students. This is the summary of the opinions of the majority of the respondents. More than ninety percent agree that the play teaches morals and values that they can imbibe and that studying the drama text in class showcases different human conditions which can make the students strive for peaceful co-habitant and that having read the text, the student's language skills got better and most times, students can understand the story because of the words used.

### Research Question 3

Table 7. Can the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka equip students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing?

Equipment with the necessary Skills for Independent Thinking and Creative Writing	SA	A	D	SD
Based on what I read, I can reason and proffer solutions to problems.	50	45	2	3
I can correct unreasonable inferences made in the play.	50	40	5	5
I can accurately define the problem depicted in the play and understand the message.	52	43	2	3
Wole Soyinka's 'Lion and the Jewel' is a tragedy.	51	41	3	5

From the table above, it is imperative to agree that the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* equips students with the necessary skills for independent thinking and writing.

The respondents agree that reading the novel has helped them to reason and proffer solutions to problems and correct unreasonable inferences made in the passage, and can accurately define the problem depicted in the prose text and understand the message. Although, more than ninety percent of the respondents opined that the play is a tragedy.

### Research Question 4

Table 8. Can the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* written by Wole Soyinka equip students for examination and further studies?

Equipment for Examination and Further Studies	SA	A	D	SD
'Lion and the Jewel' study can be used for students' intellectual development.	30	50	7	13
The main purpose of reading the drama text is to only pass my exam.	6	4	37	53
After reading 'Lion and the Jewel by Wole Soyinka, I know the author's purpose.	50	40	3	7
'Lion and the Jewel' has improved me academically.	55	40	2	3
Studying the drama text is mainly for entertainment and relaxation.	3	5	43	49
Reading the book is a challenge because there are other too many books to read.	9	11	33	47

The analysis of Table8, shows that the study of *The Lion and The Jewel* can potentially equip students for examination and further studies. The play also can be used for students' intellectual development. Many responding students agree that the main purpose of reading the drama text is not only to pass an examination as many of the students, after reading the text, know the author's purpose and it in addition improved them academically. More than ninety percent agree that studying the drama text is not mainly for entertainment and relaxation and that reading the book is a challenge because there are too many other books to read.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

As revealed from the results of the findings of the study, it is evident that the two texts examined, *Second Class Citizens* by Buchi Emecheta and *The Lion and The Jewel* by Wole Soyinka are appropriate prescriptions to achieve the objectives of Literature in English's inclusion in the Nigerian Senior Secondary School curriculum. This is equally premised on the fact that the texts are efficiently exposed to the students as appropriate through the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the following recommendation suffice.

In order to justify the appropriate selection of the texts and achieve the set objectives:

- Teachers, teaching literature in English must be adequately knowledgeable of the set objectives of the subject.
- Interactive methods and strategies that will stimulate students' interest and enhance fast learning, should be used in the classroom.
- Students should be encouraged to acquire the texts for personal use, while the school libraries should be adequately equipped to encourage personal study.

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