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A STUDY OF THE SUITABILITY OF  
A MODERN AFRICAN NOVEL SUCH AS  
THINGS FALL APART BY CHINUA ACHEBE  
FOR BLACK PUPILS IN CISKEIAN SCHOOLS  
IN CONTRAST TO A PRESCRIBED NOVEL SUCH AS  
SILAS MARNER BY GEORGE ELIOT

HALF-THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The enjoyment of any form of literature presupposes, in the reader, an understanding of the subject matter and a fundamental inclination to identify with the characters, to empathize with them and to appreciate varying perspectives. It follows that the choice of text is an important consideration especially, when the reader is not reading in the mother tongue.

The choice of novel prescribed by the DET for Second Language, non-White, non-English-speaking, Ciskeian pupils poses many problems which lead to poor examination results. The increasing unpopularity of English Literature among Ciskeian pupils and teachers appears to stem largely from the predominance of works selected from the Great Tradition. To determine how far the choice of texts is responsible for the lack of success of literature teaching in Ciskei is the aim of this investigation.

The DET syllabus for Black schools and the set books prescribed for Stds. 9 and 10 between 1980 and 1990 are examined to expose their Euro-centric focus. The effects of the DET examinations on literature study in Ciskei are also considered to show how examinations complicate the situation further. The aims of teaching literature to Second Language pupils are reviewed.

Literary merit, relevance, moral seriousness, aesthetic value and scope for skill development are suggested as criteria suitable for an appropriate choice of literary texts for Second Language pupils.

A comparative study of the prescribed novel, Silas Marner and an alternative African novel in English, Things Fall Apart has been attempted to find out whether Things Fall Apart is of equal literary value to Silas Marner and, perhaps, more relevant than Silas Marner to the experience of Black pupils.

Six teachers have been interviewed for their opinions of the books prescribed. A miniature survey also has been conducted among pupils of Stds. 9 and 10 from selected schools to verify general attitudes to the study of literature.

The findings indicate a dire need to make the syllabus more flexible and more open to include good African writing in English, such as Things Fall Apart.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of discontent in academic circles lately, regarding the selection of texts for study in the literature courses of Black secondary schools. (Reid (1982), Moody, Gunner & Finnegan (1984), Brumfit & Carter (1986) and Rice (1983).) This discontent seems to be shared by Black teachers, pupils and researchers. Researchers have criticized the ill-chosen, that is, irrelevant texts prescribed by most Departments of Education in South Africa.

Black teachers have been vociferous at meetings and seminars in decrying the difficulty of teaching Shakespeare and poetry to Second Language learners with no basic proficiency in the use of the English language. Reid, J., 1982, p. 79, quoted a Transvaal teacher's reference to Standard Grade pupils that, "Shakespeare is lost on pupils who, in Std. 10, still think that the past tense of "is" is "are" and cannot grasp that 'he write' is not English." Nevertheless, an appeal was recently made by Black teachers themselves at the South African Shakespeare Society in July, 1988 for the retention of the Shakespeare plays as they represented "the gold standard" of English Literature.

Black pupils complain often concerning their difficulties in the study of Shakespeare plays. Prose descriptions from novels, such as George Eliot's Silas Marner and poetry too, evoke such comments as "too long", "too boring", "too foreign".

As early as 1969, Durham, K. M., pp. 212 ff., complained that poetry texts were ill-chosen, difficult, too mature, intellectually demanding and unrelated to children's development of natural interests and to their accumulated experience of life. He felt strongly that the choice of texts from a recommended list should be the teacher's prerogative. This is applicable to most literature texts prescribed for Ciskei. The teacher's aim at school should be to "preserve delight" in literature. Newbolt (1924) and Bullock (1975) have stressed, continually, the importance of having suitable texts and of the purpose of teaching literature. Reid deplored the fact that literature texts prescribed for school children were nearly always set in Europe or America as if to suggest that literature is something that happens overseas. (Reid, J., 1982, pp. 47-8) In the same context she said that the "Englishness" of the prescriptions might be "not so damaging for White pupils" who were conscious of their English identity and heritage, but might prove damaging, for the rest of the South African population. This "Englishness" could lead to a lack of interest and an undermining of their own cultural values and environment. She suggested that works chosen for study in schools should, among other things, "have something to say to young adults in South Africa in the 1980's." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 53) She noted the significant tradition of African Literature in English the neglect of which was tantamount to the denial to Black pupils of contact with "Black Consciousness." She pointed to Things Fall Apart

as marking the beginning of modern African literature.

Similar alternatives have also been suggested by Moody, Gunner & Finnegan, 1984, who were of the opinion, p. viii, that students in many parts of the world "were inclined to think of literature . . . as a sort of ordeal (or 'rite of passage') involving struggles with baffling texts, endless learning of quotations, attempts to predict questions and memorize acceptable answers." (emphasis mine.) They felt that by extending the use of African literature in English in school courses, formal education would be brought closer to the realities of pupils' lives (Moody, Gunner & Finnegan, 1984, p. vii). Gunner (1984) also confidently affirmed that, "African literature is now a part of the general intellectual heritage of the English-speaking world."

On the other hand, Meihuizen, D., 1981, Crux, vol. 15:2, p. 16, and other educationists in Black environments, feel that the prescription of second-rate literature is no legitimate substitution for the great masterpieces of the Great Tradition and that difficulty of achievement should not be a valid reason for rejecting what is good. Such ideals are not the aim of this investigation, which affirms that, in agreement with Povey, J., 1980, Crux, vol. 14:2, p. 15, African literature should be prescribed for Black pupils for its relevance and that such prescription should be focused on "the partial excellence" found in much African writing in English. It was also intended to determine, clearly, the

literary merit of Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart, as compared with that of works from the Great Tradition, such as Silas Marner and to criticize its exclusion from lists of prescribed works in areas such as Ciskei.

To determine literary standard, literary merit would have to prove to be the most crucial criterion in selecting texts. Appropriateness of texts demands discussion of the selection criteria. It should be verified whether the criteria accepted implement the aims of literature teaching in a Second Language situation. Ironically, there is disparity of opinion between adopting literary merit or relevance to pupils' experience of life as the primary criterion in selecting works. While the classicist tendency to recommend literary merit is understandable, the modern tendency to regard literary merit as a nebulous concept cannot be overlooked. The question, 'How different is the English used by African writers from the English used by mother tongue speakers?' could be answered with Gunner's words, "Certainly, African writers introduce expressions which do not occur in 'Standard English' . . . they may use an unfamiliar range of language register . . .", but they definitely, "bring new resources into their use of the English language: they endow it with a novelty and an unfamiliar richness of expression which strengthens rather than impoverishes the language" (Gunner, E., 1984, p. vi). Gilliat, P., wrote in The Observer (London), September 19, 1966,

Every decade or so, it seems to fall to a non-English dramatist to belt new energy into the English tongue . . . a Nigerian called Wole Soyinka has done for our napping language what brigand dramatists from Ireland have done for centuries - booted it awake . . .  
(as quoted by Wästberg, P., (ed.) 1968, p. 72.)

Reputable researchers such as Moody (1971), Moody, Gunner & Finnegan (1984) and Gunner (1984) have produced handbooks to promote the study of African works in English, in addition to identifying them. Reid (1982) briefly talked of the usefulness of comparative studies between English and African texts. Apart from these, there has been no detailed, comparative study of English texts and of African texts to clinch the argument: Black writing in English has more potential than "English" works to serve the literary needs of African pupils. This is an opinion that overrides the conviction held by some critics and researchers that literature really has no place in the Second Language situation (see McKay, S., in Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., 1986, p. 191; Moody, H. L. B., (1971) pp. 9-13; Reid, J., p. 18, and Allen, W. H., (ed.), 1965, p. 290) The value of literature that is relevant to human experience reduces to insignificance the other problems (discussed in Chapter One) confronted by pupils of English Literature in areas such as Ciskei.

A consideration of the novel component of the literature syllabus is the focus here. As is evident from the opinions of the teachers interviewed and of the pupils questioned (see Annexures), the study of the novel may be regarded as more difficult than is the study of drama or the short story. This is attributable to the length and

to the discursive nature of the genre. The type of nineteenth-century novels, such as Silas Marner, that are prescribed usually present enormous problems of language, theme, length and relevance. Several Ciskeian schools are compelled to include the novel at times, because other prescribed works are not readily available. At other times, it is wrongly believed that being in prose, the novel is less difficult to study than is poetry or a Shakespeare play.

Novels such as Silas Marner, provoke adverse reaction from pupils and teachers. The Std. 10 English results are poor, and Literature constitutes one-third of the marks (100 out of 300). Pupils are, consequently, led to dislike the study of literature. The reasons for this dislike need to be investigated in more detail. Is the prescribed literature appropriate to the pupils' limited circumstance? What alternatives should be considered?

The methods of investigation involve a direct comparison between a prescribed English novel (Silas Marner) and an African novel in English (Things Fall Apart). Both are novels which have at one time or another been set for study at Matriculation level, although Things Fall Apart has not been prescribed for Ciskeian schools. Both novels have been analysed stylistically, structurally and culturally. Literary merit, relevance, moral seriousness, aesthetic value and scope for skill development have been deployed as criteria in the evaluation of the texts. The hypothesis is that works by established African writers easily compare with English works. Why, then, are they not being prescribed

as alternatives to "English" works and so offer a wider choice and more relevant themes?

Since Things Fall Apart has not been presented in Ciskei, it was felt that it would be interesting and applicable to extend the comparative study to an experiment involving pupils. As Chapter Five reveals, pupils from representative sections of Ciskei were selected for this purpose. The findings are available in Chapter Five.

Besides the comparative literary analysis of the two novels mentioned, miniature survey-oriented research was conducted among pupils in the form of a questionnaire and among teachers, in the form of interviews. It was important to know whether Ciskeian pupils were favourably inclined to the study of literature and what problems they faced during such a study. It was also important to determine the teachers' opinions of the books prescribed and what alternatives could be suggested. If these facts were not ascertained, much of the blame in the teaching of literature in Ciskei would probably be due to lack of interest among pupils in the study of the literary genres and to the practical problems confronting literary pursuits.

In addition to the comparative study, the actual performance of some carefully-chosen pupils to interpretative exercises on certain areas of Silas Marner are recorded as primary evidence of their difficulties in interpreting the text. The importance of an appropriate and relevant choice of texts, especially for Second Language pupils is borne out by the findings.

CHAPTER 1      THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
IN CISKEI

The suitability of the choice of literature in Ciskeian schools and the principles governing this choice are issues that can be debated or solved only in conjunction with matters of far greater complexity, namely, should English Literature in the Great Tradition be introduced at school level to pupils whose home language is not English? Would not these pupils benefit from a better acquaintance with the works of African writers? Is it fair to force upon non-English-speaking pupils a knowledge of a way of life that is totally foreign to contemporary Black pupils? Moreover, the teaching situation in Black Ciskeian schools is far from ideal. Basic educational facilities such as libraries, audio-visual aids, textbooks and comfortable classroom accommodation are lacking or deficient. There is a dearth of competent teachers of literature and the pupil-teacher ratio itself is alarming. In addition to these problems there is a wider range of problems, namely: political legislation, communicative incompetence, the status of the subjects, the design of the syllabus, the prescription of books, the insufficient period of exposure, the system of examination and "Black Consciousness", all of which further complicate matters.

The aim of this investigation is to show how these dire circumstances and the many problems experienced in

teaching literature to Black pupils could be relieved to a great extent by a more appropriate choice of literature texts. The choice of suitable material for detailed study should be dominated by the consideration that content and presentation do not become stumbling blocks for pupils in a non-European environment. Therefore, a choice of material more in keeping with the attainments of Black Second Language pupils in Ciskei will be examined.

It is within this framework that the DET syllabus and its list of prescribed works will be looked at critically and the problems confronting the teacher of English in Matriculation classes in Ciskei be discussed briefly. It would, then, prove a contentious point whether the study of Literature should be continued in schools. The "teachability" of a text ultimately depends on the ingenuity of the teacher. In an ideal situation, the choice of text would not have assumed undue significance. Because the situation in Ciskeian schools is far from ideal, it is necessary to consider the choice of text bearing in mind the impoverished conditions under which English Literature is presented to Black pupils. These conditions especially necessitate a more prudent selection of literature in English for Black pupils. The conditions may even necessitate the withdrawal of the study of English Literature until such time as conditions will have improved.

### 1.1 A critical examination of the DET Syllabus for Black schools

The DET Syllabus for Black schools was revised recently in 1985 and was implemented for Stds 9 and 10 in 1988. The earlier syllabus had been formulated in 1975. Within the decade, 1975-1985, the contours of the syllabus have changed only slightly in detail and in structure.

The 1975 syllabus introduced the common core for Stds 9 and 10. It explained that the course work for both these classes had similar characteristics and needed a similar approach. The content of the syllabus for Std 9 was the same as that for Std 10, although the level of work expected was lower and the quality of the questions was less demanding. The 1985 syllabus is similar to the 1975 syllabus in that it also had a common core for Stds 9 and 10. The areas outlined by the syllabus are:

<u>1975</u>	<u>1985</u>
oral work	aural work
written work	oral work
reading	written work
comprehension & language study	reading

Literature was not given a specific place as such in the syllabi. It was merely a part of the reading

programme, which included supplementary reading, quick/controlled reading and the study of prescribed books (see Annexure V, pp. 237).

A glance at the "minimum objective of reading" listed in the aims of teaching reading on pp. 4-5 of the 1985 syllabus (see Annexure A, pp. 138-9) specifies worthy language-recognition skills. The aims related to the teaching of literature must be extracted from the overall aims of promoting reading.

It would seem that the structure of the syllabus is at fault as it allows a student at Matriculation level "to get away" with the study of just two genres, such as drama and novel, or drama and short story. It may just happen that a pupil could leave high school without having experienced adequate acquaintance with poetry in Std 10. What value has the study of literature without poetry? The ELTIC Report (see Annexure B, pp. 140-8) affirmed that nothing was comparable to the study of a poem. Poetry "lends itself most easily to the interpretation of language, which, in turn, is vital to the understanding of literature as a whole." Other genres of literature also are indispensable. One of the teachers interviewed for the purpose of this investigation, spoke of the great value of drama and of the short story in teaching literature to Second Language pupils. (see Annexure G, pp. 174-9).

Another, and more serious problem presented by the syllabus is the fact that pupils are plunged for the first time into a study of a Shakespeare play, in Std 10, with no previous preparation in Std 9. The Std. 10

pupils have to contend with this formidable task, within the period of 4-5 months of an academic year. In fact, a more balanced syllabus may solve some of the problems encountered in teaching literature. It is most likely to evoke a love of reading and an understanding of situations as presented by established writers.

### 1.2 The "set books" prescribed

South African Education Departments favour the "set book" system in prescribing literature. The books prescribed for study in Ciskei in Stds. 9 and 10 since 1980 are available in Annexure S, see pp. 229-31. The stress on Euro-centric literature is clearly evident

The quota of poetry prescribed has ranged between:

#### Std 10

<u>555</u>	lines of poetry in 1981
<u>613</u>	lines of poetry in 1982
<u>547</u>	lines of poetry in 1983
<u>632</u>	lines of poetry in 1986
<u>390</u>	lines of poetry in 1989
<u>416</u>	lines of poetry in 1990

English poems have formed the bulk of the syllabus. The selection for 1989 included poems:

1. The World is too much with us - Wordsworth
2. To Lucasta, on going to the Wars - Lovelace
3. The Wild Swans at Coole - Yeats

- |    |                                   |   |          |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|----------|
| 4. | <u>Preludes</u>                   | - | Eliot    |
| 5. | <u>On His Blindness</u>           | - | Milton   |
| 6. | <u>Ulysses</u>                    | - | Tennyson |
| 7. | <u>Thou art indeed just, Lord</u> | - | Hopkins  |
| 8. | <u>There is a pleasure</u>        | - | Byron    |
| 9. | <u>The Unknown Citizen</u>        | - | Auden    |

from the total of twenty prescribed poems. Eleven poems were written by non-British poets on non-African themes. Only three of these eleven poems were by Black poets, namely,

- |  |  |   |              |
|--|--|---|--------------|
|  | <u>The Peach Tree</u>                  | - | S. Sepamla   |
|  | <u>Inside my Zulu Hut</u>              | - | M.O. Mtshali |
|  | <u>City Johannesburg</u> (lines 18-27) | - | M.W. Serote  |

The selection prescribed for 1990 seems to be slightly "better" in that only two poems out of twenty, namely, The Journey of the Magi (T. S. Eliot), and To Sleep (W. Wordsworth) are distinctly "English" although ten poems still are those of English poets and seven are poems by non-African poets. Again, there are only three poems by African poets.

There is an overall "Englishness" in the works prescribed. Many critics including Povey (1981), Reid (1982) and Rice (1986) have protested vehemently against this bias. Much of the literature that has been prescribed for Black schools seems unsuitable for other reasons too. Works such as Gold and Maseru have been decried by writers such as Achebe as being sterile

depictions of Black life by unimaginative White writers. Novels such as Scruffy, No Highway, and I heard the Owl call My Name have been criticised by Rice (1976), Meihuizen (1981), Reid (1982) and others, as not really being of a high literary standard. Likewise, the adverse reaction of pupils to works such as Silas Marner, Far from the Madding Crowd and Wuthering Heights, has been observed by teachers in Ciskei, as is evident in Chapter Five. It has been felt that such books are unrelated to the experience of Black pupils and are therefore, an imposition on their sensibilities. The selection of "set works" and the methods of examining these need to be revitalized. Selections are often resented in that they thrust alien values on people of different races. At the same time, there have been situations when attempts to avoid ethnic leanings have caused "safe works" to be repeated year after year (see Annexure S). It follows then that

the same (more or less) bland selection of plays, novels, short stories and poetry prescribed . . . has continued to be taught in the same bland uninspired way with the same predictable types of questions being set in examinations.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 40)

As a result, the relationship between literature and life is lost and the study of literature degenerates into a boring and irrelevant exercise.

The intellectual development and the interests of pupils should be the criteria deciding the choice of wider and more varied texts. As Marti, J., quoted by Freinkel, E., 1988, Crux, vol. 20:2, p. 16, said,

"knowledge of different literatures is the best way to free oneself from the tyranny of any of them." If such knowledge includes writings of other cultures, then why not choose works written by African writers of established reputation? John Povey advised, "look to the north" of the borders of South Africa "and read its literature. It will, at least, be highly revealing of the attitudes and beliefs of the most articulate and original men in these societies." (Povey, J., 1980, vol. 14:3, p. 16)

Relevance and literary merit should be the criteria to dominate a selection of texts. It would seem, from the evidence presented in Annexures E, G - L and T that inappropriate choices have caused Black children to lose their grip on the study of English altogether. Black children should not be harnessed to the classics and the Great Tradition alone, for there are other traditions of equal or greater significance. All the evidence appears to suggest that cultures and traditions other than those of the Great Tradition should form the bulk of the literary diet prescribed for Black children.

### 1.3 The examination of literature in Ciskei

The yardstick by which the success or otherwise of teaching methods, classroom practice and approach to literature are assessed is undoubtedly the pupils' performance in the examination. Teachers and pupils interpret the syllabus through the patterns of the question papers set. Therefore, much of the blame for the failure of literature teaching may be laid on the

structure and mode of examining literature. This has been confirmed by Macrae (1990).

The literature examination in Ciskei has undergone a fundamental change. According to the 1975 syllabus, a test of English consisted of three papers;

Paper I	-	Composition and letter (120 marks)
Paper II	-	Literature (80 marks)
Paper III	-	Comprehension and language (100 marks)
Total	=	300 marks

In Std 9, however, at present, it stands as

Paper I	-	Composition, comprehension, summary and language (190 marks)
Paper II	-	Literature (60 marks)
Total	=	250 marks.

To this, the oral mark of 50 and the year mark of 100 are added, producing a total of 400 marks. The duration of the current literature paper is 90 minutes. It is worth only 60 marks in Std 9, but it is worth 100 marks in Std 10.

The nature of the literature paper is interesting. The 1975 syllabus gave importance to the contextual question. Two questions worth 40 marks each were to be answered; one at least of which was to be of a contextual nature. The contextual question claimed to test for example, understanding a poem or a work of literature, in itself as well as, in relation to the rest of the work from which the extract was taken.

The modified syllabus (reprint) of 1981 provided three questions on each text, one of which was contextual. At least one of the two compulsory questions was contextual.

The 1985 syllabus required pupils to attempt one question worth 50 marks on each of the two prescribed texts. Poetry was examined contextually, while all other aspects had an essay choice for every contextual question asked. At least one contextual question was compulsory.

In 1988, a further change was made to Paper II (Literature). The essay question was eliminated in order to enable "more accurate marking" as the Departmental Instruction No. 46 of 1987 observed,

Even the best teachers sometimes disagree when they are given the same essay to mark. This is unacceptable in a public examination, where each candidate's mark should be unvarying no matter who marks his paper. The essay made this difficult to achieve. A contextual question is a much more suitable test . . . this kind of test is flexible enough to be adapted to reinforce the aim of the new communicative syllabuses.

(Extract from Departmental Instruction,  
Annexure R)

The relief expressed in this circular at the removal of the essay question tends to ignore some of the advantages of answering in the essay form. The aim, even in Second Language teaching should be to enable pupils to acquire by degrees, the same proficiency as First Language learners in writing at reasonable length, a refined critical response of reasonable length to a literary work of art.

This change in the syllabus, which caused the removal of the essay, was not peculiar to the NSC alone. The JMB core syllabus and all other syllabi based on it were also affected.

With this change, the study of literature has become a series of comprehension exercises in the name of communication. Unfortunately, literature "does not easily lend itself to objective testing, and, to reduce literature to a body of knowledge and skills is to deny its authentic pedagogic value." (Pfister, B., 1987, p. 26)

Defective systems of examining literature, and the unvaried use of certain systems such as that of external examinations alone to assess performance in literary skills, compound the problems already existing in teaching literature in Ciskeian schools. Some of these problems will be discussed peripherally in the following sections.

#### 1.4 The actual teaching situation in Ciskei with reference to the teaching of literature

The DET Second Language Higher Grade Syllabus defines pupils, whose mother tongue is not English, as

- those for whom English is a second language, because it is used frequently in their local environment.
- those for whom English is virtually a foreign language because they have very little contact with it in their daily life.
- those for whom English is a medium of instruction.

(DET Syllabus, 1985)

For Ciskeian Black pupils, English is a Second Language. It is also a medium of instruction. As expected in a Second Language situation, the emphasis in Ciskei is on communication. The overriding concern of the syllabus is "communicative competence for personal, social and occupational purposes." The emphasis of this approach in language teaching is on oral skills and its emphasis is on forms of language. Its assumption is that linguistic structures obtained in the classroom should be transferable immediately to the real world. This approach has little to gain from the use of literature. (Mackay, R., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 5) But literature is an integral part of language teaching. It is "one of the many registers of language usage" (Daniel, as quoted by Pfister, B., 1987, p. 24). It should be placed prominently in most language syllabi. The study of a language should not be divorced from the study of the works of the masters. Literature is language at its best. Creative writing cannot be encouraged without the models of emotive language which good literature provides.

In Ciskei, literature still forms a compulsory part of the English Paper. Thus far it is integrated. But how far is the literature prescribed useful in developing pupils' knowledge of language? How far literature and language teaching are integrated in this manner, as it should be ideally, is a moot point.

There are numerous problems experienced in teaching English to Black children. A paper presented by the

ELTIC teachers of Alice at Rhodes University on 8 July, 1982 (Annexure B), summarized some of these problems. They include, inter alia,

- approach to language teaching,
- political isolation and legislation of English,
- status of subjects,
- prescription of books and insufficient period of exposure,
- examinations,
- lack of reading opportunities.

The political relegation of the "Bantu" in South African society poses the question, "Should Black pupils be compelled to study literature when English itself is taught as a Second Language?" All the teachers interviewed on this issue were of the opinion that literature should be introduced to pupils even in Second Language situations. Their reasons are:

- because literature is ennobling,
- because it develops style,
- because it gives pupils access to language as used by native speakers.

If pupils do not encounter literature in school, they may never encounter it. On leaving school, few Black pupils are fortunate enough to proceed to university. Reading opportunities are virtually non-existent in many Ciskeian schools. The majority of schools (53 out of 79) are in the rural areas, and there are thus no library facilities. Neither is there time to cultivate any serious reading discipline among pupils. Most pupils hail from very poor, culturally-deprived homes. They have no access to electricity, radio, television or newspapers. These are circumstances that cannot be

overlooked in view of the fact that reading can flourish only in a climate appropriate to it.

In most Black schools, English is taught by Africans or others whose mother tongue is not English and by inadequately qualified teachers, lacking university degrees. Rice has commented on the struggles confronting Black teachers when teaching poems such as Museé des Beaux Arts and drama, such as The Winslow Boy. (Rice, M., 1976, Crux, vol. 10:2 p. 33) The linguistic inadequacies of inadequately trained teachers of English give rise to aberrant forms of English which are perpetuated. (ELTIC Report, Annexure B)

The teaching of English literature in Ciskei is not likely to produce good results until the authorities responsible come to an understanding of the degree of isolation experienced by Black pupils. This implies more than just a nodding acquaintance with "Black Consciousness" which encompasses a perception often lacking the awareness of the need of an effective approach to teaching English to Black pupils. Only when these difficulties are tackled and overcome to a certain extent can a love of literature be encouraged amongst Black pupils by means of an appropriate selection of literature texts.

### 1.5 The issue of retaining the study of literature

In view of all the problems experienced in teaching literature in the Ciskeian situation, it is a controversial issue whether literature should be

introduced at all to Black pupils. The term, English Literature, may be defined as literary works in English, displaying considerable proficiency in the use of language and the explication of experience, originating from any country. One would, then, be able to appreciate the threat posed to education by the establishment of "a hierarchy of texts, a sort of First Team, against which all other texts should be judged." (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 38)

According to Pfister, dissatisfaction with the traditional aims and methods of teaching literature has affected the status of literature, often making the study of literature unimportant; making literary studies occur merely on a thematic level and acting as a stimulus for historical or social discussion and encouraging "a new kind of academism". (Pfister, B., 1987, p. 4)

Rice felt that

the failure of literature teaching in our schools and the low esteem in which it is held in our society . . . can be laid at the door of the narrow view that has prevailed up to the present of what constitutes literature and what its function is.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, pp. 38-9)

So the role of literature in education needs to be reassessed in order to determine a more appropriate selection of literature texts.

Responding to Rose's comment in 1980, Crux, vol. 14:3 on "the validity of literature for emergent people", Meihuizen reiterated the fact that there was "vital need for literature in education." (Meihuizen, D., 1981, Crux, vol. 15:2, p. 15)

Over the last hundred years, from the time of Matthew Arnold to the present day, there has been a great deal of persuasive argument regarding the inclusion of literature in the school curriculum, (Arnold (1880), Newbolt (1921), Whitehead (1962), Newsom (1963) and Bullock (1975). It should be obvious to educationists that literature is indispensable in the overall education of a child.

The study of literature has distinct educational value in that it is a distinctive kind of discourse, a record of human experience and "the most rewarding form of the child's encounter with language." (Bullock, 1975, p. 124) As "the form of art most readily available", (Newbolt, 1921, p. 9), literature "helps to shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence" and "is a powerful instrument for empathy, a medium through which the child can acquire his values". (Bullock, 1975, p. 124). The Newsom Report stated that "all pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need and can respond to its universality . . . ." (Newsom, 1963, p. 155) The study of literature should not be exclusive. It should not become "a luxury indulged in by a select few", (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 40). "There is a great need for the best insights of civilisation to be made available to people generally and for its human significance to be made clear." (Phenix, P. H., 1964, p. 173) All literature teaching therefore is aimed at pupil development, whether it be termed "humanizing" in Arnold's terms or "sensitizing" in Margaret Mathieson's terms.

In the modern curriculum, literature deserves a prominent place as it provides material for cognitive, affective and communicative development. Reid outlined three areas to look for in a balanced curriculum - skills, knowledge and enjoyment. She affirmed that "literature comes into all three areas of the curriculum." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 16)

Literature provides the readers with "imaginative insight into what another person is feeling," (Bullock, 1975, p. 125) thus providing "vicarious experience" of the situation which he has not yet experienced in life, but may experience later. As Reid said,

Most people encounter sexual love, danger and death in fiction long before they meet them in fact . . . to mention only the broadest and most universal of human experiences.  
(Reid, J., 1982, p. 33)

While reading "we try imaginatively to put ourselves into other people's shoes and understand their predicament from their point of view rather than our own." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 34)

Such objectivity, derived from the study of literature would facilitate understanding of oneself through understanding of others. Pupils would be able to identify, at least vicariously, with the experiences recounted and the characters portrayed in the books that they read. They would be able to appreciate the significance and relevance of fictional experiences to their own experience and knowledge of life before they are moved by the felicity with which these experiences have been expressed.

What Dryden said of poetry is probably true of all literature, that it "instructs only as it delights." (Enwright, D. J. & De Chickera, E., 1962, p. 64) Good literature can move readers to laughter or to tears, to feel pleasure or pain. In studying good literature, pupils are led to identify with characters and their situations and to respond to them. This kind of involvement with "catharsis", which Aristotle claimed was an attribute of great tragedy produces "enjoyment", is the primary aim of teaching literature.

The greatest value derived from reading should be enjoyment. If reading fails to provide enjoyment, it fails altogether. (Stevens, T., 1966, p. 3) As the Bullock Report said, ". . . whatever else the pupil takes away from his experience of literature in school, he should have learned to see it as a source of pleasure . . . ." (Bullock, 1975, pp. 13) K. M. Durham wrote, "A great deal should be done to try to restore the pleasure principle in literature" in South African schools. (Durham, K. M. 1969, p. 170), emphasis mine.) Reid added, "If teachers can help pupils to find enjoyment from reading they have done them a lasting service." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 27)

But literature has much more than mere recreational value. As a school subject, it develops "the capacity for individual response to language use". (Widdowson, as quoted by Pfister, B., 1984, p. 24) It can be taught for developing reading skills, for extension of vocabulary and for cultivating a flair for style, "which is not something that can be taught in a grammar lesson (although it can be

corrected)." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 16) Literature encourages critical thinking and the power to discriminate. Teachers of literature can, as Reid said, help the young reader to graduate from Enid Blyton; not to stop at Harold Robbins, but develop a taste for better reading so as to progress from Ian Fleming through Eric Ambler to Graham Greene or from C. S. Forester to Conrad or to the Brontës. (Reid, J., 1982, p. 28)

Moreover, the study of literature develops the power of observation, the power to see relationships and the power to order thoughts coherently. These are skills which are crucial to the study of literature and to literary appreciation. Moody, so rightly said that when one gains experience in discrimination, one compares one's discrimination with that of other, more experienced people. By reflecting on our discriminations, we discover the factors underlying them, and approach a state of mind possessing a capacity for judgement, a capacity for delivering an opinion about the rightness or wrongness of a situation. (Moody, H. L. B., 1969, p. 4)

A sense of moral awareness stems from the study of literature. It acts as a subtle civilizing force.

Literature is moral not because it follows or upholds any particular morality but because it widens our awareness of life . . . Literature is an experience of endless renewal. (Durham, K. M., 1987, Crux, vol. 21:3, p. 44)

Great works of literature

Make us question and redefine for ourselves our assumptions, attitudes and values; they

open our minds and hearts to new ideas and sensations; . . . its effect is profoundly formative and moral. . . .

Pereira, as quoted by Reid, J., p. 31)

A complete form of education should include the study of literature. The literature that is prescribed should be culturally significant. This would make available "the best insights of civilisation" to people in general for its human significance. (Phenix, P. H., 1964, p. 173)

The British literary tradition forms the bulk of literary studies almost everywhere today. The classics have an undoubted place in such studies. The keep-to-the-classics tendency is making educationists among emergent peoples consider the study of literature as an "unnecessary frill". The question is whether the classics deserve the same prominence in the syllabus that they enjoyed in the past, especially in the "fast-changing, far-removed worlds of pupils" today (Reid, J., 1982). Of course,

. . . English literature stands amongst the greatest achievements of the human spirit. Understanding and enjoying it is a highly significant activity in the development of spiritual awareness.

(Povey, J., 1980, Crux, vol. 14:2, pp. 17-8)

But each generation needs to re-examine and re-structure its own perception of culture as T. S. Eliot asserted. (Eliot, T. S., 1920, p. 43) The study of literature in schools "should be related in a meaningful way to the pupils' experience of their world." (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 44)

Bearing in mind the advantages of a well-considered choice of English Literature for Ciskeian pupils, one may be led to consider the importance of some form of aesthetic, moral and pleasurable literature in English by English authors or by established African writers. Such consideration indicates the retention of English Literature in the curriculum. Under no circumstances should it be discontinued even in a Second Language syllabus.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE AIMS OF TEACHING LITERATURE

### IN A SECOND LANGUAGE SITUATION

The aims of including literature in any language syllabus should be universal, but the classification of learning situations into First Language ( $L_1$ ), Second Language (ESL), Foreign Language (EFL), Language for Specific Purposes (ESP) inter alia complicates matters regarding the status of literature. The arguments against including literature in an ESL syllabus have been based on the following points:

- The crux of ESL teaching is to teach the grammar of the language. The structural complexity of literature prevents this.
- The study of literature is not essential to academic/occupational progress.
- Literature presents a cultural perspective which is conceptually different for ESL students.  
(summarized from McKay, S., as quoted by Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 191)

Moody, H. L. B., 1968, pp. 9-13, also felt that literary appreciation was tough for the ESL pupil because of

- less private reading (and more oral activity),
- the complexity of the English language which has been continually developing as a result of contact with other cultures,
- the richness of the connotations of the English language which is missed by a student with a limited command of language,

- the indirectness of its expression which emerges in metaphor, irony and other literary devices,
- the varied register, and
- the cultural references that seem foreign to foreign users of the language.

Reid also admitted that "for those learning English as a second language, the study of literature is more of an effort . . . they study books to learn the language as well as for what they contain." She agreed with Bright & McGregor that in the ESL situation, where there is little reading, there would be little language learning. (Reid, J., 1982, p. 18) "Securing an interest in, and encouraging voluntary reading of literature, are important aspects of education where English is a second language." (Pattison, B., as quoted by Allen, W. H., 1965, p. 290) The study of literature could promote cultural understanding and tolerance, encourage creativity and even extend reading proficiency and interaction with a text.

### 2.1. Teaching for communication, skill development and enjoyment

Mathieson, M., wrote in The Preachers of Culture that as a school subject, "English first existed as instruction in the basic skills of reading and writing." Paffard said that as a subject, "English is mainly concerned with skills of expression, communication, discovery and evaluation." (Paffard, M., 1978, p. 11) The development of communication skills has been the crux

of Second Language teaching. This, probably, led to the decline in the prestige of literary studies. There are other reasons for this decline which include an unwise choice of books, a shortage of textbooks, incompetent teachers and deficient reading habits of the pupils. Curriculum designers have tended to reduce the literature component, and "dilute" examination techniques, especially at the Second Language level. It has been pointed out that "all too often emphasis on literary knowledge disguised poor language attainments." (Gilroy-Scott, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1983, p. 1) Therefore, there should be a radical reconsideration of the educational aims of English literature courses and a rehabilitation and reintegration of literature in communicative language programmes.

There is a close relationship between language and literature. Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. The inclusion of literature in the curriculum provides primarily, instruction in the skill of reading and secondarily, in listening, speaking and writing. Pupils hear readings, enact, discuss, write about discussions and produce creative writing. There is great potential in literature for educational enrichment, although literature based on language acquisition courses has been unjustly condemned as inadequate. The study of literature is, indirectly, the study of language. Literary communication is similar to non-literary communication insofar as it deals with the same basic language system, (that is grammar, vocabulary and the rules for combining these meaningfully). There

is a need for students to be introduced to appropriate choices of primarily literary texts, to be taught the necessary study skills, to be taught how to apply language studies to literary studies and to be enabled to cope with the reading requirements.

It should be remembered that Second Language learners of English are less proficient in the use of English than are their First Language counterparts. When literature is taught to such Second Language learners, perhaps the ideal thing to do would be to "foreground" it as a type of discourse which stands apart from ordinary, non-literary discourse by virtue of its communicative purpose and special generic conventions. "Foregrounding" becomes more meaningful when the choice of literature to be studied is relevant to the lives of pupils. Rodger explained the effects of "foregrounding" literature in the pupils' consciousness as development of "communication awareness" and "language consciousness". Thus, in studying literature, pupils have to be taught to recognise special literary conventions and to make sense of "the ways in which authors, especially poets, exploit the possibilities latent in the established code or system of the language in order to create and convey their own uniquely personal kind of meaning." (Rodger, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1983, pp. 38-9)

When students study literature that is not in their mother tongue, they should be reasonably proficient in the language of the text, otherwise, they would miss the significance of much of the literary study. As Rodger said,

If we read a poem which somehow reminds us of a prayer, it is not sufficient merely to note this as a vague impression. We have to ask in what respects it resembles the vocabulary and syntax of an actual prayer but in what other respects it differs from any authentic instance of real prayer, and why."

(Rodger, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J. (ed.), 1983, p. 40, emphasis mine)

The principle of comparison and contrast should be applied to literary discourse. Ultimately, the student should be able to recognise the pattern in the linguistic study of a literary work. Then he may be said to have acquired literary competence which is "analogous to and based on" communicative competence. (Rodger, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1983, p. 43)

Traditionally, literature has been used to teach language usage, and this, traditionally, has compounded the distaste for unsuitable literature. Of course, it would be senseless to learn a language and to pass it without attempting to see 'what the masters have done with it'. But literature can also be used to develop language use. It is ideal for developing an awareness of language use because it involves "language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and the role relationship are defined." (McKay, S., as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1986, p. 191) The study of literature may not promote occupational progress, but interaction with literary texts will definitely develop reading proficiency and thus promote academic and occupational objectives.

Development of reading skills is a pedagogic aim of teaching a Second Language. A literary response commences only when moderate fluency in reading has been

attained. The response, irrespective of how limited or crude it is, precedes analysis of the response to a work of literature. As Brumfit and Carter put it, the literature syllabus in Second Language situations must operate in two stages, the first, enabling students to "experience" literature and the second, enabling them to describe, explain or account for it. Much literature teaching, in practice, reverses the procedure. (Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 31) Students should be able to read, read widely and be able at a later stage to enjoy the literature of different traditions. More than anything else, a stimulating reading experience enriches the reader's perception of what it is to be human. The experience of literature does not end in knowledge but in understanding. Many students enjoy reading literature. "As enjoyment plays such an important part in any learning process, literature is potentially a useful aid to the language teacher." (Short & Candlin, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A. (eds.), 1986, p. 91)

Brumfit felt that literature provides a convenient source of motivating and communicative content for a course in a foreign language. He said,

Literature is one of the only three areas on which a foreign language content syllabus could be based (the others are linguistics and civilisation) which will not conflict with the claims of other subjects in the curriculum.

(Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1986, p. 92ff,  
author's emphasis)

As reading literature demands individual response, it involves interaction of reader with texts. Rice said,

"the individual response to texts is the starting-point of any critical discussion" (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 40), from which meaning is negotiated by the reader. In a classroom, this results in comprehension activities and interpretation activities.

However, extension of reading skills is not the only objective achieved by teaching literature. Literary awareness in terms of "the recognition of the density of allusion" and "the significance of the text" (Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 187, emphasis mine), more than understanding of the language of the text are crucial to being a good reader. According to Brumfit, even native speakers of English fail to understand Shakespeare on a literal level, "but this failure will not be crucial to their response unless it develops above a certain level. Accepting appropriate tolerance of uncertainty is an essential part of being a good reader." (Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 187)

Although literature provides instances of language structure in use, which could be used as a basis for instruction in the language skills, such as reading, comprehension and grammatical analysis, it necessitates an "internalisation" of grammar "which would permit him (the reader) to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings." (Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 185) Grammar, which "is the dynamics of communication" is taken for granted by those who have "a highly proficient but wholly internalised communicative competence in English", including many ESL

teachers. (Rodger as quoted by Brumfit, C. J. (ed.), 1983, p. 50)

But of course, the study of literature should not include intensive grammatical analysis, extensive paragraphing, cramming of long eloquent passages, dwelling on literary history or practical criticism. This has been stated by reputable reports such as the Newbolt Report and confirmed repeatedly by language theorists such as Arnold, Mathieson, Paffard, Shayer and others. On the contrary, the study of literature should involve integrated activities which project the text as a unified and coherent discourse.

## 2.2 Sensitization in preparation for life

The role of literature in sensitizing students towards recognition of different discourses has been discussed already. But the value of literature is not confined to this only. Literature sensitizes readers to linguistic variations (varieties of English); it encourages liberal, ethical and humanitarian attitudes in the reader and it inculcates respect for the imagination, the intellect and literary traditions. In general, the teaching of literature refines the sensibilities. What Durham said of poetry should hold good for literature in general.

The whole aim of including poetry in the curriculum is its extraordinary power to encourage and extend the feelings and perceptions . . . . The function of poetry in education is the enlargement of experience, not by information or instruction or precept but by direct impact.

(Durham, K. M., 1969, p. 15)

In 1880, Arnold wrote that,

Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty and truth in alliance together, it suggests, however indirectly, high and noble principles in action, and it inspires the emotion as helpful in making principles operative.

(as quoted in Newbolt, 1921, p. 49)

The Newbolt Report also explained that,

poets, philosophers and historians have the power of revealing new values, relations of thought, feeling and act, by which the dull and the superficial sight of the multitude is illuminated and helped to penetrate in the direction of reality.

(Newbolt, 1921, p. 17)

Even Wordsworth felt that "the common, unaided senses of man are not equal to the realisation of the world." (as quoted in Newbolt, 1921, p. 17)

Training pupils to read sensitively and intelligently is one of the primary aims of teaching literature at any level. Therefore, the inclusion of literature in a language syllabus makes the relationship between the reader and the text an intrinsic part of the educational structure. In reading a literary text, pupils are engaged in "a complex, essentially intellectual process of searching for and identifying a set of ideas appropriate to an academic task . . . ." (Gilroy-Scott, as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1986, p. 2) Reading involves comprehension of the total context and the rhetorical strategies of the text, besides the knowledge, attitudes and expectations of the reader. Gilroy-Scott quoted Urquhart on p. 4 of Brumfit, C. H., (ed.) 1986, as having said, "Comprehension must be a provisional

construct by an individual based partly on a language text, partly on the knowledge and skills he brings to the text."

The study of literature enables pupils to see the point of plays, poems and novels, a vicarious experience of life by which it produces an empathetic understanding of others. It is indeed "a springboard for personal experience." (Bullock, 1975) As Durham said,

Literature enlarges the boundaries of human awareness . . . . The experience of literature . . . focuses on reality; places it in perspective; we are, as it were, disengaged from it and it is this which enables us to come to terms with experience. (Durham, K. M., 1987, Crux, vol. 21:2, p. 44)

Thus, literature is associated with "the culture of the feelings" and "the training of the emotions". It has "character-training possibilities". In the training of the intellect too, literature is extremely valuable for its contribution to logic, accurate perception, precise interpretation of language and judgement of various kinds. In the words of Moody,

Literature, by its nature so various, confronts the student with the opportunity of dealing with an endless stream of fresh and unpredictable experiences. It is thus an excellent preparation for later life, especially at the more professional levels where the educated man has to be ready to take on, evaluate, and make decisions about a wide range of diverse problems.

(Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 13)

### 2.3 Acculturation

In this investigation, this term will be used in the sense of ingraining a "feeling" for culture, civilisation and emotional refinement. Thus, when it is said that literature has an acculturating effect, it means that literature has a capacity to develop within readers a sense of their own culture, perception and an understanding of another person's culture. The word culture also will be used in Moody's sense to denote "what is peculiarly characteristic of a particular community, . . . its organisation, laws, customs, pay, art, religion . . . its totality." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 8)

Education is a process of development of all faculties of the individual.

It is important in any education to impart to each individual a comprehensive insight into his own culture, for this gives him pride, self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Some of this knowledge is transmitted in the family, in places of worship; and some in various parts of the school curriculum. Literature . . . can often fill in any gaps and weld the whole into a meaningful picture.  
(Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 8)

In the same context, Moody felt that, if undertaken wisely, studies in literature could bring students into contact with the great minds and personalities, teachers and thinkers of the world. He, so accurately, said, "We could manage to live without knowledge of such things and such people, but having made their acquaintance, we would not wish to be without them," (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 8)

McKay was of the opinion that literature could "promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student." (McKay, S., as quoted by Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 143)

So you may ask what is the use of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights and wrongs and all its arguments are equally good. One of the most obvious uses, I think, is its encouragement of tolerance.

(Northrop Frye, as quoted by McKay, S., in Brumfit, C. J., & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 193)

Allen wrote "literature is a facet of culture. Its significance can best be understood in terms of its culture; and its purpose is meaningful only when the assumptions it is based on are understood and accepted." (Allen, W., 1975, p. 111) In McKay's view, literature is also "an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and for introducing cultural assumptions." (Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 198)

According to I. A. Richards, literature has cultural value insofar as human development involves communal activities that maintain customs, institutions, ideology, entertainment and value systems. So, cultures vary in sophistication, refinement and strength. Culture needs to be communicated physically, linguistically, socially and artistically. Literature is a process of "cultural amplification." (Richards, as interpreted by Moody, quoted by Brumfit, C. J. (ed.), 1983, pp. 22-3) Speaking of languages, Saviile-Troike said, it is "the expressive dimension of culture" and

the primary medium for transmitting much of culture. The teacher of language is therefore inescapably a teacher of culture; the school . . . an instrument of enculturation - and for the student from a different culture, of acculturation.

(Saville-Troike, M., 1976, p. 140)

So the teacher of English as a Second Language has to be "a cross-cultural interpreter" and, such a teacher, while engaged in teaching students from different cultural backgrounds should:

- understand the nature of culture,
- recognise the validity of cultural differences and their importance to identity and self-worth,
- be able to identify and distinguish individual and cultural differences in students,
- recognise both similarities and differences between Anglo-American and other cultures and their significance for teaching strategies and content, and
- be able to prepare and assist students to interact successfully in cross-cultural setting.

(Saville-Troike, M., 1976, p. 141)

Some situations in life can be dealt with by rational procedures. Some cannot be dealt with by intellectual recognition but demand emotional response. Moody highlights the sight of a grown man beating a small boy, a sight which should provoke our indignation, "whereas the sight of the sea breaking upon a rocky coast demands our awe and admiration; and we should say that anyone who failed the normal response was 'less than human'." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 10) Explaining what emotions are, Moody said that "they are derived from the basic human instincts," and

as human institutions have become more complex, they have become attached to things which are more peculiar to each culture (e.g. a baby or a small child evokes admiration throughout the world; but Beethoven's Missa Solemnis may seem boring to an educated African, while the tribal tattooings of a Polynesian islander may seem ugly to an European). In some cases, we say that people should 'have some feeling'; at other times, we say that 'feelings need controlling'.

(Moody, H. L. B., 1971, pp. 10-11, author's emphasis)

The process of growing up, the process of overall development and the basic purpose of education "is concerned with the recognition and appreciation of other people; and . . . this is often quite a painful process, involving conflicts, clashes, and friction of many kinds." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 11) A really educated person respects the attitudes of other people. The understanding of others can occur only when one has understood oneself and one's own culture.

As Moody said,

More than most other kinds of study, it (literature) acquaints us with the whole range of possibilities of human life: from happiness, achievement, ecstasy, joy, love, freedom, friendship, self-respect, to greed, defeat, despair, apathy, hate, disintegration, death.

(Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 12)

Having experienced literature, "The general probability is . . . that he will thereafter look upon the complexities of life with much greater understanding, insight, tolerance and sympathy . . . ." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, pp. 12-3)

In today's world-situation, where there is so much diversity of culture and race, there is great need for understanding humanity's cultural heritage. Students of the English language need to know of the great tradition of English Literature as well as that of literature written in English. Multi-ethnic schools in Britain have been introducing African literature in English in their syllabi because "exposure to African experience through literature is an important way of breaking down negative attitudes." (Gunner, E., 1984) In writing his novel Things Fall Apart Achebe was rehabilitating traditional African society and values in the minds of Europeans as well as in those of Africans. Thus, a literary work helps readers "put themselves in other people's shoes and understand their predicament from their point of view rather than our own." (Reid, J., 1982, pp. 33-4)

#### 2.4 Appreciation for Aesthetic Education

As with the First Language, the ultimate aim of studying literature is literary and critical appreciation. In fact, this is the ultimate aim of any language curriculum. It is not enough to respond to a text; the response should be developed and structured. As Rodger believed, "students of literature are accountable for their reactions to the works they read." (as quoted by Brumfit, C. J., (ed.), 1983, p. 46)

Literature should never be studied merely for the acquisition of facts. Once the preliminary stage of literary experience, namely, pleasure or enjoyment, has

been experienced, the interpretation and assimilation of the experience must take place. Thus, in aesthetic reading, readers make judgements about characters, comment on them in follow-up activities, and if in a classroom, fantasize on what they would have done in a similar situation. Having penetrated the contextual framework, they then perceive the language used to express the content and to analyse its expressiveness.

Continued reading develops the power of discrimination in an individual and, as Moody said in 1968, p. 4 as "one gains experience in discrimination, one compares one's discrimination with that of other, more experienced people." In this manner, one develops the capacity to judge and to comment on the propriety of situations.

One of the primary aims of teaching literature is to promote critical thinking. Reid believed that literary discussions were the few occasions when "pupils and teachers meet on equal ground." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 30) It is often, by challenging the conventional literary opinion handed down to them by the teacher, that pupils redefine their assumptions and arrive at greater appreciation of merit. As I. A. Richards said, "By throwing . . . students entirely upon their own resources," teachers would "bring out all their powers of observation, concentration, discrimination and judgement." (as quoted by Moody, H. L. B., 1968, pp. 5-6)

Readers respond to different texts in different ways.

It must be recognised that the individual response to texts is the starting-point of any critical discussion; . . . in fact, there is no single correct response to any literary work; . . . meaning is largely a question of negotiation between the reader and the text.

(Rice, M., 1986, CruX, vol. 20:1, p. 40)

Chambers also confirmed this possibility of variation in response when he said that "criticism is not about error, not about being right or wrong." In his view, "there can never be a definite reading, but only an additional reading, all of them in some way revealing . . . ." (Chambers, A., 1985, p. 127)

A reader of literature is constantly re-negotiating meaning "in the light of what has gone before and in the light of his/her own life experiences." (MacKay, R., 1986, CruX, vol. 20:1, p. 6) So a poem can come to mean something quite different to the individual reader. A text assumes life only when it is realised and responded to; and with his individual disposition, each reader "concretises" the text, filling in "unwritten portions", "gaps" and "indeterminate areas" in his own way. (Tompkins, as quoted in Stear, N., 1988, p. 73)

Such appreciation requires readers to make value judgements. This may be a particularly difficult task for Second Language pupils and hence should be deferred until a fairly advanced level has been reached in literary studies. Nevertheless, the experience gained from this kind of systematic interpretation is very valuable and, therefore, should be made available to pupils through the study of subjects such as literature at school. If, therefore we accept the fact that our aims in teaching

literature are to foster these values, skills, enjoyment and appreciation, it would be possible to move with confidence into the choice of a field of literature which would prove appropriate to the situation. It should be borne in mind that the choice eliminates difficulty in the language content, remoteness of theme and setting of texts which might lead to loss of interest.

A great share of the blame for the failure of teaching literature in Second Language programmes is attributable to the inadequacy of or confusion concerning the criteria used in selecting texts. Rice's opinion that

the education authorities in this country have laboured under the constraints of a set of self-imposed, narrowly conservative criteria, which may have been appropriate as guidelines to set work selection twenty or thirty years ago, . . . but which do not now reflect with any sense of reality the mores of South Africa in the 1980s.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 39)

seems to be gaining wide recognition. Even today, the questions that remain unanswered are: Who should select the books? What kind of books should be chosen? Both questions revolve around the awareness of the issue: Who should study those books? The criteria for the selection of works to be studied by school children need to be reassessed and renegotiated

so that pupils emerging from our school system have a flexible range of criteria to which they can refer and which can be applied to different kinds of texts from different historical periods and socio-cultural contexts

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 40)

In fact, it should be agreed that "the criteria for selection should be renegotiated to allow for a much wider and more varied choice of texts." (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 41)

Textbooks are generally chosen by textbook committees. How far are classroom teachers, especially teachers from areas such as Ciskei, involved in the selections made by these committees? These teachers, who are familiar with pupils' problems with the books prescribed, are not consulted. On what criteria do the "experts" base their decisions? Besides appropriateness to age, mental maturity and relevance, criteria vary from subject to subject. The following views concerning a selection of literature are worth considering.

(Protherough, 1983, pp. 149-54) offered these guidelines to teachers choosing books for study in the class-room:

- Is the book worth reading?
- Will the book be popular?
- Will the book be useful?
- Is it suitable for the children for whom it is intended?

Brumfit suggested linguistic consideration, cultural proximity, length, pedagogical role, generic status and classicist tendency as criteria for selecting literature texts. (Brumfit & Carter, (eds.), 1986, pp. 189-90) Littlewood, W., put forward certain criteria such as structural suitability, stylistic appropriateness, interest and relevance as suitable in the selection of texts for ESL pupils. (Littlewood, as quoted by Brumfit & Carter, (eds.), 1986, p. 193) Reid listed literary merit, relevance, moral seriousness, examination requirements and enjoyment as criteria for selecting texts. Literary merit, relevance, moral seriousness, aesthetic

value and the capacity for skill development, will be discussed here. If applied carefully, these could rehabilitate the status of literature in a Second Language programme.

### 3.1 Literary merit

Reid believed that literary merit was the most important criterion to be used in the choice of books. While children are encouraged to develop a taste for reading, they can also be encouraged to read anything, irrespective of literary merit, but Reid felt that "to make people study books of inferior quality is to confer unwarranted respectability on the second-rate." (Reid, 1982, p. 40, author's emphasis) Earlier, on the same point, she said that works prescribed for study should be worth studying (p. 39).

But how is literary merit to be defined? Scholars and researchers have tried to define it in several ways. Stear (1988) looked for correspondence with reality, scope for enjoyment, universality of truth, authorial organisation, point of view, lively characterisation, structural unity and good style in a good novel. Gilfillan (1984) mentioned content and style as important qualities of literary merit.

Most scholars advocate resort to the "safe classics" as the safest course of action. But some question the validity of the reputation of the classics. According to Reid,

A book which is the first of its kind or has some other historical importance retains a status which may be in excess of its actual literary merit, and other excellent books which are tied to particular historical circumstances may become obsolete . . . good timing, good luck and good publicity can help one to succeed where another of at least equal merit may fail.

(Reid, J., 1982, p. 41)

Shayer spoke of the four fallacies that haunted English teaching in the early part of the century. The classical fallacy, the Old English fallacy, the imitative fallacy and the moral fallacy had, at one time reduced English literary studies to grammar study, "allusion hunting" and imitation of pseudo-classical models. (Shayer, D., 1972, pp. 6-20) Rice talked of "such uncontroversial plays as Julius Caesar appearing on Matriculation lists with monotonous regularity." (Rice, M., 1986, p. 40) Generally, it was assumed that if students were "continually exposed to the best uses of the English language, it would in some sense 'rub off' on their own performance in the language". (Short & Candlin, see source below.) But it has also been discovered that "many literary texts of a high calibre were difficult and inaccessible to . . . non-native English-speaking students." (Short & Candlin, see source below.) This is so, because

Much . . . of what is best in English literature derives from ages linguistically very distinct from Modern English, and even modern writers present problems of comprehension, as they often break both writing conventions and the rules of English in the service of the literary artifice.

(Short & Candlin, as quoted in Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A., (eds.), 1986, p. 91)

Texts selected for study should be neither linguistically nor conceptually difficult.

Works of literature have "many shades of language complexity and sophistication." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 16) The language of a prescribed text should be suited to students' capacity to understand and interpret. The linguistic appropriateness of a text could be classified scientifically in terms of vocabulary counts, lists of grammatical structures and so on. But the language factor cannot be isolated. Consideration of the language should also include concepts, situations, allusions and references. The complexities of style are partly determined by "the author's own way of grasping the subject he deals with, the literary conventions prevailing at the time he was writing, and the kind of readers he assumes himself to be writing for." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 16)

Both Gilfillan (1984) and Stear (1988) quoted Arnold Kettle on the capacity of the novel to portray life realistically. They referred to literature as a mirror held up to the world - "a speaking picture". Gilfillan said that great literature is "significant" as it has "broad appeal" and "wide acclaim". Great literature conveys truths about life that are universal and relevant. Great literature also provides "excellent models for correct language usage and registers." (Gilfillan, 1984, p. 34) But since "significant" literature of high literary standard may prove too difficult for L<sub>2</sub> learners, literary texts should be graded.

Povey (1980), Reid (1982), Rice (1986) and Gilfillan (1984) advocated the introduction of indigenous literature in English to confront the linguistic difficulty of the classics. Povey wrote that it was absurd not to teach South African literature to students in South Africa and said it betrayed a lack of respect for South African culture. Later, he added that South African works included in the syllabus should include works by indigenous African writers. "The style, the form of English used, is also a fresh illumination, . . . of what is happening to the English language in . . . brash and unconservative hands. . . ." After African students had witnessed "the English language at the service of their own experience", there would be opportunity to discuss the critical principles and the standards of evaluation which should be used to judge the merit of the book. (Povey, J., 1980, Crux, vol. 14:2, pp. 15-16)

Among researchers, there is increasing recognition of the need of indigenous literature and increasing respect for its effectiveness in Second Language teaching. Gilfillan testified,

A striking example of indigenous literature which might lay strong claim to being included in the category of significant literature is Things Fall Apart (Chinua Achebe). This novel has, in the last twenty-six years, achieved international status, and is widely recognised as one of the best examples of African literature in English.

(Gilfillan, 1984, p. 28)

Perhaps the best defence, by far, of indigenous literature has been made by Lindfors:

. . . intelligibility and relevance do not necessarily guarantee excellence in a work of art . . . . A book's quality must be judged by other criteria as well - beauty of form, brilliance of language, felicity of characterisation, aptness of dramatic action, high moral seriousness, etc. But even by these criteria I am willing to insist that the best African literary works compare favourably with any of the titles currently on the literature syllabus and in many ways surpass them as verbal artefacts created out of images, metaphors and symbols able to move the hearts and minds of living human beings. (Lindfors, as quoted by Gillfillan, 1984, p. 73)

### 3.2 Relevance

As a criterion for book selection, the term "relevance" needs some clarification. Relevance to what? Books selected should be relevant to the philosophy of the curriculum, to the political climate (in South Africa), to the phase of development of the pupils (in terms of age, mental maturity, race, taste and culture). In literary and cultural circles, the cry for relevance is vehement.

The plea for relevance in education, especially in the study of literature, has had the adverse effect of watering down the Great Tradition. Educationists such as Meihuizen (1981) inquire why academic standards should be lowered to meet the requirements of Second Language learners. However, classroom teachers and researchers entertain their own views on the suitability of certain texts at certain levels in South Africa.

Books prescribed for detailed literary study should be relevant to the life experiences of pupils. Works of fiction interest pupils only insofar as these works truthfully depict the life that pupils know. Of course,

the reality of a work of fiction is not an historical kind of truth. It is more of a philosophical kind of truth or, as Wellek & Warren claimed, "an illusion of reality" that, nevertheless is "a convincing reading of life". (Wellek, R. & Warren, A., 1949, p. 220) Therefore, the truth portrayed in fiction has relevance for the reader because it helps him "understand life better than before". (Stear, 1987, p. 8) Whitehead said, "There is only one subject for education and that is Life in all its manifestations." (Whitehead, as quoted by Moody, 1971, p. 14)

In extending Whitehead's image, Moody described much of the literature teaching in vogue as being similar to teaching people to swim by pushing them in at the deep end. Pupils are sometimes plunged into the study of eighteenth-century novels "with the social occasions of eighteenth-century English country gentlemen and their ladies, with much talk of barouches, esplanades, backgammon, spinets, shrubbery walks and Bath Assemblies, etc." (Moody, H. L. B., 1971, p. 18) Such references could create an aversion to literature. Reid also condemned the "Englishness" of the literature prescribed. She noted that nearly all the textbooks prescribed had an European setting and gave the impression that literature was something that happened abroad. (Reid, J., 1982, pp. 47-8)

Reid's investigation revealed that some South African Departments of Education have made attempts to prescribe African works, but these were limited to a few poems or stories by White writers of doubtful literary merit.

Pauline Smith, Alan Paton and H. C. Bosman were the usual South African novelists prescribed. Only a few stories by Nadine Gordimer have been set. But the writing of Black authors in English was significantly absent. A few poems by Wole Soyinka, Achebe's Things Fall Apart and V. S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas have managed to stay the course. Reid felt that the English bias was particularly harmful for young Black children. She quoted Searle as saying that foreign students should not be sold the English tradition before they have experienced their own. (Reid, J., 1982, pp. 48-9)

This point is similar to J. C. Muller's (1982), who felt that the English ethos was foreign to the African student. Lindfors was of the opinion that,

Most African secondary school students have not developed such rarefied tastes and would prefer good, honest, home cooking (indigenous literature), which would certainly be better for them, especially in their formative years. It would be much healthier to put strange foreign dishes on the university menu rather than on every high school plate.  
(Lindfors, as quoted by Gilfillan, 1984, p. 49)

It would seem that education authorities defend their traditional selection as a precaution against offending any racial group in the heterogeneous society of South Africa. But the consequence is that there is no connection between literature and life. The classics have little to say to the pupil in modern society. Selections should be related in a way meaningful to life and to the pupils' experience of the world. Arguing against the cultural reasons that may be presented to show why an

educated South African should be familiar with British literature, Reid explained that,

this is Africa in the late twentieth century, remote in time and space from these British writers, with different problems and preoccupations, a different environment and a different climate. There is a diversity of cultures and races unknown in Britain in previous centuries, and an imperative need for mutual understanding. This is why the cultures of Africa should also be accepted as part of South Africa's cultural heritage.

(Reid, J., 1982, p. 35)

Povey highlighted the literature produced by writers to the north of South Africa's topographical borders. He claimed, "It will, at least, be highly revealing of the attitudes and beliefs of the most articulate and original men in these societies." (Povey, 1980, Crux, vol. 14:2, p. 16) In the same context, on p. 15, he said, "It is unthinkable for the national literature not to be taught in . . . Australia as a dominion, or Kenya as an African state." Later, in the same article, he said that South African works studied in schools "should include those written by non-Europeans . . . The newer African writers are also part of South African literature and should be read by both Black students and White students."

The African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o himself, condemning the European focus in Black education said,

Thus the teaching of only European literature, and mostly British imperialist literature, in our schools, means that our students are daily being confronted with the European reflection of itself, . . . . Our children are made to look at, analyse, and evaluate the world as made and seen by the Europeans . . . They see how Prospero sees Caliban and not how Caliban sees Prospero; how Crusoe discovers and remakes Man Friday

in Crusoe's image, but never how Friday views himself and his heroic struggles against centuries of Crusoe's exploitation and oppression.

(Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as quoted by Brumfit & Carter, (eds.), 1986, p. 225, emphasis mine).

In 1976, Rice wrote,

in any literature course, surely if education is to be effective it should be integrated with the pupils' cultural background and relevant to his experience of life and aspirations. In fact, he should be able to identify with what he is reading. This is particularly so in Black education where there can be little excuse, except snobbery, for hanging on to an exclusively European vision of reality.

(Rice, 1976, Crux, vol. 10:2, p. 33)

Writing ten years later, in 1986, Rice found himself still advising authorities that

the study of literature in our schools (at least) should be related in a meaningful way to the pupils' experience of the world; that it should challenge their prejudices and preconceived notions about life while allowing them to explore on a meaningful level the complexities attendant upon so much of their experience of the tensions of living and growing up in the 20th century, and more specifically in the multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-lingual world of South Africa.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 45)

Since Reid's research in South African schools when the prescribed works were found to be

- too long, difficult and remote for the majority of pupils to enjoy or appreciate,
- too insubstantial for Second Language pupils, to provide critical thinking or judgement, or not literary enough,

no significant change or improvement has been noticed in the syllabus for Second Language (Black) pupils, as a reference to Section 1.1 will show. The hesitation of the authorities to prescribe African works in English, a body of literature that is close at hand, is perhaps due to their ignorance of its potential and its uniqueness to the African experience, or to their misguided conviction of its literary inferiority.

Anticipating any arguments that, "Great literature is culture-linked only at the plot level," and that, "Relevance is not decided by date," Meihuizen asserted that "the background of a novel set in Ghana . . . may need explanation for a South African child." (Meihuizen, D., 1981, Crux, vol. 15:2, p. 16) Students who sat for the Cambridge Board 'A' levels in 1980 and read Achebe's A Man of the People complained of difficulties experienced in coming to terms with a novel from an alien culture and an historical context with which they were unfamiliar. Stephen Wicks of Camborne School, Cornwall, commented:

One or two think its remoteness from Britain in the 80's discounts its value, but most now speak of coping with the problem as enjoyable, and cultural insights and sense of common humanity gained as what good literature can offer.

(as quoted by Gunner, 1984, p. xvi)

So, ". . . South African syllabuses should contain, in addition to works by Gordimer, Fugard and Plomer, etc., works by André Brink, Etienne Leroux, Bartho Smit, C. Louis Leipoldt, Zeke Mphahlele, Mongane Serote, etc." (Rice, 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 45)

### 3.3 Moral seriousness

There is no dearth of critics who uphold moral seriousness as a criterion for good literature. Arnold believed that good poetry tends "to form the soul and character", "to beset a love of beauty and of truth", and to suggest, however indirectly, "noble principles of action." Several voices have been raised in the Arnoldian tradition viewing literature in the civilizing role. The Newbolt Report commended that, if "science and literature" were "ably and enthusiastically taught, the child's natural love of goodness will be strongly encouraged and great progress made in the strengthening of the will." (p. 9) According to F. R. Leavis, moral seriousness was the touchstone of great literature.

Since the acquisition of sound attitudes and values is one of the prominent aims of teaching literature, the values embodied in literary works should be explored. The problem of good and evil is not merely a problem in literature but it is inherent in life itself. The knowledge of right and wrong is present in children from a very early age. It is an accepted fact that human instincts display a natural tendency towards the forbidden. It is also a fact which all great literature impresses upon the reader. This explains the tendency among writers to "moralize" fiction.

If novels are a true reflection of life, they must reflect the truth about life. As Kettle said, in his Preface to An Introduction to the English Novel, "the good novel does not simply convey life, it says something

about life. It reveals some kind of pattern in life. It brings significance." (Kettle, A., 1951) Pupils and readers are expected to respond to this "significance". So attention should be paid to the development of attitude formation and change in children (Freinkel, E., 1988, Crux, vol. 22:2, p. 15) Teachers and book-selectors should be sure of the moral criteria they employ to explore the values embodied in the literature that is prescribed. Moral issues should be examined in relation to stated cultural, socio-historical contexts because

literary texts are cultural artefacts and, as such, emerge from specific social circumstances in specific historical periods . . . from which they draw their meaning and system of values and, incidentally, to which they reciprocally contribute their own vision.

(Rice M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 39)

Therefore, it cannot be presumed that there is any "universality of values" encapsulated in literature." (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 38)

This does not mean that moral education in literature can take place only through "subversion and questioning" but, as Jane Reid said, "There must be agreed notions of right and wrong. Society cannot flounder in the existential chaos of each individual deciding every moral issue for himself." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 32) Books worth reading should convey subtly and by implication a sense of what is "tangibly right" (Ibid.)

However, moral seriousness can be a controversial test of great literature. Too rigid an application of it

would exclude even acclaimed works from the canons of the Great Tradition. Rice confirmed this when he affirmed that negative criteria such as; no sex, no "bad" language, no controversial religious, political or racial issues would exclude from school syllabi, for many years to come, works acknowledged as great. (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1. p. 39)

One of the consequences of this policy of exclusion is that the vast majority of pupils who pass through our matric system emerge (to all intents and purposes) ignorant of the vast and rich literary heritage to which they are heirs . . . the sanitised nature of their school experience does not prepare them for the roles they will have to play as citizens of this country . . . it does not promote the kind of intellectual toughness and flexibility that is expected of university students.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 39, emphasis mine)

Readers should be allowed to formulate their own responses to momentous questions of morality. Moral issues should not be extracted didactically but, "should be examined in terms of the questions they raise about human behaviour rather than the answers they provide." (Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 45) The moment literature becomes didactic, it is reflected in the style and in the intrusion of the authorial voice on the subject.

The reading of a good book leaves us slightly changed, bigger, different - we have gained in understanding, in tolerance, in empathy - we have become sensitized . . . Literature is an experience of endless renewal.

(Durham, K. M. 1987, Crux, vol. 21:3, p. 44)

That is why children need to be warned against the subtleties of indoctrination and the techniques of persuasion. This can be done by judicious questionings, probing and by encouraging them in an "unremitting quest for truth." (Freinkel, E., 1988, Crux, vol. 22:, p. 16) Nevertheless works of literature that are selected for study should be able to challenge moral debate when required.

### 3.4 Aesthetic value

Literature is not taught merely to extend "the personal vision and experience" (Reid, J., 1982, p. 24) or to help the pupil to adjust to the environment in which he lives, but also to educate him aesthetically, so as to enable him to read carefully and thoroughly and to develop the capacity to discriminate, appreciate, judge and enjoy. So works prescribed should consider the aesthetic education of the pupil. Works should have aesthetic value.

A good work of literature should extend the appreciation of art and produce the joy of creation. It should enrich life in the future. It should be a key to style, which Reid described as "a feeling for correctness and clear thinking, familiarity with words and . . . a good ear." (Reid, J., 1982, p. 16) An enjoyable book will stimulate an interest in reading more books, and, in general, an enjoyment of literature.

Pupils, especially those at Matriculation level, need to be trained to develop their critical and

appreciative abilities. They should be able to recognise in a writer, change of tone, register and intention. Moreover, they should develop the ability to respond with precision to "the richness of nuance, subtleties of thought and human interactions, and variety and range of interest that literature offers." (Meihuizen, D., 1981, Crux, vol. 15:2, p. 16) How can this response be encouraged among Black pupils in Ciskei who experience basic difficulty in differentiating literary quality, tone, register and authorial intention? What kind of aesthetic criteria should be involved in selecting works for such pupils?

Perhaps, the advice of Povey (1980), Rice (1986) and Stear (1988) concerning comparative literary study and analysis in the classroom should be accepted:

If one of the aims in teaching literature is to encourage discrimination, then it surely follows that the basis of such teaching should be a comparative one in which the pupils are exposed to a wide variety of different kinds of discourse.

(Rice, M., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 44)

It is a moot point to ponder over Povey's suggestion that the use of indigenous African writing in English may be more advantageous than the use of conventional works in the teaching of literature to Black pupils (see page 49) as it affords speculation on the success or otherwise of the use of the English language in "brash", "unconservative", "foreign" hands. This kind of comparative study would help pupils to examine and improve their own style (Hale, S., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:3, p. 33) As Stear ventured, perhaps it may be the study of

"dappled things" in literature that would "create enthusiasm for the great literary works. (Stear, N., 1988, p. 21)

The subject of comparative study necessitates the prescription of more books of greater variety of choice from the Great Tradition as well as from indigenous African writing in English. This is quite in keeping with the trend among Black educationists to retain Shakespeare in the syllabus even if this should involve the removal of much else. It is also quite in keeping with the aims of this investigation which deals only with the novel component of the DET syllabus for Ciskei and proposes to look at the advantages of an African novel in English as compared with an English classical novel. Ultimately, if a book is understood only with difficulty, such a book will not be enjoyable.

The books that are prescribed should be enjoyable, in addition to being meaningful. When a work of literature is enjoyable, pupils become emotionally involved and are stimulated "to display their insights, imagination, intellectual excitement and originality of thought." (Rice, M. 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1, p. 46) Indirectly, good books educate aesthetically. They develop literary discrimination, critical thinking, analytical and observatory powers. Aesthetic experience can also inspire aesthetic creativity. As Reid said, "love of books and of poetry can lead to the impulse to create one's own." (Reid, J., 1982, pp. 16-17) Thus, aesthetic experience leads to literary skill development.

### 3.5 Skill development

As Reid said, literature falls into the area of skill development also (see page 18). Reading, the use of language and discrimination are the most important skills offered by literary studies. It also affords training in the understanding of syntax and the

recognition of a writer's tone and point of view; whether he is writing objectively or has an axe to grind; whether he is writing squarely to explain or emotively to persuade or impress; whether he is writing straightforwardly or making use of irony. It involves an understanding of register, of implication and of analogy and of underlying meaning - in the theme - which may be more important than the account or story the writer seems to be telling. It involves understanding the use of the symbol and the atmospheric use of description, and many other things besides.

(Alan Warner, 1954, p. 14)

In a complete and authentic kind of education the development of such skills is the aim. The mere ability to communicate by means of language is, for any pupil, not enough. Pupils should also be trained to develop an ability to appreciate a work of literary art, to discriminate between great literature and mediocre literature, to judge literary merit and to write creatively. So, while considering the scope for skill development as a criterion in selecting works, it should be ensured that the response developed to such works is stimulated by discussion in the classroom, by wider and more sensitive reading and by fostering critical enjoyment.

Lemmer's delineation of the stages of reading illustrates how skill develops. The pupils' natural sequence of response moves from personal engagement and enjoyment, through perception embodied in enacting or describing the text to interpretation and evaluation. (Lemmer, A., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:2, p. 4) While responding to fiction, pupils learn or, sometimes, absorb the skills of prediction/anticipation, recapitulation, focusing of the viewpoint, analysis of form, style and theme. The development of these skills causes spontaneous personal response to be reconsidered, extended and refined to articulation and understanding of fictional experiences. (Lemmer, A., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:2, pp. 6-9)

Durham discussed the skills and enrichment to be derived from a shared experience of reading which makes reading "an essential, enlarging, sensitising experience." (Durham, K. M., 1987, Crux, vol. 21:2, p. 36) In addition to providing pleasure and enjoyment, literature should possess the capacity to improve pupils' powers of comprehension and expression, to develop their grasp of language and meaning, if it is to be part of a comprehensive sort of education. (Durham, K. M., 1987, Crux, vol. 21:2, p. 37) Pupils, whose interest in reading is aroused begin to notice, "the beginnings of sentence patterns, the conventions of printing and writing, vocabulary, the subtleties of spelling, the cadence and rhythm of punctuation and grammatical structure and the association of pronunciation." (Durham, 1987, Crux, vol. 21:2, p. 40) The experience of literature provides

knowledge although that knowledge is not supposed to be "implanted" (Durham, 1987, p. 45) but absorbed.

Protherough's (1983) models for developing response to fiction, too, provide suggestions with regard to the choice of appropriate literature. Perhaps, Protherough's is the best advice, that is, the teacher or the book selector should balance "the different, sometimes, conflicting claims of the various criteria . . ." while choosing books. As he went on to explain,

Too much emphasis on the literary merits of the text, or on an academic presentation of it, may produce damaging reactions from students, because it limits the way in which the novel can be read . . . On the other hand, too much emphasis on pupils' immediate enjoyment can imply an endorsement of the trivial, the indulgent or the escapist. It can ignore the fact that there are different kinds of enjoyment to be gained from fiction, and the fact that a teacher's recommendation of a text implies a degree of approval. Too much stress on the curricular, pedagogic value of the text may reduce the story to a launching pad for writing or talk, to a lead-in for a 'theme' or issue, or even to a query for linguistic analysis or formal exercises.

(Protherough, 1983, p. 166)

When selecting works for study, the criteria should be well-balanced, bearing in mind the stage of the pupil's emotional, conceptual, moral and aesthetic development. Furthermore, the texts selected should offer "different levels of accessibility as regards form and content, the type of language used, the topic, the tone and so on." (Mackay, R., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1. p. 7) These "levels of accessibility" are significant because "different learners acquire different things from the literature

text; one pupil may learn three new vocabulary items; another may acquire the use of a preposition, a third may be motivated to read more works by the same author. (Mackay, R., 1986, Crux, vol. 20:1) Book selectors and teachers should be governed by an awareness of the fact that literature and a love of literature are not always "taught" or "caught" and that pupils can only be brought to "the best insights of civilization" open to men, from which they themselves will glean what interests them. They cannot be cajoled into an appreciation of what is universally approved. Therefore, the choice of literature texts for Second Language pupils should not depend merely on the fulfilment of the aims of teaching English as a Second Language. It should also be vitalized by a perfect understanding of the purpose of introducing literature to pupils.

CHAPTER 4      A STUDY OF THE NOVEL, 'THINGS FALL APART,'  
AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESCRIBED TEXT,  
'SILAS MARNER', IN A SECOND LANGUAGE  
COURSE

Having established the fact that certain criteria should be applied to the choice of literary works, it would seem that for ESL pupils a novel by an African writer such as Achebe should take precedence over one representing the Great Tradition, namely, Silas Marner. To establish the merit of Achebe's Things Fall Apart is the aim of this chapter. Since South African literature is still "a timorous applicant to the honoured body of subjects approved for syllabuses of schools and universities" (Okonkwo, J., 1979, ALT, vol. 10, p. 86), the aim of this chapter is, also, to consider the worth of good African literature in English to be regarded favourably for inclusion, especially in Second Language syllabi.

Anyone interested in developments in education related to African writing in English will be aware of the increasing demand to include it in the literature syllabi and of the problems posed by curriculum planners, against its inclusion. In view of the teeming voices including those of Rice (1976), Povey (1980), Gunner (1984), Moody, Gunner, & Finnegan (1984), Lindfors and many more, now in favour of its inclusion, it would be an understatement to say that "there has been growing acknowledgement of the need for African literature to be prescribed." (Atwell, D., 1982, Crux, vol. 16:1, p. 7, emphasis mine.)

However, this discussion will be confined to a comparison of Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart with a prescribed novel, George Eliot's Silas Marner. The purpose of this investigation is to show that this African work is of a literary standard comparable to this English work. In addition, the work would appear to have far more cultural relevance and sensitivity for Black pupils. Therefore, such an African work would be better suited for study by African schoolchildren, especially for Second Language learners.

#### 4.1 The thematic, moral and cultural significance and relevance of 'Things Fall Apart' and 'Silas Marner'

In her textbook guide, Gunner (1984) categorized Things Fall Apart as a book which should, rightly, be placed under the term 'Social Change'. Moody, Gunner & Finnegan (1984) regarded it thematically on three levels - social, cultural and psychological. Socially, it deals with the workings of Ibo society in Nigeria. Culturally, it depicts the conflict of native customs with those of Christianity. Psychologically, it portrays conservatism pitted against social change. Rice (1976) also spoke of three main themes in the novel: "the balance between individual and collective traits in traditional Ibo Society", "the role played by superstition, collective norms and expectations in regulating society", and "the conflicts and tensions that arise both in the individual and the clan when the white man's religion and government first come to Iboland." The falling apart of the protagonist, Okonkwo, and society is the theme of the

novel. Considered even on the purely thematic level, Things Fall Apart seems to be, culturally, historically and psychologically, more relevant to Black pupils than is Silas Marner which will be discussed later.

To say that Things Fall Apart is about life in Iboland would be to reduce it, according to the common trend in the criticism of African fiction, to "anthropological documentation". It does not merely provide more "information on African primitive ways". (Emenyonu, 1971, ALT, vol. 5, p. 2) It is not merely "the story of Umuofia society (or African civilisation)." It is also the story of Okonkwo who, had risen from obscurity to a high position by dint of his own hard work. Okonkwo's achievements are magnified by the fact that unlike most of his contemporaries he had inherited nothing from his father, Unoka. His father was a debtor, publicly denounced as a failure in life. The driving force of Okonkwo's life was not to resemble his father in any way. Therefore, he shunned the quality of gentleness, which he associated with weakness. He was overwhelmed by fear of failure, which forced him to do things that triggered off a series of catastrophes and finally resulted in his expulsion from his fatherland.

While in exile in his motherland for a crime he had unwittingly committed, but for which he had to be punished, conditions changed in Umuofia. Okonkwo had been planning means to project his image on his return to his fatherland. But when his term of exile was over, he found social conditions and attitudes so drastically changed that all his schemes to rehabilitate himself

socially, were doomed to failure. Matters came to a head when his belligerent, restless nature led to a confrontation with the missionaries and caused him to be brought before the judgement seat of the White man. Unable to control himself, Okonkwo struck out single-handed against the seeming injustice of it all and failed. The realisation of his failure was too much for him and drove him to commit suicide and to be "buried like a dog". It was against the custom of the tribe to bury a man who had committed suicide. Tribal tradition demanded this final indignity.

It is interesting to observe that Okonkwo is representative of the Ibo society and of its influence on the individual; so much so that when he, Okonkwo, fails, his disgrace represents the disintegration of his society also. The story operates on two levels - the personal and the social. Okonkwo acts as a catalyst to his community. He triggers off events which accidentally assume major dimensions involving social change. The vicissitudes of fortune of Okonkwo and of Umuofia are so inextricably bound together that he becomes the symbol of its strengths and of its weaknesses. Things Fall Apart has epic and tragic proportions.

The title of the novel and Achebe's introductory quotation from 'The Second Coming' point to yet another philosophical underpinning of the novel. Interpreting Yeats' philosophy, Rice said,

Yeats believed that history was the product of eternal cycles of destruction and regeneration. As civilisations grow their inherent weaknesses develop until a point is

reached in time when the external forces of destruction combine with the inner decay to overthrow the existing order . . . out of the ensuing chaos a new order is born, which will in turn be subject to the same process of growth, destruction and rebirth.

(Rice, M., 1976, Crux, vol. 10:2, p. 34)

Rice went on to explain that, while Yeats was referring to the end of the Christian era, Achebe was referring to the disintegration of the Ibo society under the onslaught of a more powerful culture. However, it is to Achebe's credit that he has pointed out the weaknesses inherent in Ibo society that made it ripe for change, because, traditionally, it was ultra-conservative and resistant to change, Professor Stock commented on Achebe's reference to Yeats, "it is startling to find the Yeatsian pattern traced most closely where Yeats himself was least likely to look for it, in an imaginary but typical village of the lower Niger." (Stock, A. G., as quoted by Innes, C. L., & Lindfors, B., 1978, p. 87)

Some critics view African writers' debts to Western literary influences as a loss of originality. They condemn African writing in English as an extension of colonialism, and the use of the English language instead of the vernacular as bondage, or, as the African taking in one hand "that which he has pushed aside with the other." (Jean-Paul Sartre, as quoted by Juliet Okonkwo, 1979, ALT, vol. 10, p. 101) Are these borrowings as significant as suggested by critics, when its adaption is as innovative as in Things Fall Apart? Professor Stock explained herself regarding Achebe's use of the Yeatsian pattern of history when she said,

Not that Things Fall Apart smells of discipleship; the two minds, their perspectives and their fields of vision, are too different for that . . . . For Yeats the pattern is an instrument of prophecy . . . . Achebe is not interested in prophecy but in analysing the way things happen.

(Stock, as quoted by Innes, C. L. & Lindfors, B., 1978, p. 89)

Genuine originality, as Shaw believed, lies in

the genuineness and effectiveness of the aesthetic moving power of the creative work . . . . What genuinely moves the reader aesthetically and produces an independent artistic effect has artistic originality whatever its debts.

(as quoted by Bu-Buakei Jabbi, in ALT, 1979, vol. 10, p. 121)

Have not writers of sixteenth-century England been highly imitative of classical thought and literary forms? Have they been accused of lacking in originality? Can it not happen that there are "universals" for the position of the individual in society, their relationship to one another, and their cosmic world views? Can it not happen that the same issues may attract writers of different eras and cultures in similar (or differing) ways; that the human condition may manifest itself similarly, or otherwise, over a period of time and that there be an "historicity" for cultural artefacts?

Things Fall Apart is morally significant. Readers could consider, for example, moral issues related to the premium placed by Umuofian society, Okonkwo's impatience with unsuccessful men, the loss involved in the conflict of cultures, the value of compromise embodied in the delineation of the different characters in the story and the futility of the conflict itself. The issues raised

in Things Fall Apart are still vivid in adult African minds and would be close to the hearts of children. This probably explains why pupils perform significantly better on this novel than on Silas Marner in the final comparative test (Section 5.1).

Culturally, also, this novel is relevant to the experiences of the Blacks. Palmer talked of "the legal, educational, religious, and hierarchical systems and the conventions governing relations between the various generations" described in the novel as being "as elaborate as any to be found in a Jane Austen novel." (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 49) The descriptions of the dispensation of justice, the wrestling match and the ritualistic customs cause critics to condemn this and other African novels, as "sociological information", but all these serve the purpose of pointing to a well-ordered society. "From such descriptions the reader gains a sense of an alien, but nevertheless strong, self-assured and civilised society." (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 51) Such descriptions make the novel lively and life-like.

Achebe is objective in his exposition of the brutalities of his society. As Palmer (1972) said, "He . . . leaves clues and hints, structural as well as textural, as comments on the nature of the society he describes." (pp. 52-3) Such an understanding is crucial to the understanding of Okonkwo's character. Palmer (1972, p. 56), said, "It was a shrewd masterstroke of Achebe's to make the most cruel punishment of Umuofian society rebound on the man who most personifies it."

Achebe's comments are not restricted to Umuofia

alone. They extend to a criticism of the arrogance and intolerance of Rev. James Smith who replaced the compromising Mr. Brown; the dishonesty of the kotma (court messengers) and the insensitivities of the District Commissioner. All the events, incidents and descriptions in the novel are woven together to stimulate the reader's appreciation of the way of life intended in the novel.

Published in 1958, Things Fall Apart was the earliest African novel to win world-wide acclaim. Since then, the contribution by Africans writing in English may surprise some people pleasantly by its volume, variety and quality. African literature has been written for a variety of readers. Extending its use to pupils in schools could contribute significantly to the education and enlightenment of contemporary African youth. Exposure to the African experience and viewpoint could promote immense tolerance among the intolerant and the prejudiced. Besides Things Fall Apart, there are a number of other novels on various themes that would be worth reading for enjoyment and study (see Section 6.2).

Having looked at Things Fall Apart, it is necessary to consider Silas Marner, which was one of the prescribed novels for Black Matriculation pupils as recently as in 1988-9. Reid (1982) commented on its being a most inappropriate choice. Quoting Halstead, she said that only classic status, length and moral acceptability could explain why it continues to be prescribed as a set book in preference to any other work of George Eliot. (Reid, J., 1982, p. 41)

Thematically, as Haddakin, L., said, it is "from one point of view, a tale of old-fashioned village life." (as quoted by Barbara Hardy, 1970, p. 60) It was inspired by George Eliot's visual recollection of once having seen a linen-weaver with a bag on his back, as she recalls in a letter to Blackwood, her publisher.

The elements of the story of Silas Marner will be recounted briefly here. Although "very" realistic, it also reminds one of a fairy-tale. Critics, such as David, C. R., quoted by Baker (1973), comment on George Eliot's "myth-making" in Silas Marner and refer to the myth of Christianity as one among others that George Eliot tested in Silas Marner.

The history of Silas Marner is bound up with that of Godfrey Cass. The inter-twining has been done deliberately in order to create an impression of mystery. In Things Fall Apart also, the plot operates on two levels. Besides this superficial structural feature, there is no thematic or modal similarity between the two works. Indeed, it would be ridiculous to think that there would be.

Silas Marner examines man's relation to society (Godfrey, Dunstan and Marner); the social influence in the formation of character (Nancy, Eppie, Marner); man's spiritual (Marner's) and moral (Godfrey's) regeneration as a consequence of experience. These themes are executed in the characters of both Marner and Godfrey as if to emphasise George Eliot's point or to indicate its universality. The novel embodies the great questions concerning the interaction of the primary affection,

religion, superstition and class within the story of an obscure weaver who was expelled from his community on a false charge. He felt alienated from the new community into which he came, and so became a miser. He was then robbed of his gold, but his recompense came with a young child whose company healed him emotionally, and rehabilitated him. (Haddakin, L., as quoted by Hardy, 1970, p. 60)

George Eliot drew heavily on the circumstances of her own youth for her setting and for her characters. The success of her novel depends on its atmosphere. To grasp that atmosphere would prove an onerous task for an African child. The study of literature would be hindered by necessitating knowledge of the life and works of the writer. Silas Marner is quite definitely a period-piece in an outdated, rural setting with people speaking a quaint, unintelligible dialect. Note the difficulties experienced by certain Ciskeian pupils with this text (see Annexure T, pp. 232-4).

But this criticism is not intended to demolish the reputation of a book that is regarded as part of the fabric of classical excellence. Of course, taught in the English context of English country-life, it would be a representative and an historic choice. As Reid (1982) said, the "Englishness" of many of the prescribed books may not be quite so damaging for White pupils and English-speakers who are conscious of their English heritage, culture and literary tradition. (p. 48) But even for the White South African child, more so the Second Language Black learner, a story wrapped in

Dissenting trappings with Hardy-esque descriptions of nature and scenery, and prolonged ruminations on the nature of the human mind would surely be very far removed from any contemporary experience.

It is an undeniable fact that the novel has universal appeal, (see the reactions of pupils and teachers recorded in Annexures E & G - L). The rejection of Silas by his friend, William Dane; by his betrothed, Sarah; by the community of Lantern Yard and even by "the god of lies" is quite a modern, timeless human experience. Silas' recoiling into himself and subsequent perversion into miserliness, also, is quite normal. Silas' desperation at the loss of his beloved gold; his unfounded belief that it would be returned to him; his grasping at Eppie who had been sent to him by Providence, all these are very human reactions. Equally normal is Godfrey's need for deceit and subsequent regret and atonement. Even characters such as the prudish Nancy and the parasitical Dunstan are found in contemporary life. This would speak well for George Eliot's ability to characterise realistically. Great relevance to man's psychological maturation from despair to hope could be drawn from Silas Marner, but it is not something that will captivate a teenage reader on initial reading. As K. M. Durham said in a casual comment, Silas Marner offers a philosophy that can only be appreciated in its proper depth and intensity by a very mature reader. It is definitely not something that would instantly create a response in a teenager at school, more especially a Black teenager.

Despite their obvious unsuitability for African pupils, the continued use of English classical works deserves the indictment meted out by Reid and Lindfors. Jeering at "the Prosperos of our day", as the latter called the book selectors, he derided them in a well-known quotation saying,

Instead of making use of local literary resources to create something meaningful and relevant for Africa, they turn their eyes toward England, import ponderous verbal artefacts from that remote and dying culture, and try to set them up as monuments worthy of universal veneration . . . .  
(Lindfors, B., as quoted by Gilfillan, R. M. E., 1984, pp. 60-1)

There is much talk of African writers who write in the Conrad - Hardy tradition. Conrad however, was not an Englishman. In fact, he acquired the use of English as a Second Language and mastered and perfected it to a point of excellence unsurpassed by even some of the reputable writers and craftsmen of English letters. So much for the argument concerning the Second Language user's inability to master the language of adoption.

Silas Marner displays interesting dimensions of the theme of man's relationship with his community which are illustrated far better in Things Fall Apart. In Silas Marner the dimensions make the community direct the lot of man; non-conformity leading to man's expulsion, conformity leading to reinstatement. What makes Things Fall Apart a better selection, thematically, is its historical relevance to the African experience. The arrival of the White men, the establishment of missions, the penetration of colonial administration into native

systems of authority are still vivid in the African mind and are definitely nearer to their hearts than the story of some obscure weaver in a remote English village. The usual criticism of African fiction, that it is social, polemical or controversial, is arbitrary. Also, the fact that many African novels have been written on similar themes has not detracted from the literary quality of any of the works. Consider two African novels such as Things Fall Apart and The River Between which are written on similar themes of personal and social emancipation and progress. The best literature will often be found to be "committed" as Reid (1982) argued.

There is no lack of variety of theme or treatment in African literature. Camara Laye's The African Child depicts the life of the Madinka tribe of Northern Guinea, while also highlighting cross-cultural links in experiences such as the child-parent relationship, friendship, school, growing up into adulthood and being part of two cultures. No Longer At Ease depicts the dilemma of a person unable to reconcile the demands of custom with personal conviction. Ngugi's Weep not, Child depicts parents and children in a period of political turmoil. Peter Abraham's Tell Freedom dwells on racial prejudice. Examination Boards in Britain are increasingly including African literature in their courses. All this

might seem to have no very obvious relationship to the here and now of life in Britain. But does it have to? It has the all-pervasive power of good literature which

absorbs the reader in the artificially created world of the novel so that it may seem, for a time, more real than his or her own.

(Gunner, E., 1984, p. vi)

Reaction to the introduction of African texts in Britain has been mixed. Occasionally, there has been apprehension as to whether African traditions and rituals can be understood by Englishmen. If Englishmen can experience concern in such matters, how much greater should be the degree of anxiety of an African child confronted with "nuts in May", daffodils and roses, spring and snow? What Reid said of English nature-poetry may be extended to much of the traditionally prescribed English Literature, that it is "confined to England" and "it is futile to expect ordinary school students in Africa to respond to the beauties of an English spring when they have no experience of it or of an English winter." (Reid, 1982, p. 51, emphasis mine.) Consider how much more acute this anxiety should be when it is realised that theme is secondary to other matters of literary concern for example, mastery of style. If pupils cannot surmount thematic obstacles sufficiently to come to grips with style, then the purpose of introducing literature to them is defeated.

Palmer was not the only critic to find parallels between Things Fall Apart and Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles when he said that the protagonists of both novels are destroyed by the encroachment of social forces and that, therefore, they are not personal tragedies.

(Palmer, E., 1972, p. 48) What Gilfillan said approximates more closely to this investigation.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Thomas Hardy) may express universal truths about human relationships and workings of fate, but it could be argued [the investigator's emphasis] that a significant number of Blacks might possibly and more immediately relate to Okonkwo and the themes of Things Fall Apart (Chinua Achebe).

(Gilfillan, R. M. E., 1984, p. 57)

The Nigerian trappings of the story, the customs and traditions, the oracles and masquerades, the food, (yam and foo-foo), the climate (with the harmattan winds and locusts) may be alien to the Zulu and to the Xhosa, but the essential Africanness of the setting and the historicity of African experience of Things Fall Apart would be infinitely more comprehensible to the Bantu than would be the vicissitudes of fortune of English Dissenters.

#### 4.2 The literary standing of 'Things Fall Apart' as compared with that of 'Silas Marner'

The literary status of Things Fall Apart has been established by commentators such as Lindfors who have said that it has "unquestioned merit". In pitting its literary standing against that of Silas Marner, this investigation is trying to counter the criticism often made against African novels, that they need to be assessed for literary merit by using different standards. It is not surprising to hear remarks to the effect that placing texts such as Things Fall Apart side by side with Great Expectations and

Twelfth Night and the setting of equivalent examination questions on each, imply that "each work is to be studied in a similar way." (T. De Graaf, 1983, Crux, vol. 17:1, p. 37) As with De Graaf, several critics feel, "This might be appropriate for Great Expectations and Twelfth Night, but it is definitely not so for African writers." These critics base their arguments on the fact that African writers including Mphahlele have complained of the inappropriateness of using Western critical standards to review their works, which, they claim, belong to an entirely "different type of discipline". They claim that Western critical standards are founded on Practical Criticism involving an 'Art for Art's sake' approach that may not suit African literature.

This investigation disagrees with Mphahlele's view of African writing and agrees more with Iyasere who said, "If the work cannot stand by itself, for itself, then no amount of cultural apprenticeship nor narcissistic indulgence can defend it." (Iyasere, S. C., ALT, 1975, vol. 7, p. 24) It also disagrees with rigorous Practical Criticism that explicates a text to the extent of reducing it to an analysis of the author's "intentionality". Such criticism could, as Rice said, "promote the assumption among unsophisticated readers that there is only one interpretation . . . that is correct," thus ignoring "the whole issue of the historicity of texts and readers" which is so important because they reflect the ideologies of their times", to a large extent. (Rice, M., Crux, 1986, vol. 20:1, p. 37, emphasis mine.) To clarify a point, the term "unsophisticated reader" could apply equally to

Englishmen reading African literature as well as to Africans reading English literature.

It would be interesting to estimate how far an African work, of any genre, could be comparable on literary grounds with reputable English works. Things Fall Apart would easily compare. Lindfors wrote, "Critics tend to agree that no African novelist writing in English has yet surpassed Achebe himself." The use of Achebe's novel in this comparative exercise represents a significant body of African fiction in English. It suggests that, for the most part, this literature is of a reasonably high literary merit by any standards, and, because of its cultural proximity, should feature more significantly in literature study in African schools. As a body of literature, where literary quality flags in certain works, as for example, in the case of the much-criticised novels of Cyprian Ekwensi, why not "focus on the partial excellence found in many writings . . . rendered more significant by the cultural significance in which they flourish." (Povey, J., 1980, Crux, vol. 14:2, p. 15, emphasis mine.) African Literature in English, particularly West African Literature seems to have more literary value than some works prescribed by South African Departments such as Sabatini's Sea Hawk, M. Craven's I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Paul Gallico's Scruffy. Among indigenous literature in English, more than South African, West Indian or Indian writing in English, African writing in English has body and character enough to be recognised as worthy of study. In 1973, Lindfors expressed his conviction that "an entirely African syllabus could be

devised which could be more meaningful and relevant . . . than the present syllabus . . . without sacrificing quality." (as quoted by Gilfillan, R. M. E., 1984, p. 64) Gilfillan (1984) has pin-pointed the accusations levelled against most indigenous literature, they include,

- parochialism and limited scope,
- content of slang and dialect providing poor language models and
- content that is controversial because it is political and socio-cultural.

Of all the accusations that could be levelled against African literature, the one that could be regarded as most unfair and damaging would be one that questions its literary merit. In this discussion of literary merit, structure, plot construction, style including language/diction, narrative techniques, literary devices/stylistic techniques, characterization, setting, themes and moral vision will be discussed.

Many critics have granted epic-heroic or tragic status to Okonkwo, the main character of Things Fall Apart. Reid described the novel itself as a classic. A close look at the novel will reveal that what looks like a simple novel "is deceptively so" and that "it is provocatively complex, interweaving significant themes: love, compassion, colonialism, achievement, honour, and individualism," Iyasere, as quoted by Innes C. L. & Lindfors, B. L., 1978, p. 93) Structurally, too, the plan is grand and powerful in outline. The investigator agrees with David Cook, (1977), who said, "There are story patterns in the structuring of Things Fall Apart". There

is a distinctive simplicity in its design of a story focusing on one character, Okonkwo, and progressing linearly in time to its conclusion. This may be considered in favour of using Things Fall Apart with Black pupils, who find the complicated plot of Silas Marner too difficult to sort out. (see Annexures G - L, on this point, for the structural reasons for the unpopularity of Silas Marner as expressed by teachers.) The placing of the section dealing with Okonkwo in exile in Mbanta in the middle of the novel, between the earlier section on life in Umuofia before the arrival of the White men, and the later section on Umuofia in conflict with the White men is structurally significant of the "clash between the two major forces." As Cook (1977) said, "there is rightness about the scheme, which suggests the imprint of a master-craftsman and artist, who can return to first principles and achieve the most significant of all artistic effects: significant simplicity." (Cook, D., 1977, p. 77)

It is appropriate to quote Palmer on "such mastery of plot construction, such keen psychological insight, and such ability to hold his themes steadily before his mind and pursue them convincingly to a logical conclusion" (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 48) that is evident in Things Fall Apart. The chapters are organised logically. Some critics, such as Cook, have attacked Things Fall Apart and much other African fiction, as consisting of "disconnected incidents" of sociological information. They had in mind the chapters describing the wrestling matches, the raising of Ezinma's iyi-uwa, the settlement of the bride-price in Iboland and other exigencies of

marriage, birth and death in the novel. What they fail to realise is that these sections are intrinsically bound up in the author's vision of the community, the vicissitudes of fortune of which are worked out more significantly because they are elaborated. The readers identify with the disintegration of Umuofian society because they are shown its strength, its impenetrability and its former glory as an entire way of life. It is part of the powerful structural irony of the novel that, within the novel, this vision was denied to the D. C., the most representative of the White men.

Similar instances are found in English works, for example, in Chapter Six of Silas Marner (the scene in the Rainbow Inn) and in Chapter Eleven (the preparation for the New Year's Eve Dance) which have not detracted from the reputation of the work, despite their seeming irrelevance. Such chapters of Things Fall Apart have not been criticized for difficulty or irrelevance. Descriptive chapters in Things Fall Apart acquaint African pupils with a way of life that may have more relevance to their own way of life and are, therefore, more relevant to them than similar chapters in Silas Marner.

The plot of Things Fall Apart, as with the plot of Silas Marner, operates on two levels, and the two levels are so inextricably bound together that Okonkwo's failure is the tribe's failure. He becomes its symbol. The picking up of the threads of the story is delightfully surprising and the skill of the master-craftsman is admirable. The end of Chapter One refers to Okonkwo's becoming Ikemefuna's guardian. Ikemefuna is mentioned

again in the concluding paragraphs of Chapters Two and Four, as David Cook noted, "his name is the last word of Chapter Seven, in which he is killed." (Cook, D., 1977, p. 77) Such coincidences are "one of the many pointers to the book's planned proportions." Whether consciously scattered throughout the book or accidental in their occurrence, the ironic linkage indicates meaningful artistry. Its structural significance proceeds from its sense of drama, the degree of the skill of its presentation and its unexpectedness. As Griffiths (quoted by Gilfillan, R. M. E., 1984, pp. 104-5) said, "The characteristic effects of Achebe's irony depend on the position which he occupies, poised between two worlds whose interaction he seeks to record." It must be conceded that, it was indeed "a shrewd masterstroke of Achebe's to make the most cruel punishment of Umuofia society rebound on the man who most personifies it." (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 56) Although it should also be conceded that the God of Lantern Yard punished the innocent Silas Marner, pupils, more especially Black pupils, would identify more readily with Okonkwo's tragedy than with Marner's.

Is this not the essence of genuine tragedy and all-powerful drama? Is this not similar to the recoiling of fate and justice on Oedipus who set out to cleanse the land? Affinities have often been drawn between the work of Hardy and Achebe, but, as Palmer said, "whereas Hardy always bangs his fatalistic drum . . . Achebe intelligently regulates the supernatural to the background and shows tragedy to be consequent on the interaction of

the social forces and human character" (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 48) and goes further to explore the possibilities his fictional situation "offers for a unique comment on the limitations of the human situation." (Griffiths, as quoted by Gilfillan, R. M. E, 1984, p. 105)

The unities of time, place and action are maintained in Things Fall Apart. There is great correspondence to life, the hallmark of "significant literature". In writing Things Fall Apart, Achebe seized upon a slice of life, which, like any other, had much to glorify and much to condemn within it, and he "achieved the sort of balance which only a committed artist can accomplish." (Rice, M., 1976, Crux, vol. 10:2, p. 39) In his own stated declaration of intention, as quoted by Wästberg, P., (ed.) (1968), Achebe, while re-creating his past in the novel, admitted to having experienced strong temptations to extol its virtue, to idealize it and to pretend that the "bad" in it did not exist. He selected not only the facts which could be used to flatter; he was a trustworthy witness, who portrayed the strength and stability, as well as the brutality and savagery of Umuofia.

Because Achebe's fictional derivations are true to life, his characters are also realistic. Palmer said, "Okonkwo is what his society has made him." (1972, p. 53) He is plagued by fear of failure because of the "premium" his society placed on success. Okonkwo is the personification of his society's values. It has been said quite aptly that in Things Fall Apart Achebe demonstrates "the interrelation between sociology and psychology, between

the environment and character." (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 53) Like the classical tragic hero, Okonkwo rose to the pinnacle of fame and achievement by the norms and values of his society; but because of his unreasonable need not to fail as his father had failed, he became perverted and so accelerated his own decline. The laborious but steady pace of his rise to fame and the speed of his decline are reflected in the structure of the novel, in the slow movement of action in the first half and the acceleration to the close in the second half. "Like Aristotle's tragic hero, Okonkwo is a man of high estate brought low by a weakness in his character." (Rice, M., 1976, Crux, vol. 10:2) Unoka, his father, is the antithesis of Okonkwo. Unoka had been a dreamer and a loafer, for whom society had no regard; but unlike Okonkwo, he had had a capacity to enjoy life, a sense of perception and human sympathy.

The common accusation hurled against Achebe's characterisation in this novel is that it is limited to a detailed portrayal of Okonkwo. This censure is unjustified. References to Unoka occur as far as at the end of the novel, and it is ironic that Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, resembled Okonkwo's father more than Okonkwo himself did. Consider the passage when Okonkwo sits looking at the flames of the log fire and how he had been nicknamed "Roaring Flame" in his youth, but now he had begotten a son like Nwoye. It is like "living fire begetting cold, impotent ash." (Things Fall Apart, Heineman, 1987 edn., pp. 108-9) It cannot be refuted that the character of Unoka has been vividly evoked, as

have those of the less important, Ekwefi and Ezinma.

As in Things Fall Apart, so in Silas Marner, characters are shaped by their reaction to society. Marner becomes sceptical and miserly because of Lantern Yard's treatment. After Marner's rejection of Raveloe society's earlier overtures to consider him favourably for his knowledge of herbs, Raveloe also spurns him. It is much later, after he approaches the Raveloe community in the Rainbow Inn, asking for help to find his stolen gold, that he is found in contact with society once more. However, the failure to recover his treasure keeps Silas at a distance until Eppie's arrival heals him emotionally. In spite of all the severity of Marner's isolation from society, he is not anti-social in the sense that Dunstan Cass is. The social system of that time prevented the sons of a squire from turning to the world, as common working men would, to earn a living. This social tradition gave rise to social parasites such as Dunstan and to minor liars such as Godfrey. There is no need to discuss the evident liveliness and depth of George Eliot's characterization which has been defended by critics as Achebe's should be.

Things Fall Apart may be found to possess a less-embellished style than that of the elaborate, florid, philosophical ponderings of Silas Marner. This is not to suggest that there is no philosophy in Things Fall Apart - its philosophy is simple yet profound; it generates a vision, which, if not superior, is at least equal to the European vision of reality. David Cook was of the opinion that Things Fall Apart had a spare style,

bare vocabulary, fairly simple structures and restrained imagery (apart from the proverbs). He added dismissively that "The language is plain to the point of losing at later readings intense minute-to-minute interest" (Cook, 1977, p. 76), and that the style engaged only "occasional imaginative" phrases. This latter point can be refuted if one considers, these extracts from the Heinemann edition, (1987):

- 1) A description of Okonkwo:

When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people . . .

(Things Fall Apart, Heinemann, 1987, p. 3)

- 2) The description of the efulefu, the first converts to Christianity from the clan:

This imagery of an efulefu in the language of the clan was a man who sold his matchet and wore the sheath to battle. Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, called the converts the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up.

(Things Fall Apart, p. 101)

- 3) The poetry of the new religion described as:

something felt in the marrow . . . The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth.

(Things Fall Apart, p. 99)

- 4) Okonkwo's self-pity on his condition at being exiled:

But it was like beginning life anew without the vigour and enthusiasm of youth, like learning to become left-handed in old age . . . He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting.

(Things Fall Apart, p. 92)

- 5) A description of the rain after the drought:

At last the rain came. It was sudden and tremendous . . . And then came the clap of thunder. It was an angry, metallic and thirsty clap, unlike the deep and liquid rumbling of the rainy season. A mighty wind arose and filled the air with dust. Palm trees swayed as the wind combed their leaves into flying crests like strange and fantastic coiffures.

(Things Fall Apart, pp. 91-2)

- 6) Phrases describing kites hovering over a burning field in "silent valediction" as "a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty."

These compare favourably with some of the "imaginative" excerpts in Silas Marner. There is "formality of address", "ritualistic repetition of conventional statements" and "pause for effect" in passages such as the Egwugwu trial scene. The wrestling scene is powerfully rendered. Palmer said of it, "One can feel not just the excitement and the physical movement of the wrestling but the very resilience of the prose." (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 51) If the language of Things Fall Apart is judged simple and direct despite these illustrative examples, then it should be regarded as being literary enough, suitable for, and ideally conducive to the comprehension and enjoyment of Second Language learners. Silas Marner, could never fulfil these requirements for Black pupils, who cannot read without the continual use of a dictionary.

Some critics of Achebe's language in this novel, such as C. L. Innes, have commented on the fact that its excessive simplicity and starkness reveal his awareness

of the possibilities of language in "constraining thought or extending it." (as quoted by Innes, C. L. & Lindfors, B., 1978, p. 111) Some examples of how such extension of thought takes place in Things Fall Apart have already been seen. Innes pointed out some occasions when it was "constrained" also, for example,

- when Rev. James Smith's Ibo interpreter, Okeke, reinterprets his order to the attacking egwugwu to leave the church premises, "wisely" but no longer in the White man's sense at all."
- When Obierika, at the end of the novel, in his eulogy on the dead Okonkwo, chokes on his words, being overwhelmed by emotion, and is told to "shut up" by the D. C. who is totally insensitive to, and uncomprehending of, the whole tragedy.

In the narrative and descriptive passages, which are not lengthy, distracting descriptions of nature or character as in the discourse on the "strangeness" of weavers in Silas Marner, apt similes and indigenous idiomatic expressions are employed. Proverbs, which Achebe described as "the palm-oil with which words are eaten", (Things Fall Apart, p. 5) form a distinctive feature of his style. He uses them as "vivid, illustrative analogies" (Palmer, E., 1972, p. 62) and to create a value system for his readers (Innes, C. L. & Lindfors, B., p. 125, emphasis mine.) They are always appropriately used in Things Fall Apart, as Palmer declared, and they lend to the prose a poetic quality. Consider the appropriateness of Okonkwo's discomfiture at the friendly gathering in Nwakibie's house on hearing the story of a man, who had challenged the Oracle, demanding

the sacrifice of a goat for his father's spirit. The man had told the Oracle, "Ask my dead father if he had ever had a fowl when he was alive?" While everyone enjoyed the joke, Okonkwo had "laughed uneasily, because as the saying goes, an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned." (Things Fall Apart, p. 15) Consider, also, the appropriate use of the proverb in view of the fact that Okonkwo's father, Unoka, had never acquired anything substantial in his life. Thus, Palmer continued that proverbs as "invaluable rhetorical devices" stating "basic truth" and, conveying "a quaint charm" are an "indispensable aspect" of Achebe's style.

The language of Things Fall Apart evolves from Africa's great oral tradition, delight in oratory, dramatic effect, use of proverbs, songs and folktale. Moody, H. L. B., Gunner, E., & Finnegan, E., (1984) describe the language as "the fashioning out of an English which is at once universal" and able to convey Achebe's peculiar experience. It is interesting to observe Cook's comment that "in escaping from British stylistic clichés and mannerisms," Achebe

has employed, aptly enough, what is often . . . a rarity among well-known British writers . . . a 'key' sentence in every paragraph . . . Achebe has adopted in Things Fall Apart a style which is . . . carefully modulated; . . . and . . . a rather more formalised conception of the paragraph than many English writers.

This should be regarded as excellent material in teaching composition writing in Second Language courses. In fact,

Things Fall Apart "deserves its universal fame" for its expertise in the use of language.

There could be endless comparison between Things Fall Apart and Silas Marner to highlight the importance of the relevance of literature to the human condition (experience) and the literary quality of much African writing in English that is significant for African pupils as well as for others. Thus, it would be possible to develop literary appreciation at no loss of literary merit. No writer in English is unaware of the Great English Tradition; but language is significant only as it is evolved from human use and experience. So, however unorthodox, the expressions such as Ezinma "had come to stay" ('survived') or Okonkwo had "washed his hands and so he ate with kings" ('deserved his success') are far more charming and appealing than their staid rendering in formal English. What Mrs. Mather (Annexure K, pp. 194-9) said of Shakespeare, could be applied to Achebe, "It could not have been put across better."

Certainly African writers introduce expressions which do not occur in 'standard' English . . . (but) African writers bring new resources into their use of the English language: they endow it with a novelty and unfamiliar richness of expression which strengthens rather than impoverishes the language.

(Gunner, 1984 p. vi)

It would be interesting to consider a quotation from the master artist, Achebe's 1966 articles, which succinctly concludes the debate on the issue of the literary merit of African Literature in English:

My answer to the question; can an African learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing? is certainly yes. Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I should say, I hope not . . . .

(as quoted in Wästberg, P., (ed.), p. 91)

This investigation was prompted by the observation of pupils' difficulties with prescribed English texts (see Annexure T, pp. 232-4). It represents a "limited" sample of what the investigator has observed during her years of experience as a classroom teacher with regard to the actual performance of pupils in literature classes and in public examinations. Results speak for themselves. See Annexure C for the analysis of the NSC November, 1987 English results for Ciskei. The performance reflected there refers jointly to pupils' performance in language and literature. Literature accounts for only 100 out of the total of 300 marks for English as a Second Language. The figures clustering around symbols D, E and F show the relatively poor quality of the overall performance in English.

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether a more suitable or more relevant selection of texts would improve the pupils' performance in literature. The underlying assumption was that significance and relevance were the most important criteria in the selection of books.

The procedure undertaken for this investigation was "three-pronged". It involved:

- 1) The systematic conducting of a course of study in which student-response to a prescribed text was

compared with their response to a carefully selected African work in English.

- 2) The administering of a general questionnaire to senior school pupils in order to study their general attitudes to the study of literature and the problems that they experience while studying literature.
- 3) The interviews with experienced teachers of English in Ciskei in order to determine their attitudes to the selection of books for detailed study.

#### 5.1 A comparative study of the actual pupil-performance with a prescribed book and with an experimental book

In order to find out exactly how the pupils responded to an African novel, Things Fall Apart, as compared with a prescribed book such as Silas Marner, an organized study was conducted on both texts in two different schools. Two groups of Matriculation pupils were chosen at random for this purpose. One group was chosen from a rural school, while the other group was chosen from a semi-urban school in Ciskei. They included 60 pupils, 32 from the rural school and 28 from the semi-urban school. This selection of pupils was partially determined by their willingness to co-operate in the experiment as it involved extra classes in the afternoon. Pupils of average ability who scored between 40% and 50% marks in English were selected. The permission required to conduct this investigation was duly obtained from the Department of Education, Bisho.

The study of Silas Marner involved a revision of a text that both schools were offering for the Matriculation examination that year (1989). The study of Things Fall Apart involved the extra reading of a text which had no value for pupils as far as the examination was concerned. It was envisaged that as the study of Things Fall Apart was actually "fun study", authentic response would not be effected. In order to minimize the researcher's possible prejudice or bias against both texts, precaution was taken to split the group of 60 into two groups. The investigator conducted the course in the rural school where she is employed full-time. Ms. Dlova, who is a teacher of English in Nobuzwe High School, Zwelitsha South Circuit, conducted the course in the semi-urban school. Ms. Dlova is a trained graduate in English and the Head of the Department, with more than eight years' teaching experience in Stds. 9 and 10. This course-conductor was informed only of such details of the investigation as were absolutely necessary in order to exclude teacher-bias. She was instructed to conduct the course in exactly the same manner as did the investigator. Every attempt was made by both teachers to ensure that the teachers' prejudice did not affect the pupils' opinions.

Both texts were divided into convenient units. As the pupils were already familiar with Silas Marner, it was really a revision exercise for which the pupils were grateful. To the best of the investigator's knowledge, both texts were handled impartially. In the case of Things Fall Apart the pupils were asked to read a unit (a

set of chapters) at a time in class. Although these "classes" were held in the "prep" time, in the afternoons, prior permission had been obtained for this purpose and the pupils were willing to attend. After each reading, pupils were asked to answer sets of questions on each unit in writing, to test their understanding and appreciation of the story. The questions asked on the units were textual, literary and general, and are available in Annexure Q, (pp. 217-26). The pupils' answers were checked and errors of comprehension, if any, were corrected before the teacher discussed each unit in detail. Initial teacher-intervention (in terms of providing background information and explanation) was minimal as compared with the presentation of Silas Marner, with which pupils were already familiar at their respective schools. In the discussions, significant portions were re-read, and plot and character development were highlighted. This exercise sometimes led to considerable oral work and comment on use of language. Both course-conductors noted the interest with which the pupils read the African text.

At the conclusion of the course, which lasted a little over eight weeks (August/September, 1989), the pupils were given two full-scale written tests in which they were expected to answer examination-type questions. Test 1 was modelled on the pattern of the current literature examination set for Ciskei (see Annexure R), which has been severely criticized by teachers. Test 2 was modelled on the traditional type literature examination including essay-type questions. Test 2 was

comparatively, more literary as it included essay-type questions and involved detailed responses. It was expected that, if a significant number of pupils could write satisfactory essay-type answers to questions on Things Fall Apart as compared with questions on Silas Marner, it would strongly indicate that a wiser selection of texts might probably be the solution to some problems confronting literary education in Ciskei. The question papers set for the two tests are available in Annexure M and N (pp. 211-14). Questions worth 50 marks were set on each text.

The sample of 60 pupils was used as its own control to ensure that all pupils were equally exposed to both texts. This was done as,

Situations often arise where a single group of subjects is studied under two experimental conditions . . . in many experiments it is more appropriate to use the individual as his own control . . . The reason for this is the lack of techniques to fully evaluate and control the variables which make each individual unique and which may affect the outcome of the experiment. The 'within person' variation is such that only by using the individual as his own control can maximum inference be made.

(Behr, 1983, p. 70, author's emphasis)

The aim of the tests was to determine from a comparison of the performance of pupils on both texts, whether the choice of text itself had anything to do with the quality of the performance. Pupils who usually scored between 40% and 50% marks in English (that is, average pupils) would be exposed to both texts which would be taught in the same manner. Since the method of teaching was uniform, it was assumed that any variation in their performance with the

two different texts would reflect the possibility that the difficulty, or otherwise, of the text itself was responsible for the variation. It was expected that a statistically significant difference in the performance, as indicated by the test scores, would show that the difference was due to the variation in the use of African texts as compared with the use of English texts.

The scores obtained by pupils in both tests and with both texts are reflected in Annexures O and P (pp. 215-16). In Test 1, the mean (average) score obtained by the 60 pupils on Silas Marner was 14,8; while the mean score obtained by the pupils on Things Fall Apart was 19,8. Considering the fact that a revision of Silas Marner which is a prescribed work, produced only an average of 14,8 out of 50, it may be said that the performance of the pupils on Things Fall Apart was significantly better.

It may be argued that Things Fall Apart was "fun study" and that the pupils performed better because there was no pressure on them. On the contrary, it could also be argued that the fact that Things Fall Apart was not prescribed could have caused a performance poorer than expected, as there was no compulsion to do well in it. Taking into consideration the fact that the course of comparative study was conducted just before the examination period (August/September), this performance appears to be satisfactory.

The second test involved contextual as well as paragraph/essay-type answers. 38 pupils attempted essays on Silas Marner while only 16 attempted essays on Things Fall Apart. This may have been due to their familiarity

with Silas Marner, although it was expected that more pupils would attempt essays on Things Fall Apart.

A problem faced in the analysis of the results of Test 2 was that some pupils, as is so typical of most, disregarded instructions and answered either two contextual questions or two essay-type questions. Of the total 60, 19 pupils flouted instructions; 13 answering two contextual, and 6 answering two essays. These six actually answered all the four questions in the paper. The first essay and the next contextual answers could be examined for the purpose of results. However, there would be no uniformity, even if this criterion were used. The results of Test 2 are, therefore, unreliable and invalid and may be scrutinized, solely, for interest's sake. It is to be noted clearly that it is a common tendency among pupils, especially Black pupils, not to regard instructions seriously enough. Apart from this, a glance at Annexure P will confirm the overall performance, as is evident in the results of Test 1. The performance was significantly better in Things Fall Apart than in Silas Marner. The results of Test 1 may conclusively, be accepted as evidence in favour of this.

## 5.2 A survey of the attitudes of Black pupils and teachers of English literature towards texts currently in use

### 5.2.1 The general questionnaire administered to pupils

In view of the fact that the poor performance of Ciskeian pupils appears closely related to poorly-chosen

texts, it was felt necessary to consult the views of pupils themselves regarding their attitude to the set books imposed on them, and about attitudes they adopt towards the study of the subject, literature. With these objectives in mind, the inquiry was undertaken to try to eliminate factors such as incompetent teaching, insufficient opportunities/facilities and communicative incompetence from contributing to poor performance in English. It would also draw attention to the role of a more apposite selection of texts in stimulating a love of literature. In order to determine pupils' attitudes regarding the matters under discussion, it was felt that a generalized questionnaire could be administered to pupils of Stds. 9 and 10, from selected schools, who are the subjects of this investigation. The questionnaire was decided upon as the ideal instrument to use in an investigation concerning "opinions, attitudes and interests." Moreover, the questionnaire has been acclaimed by Behr, A. L., 1983, p. 150 as "the best available instrument for obtaining information from widely spread sources." This questionnaire was intended to study pupils' attitudes to the study of literature in general, the difficulties that they experience in their study of English literature at school, their opinions of the texts prescribed and their general reading habits.

It was administered to the pupils of Stds. 9 and 10 of four Ciskeian schools selected at random. Although the willingness of principals to permit the administering of the questionnaire was one criterion for the selection of these schools, there was also the fact that these schools

were more or less representative of both the rural and the semi-urban schools in Ciskei. Of the 79 senior secondary schools in Ciskei, 58 are declared rural and 21 are declared semi-urban, according to verifiable departmental statistics. This suggests a ratio of three rural schools to one semi-urban school. Therefore, three rural schools and one semi-urban school were selected for the purposes of administering this questionnaire. 370 questionnaire forms were distributed and supervised personally by the investigator. However, only 287 were completed/responded to on account of pupils' unwillingness to co-operate. This is attributable, possibly, to sheer apathy, and to the fact that there was no advantage to be gained in responding to such a questionnaire. Those pupils who did respond, distinctly indicated their willingness to complete the questionnaire. The following table indicates the distribution of the response received.

School	No. of responses		
	Std. 10	Std. 9	Total
1. Nobuzwe High School (rural)	50	55	105
2. Nosizwe High School (semi-urban)	30	57	87
3. Zanuvuyo High School (rural)	54	-	54
4. Phillip Mtywaku High School (rural)	26	15	41

The final questionnaire schedule appears in Annexure D (pp. 150-2). Two sections are noticeable in the schedule. Part I was meant to elicit certain personal information and preferences that might be useful. Part II dealt specifically with attitudes to literature. The questions were of a mixed variety, namely, open-ended and closed questions. It is regrettable that questions, 7, 8, 10, 15 and the latter part of questions 9, 11, 12 and 13 were not closed questions. This could perhaps have produced better responses. However, when the questions were drawn up, the intention was to prefer the open-ended form as it

enables the respondent to state his case freely, and possibly give reasons as well. It evokes a fuller and richer response and probably probes deeper than the closed question . . . goes beyond statistical data or factual information into the area of hidden motivations that lie behind attitudes, interests, preferences and decisions . . . In practice a good questionnaire should contain both open and closed forms of questions so that responses from the two forms can be checked and compared.

(Behr, A. L., 1983, p. 151)

So, despite the full awareness of the communicative limitations of the pupils selected, these questions were nonetheless included in the questionnaire. Since it was known that the responses were not going to be scanned for poor expression, it was hoped that a genuine, even if limited, response would be elicited.

A pilot questionnaire (Annexure U, pp. 235-6) was prepared and administered to 30 pupils of the comparative study course mentioned in Section 5.1, before the commencement of that course. Subsequent improvements are reflected in the addition of questions 15 to 19 and the

open-ended nature of the majority of these additional questions. It is to be regretted that part of the introductory paragraph to the questionnaire which was meant to put pupils at their ease by way of clearing the rubric (and which is evident in the pilot questionnaire) was omitted inadvertently in the revised version, Annexure D. However, since the administration of the questionnaire was personally supervised by the investigator, the omission was rectified verbally.

An analysis of results is to be found in tabular form in Annexure E, pp. 153-69. The tabulation and summarizing of the responses to the open-ended questions demanded painstaking effort. This confirms the view of Cohen, L. & Manion, L., 1980, p. 254, that, "One of the problems that has to be considered when open-ended questions are used in the interview is that of developing a satisfactory method of recording replies." Responses were categorized approximately, and as impartially as possible. Analysis revealed that non-response was a severe problem. It is important, at this juncture, not to forget the unexplained "flouting" of instructions in Test 2 (Section 5.1), which conduct on the part of the pupils rendered its results invalid. This investigator has noted that teachers of Black children increasingly feel that their pupils are not particularly "constrained" by instructions in examinations. In fact, they display a tendency to turn a blind eye to instructions. This could, to a certain extent, explain the problem of non-response. The majority of Ciskeian pupils do manage to earn sufficient marks to

produce a pass mark in English, mediocre though their performance may be. This phenomenon lends credence to the fact that difficulty in expressing themselves is not, per se, the reason for omission of response to a question. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to consider the possibility of evolving better or more effective methods of investigation while working with Black children. Perhaps only time and an acute consciousness of the attitudes of Black pupils will help evolve more effective investigative methods to provide more accurate solutions.

Annexures D and U may be referred to for the actual wording of the questions discussed here. Annexure U is the pilot questionnaire discussed on p. 101. It was subsequently amended and presented to the pupils in the final form available in Annexure D. For the sake of convenience, the actual wording of the questions as in Annexure D has been condensed in the analysis below.

#### Part I: Personal Information

Questions 1 - 4 demanded personal details from the respondents which were deemed necessary at the time of compilation.

##### Question 1      Name

The request for names was merely to ensure that respondents did not try to answer on behalf of those seated at the back of the classroom who may have been

reluctant to respond. Moreover, it was necessary for identification of the respondents and for verification of their responses if needed later.

Question 2      Age

It was important to know approximately into what age group Ciskeian Matriculation pupils fell. As a glance at Annexure E, p. 141, will confirm the average Ciskeian Matriculation pupil involved was found to be between 19,5 and 20,5 years of age. This information is significant as it indicates how much more a matter of concern it is that even at this age, Black pupils experience linguistic problems that hamper literary appreciation.

The query regarding mother tongue was intended to discover what percentage of pupils of Zulu- and Sotho-speaking origin could be expected in this exercise. A few such pupils are occasionally found in Ciskeian schools. It was discovered that in all four schools, the respondents were entirely of Xhosa origin.

Question 3      Class

The class in which the respondent was studying was important as it would help to decide what proportion of the response came from Std. 10, for which class, books such as Silas Marner are prescribed. As the table on p. 100 shows, 160 were Std. 10 pupils while 127 were Std. 9 pupils. So the proportion of pupils in Stds. 9 and 10 is not grossly distorted.

Question 4      Name of school to which respondent  
belongs.

It was necessary to include the name of the school to which the respondent belonged in order to maintain a record of the source of the response. Although not irrelevant, it could have been excluded and the information could have been noted and recorded privately by the investigator.

Question 5      Repeaters

It was necessary to know how many Matriculation pupils were repeating their class and, therefore, had had experience of; sometimes the same, or, at other times, new prescribed books. 52 out of the 287 pupils were repeating their classes and had had experience with Matriculation Literature. Their responses would indicate strong preferences that cannot be ignored when choosing books for these pupils. The details of their responses are reproduced in Annexure E, pp. 153-5.

Questions 6-7 were included in this section despite the fact that these required more than mere introductory information. In addition, these questions referred to the pupils' attitudes to language study. They were not the same as the questions which tested attitudes to the study of literature, the purpose of Part II.

Question 6      Which language do you perform well in?

There was a possibility that a certain percentage of pupils would make mention of English or Afrikaans as the subjects they did better in, than their mother tongue.

This question would eliminate such a possibility. Some pupils mentioned more than one subject. Apparently, Xhosa was the language with which pupils were most at ease. English ranked second and was more popular than Afrikaans.

Question 7      Why do perform better in this language?

This question was related to Question 6 and, since more than one language was mentioned by pupils, the responses to Question 7 did not tally with the total number of pupils. 123 pupils stated that they did well in Xhosa, their mother tongue. 91 did well in English and Afrikaans.

Question 8      What difficulties do you experience in the other languages?

This question was added to Part I where it rightly belongs, as a comparison of Annexure D with Annexure U will reveal. Here, too, the pupils mentioned more than one difficulty as may be verified from Annexure E, p. 157.

#### Part II: Attitudes to literature

Questions 9 - 11 referred in general to pupils' opinions of literature in all three languages.

Question 9      Do you enjoy studying literature?  
Why?

273 pupils stated that they enjoyed studying literature. 14 pupils declared that they did not.

Several pupils mentioned more than one reason for enjoying the study of literature (see pp. 158). The response to the "why" part of the question is clearly indicated there.

Question 10     What difficulties have you encountered with English Literature?

128 pupils out of 287 attributed their difficulties in the study of literature to their own deficient vocabulary and to the extended vocabulary that they encountered in the prescribed books. This was perhaps the most popular reason given for their finding most prescribed books very difficult.

Question 11     Are your teachers responsible for your difficulties with English Literature?  
How?

160 pupils misunderstood this question. They answered "Yes" to the enquiry whether they held their teachers responsible for their problems within the study of literature, but added that their teachers did their best. Only those who answered "Yes" offered reasons for their feeling that way. The reasons are categorized on pp. 160.

This kind of response is self-contradictory and seems to suggest careless reading or wrong interpretation, neither of which is justified in view of the directness of the question. Perhaps more reassurance, as was proffered in Annexure U, Question 10, was needed regarding the confidentiality of the responses, although that is no excuse for ignorance and "misunderstanding".

Question 12     Do you enjoy Literature in Afrikaans?  
Why?

84 pupils said that they enjoyed Afrikaans literature, while 203 said that they did not enjoy it. The reasons given by those who enjoyed Afrikaans literature and by those who did not are categorized respectively (see pp. 161).

Question 13     Do you enjoy Literature in Xhosa? Why?

275 pupils declared that they enjoyed literature in Xhosa, while 8 said that they did not. 3 did not answer the question at all and 1 misinterpreted it. The reasons for both points of view are categorized on pp. 162.

Question 14     Which type of literature do you find most difficult?

This was a closed question and, clearly, most pupils (210 out of 287) found poetry difficult.

Questions 15 - 19 are available only in Annexure D.

Question 15     What do you think of the set books prescribed for you?

The rather high rate of non-response (66 out of 287) suggests that response categories should have been provided for this question concerning pupils' comments on the set books prescribed. Nevertheless, 104 pupils distinctly declared that the set books prescribed were difficult. Other responses are available in Annexure E, p. 163.

Question 16     Mention the kind of book you would prefer to study.

57 pupils did not respond to the suggestion to recommend a work of their choice which they considered suitable for study. 71 pupils mentioned Animal Farm, 61 pupils mentioned Silas Marner among other suggestions. In view of the response to Question 15, it would seem that the repeated mention of preference for Macbeth and Silas Marner is probably a result of misunderstanding or confusion. It may be noted that although this question required only the "kind" of books, specific titles were mentioned by pupils. This is yet another example of the Black pupils' penchant for misinterpreting instructions.

Questions 17 - 19 were open-ended questions demanding straightforward responses.

Question 17     Do you read books/newspapers/magazines?

261 pupils read widely outside the course of reading expected at school. 1 pupil confessed to not being in the habit of reading. 25 pupils did not answer the question despite the directness and simplicity of the question.

Question 18     How frequently do you read these?

41 pupils declared that they read often. 209 pupils declared that they read sometimes. 1 pupil admitted that he never did any extra reading. 36 pupils did not attempt a response at all.

Question 19 Response categories were provided for this question. Details of the response are available on pp. 169.

From these responses, the following general conclusions may be drawn.

58% of the pupils performed well in Xhosa; while 38,7% did well in English.

There was a general feeling of a dislike of Afrikaans as a language. 70,8% of the pupils stated their dislike of literature in Afrikaans.

95% of the pupils enjoyed studying literature, considering all three languages together.

They (95%) preferred literature in the mother tongue as being easier to understand.

44,5% of the pupils felt that the study of English literature was made difficult mostly by their own lack of competence in the language as, for example, their deficient vocabulary. This would seem to validate the resolution of this investigation that prescribed texts should be relevant to the pupils' level of understanding and experience.

Most pupils seemed to prefer drama, short stories and novels to poetry. 73% of the pupils admitted that they found poetry difficult; while between 8% and 9% each found drama and novels difficult.

91% of the pupils said that they read material beyond their school course. 72% admitted that they read occasionally. These percentages were calculated as based on the figures listed in Annexure E.

Considering the fact that Ciskeian pupils have limited reading opportunities and the fact that African works in English have not yet been prescribed, it was felt that these questions were the only pertinent questions for pupils in order to determine their attitudes to prescribed books and the study of literature in general.

### 5.2.2 Interviews with teachers

It was decided that selected teachers of English Literature in Ciskei would be interviewed to complete the survey of pupil/teacher attitudes towards the choice of prescribed books in Ciskei.

The interview can be used in the initial stages of a project in an effort to obtain greater clarity as to the problems involved, or as the main source of information, or to supplement other findings.

(Behr, A. L., 1983, p. 145)

As does Behr, so also do Cohen & Manion, who suggest that "the interview may be used in conjunction with other methods in a research undertaking" (Cohen, L. & Manion, L., 1980, p. 243) Cohen & Manion quote Tuckman (1972) who described the interview as

providing access to what is 'inside a person's head', [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge and information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).

The number of teachers of English Literature is clearly lower than the number of pupils. The general "feeling" (attitudes and opinions) of these teachers concerning

problems in teaching literature had to be confirmed in order to assess the trend. It was felt that this could be done best by using the interview technique, one of the advantages of which has been declared by Cohen, L., 1980, p. 242, as it allows for "greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection."

Six teachers were interviewed for this purpose. Their selection was determined according to the following criteria:

- a) willingness to participate in the interview,
- b) fair representation of teacher origin in terms of nationality, (teachers of English in Ciskei include, besides the Xhosa-speaking, teachers from Ghana, India and Britain),
- c) experience and education. (The teachers selected were expected to have sufficient knowledge of the problems experienced in introducing literature in the Great Tradition to Ciskeian pupils and also, to be aware of alternative books that could be prescribed. Trained, university graduates with a minimum of five years' teaching experience were selected).

Despite the fact that the teachers selected for the purposes of the interview were known to have been involved in the particular situation of having to teach literature in Ciskei, using unsuitable books, the focused interview was discarded. If the semi-structured interview was adopted "interviewer bias" could be eliminated.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that complete flexibility of approach, particularly where information is sought from a number of

persons, can result in bias. Hence, it is necessary to impose a degree of standardisation or structure in the interview.

(Behr, A. L., 1983, p. 145)

In the event, the fully structured and the completely unstructured interview were avoided to allow for a certain degree of flexibility and freedom in collecting information regarding teachers' attitudes, beliefs and opinions. The interview schedule was prepared in advance and the questions were asked, more or less, in the planned order. However, as expected, in some cases, "relevant" digressions occurred as a result of enthusiasm among the teachers concerning the issue under discussion. Such digressions are probably, indicative of the usefulness of the interview in following up "unexpected results" or in going "deeper into the motivations of the respondents and their reasons for responding as they do" (Kerlinger, as quoted by Cohen and Manion, 1980, p. 243) These digressions caused repetition and re-phrasing of questions. Occasionally, further questions had to be posed to bring respondents back to the point at issue. Such additions and re-phrasing are indicated clearly in the transcripts of the interviews, (Annexures G to L, pp. 174-203). A variety of open-ended questions, questions involving rating and ranking scales and fill-in type questions were used in the interview to eliminate respondent fatigue.

The purpose of the interview was to determine the opinions of classroom teachers concerning the literature prescribed for study in Ciskeian schools. Were these

books suited to the experience, understanding and appreciation of the majority of the Ciskeian high school pupils whom they taught? The interviews were recorded and have been reproduced almost verbatim. Extensive digressions have been shortened. In an attempt not to alter the responses too much, grammatical errors have been retained.

At the conclusion of each interview, the respondents were provided with questionnaires in order to submit such personal information as age, qualification, experience and reading habits. This information was regarded as imperative in conjunction with their views. Although these questionnaires were collected at the end of each interview, the information will be discussed before the result is analyzed.

There follows a general analysis of the results of the interview.

Nationality:

Ghanaian	-	One
Indian	-	One
British	-	One
Xhosa	-	Three

(Note: There are many Indian and Ghanian teachers of English in the Ciskei)

Qualifications:

All teachers were trained university graduates.

Teaching experience:

All the teachers had a minimum of five years' experience in teaching at high school level. Even the expatriates had a minimum of three years' experience in Ciskei. One of the teachers had ten years' and another, sixteen years' experience. In other words, the average length of experience ranged between five and sixteen years.

The expatriates had had experience in teaching English literature in their own countries before assuming duties in Ciskei. One expatriate teacher and one Xhosa had taught in the R.S.A.

Position:

Two teachers (one Indian and one Xhosa) are now lecturers in a Teacher-Training College in Ciskei where teachers are trained for high schools. Their opinions were particularly valuable for this reason.

Two teachers (one Ghanaian and one Xhosa) are subject teachers only.

One Xhosa teacher is a subject teacher in addition to being a principal.

One British teacher has now attained promotion as Development Officer in the Department. The views of the latter two cannot easily be dismissed.

Reading habits:

Two teachers claimed that they read daily and regularly.

Four teachers claimed that they read occasionally, at

weekends and on holidays. All read literary works as well as journals, periodicals, newspapers and magazines.

The exact interview schedule (Annexure F, pp. 170-73) is available and may be referred to since the text of the questions has been abbreviated below for convenience.

Question 1      Should ESL pupils study literature?

All six teachers answered in the affirmative thus confirming the hypothesis in Section 1.5 and Section 2.

They gave the following reasons including:

- the ennobling power of literature,
- the value of literature to language acquisition, improvement, development of style and the development of critical perspectives,
- the use of literature to those students who wish to proceed to university for higher studies,
- the use of literature in equipping students for life.

Question 2      What are the crucial problems faced by literature teachers in Ciskei?

The responses included:

- shortage of competent teachers and scarcity of textbooks provided by the Department, (two teachers)
- poor command of language, (two teachers)
- absence of reading skills among pupils, (two teachers).

Question 3      How could literature teaching be made more effective?

the teachers proffered various recommendations:

- by improving reading skills, (one teacher)
- by extending reading, (three teachers)
- by training competent literature teachers, (three teachers)
- by prescribing more relevant books, (four teachers)

Some teachers offered more than one suggestion.

Question 4      What is your opinion of the matriculation textbooks?

- The texts are suitable/good, (two teachers)
- The texts should be relevant to pupils' culture and experiences, (four teachers)
- The texts are difficult, (three teachers)
- The texts are too remote, (four teachers)

These observations substantiate the issue favouring the prescription of good African literature in English, which is discussed in Sections 3 and 4. The opinions are particularly significant as they are those of teachers who have experienced the problems encountered when introducing unsuitable literature to ill-equipped pupils.

Question 5      What alternative choice of text would you suggest?

- More drama than novels should be prescribed. (One teacher)
- Short stories are the most favoured form of literature for Ciskeian pupils. (One teacher)

- African writing in English would be suitable.  
(Four teachers)
- Any good English books could be prescribed.  
(Two teachers)
- Only books relating to the experiences of youth should be prescribed. (Two teachers)

Some teachers suggested more than one type of literature.

Question 6      Rate the genres of literature usually prescribed for Matriculation classes.

The responses were varied. Most of the teachers regarded African Literature in English favourably; but only

- one teacher rated it first.
- one teacher rated it second.
- one teacher rated it third.
- two teachers rated it fourth.
- one teacher rated it fifth.

In other words,

- three teachers rated short stories first.
- two teachers rated the Shakespeare play first.
- one teacher rated African writing first

Other details are available in Annexures G - L.

Question 7      What do your pupils feel about the literature prescribed?

That pupils have an open mind and depend on the teacher for cues to form attitudes towards what they read was the opinion expressed by two teachers.

That pupils find it difficult, was felt by four

teachers. It is interesting to note that one of the two teachers who had expressed the opinion that pupils' attitudes depended on the teacher also felt that a text such as Silas Marner was unsuitable.

Questions 8 - 13 may not seem directly relevant to this investigation. The questions were asked to put teachers at ease and to enable them to follow a logical argument about literature. Such a discussion, it was felt, could not ignore Shakespeare studies to which Black educationists are prone to cling. These questions will become more relevant on consideration of Sections 6.1 - 6.5 and Section 6.7. After all, the main contention of this investigation has not been to condemn the use of the Great Tradition in Africa outright, but to show that only as much of it as can be appreciated by African pupils should be "enforced", and to show that alternative literary works of African origin, especially in the form of novels, and perhaps other genres should be provided. This discussion about the retention of Shakespeare is, therefore, not totally irrelevant.

Question 8      Should Shakespeare remain in the syllabus?

All six teachers felt that Shakespeare should be retained for a variety of reasons. Five teachers felt that Shakespeare should be retained as an important part of English literary tradition as his dramatic handling of themes has an universal appeal. However one teacher felt that in view of the difficulty of language, modern plays could be studied more profitably and with more pleasure.

Question 9      Do you think Shakespeare's language clouds the enjoyment of his plays? If not, why are they so popular?

All answered that Shakespeare's language probably caused problems. Despite this, his universal dramatic themes and style were so pertinent and outstanding that the pupils did manage to develop adequate comprehension and appreciation.

Question 10      Should Shakespeare be optional or compulsory? Why?

All six teachers said that the study of Shakespeare should be optional but all noted that, although it was already an option in the present syllabus, every school chose a Shakespeare play as if it really were compulsory. They felt it should be optional because:

- it is uneducational to force anything on pupils.
- Shakespeare can, sometimes, be too difficult for pupils with poor language ability.
- There are equally good works, which are easier and modern.

Question 11      Do you enjoy teaching poetry?

As with the discussion on Shakespeare, the discussion on the teaching of poetry was inevitable. The intention to confine the discussion to the novel alone seemed to exclude much valuable commentary by experienced teachers on prescribed literature. Fuller responses were expected if minor digressions into other prescribed genres including drama, short stories and poetry were not

restricted. Moreover, even the pupils had expressed their aversion to poetry in the questionnaire intended for them. A discussion of the teaching of poetry here, is not entirely irrelevant since it supplements the discussion of pupils' problems discussed in that questionnaire. Generally, the digressions are in keeping with the expectations of the semi-structured interview.

Five teachers declared that they enjoyed teaching poetry. Only one teacher was not at ease teaching it.

Question 12      Comment on the poetry prescribed for  
Stds. 9 and 10.

The comments were adverse.

Two teachers felt that the poems chosen were from disparate periods.

One teacher felt that the selection was appropriate. However, she admitted that poems such as The Ancient Mariner would not be fully appreciated by Std. 9 pupils.

Two teachers felt that the selection should include more poems from Africa. The one teacher who liked poetry agreed.

Question 13      Do your pupils enjoy poetry?

Five teachers replied in the negative. Only one teacher gave a qualified answer saying that interest in poetry depended on how it was handled.

Question 14      What qualities make a novel worth study?

The discussion on the novel as a particular genre was

intended to connect these data with the main focus of this investigation, the African novel.

Most teachers mentioned inter alia familiarity of theme, simplicity of plot, interesting characterization and good style.

Question 15     Give examples of novels of varying difficulty.

Here, too, the responses varied greatly in the choice of:

- A notably enjoyable novel. (Two teachers mentioned Tess of the D'Urbervilles);
- Difficult but worth teaching. (Three teachers mentioned The Great Gatsby).
- A failure in class; (Four teachers mentioned Silas Marner, two teachers mentioned Northanger Abbey).
- Unworthy of prolonged study; (Two teachers mentioned Hard Times, three teachers mentioned Silas Marner).

Question 16     What do you think of the set-book system compared with a wider choice?

This question was asked to determine whether the system was to be blamed for the problems existing in literary education (see Section 1.4).

All six teachers favoured a wider choice, provided it was practical and could be monitored by the teacher. However they felt that set books were a "safe" system.

Question 17      What is the ideal method of assessing performance in literature?

Teachers' opinions concerning this, it was felt, would be interesting in view of the observations made in Section 1.3.

Although three teachers unequivocally advocated the continuation of the external examination system as the definitive method of assessment, all six felt that a combined internal and external assessment could prove advantageous to the pupil and would do justice to the nature of the subject. This method has been investigated and recommended by Macrae (1990), too.

Question 18      How could supplementary reading be promoted?

Poor reading facilities are probably the root cause of poor/undeveloped reading tastes.

The teachers had interesting suggestions to make. School and mobile village libraries could be developed. It was felt that a separate quota of marks could be reserved for private reading. Newspapers and magazines could be distributed among pupils of poorly-funded schools. Pupils could be encouraged to read magazines. This opinion is supported by Gardner (1990).

Question 19      How exactly can supplementary reading help?

Teachers mentioned these points:

- It would help to encourage reading habits.

- It would help to develop critical thinking and appreciation.
- It would help to encourage pupils to work on their own.
- It would help to provide useful and pleasurable leisure-time activity.

Question 20      List five African novels you have read.

Two teachers had not read any African writing. This is not surprising. It has been noted often that Black teachers are not well-informed concerning good African writing in English, and that they prefer to study English literature since that is the only type of literature they are familiar with. Gilfillan (1987), among several others, has already confirmed this. One of the teachers, unfamiliar with African writing, is British and has a justifiable preference for works from the Great Tradition. The other teacher is Xhosa and was educated in the "colonial" years before nationalization. Neither teacher answered questions 21 - 24. Of the other teachers, all four mentioned Things Fall Apart, two mentioned A Grain of Wheat, two mentioned The African Child, among others. They had studied these works at university.

Question 21      Are the works by African writers comparable to works by English writers in quality?

All four teachers considered that they are comparable in style and in felicity of expression.

Question 22     What is the most appealing literary aspect of African writing in English?

All agreed it was the "African idiom" which is so expressive, unique and relevant.

Question 23     With what English novels can you compare certain African novels?

It was explained that the comparison could be on the levels of theme, literary merit or relevance to pupils' lives. The respondents pitted Things Fall Apart against Silas Marner, and A Grain of Wheat against Hard Times. The teachers mentioned similar force of feeling in the story, similar treatment of situations, suitability of language to theme and similar attitudes to life.

Question 24     Discuss the advantage of the "Africanness" of a novel to "foreignness".

All felt the "Africanness" could be advantageous to the pupils' identification and understanding of the plot/story. "Africanness" was used in the sense of uniqueness; of style, theme and exposition, in the sense used by Reid (1982).

Question 25     How important is cultural identity to literary appreciation?

- Two teachers said that, ordinarily, this should not matter. This viewpoint seems to accord with the references in Section 1.4 to an "ideal" situation which, however, appears not to exist in Ciskei.

- Four teachers said that cultural identity is very important for appreciation.

Question 26      What difficulties did your pupils experience with Silas Marner?

The teachers mentioned complexity of theme and plot, remoteness of setting and period, difficulty of language, irrelevance to youth, and presentation of text (in terms of unattractive print and careless presentation of illustration).

These questions were administered in circumstances where African works in English had not been prescribed for study in Black schools. They have only been prescribed by JMB, the Cape Education Department and now, by Teacher-Training Institutions in Ciskei. Under the constraints of adverse circumstances, these questions were the only means available to determine teachers' views on set books, on the existing teaching practices and on the impediments to positive change.

General conclusion

All the teachers who are familiar with African writing in English conceded that such writing has considerable literary merit and may provide the solution to the basic problems of comprehension and appreciation experienced by Ciskeian pupils. In view of this, to persist with works from the Great Tradition when and where they cannot be fully understood and appreciated is to inflict the alien values of an élite minority, on an under-privileged majority and so deprive the latter of the privilege of its own choice.

These recommendations are intended for syllabus planners, for textbook selection panels/committees engaged in prescribing English literature books for study in areas similar to Ciskei, for those who are interested in the progress of Black education and for future researchers. The recommendations are based on the investigator's experience and observation, the opinions of subject teachers, the experience of pupils and the actual performance of pupils, all of which have been recorded in the preceding chapters.

6.1 A proposal for a far greater emphasis upon Literature in English rather than English Literature for Africa

In view of the fact that literature in the Second Language should primarily "interest" the pupils before "educating" them, any literature that is prescribed should not only be good, but should also be relevant. Pupils have experienced difficulties with remote English texts such as Silas Marner despite the fact that good African works are available. It seems imperative that education planners for Black areas should consider a proposal for Literature in English rather than English Literature. This scheme has worked out fairly successfully in West African schools as H. L. B. Moody (1971) bears out.

6.2 Some alternative African novels for detailed study at the Matriculation level in Black schools

For the purposes of devising such a literature programme, researchers such as Moody (1971), Gunner (1984), Moody, Gunner & Finnegan (1984) among others, may be consulted for lists recommending African works for study. However, a short list of African novels in English which may be considered suitable for the traditionally prescribed formidable English works, could include:

C. Laye	-	<u>The African Child</u>
"	-	<u>The Radiance of the King</u>
T. M. Aluko	-	<u>One Man, One Matchet</u>
"	-	<u>One Man, One Wife</u>
Ike	-	<u>Toads for Supper</u>
Ngugi wa' Thingo	-	<u>Weep not, Child</u>
"	-	<u>The River Between</u>
Peter Abrahams	-	<u>Tell Freedom</u>
Achebe	-	<u>Arrow of God</u>
"	-	<u>A Man of the People</u>
"	-	<u>No Longer at Ease</u>
"	-	<u>Things Fall Apart</u>

These novels are recommended for their thematic relevance and for good literary style. Most of them recapture the struggles of youth with the idea of growing up and with self-discovery, and they are captivatingly linked with wider emancipatory movements that have a special attraction for the Blacks. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. There are many more African novels which

have not been mentioned here, which may be excellent for study by Black pupils.

### 6.3 Choices in African drama

Although this investigation has been confined to the novel, one can tentatively argue from the evidence accumulated that similar choices could be considered for drama, poetry and short stories. The following plays or collection of plays may be considered.

Wole Soyinka	- <u>The Lion and the Jewel</u>
"	- <u>The Trials of Brother Jero</u>
"	- <u>Death and the King's Horseman</u>
Ola Rotimi	- <u>The Gods are not to Blame</u>
Fugard, Kani & Ntshona	- <u>Sizwe Bansi is Dead</u>

### 6.4 West & South African and multicultural anthologies of poetry

It may be possible to find ideally suitable African and Commonwealth anthologies of poetry to replace the concentrated diet of English and Western poetry. Here are a few suggestions.

Beier, U. (ed.)	- <u>African Poetry</u> (C. U. P.)
Berry, A.	- <u>Poetry for Africa I - III</u> (U. L. P.)
Parsons, D. St. J.	- <u>An Anthology of West African Verse</u> (U. L. P.)
Reed, J. & Wake, C.	- <u>A Book of African Verse</u> (Heinemann A. W. S.)

- Sergeant, H. - New Voices of the Commonwealth (Evans)
- " - Poetry from Africa (Pergamon)

A study of poems such as

- 'Nuit de Sine' - J. P. Clark
- 'Night Rain' - "
- 'Breath' - Birago Diop
- 'Boy on a Swing' - M. O. Mbuyiseni
- 'Letter to a Son' - Charles Mungoshi
- 'Telephone Conversation' - Wole Soyinka
- 'Season' - "
- 'City Johannesburg' - M. W. Serote

would be more relevant for Ciskeian pupils than poems such as 'The Ancient Mariner'.

#### 6.5 Short stories by Black writers

A careful investigation into this field may produce collections that are worth studying, they include the following:

- Appiah - A Smell of Onions
- Edwards, P. (ed.) - Modern African Narrative (Nelson)
- " - Through African Eyes (C. U. P.)
- Richard Rive - Modern African Prose (Heinemann, A. W. S.)

#### 6.6 The system of set books versus the corpus of literature

The system of set books in South Africa is a necessary evil that one has to learn to live with. This situation could be relieved a little by widening the choice within the system, which, at present necessitates a choice of any two genres from a choice of four, including poetry, Shakespeare, novel and short story. A wider choice should include at least, five or six different works in each genre. This wider choice would ensure that, although works from the Great Tradition are not eliminated, their retention is balanced by the presence of suitable African works. In this way, teachers and pupils would have a wider range of the corpus of literature from which to choose.

#### 6.7 The issue of retaining Shakespeare in the Second Language system

This is an issue that has been hotly debated by many critics including Reid (1984), Edmunds (1985), Sherman (1984 and 1985), Unterslak & Ricci (1985), Morton (1981), Black (1982) and others. The consensus of opinion has opted for retaining Shakespeare. The reasons are obvious and need no repetition.

It is proposed that the Shakespeare play should be begun in Std. 9 and continued in Std. 10 in Black schools. Moreover, prose versions of the plays, as, for example, Lamb's Tales and others should be introduced in Std. 8.

Tragedies and historical plays should be prescribed, as these have a greater appeal than have the comedies, the subtle humour of which is unintelligible and foreign to the unsophisticated Black pupil.

#### 6.8 Establishment of libraries

It is recommended that Ciskeian schools should, forthwith, be furnished with libraries. Lack of reading facilities has, in all likelihood, been primarily responsible for destroying any zest for reading. Where there is little reading, opportunity for enjoyment and appreciation will be minimal.

#### 6.9 Involvement of classroom teachers in the choice of prescribed books

Finally, it is suggested that there should be far greater involvement between textbook selection committees and experienced classroom teachers who bear the results of unsuitable prescriptions. The latter are people, who by their daily interaction with pupils, are familiar with what pupils prefer and where the areas of difficulty lie. The opinions of the teachers should be sought and they should have the last word in the choice of works for study by Black pupils.

#### CONCLUSION

If these recommendations meet with approval among educationists of Black children, they will definitely lead to a more apposite prescription of books which will effectively implement the aims of teaching literature.

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ANNEXURE A    AN EXTRACT ON READING FROM THE SECOND  
LANGUAGE HIGHER GRADE SYLLABUS FOR  
STDS. 9 & 10 REVISED IN 1985 AND  
IMPLEMENTED IN 1987 (STD. 9) AND  
IN 1988 (STD. 10)

3.3    Reading

The importance of reading needs to be reaffirmed. Unless pupils have both a desire to read (reading for enjoyment and information) and the ability to do so (reading skills), they will not be able to cope adequately in the classroom, nor will they later be able to use to the full the many opportunities for career advancement in a literate society. Although enjoyment of reading is essentially a private experience, teachers should aim to foster the reading habit in their pupils.

The minimum objective of reading is that pupils should be able to comprehend and enjoy a variety of texts. They should be able:

- 3.3.1    to use an English dictionary to find the appropriate meaning of words encountered in their reading
- 3.3.2    to see the function, in books, newspapers and journals, of:
- layout
  - title and contents pages
  - the index
  - chapter and paragraph headings  
sub-headings
  - indentation, italics, and bold print

- 3.3.3 to respond to the features which show that a writer is:
- introducing or developing an idea
  - emphasising a point
  - explaining or clarifying an idea
  - illustrating a point
  - changing a line of thought
  - anticipating an objection or contrary view
  - drawing a conclusion
- 3.3.4 to distinguish
- main points from supporting argument
  - statements from examples
- 3.3.5 to skim a text to get the gist of it
- 3.3.6 to scan a text to extract information on a particular topic
- 3.3.7 to distinguish between fact and opinion and factual and emotive language
- 3.3.8 to distinguish between, and respond to, literal and figurative language, as it occurs in their reading
- 3.3.9 to recognise when techniques of persuasion are being used, especially in the mass media
- 3.3.10 to infer meaning expressed through implication and figurative language
- 3.3.11 to recognise the differences in the demands made on them by the style and organisation of the texts they have to read (e.g. fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, varieties of newspaper writing, advertisements, textbooks, cartoons, diagrams, flowcharts, application forms)
- 3.3.12 to respond to and appreciate the texts in the reading programme
- 3.3.13 to follow and extend their individual interests by reading a variety of texts of their own choice
- 3.3.14 Reading Programme

In addition to the encouragement of private reading by pupils (1.1.13 above), teachers should actively support this process by providing many opportunities for discussions of books read by pupils in a teacher-assisted private reading programme.

The following prescribed reading programme must also be implemented each year of the course:

- 3.3.14.1 At least one work will be set in each of the following sections. Pupils are required to study ONE work from each of any two sections, i.e. TWO works in all.

Section 1 : Drama

Section 2 : Poetry (approximately 20 poems or 400 lines)

Section 3 : Novel

Section 4 : Open (This could include short stories, relevant prose

ANNEXURE B      THE PAPER PRESENTED BY ELTIC TEACHERS, ALICE.

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN TEACHING ENGLISH

RHODES UNIVERSITY: 6 JULY 1982

This paper sets out to examine some of the problems encountered in the teaching of English as a language, of which literature forms an integral part. The problems are seen from the point of view of the black teacher who has the unenviable task of teaching English to black pupils today, and who feels more acutely than anyone else, the inappropriateness of the title of the subject under discussion. It is of profound significance that there should be need for an examination of problems experienced in the teaching of English to black children NOW, when the standard of English has deteriorated so much that the present generation cannot hope to pick up the threads, not in their lifetime, anyway. For the black teacher, it is a painful undertaking to have to pinpoint the problems, let alone to attempt to analyse them, because the futility of the exercise is overwhelming. The causes of the deterioration of standards obsess one far more than the problems associated with the actual teaching of the language.

Who does not know that, ideally, black children should not be striving to study English literature, in the first place, because, according to a statement made in the House of Assembly in 1953 in support of the system of Bantu Education, introduced a year later, "there was no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour."

Basically, therefore, the problems that are experienced in the teaching of English in black schools have their roots in the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission appointed in 1949, to consider, inter alia:

"The extent to which the existing primary, secondary and vocational education system for Natives and the training of Native teachers should be modified in respect of the content and form of the syllabuses in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims, and to prepare Natives more effectively for their future occupations."

One then wonders what such a well-meaning conference hopes to achieve in the light of the statements which have just been quoted.

Simply, then, the chief problem encountered in the teaching of English is lack of a basic knowledge of English, on the part of most of the teachers on one hand, and on the part of the very children they undertake to teach. The content and form of the syllabi deny them an opportunity to become proficient in English, yet:-

"Proficiency in language is the key to literature, that is language at its best; and ability to read intelligently, therefore brings us into contact with the finest human minds. This widens our experience of life and develops in us taste and discrimination - the capacity to like and appreciate great books...since all language exists to express and convey meaning, there is not one kind of language in everyday life and another for literature."

The following are listed as some of the factors that have contributed to the deterioration of the standard of English in black schools, and which create the problems encountered in teaching the language:-

- (a) Structure of the syllabi.
- (b) 'Underqualified' teachers.
- (c) Grades.
- (d) Lack of reading opportunities.
- (e) Inadequate grammar books.
- (f) Political isolation.
- (g) Importance of Afrikaans.
- (h) Examinations.
- (i) Black consciousness.
- (j) Prescribed books.

(a) Structure of the syllabi: As has already been implied, the syllabi

emphasise 'a dynamic, speech-orientated (functional) approach' throughout the Primary and High schools. That is quite acceptable insofar as it is essential for the assimilation of the various structures of a second language. It is the absence of stress upon INTERPRETATION or CRITICAL APPRECIATION of English as the basic requirement, that makes the syllabi of High schools unsatisfactory as they stand. One cannot see how a teacher who has not been trained in the INTERPRETATION of English can succeed in inspiring his pupils to appreciate poetry or drama, for example.

Side by side with this, no poetry teaching is prescribed for Form 1 (Std 6) in spite of the fact that children at that level have developed sufficiently to be able to appreciate simple poems that deal with adventure, fantasy, etc. The poems that the teacher is supposed to read to them 'from time to time', and the snatches of verse that they are expected to recite during the first year at Post-Primary school, are not a sound introduction to the understanding of literature, because, in most cases, the teacher himself cannot guide his pupils to the expected goal. He had contact with poetry in Stds 9 and 10 only, if he was fortunate, since schools are free to choose any two out of four books; thus it is common to find pupils whose schools never teach poetry in the Matriculation classes. When such pupils handle English later as teachers, they serve to kill the little enthusiasm Form 1 or Std 6 pupils might still have for poetry.

Special emphasis is laid on the need to teach poetry at all levels of the High school because it lends itself most easily to the interpretation of language, which in turn is vital to the understanding of literature as a whole. One is inclined to disagree strongly with the view that black children are by nature incapable of understanding English literature, hence the fewer books that they are required to study in the course of their Post-Primary years. If the syllabi were to allow for a more balanced approach to

the teaching of English, so that the pupils are equipped with a fundamental knowledge of critical appreciation of the language, love of reading and 'puzzling out' the situations presented by the various authors would be stimulated, and the problems would be minimised.

(b) 'Underqualified' teachers: Two categories may be distinguished in this regard, as summed up in the following statements made by Mr K B Hartshorne at a conference of the English Academy held in Johannesburg in July 1966. He

"pointed out that in African schools, English, whether taught as a language or used as medium of instruction, was almost completely in the hands of non-mother-tongue speakers of English (Africans or Afrikaans-speaking White teachers). One out of every ten pupils in the first four years of schooling was taught by a professionally unqualified teacher, and the great majority of the others by women who had only an eight-year primary education before receiving professional training. As a result, patterns of 'African English' - aberrant non-standard English - had evolved and were being perpetuated. It was important, Mr Hartshorne emphasised, that teachers be trained in the use of modern audio-visual aids."

This problem was highlighted in 1966; what does Conference hope to achieve in 1982, when, in addition to the situation revealed by Mr Hartshorne then, most English in the High schools is in the hands of teachers who either have no university course, or have Matriculation English (symbol F) to teach a class of Std 9/10, or NPTC to teach a Std 8 class with?

(c) Grades: The compilers of this paper will be grateful to anyone at this conference who can explain the significance of the term 'grade' insofar as the pupil's choice of subjects is concerned. What is apparent, however, is the fact that 'grading' has resulted in the relegating of English to a secondary place, since the pupil must take a Bantu language on the A

or Higher Grade. The same pupil fails the whole of Std 10 examination if he fails to obtain 40% in the Bantu language, even if he were to obtain 60% in English or Afrikaans. This has created a great deal of apathy in the pupils because they have a false impression that English is far less important than the Bantu language.

The intention behind 'grading' of subjects on the curriculum is clear when the following information is taken into account:-

"All pupils are required to study three languages, taking their home language on the A grade. These subjects are a Bantu language on the A grade, and English and Afrikaans on the A or B grade, or the C grade in the case of Afrikaans. Schools wishing to offer an official language on the A grade must obtain the written approval of the circuit inspector. Many inspectors prefer the B grade, since the emphasis at this level (J.C.) falls upon the development of assurance in the use of the spoken and written language rather than on the basic structure of the language and upon literature, as at the higher level."

The question today, therefore, is: Since the ground was prepared more than twenty-five years ago for the teaching of English to stumble almost to a halt eventually, what suggestions can be made at this conference for the uprooting of all the evils created by the system of education set up for black children only in this country?

(d) Lack of reading opportunities: Right from Std 3 the syllabi intend the pupil to 'learn to read simple stories and books for pleasure', to be trained in the 'reading of English material for pleasure and profit': and in 'the use of the library and its resources'. It is common knowledge that most black schools do not have the semblance of a library. No reading discipline is cultivated in the pupils and, therefore, no successful teaching of any language, or any school subject, can be achieved in such circumstances.

(e) Inadequate grammar books: The grammar texts commonly in use are grossly inadequate insofar as they conform to the speech-orientated approach ONLY, whereas a textbook containing more comprehension exercises covering select prose and poetry exercises, and exercises on critical appreciation, formal grammar, would be more welcome as a beginning towards the understanding of the basic nature of the language.

(f) Political isolation: Without going deeper into this aspect, let it suffice to repeat Professor Lanham's remarks at the English Academy Conference (1966) that

"social and political trends had served to isolate African children from others at the best age for learning a language. If present trends continued, he said, spoken English in various African territories might well be reduced to little more than local patois."

'Present trends' have continued and one wonders if Conference is faced with an examination of problems in the teaching of English in black High schools, or the refining of the 'local patois'.

(g) Importance of Afrikaans: To have to study three languages all at the same time, each with its own set of prescribed books, in the short span of a child's schooling period, is a factor that will continue to destroy all enthusiasm for the mastery of any one language. The experience of pupils is that a 'speaking' knowledge of Afrikaans earns one his bread and butter, and so, indifference to the study of English presents a serious problem to the teaching of English.

(h) Examinations: In conformity with the requirements of the syllabi, examiners set questions on content and understanding, and any effort on the part of the teacher to equip the pupil with more knowledge other than what the syllabus stipulates, is considered irrelevant and 'not for

examination purposes".

(i) Black consciousness: This ideology may have a lot to do with the pupils' attitude to their studies in general, and to English in particular. Naturally, whatever 'other' literature that pupils resort to must be more interesting to them than a school subject in which they do badly the whole time. Their isolation serves to underline their 'blackness', and one is inclined to think that only an effective approach to the teaching of English can succeed in directing their interests towards a love of literature.

(j) Prescribed books: It may be argued that to a very large extent pupils cannot cope with the same type of prescribed book that was mastered with ease by a pupil of thirty years ago. For example, 'Macbeth', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Silas Marner', may be cited. This fact is not to be disputed.

But the question arises: What criterion has been used over the last thirty years in the prescription of books for pupils at all levels?

Has it ever been considered that the teaching of English literature has been more successful in the past, that is prior to the system of Bantu Education, because prescribed books appeal to the imagination of the children insofar as their sense of adventure, intrigue, fantasy, humour were evoked at the various levels?

What happened to books like

A tale of two cities  
 The prisoner of Zenda (unabridged)  
 A midsummer night's dream  
 The tempest  
 As you like it  
 Pride and prejudice  
 Jane Eyre  
 Wuthering heights

The list is endless.

What harm is there in prescribing Shakespeare's 'Richards' and 'Henry's', for a realistic approach to the study of literature, since the reading of literature does indeed 'widen our experience of life'. What inspiration do books like 'Scruffy', 'No highway', 'Far from the madding crowd', 'Old Mali', 'Maseru', 'Stop thief' have for the average teenager, be he black or yellow?

There is no doubt that young black children who have been nurtured on stimulating nursery rhymes like 'Hickory-Dickory-Dock', 'Humpty Dumpty', 'Jack and Jill', 'There was an old woman who lived in a shoe', etc., would be entranced by 'The rime of the ancient mariner', 'The diverting history of John Gilpin', 'The listeners', (and most of Walter de la Mare's poetry), 'The donkey', etc., at Form 1 (Std 6) level, or Stds 4 and 5; 'Morte d'Arthur', extracts from Wordsworth's 'The prelude', Shakespearian love sonnets, at Std 8 level; and the longer poems and sonnets, among the poems prescribed for Stds 9 and 10.

However, the prescription of books has contributed very much to the problems experienced in the teaching of English literature. As things are today, it is inconsiderate to expect Std 7's to be plunged straight into the study of 'Julius Caesar' and poetry for the first time, with no prior preparation in the previous standards; or the Std 10's to have to battle through a play for the first time in their Post-Primary years.

In conclusion, the fact that the black children have lost all grip on the study of English causes concern, because the civilising influence of this language upon the black people of this country cannot be under-estimated. The march of civilisation cannot be halted, and it is paradoxical to attempt to harness the present generation to 'our culture and environment' because it has never yet emerged above the other cultures of long standing.

Our children may be failing hopelessly to master English at its best, but they are even more aware than their counterparts of thirty or sixty years ago that 'our culture' is minus the sea, TV, Radio, Safari, Supermarkets, Space missions, Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, Inflation, the Middle East, to mention a few.

Will this Conference arrive at some resolutions that will aim at modifying the syllabi further in order to improve the standard of English in black schools, and save future generations from degeneration?

(Unpublished paper, ELTIC, 1982)

## ANNEXURE C

## THE ANALYSIS OF STD 10 RESULTS OF 1987

PROGRAM : EUIB022  
 SYSTEM : EXAMINATIONS 1987/11  
 SUBSYSTEM: STANDERD 10 VOLTYS

EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
 \*\*\*\*\*

PAGE : 1989  
 DATE : 1987/12/30  
 TIME : 11:23:12

## ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL STD 10 EXAMINATION RESULTS

REGION : 20 CISKEI  
 SUBJECT:

CIRCUIT:

NO.	NAMES OF SCHOOLS/SUBJECTS	SYMBOLS										TOTAL	CONVER- SIONS	
		A	B	C	D	E	F	FF	G	H	X			
1.	002 SOUTH SOTHO FIRST LANGUAGE HG			2	13	2							17	
2.	006 XHOSA FIRST LANGUAGE HG	3	35	656	2447	1658			2	2		102	4905	
3.	007 ZULU FIRST LANGUAGE HG					2							2	
4.	012 AFRIKAANS SECONO LANGUAGE HG		19	121	532	1643	1406		160	100		51	4032	
5.	013 AFRIKAANS SECONO LANGUAGE SG						965						965	965
6.	014 ENGLISH FIRST LANGUAGE HG											1	1	
7.	015 ENGLISH SECONO LANGUAGE HG	11	64	375	997	1666	885		156	128		53	4335	
8.	016 ENGLISH SECONO LANGUAGE SG						691						691	691
9.	017 MATHEMATICS HG	2	4	10	22	59			112	452		23	684	
10.	018 MATHEMATICS SG			5	19	106	179	19	117	244		12	701	183
11.	019 PHYSICAL SCIENCE HG		2	8	21	57			174	256		17	535	
12.	020 PHYSICAL SCIENCE SG			5	21	131	234	11	33	29		7	471	259
13.	021 BIOLOGY HG	2	2	30	220	909			516	145		101	1925	
14.	022 BIOLOGY SG			4	32	1187	1396	31	64	18		11	2743	2437
15.	030 XHOSA THIRD LANGUAGE HG					95	10						105	105
16.	039 GEOGRAPHY HG		1	1	21	169			93	22		19	326	
17.	040 GEOGRAPHY SG				7	310	399	17	33	8		3	777	605
18.	041 BIBLICAL STUDIES HG	6	19	68	130	210			44	51		73	601	
19.	042 BIBLICAL STUDIES SG			1	1	109	141		4	5		3	264	227
20.	043 ECONOMICS HG		2	4	21	45			20	35		2	129	
21.	044 ECONOMICS SG			1	1	26	46	1	4	4			83	62
22.	045 HISTORY HG	1	7	78	195	373			367	402		56	1481	
23.	046 HISTORY SG		13	45	98	542	639	28	123	166		19	1673	926
24.	047 BUSINESS ECONOMICS SG	3	12	38	52	72	25	12	18	4		3	239	
25.	048 MERCANTILE LAW SG											1	1	
26.	053 HOUSECRAFT SG			2	27	55	14		1	1		2	102	
27.	055 AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE HG			5	27	56			67	118		13	286	
28.	056 AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE SG			44	295	761	578	136	305	82		69	2270	206
29.	057 NEEDLEWORK AND CLOTHING SG					7	23	8	11				49	
30.	058 ACCOUNTING HG	1		9	47	74			17	22		2	172	
31.	059 ACCOUNTING SG					51	46	1	7	5			110	85
32.	063 TYPING SG		2	4	7	6	5	3	8	14			49	
33.	065 TECHNICAL DRAWING HG					1							1	
34.	066 TECHNICAL DRAWING SG		1		1	4	4		6				16	
35.	067 ELECTRICIANS WORK SG					1	4	1				1	7	
36.	068 PRACTICAL AGRICULTURAL SG				2	8	1	1	2	2			16	
37.	075 FUNCTIONAL MATHEMATICS SG									6			6	
38.	076 MOTOR MECHANICS SG						3		3				6	
39.	083 BRICKLAYING AND PLASTERING SG						2						2	
40.	084 WOODWORKING SG	1			2								3	
41.	087 AFRIKAANS SECONO LANGUAGE SG					4	5	3	2	1			15	
42.	088 ENGLISH SECONO LANGUAGE SG									1			1	
TOTAL		30	123	1516	5258	10399	7701	272	2471	2323		644	30797	6751

ANNEXURE D      THE QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED TO  
PUPILS OF STDS 9 & 10

Your help is needed in an English research project on attitudes to certain setbooks. The questions are designed to explore your experience with setbooks/literature.

PART I: Personal Information

1. Surname: ..... Other names: .....
2. Date of birth: ..... Mother tongue: .....
3. Class in which you are studying: .....
4. Name of your school: .....
5. If you are a repeater in the class, please answer the following questions:
  - (a) How many times have you repeated this class? .....
  - (b) What setbooks did you study then? .....
  - .....
  - (c) Which of the books you have studied did you enjoy most? .....
  - (d) If one of the books you have mentioned is a novel, name it. ....
6. Which of the three languages you study do you perform (do) well in? .....
7. Why do you think you do better in this language?  
.....  
.....

8. What difficulties do you have in the other two languages?

.....  
.....  
.....

PART II: Attitudes to Literature

9. Do you enjoy literature? Yes ..... No .....

Why? .....  
.....

10. What problems have you experienced while studying English Literature? .....

.....  
.....

11. Do you think that your teachers of English have been responsible for any of these problems? Explain how/in what way? .....

.....  
.....

12. Do you enjoy literature in Afrikaans? Yes .... No .....

Why? .....  
.....  
.....

13. Do you enjoy literature in Xhosa? Yes ..... No .....

Why? .....  
.....  
.....

14. Which part of literature do you find most difficult?  
(Tick the appropriate one)  
(a) Poetry      (b) Drama      (c) Novel      (d) Short story
15. What comments would you like to make about the English setbooks being taught in your school? (Please name the book first and then make your comments.)  
.....  
.....  
.....
16. Can you mention the kind of books (give names) that you might enjoy studying at your class level?  
.....  
.....  
.....
17. Do you read any books/newspapers/magazines, etc. in your spare time?    Tick    Yes    .....    No    .....
18. How often do you read these?  
(a) Often      (b) Sometimes      (c) Never
19. What kind of books or magazines do you read in your spare time? (Tick the appropriate answer/s)  
(a) Sports      (b) Youth      (c) Political  
(d) Literary      (e) General interest.

## ANNEXURE E

## THE RESULTS OF PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: Unless specifically mentioned the categorization evident in the responses was not provided in the questionnaire.

Qn. No.	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	Phillip Mtywaku	Total
Total number of students	105	87	54	41	287
2. Age (average)	20,5	20,3	20,5	19,5	20,2
5. Repeaters					
(a) How many times have you repeated your class ?					
Once	7	7	4	9	27
Two times	5	7	2		14
Three times	2				2
Undeclared	6	1	1	1	9
Total number of repeaters	20	15	7	10	52

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.litywaku	Total
(b) What English setbooks did you study then ?					
The Oak and the Peach	9	8	1	6	24
Silas Marner	6	2		3	11
Macbeth	7	2	3	3	15
Julius Caesar	1	1	3		5
The Wind at Dawn	1		1	1	3
For All Seasons	1				1
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	1				1
Animal Farm	8	10	1	7	26
Shades of Fear	2				2
Moments			1		1
Oliver Twist		1			1
No answer	1		1		2

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
(c) Which books did you enjoy most ?					
* Silas Marner	3	1			4
Macbeth	5	1	3	3	12
Julius Caesar	1	1	3		5
* Tess of the D'Urbervilles	1				1
* Animal Farm	4	7	1	5	17
(d) If one of the books you enjoyed most is a novel, name it again.					
Silas Marner	3	1			4
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	1				1
Animal Farm	4	7	1	5	17

see \* above in 5(c)

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
6. Which of the three languages you study do you perform well in ?					
No answer	12	4	13		29
Wrong answer	3		1		4
All	6	5	1		12
None		2			2
Xhosa	64	35	32	36	167
English	37	49	14	11	111
Afrikaans	2	5	2	1	10
7. Why do you think you perform well in this language ?					
- because Xhosa is the mother tongue	51	24	23	30	123
- because there is need to master English/Afrikaans for communication purposes in the modern life-situation	32	35	12	12	91
- No answer	13	9	16		38
- Question misunderstood	22	23	7	9	61

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
8. What difficulties do you experience in the other two languages ?					
(a) Poor oral expression	6	11	1	3	21
(b) Poor written expression	5	4		1	10
(c) Do not understand	50	52	23	13	138
(d) Complex structure	21	1	9	14	45
(e) Unfamiliar vocabulary	9		4	16	29
(f) Too foreign	7	7		4	18
(g) No previous knowledge/background	3	4	1	2	10
(h) Limited use in life	1		1		2
(i) Lack of interest/effort on the part of the pupil	1		2	1	4
No difficulties	6	4	1	2	13
No answer	17	5	21	2	45
Wrong answer	1			1	2

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mitywaku	Total
9. Do you enjoy studying literature ? Why ?					
*Yes	93	87	52	41	273
No (too difficult)	12	0	2	0	14
Total	105	87	54	41	287
<u>*Reasons</u>					
(a) Teacher makes it interesting	2	1			3
(b) Broadens experience	31	26	12	18	87
(c) Is relevant to life	6	20	2	3	31
(d) Improves language	24	15	11	13	63
(e) Is enjoyable	17	16	17	14	64
(f) Is educative (prepares for life)	10	7	4	3	24
Question misinterpreted	4				4
No answer	7	3	12		22

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	L.Mitywaku	Total
10. What problems have you encountered while studying English literature ?					
(a) No answer	3	5	12	1	21
(b) No problems	16	13	3	4	36
(c) Difficulty in written expression	2	20	3		25
(d) Comprehension	10	11	9	11	41
(e) Vocabulary	54	32	20	22	128
(f) Interpretation	6		4	12	22
(g) Examining techniques					
- fragmentary examination of texts based on arbitrarily chosen extracts	2		1		3
- laborious essay-type answers	1				1
(h) Generic difficulty (e.g. poetry more difficult than prose, drama easier than the novel, etc.	18	4	7		29
(i) Little interest/effort on the part of the pupil	1				1
(j) Too alien		1			1

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
<b>11. Have your teachers been responsible in any way for these problems? How?</b>					
Yes	14	2	21	5	42
No	16	31	10	5	62
No answer	13	5	5		23
Question misunderstood	62	49	18	31	160
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>If <u>Yes</u></b>					
(a) Spoonfeeding	1				1
(b) Do not encourage reading	1				1
(c) Do not interpret texts in simpler terms	8		5		13
(d) Do not explain difficult words	7				7
(e) Not competent/qualified enough	2	1			3
(f) Do not boost literature lessons by using projector, films & similar study aids	1		54		55
(g) Ignore portions of the texts that do not feature in examinations	1				1
(h) No explanation		1	21		22

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
<b>12. Do you enjoy literature in Afrikaans? Why?</b>					
<b>Yes</b>	25	16	21	22	84
<b>No</b>	80	71	33	19	203
<b>Total</b>	105	87	54	41	287
<u><b>If Yes:</b></u>					
(a) Helps improve language	10		7	6	23
(b) understand/enjoy it	8	15	6	15	44
(c) Is literary	1				1
(d) Is relevant	2		1		3
<u><b>If No</b></u>					
(e) Do not like it	2	2		1	5
(f) Poor expression	2		1	1	4
(g) Difficulty in comprehension	76	65	26	13	180
(h) Difficulty in writing	1		1	1	3
(i) Is irrelevant		1			1
No answer	2	4	12	2	20

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
13. Do you enjoy literature in Xhosa? Why?					
Yes	93	87	54	41	275
No	8				8
No answer	3				3
Question misinterpreted	1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>287</b>
If <u>Yes</u> :					
(a) Increases knowledge	17	20	8	17	66
(b) Mother tongue - therefore well understood	92	56	30	21	199
(c) Enjoyable		4	2	1	7
If <u>No</u> :					
(d) Difficult	2	1			3
(e) Has limited scope	2				2
No explanation		1	9		10
Reason misinterpreted			5	2	7

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
14. Which <u>one</u> aspect of literature do you consider most difficult ?					
No answer	4	3	5	1	13
Poetry	77	65	38	30	210
Drama	11	8	5	3	27
Novel	8	6	5	4	23
Short story	5	5	1	3	14
Total	105	87	54	41	287
15. Comment about the English <b>set books</b> being used in your school.					
No answer	18	15	27	6	66
Wrong answer	5	7	1	2	15
No comments	14	8	4	10	36
<b>Difficult</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>104</b>
Irrelevant	10	3		1	14
Interesting	5	1	2	5	13
Relevant	13	3	3		19
Literary	7		2		9
Generic difficulty	5	4		1	10
Need to be supported by visual aids		3	1		4

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
16. Mention the kind of books you might enjoy in class					
Literature concerning youth and politics		2			2
Novels	12	5	4	6	27
Drama	8		8	17	33
Short story	10	5	3		18
Poetry	5	1	1		7
Any kind	3				3
Wrong answer	5				5
No answer	25		30	2	57
<u>Specific books</u>					
Shakespeare plays	1	9			10
** Six Tales from Shakespeare	1	3			4
King Lear	2				2

Continued ...

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
Macbeth	22	14	11	23	70
Hamlet	1	1	1		3
Othello		2			2
Julius Caesar	10	7	2		19
The Merchant of Venice	3	5			8
Romeo and Juliet	4			1	5
Twelfth Night		3			3
The Taming of the Shrew		1			1
No Shakespeare		3			3
** Drama Workshop III	1	2			3
** Five Plays for Pleasure		1			1
The Wind at Dawn	1	1	1		3
The Oak and the Peach	4	2		1	7
For All Seasons				1	1

Continued ...

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
Silas Marner	25	9		27	61
Tess of the D'Urbervilles	1				1
Animal Farm	53	14		4	71
Oliver Twist		1			
Chase novels	1				1
Alice	1				1
Things Fall Apart	1	1			2
** Hill of Fools	1	1	2		4
Das Kapital		1			1
No Easy Way to Freedom		1			1
Mandela's Biography by Fatima		1			1
** Jonty the First Term		1			1
** Caddie for a Crook		1			1
** Danny, the Champion of the World	1	1			2
** A Bushveld Story		2			2
Don Quixote			1		1
** The Wonderful Adventures of Henry Sugar			1		1

Continued ...

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
Tom Sawyer			1		1
Prisoner of Zenda				1	1
** Manella and the Poachers				2	2
** Family on the look-out				1	1
Kidnapped		1			1
Romantica Book of Short Stories	1				1
Shades of Fear	4	4			8
Moments	1				1
Ex-Africa Stories			1		1
** Face to Face			1		1

\*\* These works are below matric standard. They are usually prescribed for lower classes.

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
17. Do you read books/magazines/news-papers in your leisure time ?					
Yes	92	84	44	41	261
No	1				1
No answer	12	3	10		25
Total	105	87	54	41	287
18. How often do you read ?					
Often	13	11	8	9	41
Sometimes	77	67	34	31	209
Never	1				1
No answer	14	9	12	1	36
Total	105	87	54	41	287

	Nobuzwe	Nosizwe	Zanuvuyo	P.Mtywaku	Total
19. What kind of magazines do you prefer ?					
No answer	12	4	12	1	29
Sports	22	21	12	7	62
Youth	31	30	10	9	80
Political	10	17	4	6	37
Literary	16	15		30	61
General interest	43	42	20	8	113

Note: Some pupils declared more than one type of reading material.

ANNEXURE FTHE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(Time: 1 hour approximately)

1. In your opinion, faced as Second Language pupils are with inadequate mastery of the English language, should they study literature at all ?
2. What, would you say, are the crucial problems a teacher faces in the teaching of literature in places such as Ciskei ?
3. What recommendations would you make for increasing the effectiveness of the teaching of literature ?
4. What is your opinion of the literature texts usually prescribed for Stds. 9 and 10 in Ciskei ? Please refer to specific texts which have been prescribed when you discuss this.
5. If you were asked, what alternative choices of text would you suggest ?
6. Indicate in order of importance (from 1 to 6) which of the following genres/types of literature you feel would be most suitable for Ciskeian pupils.
  - Poetry
  - Short stories
  - Novel
  - Works of African origin
  - Shakespeare play
  - Other works of drama
7. What is the general attitude of most pupils towards the English literature texts chosen for study at your school?

8. What is your opinion of the inclusion of Shakespeare in the literature syllabus ? Do you feel the same way about Shakespeare plays as you do about other English works that are prescribed ? Why ?
9. Do you believe that Shakespeare's language affects the enjoyment and understanding of his plays ? If not, what is it about the plays, that make them universally enjoyable ?
10. Should the study of Shakespeare plays be compulsory or optional ? Give reasons.
11. Do you enjoy teaching poetry ?
12. What comments would you make about the poetry prescribed for Ciskeian schools ?
13. Do your pupils enjoy studying poetry ?
14. What qualities, in your estimation, make a novel worth study ?
15. Could you give examples of novels set in recent years which which were
  - (a) Notably enjoyable
  - (b) Difficult but worth teaching
  - (c) A failure in class
  - (d) Unworthy of prolonged study
16. What do you think of the systems whereby
  - (a) pupils are compelled to study the same books for examinations ; and whereby
  - (b) pupils are allowed greater freedom to choose from a list of works appropriate to the class level ?
17. What do you think is the ideal method of assessing performance in literature ?

18. How could supplementary reading for pupils be promoted in the final years of school ?
19. How would supplementary reading aid literary education (appreciation and understanding) ?
20. List five novels (African novels in English) which you have read ?
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5)
21. Do you feel that works by established African writers are equally comparable to those by English writers in literary quality ? Why ?
22. What literary aspects found in African works in English are especially appealing ? Take the example of an African novel such as Things Fall Apart or any other novel that you are familiar with to discuss the point.
23. What African works in English are comparable with English works ?
24. Do you feel that for a Ciskeian pupil the "Africanness" of a text would be definitely more advantageous than the "foreignness" of an English text ? Quote examples.
25. How important is cultural identity to literary appreciation ?
26. Comment on the difficulties Ciskeian pupils experience with a novel like Silas Marner.



ANNEXURE G    AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. R. P. ALEXANDER

(Lecturer in English, Lennox Sebe College of Education, Zwelitsha.)

Qn. 1.

Ans.    Yes. Literature is very ennobling. It could be powerful in instilling a lot of feeling, imagination and critical thinking. It broadens pupils' perspectives. It is necessary.

Qn. 2.

Ans.    Pupils are not equipped with proper reading skills so they are not able to meet the extensive reading demanded by the intensive study of literature. Without these skills they are not able to question, interpret or evaluate the author's intention. The teachers find it difficult to help them understand literature. So teachers must have strategies to improve the reading skills of pupils.

Qn. 3.

Ans.    I would suggest that they study short stories focusing their interest on "small" themes, in the beginning, to build up their reading skills with intensive reading and come to a level where they can read and appreciate with practically little help.

Qn. 4.

Ans.    With regard to Shakespeare, I agree with traditionalists who say that Shakespeare is a must, because he is universal. Pupils enjoy Shakespeare because his themes

are universal, timeless and happen in every age. But, in the case of Silas Marner, the time, the setting and the style and genre are harder to understand than the drama. It belongs to an entirely different culture. Drama is easier to understand because it involves activity. Although Shakespeare belongs much further back in time to the sixteenth century, his plays are easier to understand.

Add. Qn. What do you think about other novels which have been prescribed like The Great Gatsby and The Pearl ?

Ans. The Great Gatsby is quite relevant. It is more modern, located as it is in the twentieth century. Its theme is realistic.

Add. Qn. Is it not difficult for Black pupils ?

Ans. They can cope with the difficulty because it has an interesting theme unlike a book like Silas Marner where the theme and the story line take quite a long while to be grasped easily.

Qn. 5.

Ans. I would suggest a choice of modern writers and short stories, where the language and the themes are simple and stimulate reading. Interest would be sustained with a short story.

Add. Qn. Have you any comments to make concerning the Department's selection of short stories ?

Ans. Stories like Peach Brandy in the Romantica Book of

Short stories are way below the Standard 10 level.

Qn. What selections would you recommend ?

Ans. Modern Short Stories  
The South Wind and the Sea  
Literary Gems  
Moments

Qn. 6

Ans. 1. Short stories  
 2. Other works of drama  
 3. Shakespeare play  
 4. Work of African origin  
 5. Poetry  
 6. Novel.

Qn. 7.

Ans. They appreciate the African writers prescribed because they are easy to follow. The situation is familiar and they can identify with it. Achebe is a popular writer among pupils.

Qn. 8.

Ans. Shakespeare is very necessary, but a lot of guidance is required, from the teacher, to elucidate the language. However, drama is a very powerful medium.

Qn. 9.

Ans. Shakespeare's language is difficult but his themes, his handling of human emotions, trials and the whole gamut of experiences is so enthralling that they are compelled

to grapple with the language in their eagerness to get these. These things are unchanging in time and place.

Qn. 10.

Ans. I feel that it should be optional. Nothing should be forced upon pupils. The first step to learning is enjoyment. If pupils feel threatened by learning matter they might be inhibited from learning itself.

Qn. 11.

Ans. I do enjoy it very much.

Ans. 12. The anthologies are ill-suited to the Standard 10 level. The themes are too varied. A Miltonic poem is followed by a modern poem. Pupils have to jump from one period to another and understanding is clouded. If selections are made of poems of the same periods, the teachers would find explanation easier and students would follow better.

Qn. 13.

Ans. Some do. Most pupils do not.

Qn. 14.

Ans. Basically, it is the story, the development of plot and the characters.

Qn. 15.

Ans.

- (a) notably enjoyable - Things Fall Apart
- (b) difficult but worth teaching- Lord of the Flies
- (c) a failure in class - Silas Marner
- (d) unworthy of prolonged study- Hard Times

Qn. 16.

Ans. (a) This should be enforced only in Standards 9 and 10 if it must be enforced.

(b) This seems to be a much better prospect.

Qn. 17.

Ans. I think assessment of literature should include both internal as well as external assessment. It should be a combination of both. The teacher at school is the best judge of the pupils' appreciation. External examinations could be stressful and distort actual performance.

Qn. 18.

Ans. By encouraging pupils to read good magazines, short stories and use libraries.

Qn. 19.

Ans. Examinations limit extra-reading. If pupils supplemented their required reading by reading outside their syllabus also, it would widen their vocabulary and understanding as there is no pressure on them.

Qn. 20.

- Ans.
- (1) No Longer at Ease
  - (2) Things Fall Apart
  - (3) The Detainee
  - (4) The Hill of Fools
  - (5) The African Child

Qn. 21.

Ans. African writers have the story but English works have greater depth and vision.

Qn. 22.

Ans. The themes are African and have great relevance for African pupils.

Add. Qn. What do you think of the African idiom ?

Ans. Beyond Africa it loses its relevance. Nevertheless it is very rich.

Qn. 23.

Ans. Chinua Achebe's novels are the ones I can think of, now.

Qn. 24.

Ans. Yes, definitely. Silas Marner and The Great Gatsby are too foreign.

Qn. 25.

Ans. It is important. One, subconsciously, likes to identify with the characters. If there is no cultural identification, one tends to be isolated as a reader.

Qn. 26.

Ans. Pupils complain of difficulty in grasping the language and the story itself.

ANNEXURE H    AN INTERVIEW WITH MS. T. SONJANI

(Lecturer in English, Lennox Sebe College of Education, Zwelitsha.)

Qn. 1.

Ans.    Yes. It gets them involved in the story and in the way it is expressed so that it helps them to learn to express themselves.

Qn. 2.

Ans.    Most of the pupils eventually understand the story but cannot express themselves in an examination. Their difficulties are made worse by the kind of books that are prescribed. Very often the books prescribed are difficult and too foreign. I remember a time when in Std. 6 Don Quixote was prescribed and, although it was an abridged version, the pupils could not understand many of the interesting details of the story just because they were so unfamiliar.

Qn. 3.

Ans.    The books prescribed for study should cover familiar experiences and settings so that the story is grasped quickly by pupils. Otherwise, understanding the story itself would be a problem and it would be very difficult to stimulate any enjoyment or literary appreciation among pupils. The language of the texts should be within the

mastery of the level of the pupils, especially in the lower classes.

Qn. 4.

Ans. The texts usually prescribed have very difficult language. Pupils find it far above their level of comprehension. Often the books generate ideas which are far-fetched. Silas Marner was very unpopular for this reason. Even with Shakespeare pupils need to be helped a lot.

Qn. 5.

Ans. African novels and simpler English novels.

Qn. 6.

Ans. (1) Short stories  
(2) Novel  
(3) Poetry  
(4) Work of African origin  
(5) Other works of drama  
(6) Shakespeare play.

Qn. 7.

Ans. Although with difficulty, pupils manage to cope with the texts in the higher classes. However, with texts like Shakespeare and Eliot, they do complain of not being able to understand at all on their own.

Qn. 8.

Ans. From the story point of view, Shakespeare is all-right for Standards 9 and 10, here, but from the language point of view, the inclusion of Shakespeare is disastrous. Perhaps simplified versions would be better.

Qn. 9.

Ans. Yes, quite seriously. If Shakespeare is appreciated at all by pupils, it is perhaps only for the story.

Qn. 10.

Ans. It should be optional.

Qn. 11.

Ans. No.

Qn. 12.

Ans. It is too foreign.

Qn. 13.

Ans. They do not.

Qn. 14.

Ans. Style and characterization.

Qn. 15.

Ans. (a) Notably enjoyable - Tess of the D'Urbervilles  
 (b) Difficult but worth teaching - Wuthering Heights  
 (c) A failure in class - Silas Marner  
 (d) Unworthy of prolonged study - Hard Times

Qn. 16.

Ans. As long as it is appropriate to their level and ability it is better to give pupils a wider choice than that afforded by the set book system.

Qn. 17.

Ans. A portion of the marks should be set apart from the examination total for the year mark. This is a form of internal assessment. The over-all performance in literature is a combination of both internal and external assessment.

Qn. 18.

Ans. By encouraging them to read magazines and not novels, necessarily.

Qn. 19.

Ans. Youth magazines depict their everyday experiences. They develop the pupils' powers of expression by imitation, if nothing else, and helps them develop a point of view on certain matters.

Qn. 20.

Ans. (1) Weep not, Child  
 (2) A Grain of Wheat  
 (3) Things Fall Apart  
 (4) The African Child  
 (5) The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born

Qn. 21.

Ans. I think it is. But teachers should be able to interpret the passionate expressions of African writers to the pupils in their proper perspectives. There are times when characters in African novels, like the hero in A Grain of Wheat, are profane, indecent and obscene in their expressions. However, this usually happens when either the character or the writer is trying to drive home a certain point, as for example, resentment or outrage against some condition. Besides these instances where such unnecessary detail is observed, the English language used in African works does rise to the level of the language found in English books.

Qn. 22.

Ans. I should think it is the simplicity of the language used. It is easily understood. Despite its simplicity it is rich and figurative in its own way. The African way of speaking which is evident in these books is particularly attractive to African readers. That is exactly how they think and express themselves and although it might be new to the English reader it has been translated correctly and meaningfully into English.

Qn. 23.

Ans. The Hill of Fools, Moments, A Grain of Wheat, The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born, could be compared with any English work of the same level.

Qn. 24.

Ans. Definitely. African works are much easier for Black pupils than some of the prescribed English works. An example of this is Weep not, Child.

Qn. 25.

Ans. It is very important for understanding and expression.

Qn. 26.

Ans. The language is too difficult and the plot is too complicated. They confuse facts of the story.

ANNEXURE I    AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. KENENE

(Deputy Director-General of Youth Affairs  
and former Principal, Peddie.)

Qn. 1.

Ans. Yes, they must because many of them proceed to university where they have problems when they study literature.

Qn. 2.

Ans. It is mainly the problem of shortage of competent teachers.

Qn. 3.

Ans. Well, I would recommend in-service training and courses in literary appreciation.

Qn. 4.

Ans. When I first introduced Animal Farm to Std. 9 pupils, I had problems in getting them to understand it although it was a very good book. The themes of most of the prescribed books are complex. Silas Marner was also difficult. But The Pearl which was prescribed in 1986 was far more enjoyable. Co-incidentally, the story concerned Black people and, despite the foreign setting, was more identifiable. Generally, most of the prescribed books are too foreign to be liked easily.

Qn. 5.

Ans. Books with themes that interest children or books of African writers, revolving around African themes would be preferable.

Qn. 6.

Ans. (1) Work of African origin  
(2) Poetry  
(3) Shakespeare play  
(4) Short story  
(5) Other works of drama  
(6) Novel.

Qn. 7.

Ans. Most pupils are reluctant to read.

Qn. 8.

Ans. Shakespeare has always been there.

Qn. 9.

Ans. Yes it does, but pupils often overcome it especially because the themes are familiar.

Qn. 10.

Ans. It shouldn't be compulsory because some pupils will discontinue studies after school.

Qn. 11.

Ans. Yes.

Qn. 12.

Ans. The syllabus is quite un-African. The Ancient Mariner is not a very good choice.

Qn. 13.

Ans. Yes. I have always encouraged the study of three, instead of two genres, so as to include poetry.

Qn. 14.

Ans. Familiarity of theme, relevance and simplicity are very important. Some of the books prescribed are too complicated and alien.

Qn. 15.

Ans. (a) Notably enjoyable - The Mayor of Casterbridge  
 (b) Difficult but worth teaching - The Great Gatsby  
 (c) A failure in class - Silas Marner  
 (d) Unworthy of prolonged study - Under the Greenwood Tree.

Qn. 16.

Ans. I prefer the set book system. It is safer, even if a bit boring.

Qn. 17.

Ans. I would prefer the external examination. Some teachers could be irresponsible. We could have a combination of internal assessment and external examination.

Qn. 18.

Ans. A school library could be operated to expose children to the reading of books other than prescribed ones. Periodicals, magazines, short stories, magazines like Drum, Pace, etc., could be included.

Qn. 19.

Ans. Teachers are able to control supplementary reading, develop vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Qn. 20.

Ans. (1) Things Fall Apart  
 (2) A Grain of Wheat  
 (3) A Man of the People  
 (4) Arrow of God  
 (5) Girls at War

Qn. 21.

Ans. Yes, most often, yes. The themes appeal to most of the youth. They have topical interest and could be picked up at any point and read purely for enjoyment. English works, on the contrary demand a lot of study of the background.

Qn. 22.

Ans. African expressions (idiom) and atmosphere. There are expressions which have a distinctly African flavour that make them relevant.

Qn. 23.

Ans. If one looks for it, it is possible to find similarities between African works and works in English

on points like treatment of a situation, attitudes to life and so on. For example the tragedy of Okonkwo's death could compare with the tragedy of Brutus in Julius Caesar.

Qn. 24.

Ans. I think, in terms of interest, "Africanness" would matter very much, especially because Black education aims at encouraging Black children not to follow the White man's way of thinking but to follow a distinctly African way of thinking.

Qn. 25 .

Ans. It is important. Much African writing centres around African culture. Africans want to display their culture. A good example is Achebe's Things Fall Apart. The question of culture cannot be under-estimated. Too foreign a book may cloud pupil's understanding.

Qn. 26.

Ans. Silas Marner has been produced badly. The print is poor. It has more than one theme. This could pose problems for pupils. Pupils should be asked to study books with straightforward, simple and, preferably, single themes that develop logically.

ANNEXURE J    AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. KWAME AIDOH  
 (Teacher of English, Peddie, Ciskei)

Qn. 1

Ans. It is necessary. Literature is the basic part of language study for any student.

Qn. 2

Ans. Pupils are not well-grounded in literature. A teacher has to stop to explain every word. There is basic deficiency in their command of the English language.

Qn. 3

Ans. More emphasis should be placed on oral communication rather than on set patterns of writing, which receive greater attention in Ciskei. Pupils are not exposed to sufficient reading. Their vocabulary is limited and they are not familiar with idiomatic expressions.

Qn. 4

Ans. Most of them are unsuitable because they are so foreign. Even the poetry is unfamiliar to South African Blacks. The settings are so remote that they generate little interest.

Qn. 5

Ans. Local material should be used in the lower classes. In Std.6, Akpan and the Smugglers has been a failure. Most of the teachers themselves are ignorant of the setting.

Qn. 6

Ans. (1) Short stories  
 (2) Work of African origin  
 (3) Shakespeare play  
 (4) Poetry  
 (5) Novel  
 (6) Other works of drama.

Qn. 7

Ans. Their attitude is lackadaisical. It is as if teachers

are disturbing them by teaching literature to them. They are bored because they don't understand it.

Add. qn. Does the situation improve with the intervention of the teacher?

Ans. Somewhere along the line, a few of them show interest, but, generally, it doesn't run through as it has done in my experiences elsewhere.

Qn. 8

Ans. Probably I am carried away by my own love for Shakespeare plays and I find myself explaining them endlessly to pupils. I feel Shakespeare is necessary.

Qn. 9

Ans. Shakespeare's language is very rich. His plays have deep, intrinsic meaning. Despite the foreignness, Shakespeare remains popular because it is relevant world-wide.

Qn. 10

Ans. I wouldn't say it should be compulsory because invariably the student<sup>s</sup> don't get the message or appreciate it. But, to me, Shakespeare is part of the English tradition and should be studied as partly representative of the study of English as a foreign language. It should be studied as an option to other plays.

Qn. 11

Ans. I do, very much.

Qn. 12

Ans. It is the same as the comments I've made on novels, earlier. Most pupils get to Std. 10 without doing much poetry. They are used to answering questions by using **study-aids without exhibiting any appreciation for the poems themselves.** So it becomes very difficult to explain that it is one thing to study poetry and quite another to read a text on poetry.

Qn. 13

Ans. Most pupils do not enjoy poetry.

Qn. 14

Ans. Well, the theme, the language and style.

Qn. 15

- Ans. (a) Notably enjoyable - The Pearl  
 (b) Difficult but worth teaching - The Great Gatsby  
 (c) A failure in class - Silas Marner  
 (d) Unworthy of prolonged study - Silas Marner

Qn. 16

Ans. I prefer the second system. It would be easier for the pupils and at the same time, it would put some responsibility on them. If they didn't like a book they would exert themselves to explain why they felt that way.

Qn. 17

Ans. External examination would be a good means of assessment, but, it may be supported by internal assessment.

Qn. 18

Ans. They could be provided with magazines and dailies. The system/mode of education is partly responsible for the conditions in the Ciskei. There is no scope for supplementary reading. The system encourages cramming. If external examinations were supplemented by internal assessment the pupils would work on their own, in class.

Qn. 19

Ans. Prescribed texts narrow the pupils' attention, supplementary reading broadens their literary field and develops appreciation.

Qn. 20

- Ans. (1) Things Fall Apart  
 (2) The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born  
 (3) Toads for Supper  
 (4) The Narrow Path  
 (5) The African Child

Qn. 21

Ans. To some extent, yes, but not wholly. If one talks of quality, style and theme, I don't think Achebe compares with Shakespeare.

Adv. qn. What do you think of the African idiom?

Ans. I think it is rich and relevant for Africans. But African students reading English literature are studying English ("Queen's English"). If they become conscious of the African idiom then texts would become regionalized in their minds. Too many African expressions could make texts difficult to understand. I feel that the African idiom "colours" English. Personally, I wouldn't equate African writing to Shakespeare's plays .

Qn. 22

Ans. The African idiomatic expressions. Some of them are rich and correctly translated and although they may not seem right to an Englishman, a person with a literary turn of mind might stop to consider its significance and aptness.

Qn. 23 (reworded because of digression)

Have there been any occasions when you might have felt that African works are comparable to English works?

Ans. Yes. If I were to compare Things Fall Apart with Silas Marner I would find the former richer.

Qn. 24

Ans. To the Ciskeian pupils, as I know them, "foreignness" would mean anything beyond the borders of Ciskei. Most of them cannot understand anything beyond South Africa. I feel that settings should be familiar in the lower classes and become more universal in the higher classes. Poorly chosen texts administered at the lower levels could build up an aversion for literature.

Qn. 25

Ans. Ordinarily, it shouldn't matter. One shouldn't entertain the idea that every literary work should originate from one's own area or have cultural significance. But in

the case of these pupils, here, they tend to view anything that comes from outside Ciskei as being foreign and alien.

Qn. 26

Ans. The story is alien, not merely foreign. It is so Victorian and will not be understood easily by Ciskeian pupils. It is too advanced for Ciskeian matric pupils. It is also a bit too long for a year's work, which is usually covered in 2 - 3 months.

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ANNEXURE K AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. M. MATHER

(now Development Officer, S.S.E.R.P., Bisho.)

Qn. 1.

Ans. Oh yes, definitely. They have always studied it. If they do not, they will never be able to cope with it.

Qn. 2.

Ans. Teachers are often trained but are not graduates. At the training colleges they are not taught literature properly. They can't cope with a detailed in-depth approach. They don't understand literature. This can only be blamed on the system since 1948, when nationalization occurred, when much of the teaching was done in Afrikaans or the vernacular. So English began to fall away.

Qn. 3.

Ans. Reading and a good library. The library should be available. It should preferably be mobile and small. People usually expect something big and stationary. In South Africa, all the little villages have a small library and, once a month, a van comes along and swaps the books so that people get a chance to read very widely. That is what should happen in Ciskei. They should be exposed to reading. It will be slow but people would be forced to read. Primary school teachers should read nursery rhymes and Enid Blyton. It will definitely stimulate pupils' interests in such books.

Qn. 4.

Ans. Referring to Shades of Fear, there are probably only two reasonable stories in it. I don't know why they choose such putrid stuff. Children usually enjoy Animal Farm depending on what the teacher can generate. I can think of better books than Animal Farm. The choice of poems from The Oak and the Peach was not very good. I did a few extra. They choose a poem like The Human Seasons and then one like Wetu, which is like two ends — poles apart. I found, in

a discussion with some teachers that they didn't know what The Human Seasons was all about. Yet, in actual fact, it was an easy poem. I think the choice of poems was not really exciting. The Journey of the Magi would have been better. Donne was alright. They didn't choose something that went across the periods - work starting from the early and work through to the modern. There was no sequence.

Qn. 5.

Ans. For Std. 9 - (1) Dickens' A Christmas Carol - good English (short, simple story, an introduction to better literature and it is a classic),  
 (2) Poetry is essential.  
 (3) Shakespeare (purely for fun e.g. Twelfth Night).

Qn. 6.

Ans. (1) Shakespeare play  
 (2) Poetry  
 (3) Short stories  
 (4) Novel  
 (5) Work of African origin  
 (6) Other works of drama

Qn. 7.

Ans. They come in with an open mind and leave it to the teacher to make literature interesting. If the teacher doesn't make it interesting, then they don't cope.

Add. qn. What would you say about your experiences, in the past, with Silas Marner?

Ans. Well, I had to work really hard. I told them the story first.

Add, qn. Did you get them to appreciate it then?

Ans. Yes, I did, but then other teachers may not have because they didn't know how to jump read. One has to jump-

read that book. One can't read all the philosophy and the writer's opinions.

Add. qn.

Do you agree that literature is not meant to be studied by skip-reading?

Ans. Yes. That is, why Silas Marner was a very bad choice.

Qn. 8.

Ans. Shakespeare is a must. How are people going to cope with English studies at university without a knowledge of Shakespeare's work? I know that not all go to university. But, what about coping with life? My study of Shakespeare helps me to understand what is going on in other people's minds. That is only derived from a study of literature.

Qn. 9.

Ans. If the teacher understands and can make something of it by showing how clever it is, then it is wonderful. It is an absolute joy. The puns and irony are gorgeous. I don't think it can be put over better. In plain language it loses all its force.

Add. qn.

Do you think that the impact of the language is felt fully by the kind of pupils we have here?

Ans. That's the teacher's fault. Most of them are under-qualified and incompetent. If they are qualified, they could make it the fun it is. At Phillip Mtywaku, most of my pupils caught on. Of course you have to do it three times, one way or another. But if you do it, they catch on. You could set fun questions to retain their interest.

Qn. 10.

Ans. If it is made optional, several teachers will opt out. When you teach Shakespeare you are encouraging pupils to think critically. You are trying to say in your language what he said in his. It shouldn't be optional, but it is, in a way, in the Ciskei.

Qn. I1.

Ans. Oh yes.

Qn. I2.

Ans. The choice for Std. 10 for 1990 is putrid except for a few like Guy Butler's Pieta. It is terribly simple; boring. Why can't they set a poem like Ezra Pound's The Goodly Fare. It has such a swinging, modern tone.

Qn. I3.

Ans. Yes; once they realize what it's all about. But it takes six months to introduce Std. 9 to poetry. They must know why the poet wrote the poem.

Qn. I4.

Ans. The style - good, clear English; not flowery or elaborate or tedious. I would look for clever structure. The style should have irony and unity. The characters must be real. It must be a real slice of life. It has got to be exciting; it must have some tension.

Qn. I5.

Ans. (a) Notably enjoyable - A Tale of Two Cities  
 (b) Difficult - The Great Gatsby  
 (c) A failure in class - Northanger Abbey  
 (d) Unworthy of prolonged study - Silas Marner

Qn. I6.

Ans. The wider choice would be ideal in a First Language situation, but how could it be controlled by the teacher in a Second Language situation unless some texts were for detailed study and the rest for non-detailed study. Texts not studied in detail could be useful for testing literary appreciation separately. The non-detailed texts should be simple and intended to promote reading.

Qn. 17.

Ans. External examinations are disastrous. If it must be continued, books should be completed and tested by the semester. A combination of internal and external assessment should be organized properly.

Qn. 18.

Ans. By organizing a school library. Afternoon prep should be utilized for reading.

Qn. 19.

Ans. It would instil the reading habit and widen pupils' vocabulary.

Qn. 20.

Ans. I haven't read any African novels. The poem by Serote, City Johannesburg, was good. It was right from the heart and so true. I have also read an excellent short story by an African writer. Otherwise, excerpts from African novels used for comprehension exercises did not interest me enough to read African literature more widely.

Qn. 20 - 24 were not answered by the interviewee for reasons explained in Chapter 5.

Qn. 25.

Ans. It is possible for a Black pupil to read an English work and argue that that is how people lived there. I used to teach Black pupils an English sense of humour. The Blacks don't laugh at the same things that we laugh at. That makes it very difficult for them. But once they knew what to laugh at in Dickens they were alright. It all depends on the teacher to show them how to identify with the other culture. They couldn't do it on their own. They should be able to do it on their own. They will eventually. Even I couldn't appreciate it in the beginning.

Add. qn.

Should literature be "caught" or "taught"?

Ans. It should be caught.

Qn. 26.

Ans. One has to explain that Silas Marner is really an advanced book and cannot be read through. They are frightened at a reading of the first pages. They have to be told the story and shown the plot structure graphically by using charts and other teaching aids. By paging through it, pupils cannot easily pick up what it is all about.

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ANNEXURE L AN INTERVIEW WITH MS. NTSHONA

(Deputy Principal, Mdantsane.)

Qn. 1.

Ans. Surely if you confine pupils to grammar it would not be healthy. Literature widens their vision in a way. In fact, if they could confine pupils to literature it would be better. If they did grammar through literature that would help them.

Qn. 2.

Ans. No. 1 - making the children read on their own,  
No. 2 - making them understand.

Qn. 3.

Ans. First of all there should be a lot of preparation on the part of the teacher. Schools should provide teaching aids like films, charts, etc. The use of teaching aids leaves an impact on pupils. The child remembers things he has seen.

Qn. 4.

Ans. I should like to begin by commenting on the comprehending power of pupils, which seems to have been much better in the past than it is now. I think that as far as textbooks are concerned, classroom teachers should be consulted. I don't think that the type of books prescribed really has much to do with their performance. However, where Shakespeare is concerned, pupils prefer comedies to tragedies. Pupils prefer drama to other types of literature and do much better in it.

Add. qn. What novels have you taught?

Ans. I have taught Silas Marner, but I had problems with it. The way the book was written and the arrangement of events put off African pupils. There is suspense, but it comes in too late.

Qn. 5. If you were a member of a book selection committee, what kind of novel would you recommend?

Ans. I would recommend Jane Eyre. It has a logical plot. The plot develops logically unlike Silas Marner. There is no digression.

Qn. 6.

Ans. (1) Shakespeare play  
(2) Poetry  
(3) Work of African origin  
(4) Novel  
(5) Short stories  
(6) Other works of drama

Qn. 7.

Ans. Pupils are generally impassive to literature. They prefer comedy to tragedy, however, in Shakespeare. Julius Caesar was popular, but Macbeth was not very popular.

Qn. 8.

Ans. We always feel guilty if high school pupils leave school without a knowledge of poetry and Shakespeare, especially if they plan to go to university.

Qn. 9.

Ans. Shakespeare's stories are enjoyable and they are presented interestingly.

Qn. 10.

Ans. It should be optional.

Qn. 11.

Ans. Yes, I do, but it depends on the type of pupils I teach. The present kind of pupils are deficient in English.

Qn. 12.

Ans. The Std. 6 poetry syllabus is too advanced.  
Std. 7 has no poetry.  
Std. 8 poetry is alright.  
Stds 9 & 10 poetry is also alright.

Qn. 13.

Ans. A lot of the success achieved in the teaching of poetry rests with the teacher. Std. 8 pupils enjoy the poems prescribed.

Qn. 14.

Ans. The element of suspense and language are important in novels. Pupils are eager to know what the outcome is. The language should be within their reach.

Qn. 15.

Ans. (a) Notably enjoyable - Tess of the D'Urbervilles  
 (b) Difficult but worth teaching - Wuthering Heights  
 (c) A failure in class - Northanger Abbey  
 (d) Unworthy of prolonged study - Silas Marner

Qn. 16.

Ans. I resent the idea of pupils dealing with the same set of books, repeatedly. I feel that they should have a wider range to choose from.

Qn. 17.

Ans. I feel that written examinations are the soundest method of examining a knowledge of a text.

Qn. 18.

Ans. Supplementary reading should be encouraged right from the lower classes. A percentage of marks should be reserved for private reading.

Qn. 19.

Ans. Supplementary reading would be very useful in encouraging pupils to become familiar with literary styles and would eventually help them appreciate highly literary works.

Qns. 20 - 25. These questions were not answered by the interviewee for reasons mentioned in Chapter 5.

Qn. 26.

Ans. It was foreign, in that pupils couldn't understand the feudal set-up in the novel. The plot was so complicated. It is too English in parts for it to be fully appreciated by African pupils.

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ANNEXURE MTEST 1SEPTEMBER, 1989

(Time: 1½ hours)

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ALL questions on both THINGS FALL APART and SILAS MARNER.

THINGS FALL APART

I. When Okonkwo and Obierika got to the meeting-place there were already so many people that if one threw up a grain of sand it would not find its way to the earth again. And many more people were coming from every quarter of the nine villages. It warmed Okonkwo's heart to see such strength of numbers. But he was looking for one man in particular, the man whose tongue he dreaded and despised so much.

'Can you see him?' he asked Obierika.

'Who?'

'Egonwanne,' he said, his eyes roving from one corner of the market-place to the other. Most of the men were seated on the goat-skins on the ground. A few of them sat on wooden stools they had brought with them.

'No,' said Obierika, casting his eyes over the crowd. 'Yes, there he is, under the silk-cotton tree. Are you afraid he would convince us not to fight?'

'Afraid? I do not care what he does to you. I despise him and those who listen to him. I shall fight alone if I choose.'

They spoke at the top of their voices because everybody was talking, and it was like the sound of a great market.

'I shall wait till he has spoken,' Okonkwo thought. 'Then I shall speak.'

'But how do you know he will speak against war?' Obierika asked after a while.

'Because I know he is a coward,' said Okonkwo. Obierika did not hear the rest of what he said because at

that moment somebody touched his shoulder from behind and he turned round to shake hands and exchange greetings with five or six friends.

1. Okonkwo and Obierika were attending a meeting where it would be decided
  - (a) what would happen to the egwugwu who destroyed the church
  - (b) what the clansmen would do to collect the amount for the court fine
  - (c) what the clan would do finally to get rid of the white man and his religion
  - (d) what the clan would do to avenge the six men who were arrested.

(2)
  
2. Okonkwo hated Egonwanne because
  - (a) he could influence the clan
  - (b) he would preach against "a war of blame".
  - (c) he was sympathetic to the white man
  - (d) he would convince the clansmen not to fight against the white man.

(2)
  
3. Quote the image which illustrates how crowded the meeting place was. (2)
  
4. How did Okonkwo plan to deal with the matters of the clan in spite of Egonwanne's interference? (3)
  
5. In the context of the events from which this extract is taken, why was Okonkwo not wise in fighting the white man? (5)
  
6. Before Okonkwo expresses his fear of Egonwanne's influence on the clan Obierika asks, "Are you afraid he would convince us not to fight?" Four of the statements

provided below tell you what this statement suggests. Pick those four.

- (a) Obierika knew Okonkwo well enough to guess what he was thinking
- (b) Okonkwo was quarrelsome by nature
- (c) Egonwanne was capable of convincing people to do what he wanted
- (d) Okonkwo wanted to fight.
- (e) Okonkwo was really afraid of Egonwanne
- (f) Obierika could influence Okonkwo in his way of thinking.

(6)

7. Find synonyms in the passage for the following words:

- (a) corner            (b) hated            (c) give and take
- (d) pleased           (e) wandering            (5)

8. Imagine you are Obierika. Describe your impressions of Okonkwo's thoughts of Egonwanne and the fight he (Okonkwo) was interested in. Connect your impressions to earlier occasions when you had warned Okonkwo not to fight.

(10)

/35/

II. 'You worry yourself for nothing,' said Obierika. 'The children are still very young.'

'Nwoye is old enough to impregnate a woman. At this age I was already fending for myself. No, my friend, he is not too young. A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches. I have done my best to make Nwoye grow into a man, but there is too much of his mother in him.'

'Too much of his grandfather,' Obierika thought, but he did not say it. The same thought also came to Okonkwo's mind. But he had long learnt how to lay that ghost.

1. What was Okonkwo worried about? (2)
2. Quote a proverbial statement from the passage. (2)
3. Why did Okonkwo regard Nwoye as womanly ?
  - (a) because Nwoye couldn't wrestle
  - (b) because Nwoye resembled his mother
  - (c) because Nwoye was not like Maduka
  - (d) because Nwoye did not fend for himself.

(2)
4. Rewrite the expression "to lay a ghost" in a simpler and more direct way. (2)
5. How had Okonkwo learnt "to lay that ghost"?
  - (a) by not thinking of Unoka any more
  - (b) by working hard and making a name for himself
  - (c) by avoiding failure
  - (d) by performing only manly actions

(2)
6. Quote an ironic statement from the extract. (2)
7. How did Nwoye justify Okonkwo's opinion of him, later in the story ? (3)

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/50/  

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SILAS MARNER

III. 'Sit down, Nancy - there,' he said, pointing to a chair opposite him. 'I came back as soon as I could, to hinder anybody's telling you but me. I've had a great shock - but I care most about the shock it'll be to you.'

'It isn't father and Priscilla ?' said Nancy, with quivering lips, clasping her hands together on her lap.

'No, it's nobody living,' said Godfrey, unequal to the considerate skill with which he would have wished to make his revelation. 'It's Dunstan - my brother Dunstan, that we lost sight of sixteen years ago. We've found him - found his body - his skeleton.'

1. Where had Godfrey been ? (2)
2. When Godfrey told Nancy, "I came back as soon as I could to hinder anybody's telling you but me", he was merely referring to the scandal caused by the discovery of Dunstan's body. What was the other piece of information that he wanted Nancy to learn about only through him ? (2)
3. Why should Dunstan's death be a shock to Nancy ?
  - (a) because Dunstan had died an unnatural death
  - (b) because Nancy was a member of the Cass family
  - (c) because Nancy was a sensitive lady
  - (d) because Dunstan had stolen Silas' money.
 (2)
4. What piece of information, referred to in this extract, gave Nancy a sense of relief ? (2)
5. What event led to the discovery of Dunstan's body? (2)
6. How did the news of the circumstances involved in Dunstan's death affect Nancy ? (3)
7. Find synonyms from the extract for these words:
 

(a) shaking	(b) incompetent	(c) discovery
(d) contest	(e) great	(f) prevent
(g) ability		

 (7)
8. Briefly outline the events that led up to Dunstan's falling into the stone pit. (10)

IV. 'How can I get the money?' said Godfrey, quivering. 'I haven't a shilling to bless myself with. And it's a lie that you'd slip into my place: you'd get yourself turned out too, that's all. For if you begin telling tales, I'll follow. Bob's my father's favourite - you know that very well. He'd only think himself well rid of you.'

'Never mind,' said Dunsey, nodding his head sideways as he looked out of the window. 'It'd be very pleasant to me to go your company - you're such a handsome brother, and we've always been so fond of quarrelling with one another, I shouldn't know what to do without you. But you'd like better for us both to stay at home together; I know you would. So you'll manage to get that little sum o' money, and I'll bid good-bye, though I'm sorry to part.'

1. The money Godfrey is talking of here is
  - (a) Silas' money which he had saved up stingily
  - (b) some money Godfrey had lent Dunstan
  - (c) Fowler's rent
  - (d) money from the sale of Wildfire. (2)
  
2. Why did Godfrey find himself so penniless these days? (3)
  
3. Quote the word which tells you that Godfrey would also begin telling tales. (2)
  
4. What tale had Dunstan threatened to tell? (3)
  
5. How did Godfrey plan to counteract on Dunstan's threat to "tell" his father about Godfrey? (3)
  
6. Which one of the words listed below would describe Dunstan's complacency best?
  - (a) deplorable (b) contemptible (c) irritating
  - (d) hateful (2)

7. Why was Dunstan so sure that Godfrey would raise the money at any cost ? (3)
8. What did Dunstan hope to do if Godfrey tried to outsmart him ? (2)

  /20/

  /50/

ANNEXURE NTEST 2SEPTEMBER, 1989

(Time: 2 hours)

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer TWO questions altogether one from each text.

At least one answer should be essay-type.

Length of essays may vary between  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 pages.

Express your personal opinions frankly. Marks will be awarded for competence and understanding of texts.

For contextual questions be guided by the marks allocated to each question.

THINGS FALL APART

1. Obierika who had been gazing steadily at his friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: 'That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog . . . ' He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words.

'Shut up!' shouted one of the messengers, quite unnecessarily.

'Take down the body,' the Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, 'and bring it and all these people to the court.'

'Yes, sah,' the messenger said, saluting.

The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a hanged man from a tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Everyday brought him some new material. The story of the man who killed a messenger and hanged himself

would be interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.

1. Consider Obierika's judgement of Okonkwo. What did Obierika mean when he referred to Okonkwo as "one of the greatest men in Umuofia"? (8)
2. Obierika accused the Commissioner of being responsible for Okonkwo's death. To what extent was Okonkwo responsible for his own fate? (12)
3. Why do Obierika and the others refuse to take down Okonkwo's body? (4)
4. Compare their attitude with the attitude of the Commissioner who also avoids direct involvement in the task of cutting down Okonkwo's body. (6)
5. The Commissioner thought that it was his job "to bring civilization to different parts of Africa." How far is this assumption true in this context as well as in the novel as a whole? (10)
6. What is, the significance of the Commissioner's decision "to be firm in cutting out details"? (10)

/50/

OR

ESSAY

2. In THINGS FALL APART Achebe has shown that African people are not mere savages. Examine this statement with reference to the lives of people in the novel. (50)

OR

3. Discuss how things fall apart in Okonkwo's life as well as in that of his clan. (50)

SILAS RAINES4. Contextual question

'Dunsey isn't come back sir.'

'What! did he break his own neck then?' said the squire, with some disgust at the idea that, in that case, he could not fulfil his threat.

'No, he wasn't hurt, I believe, for the horse was found dead, and Dunsey must have walked off. I daresay we shall see him again by-and-by. I don't know where he is.'

'And what must you be letting him have my money for? Answer me that,' said the Squire, attacking Godfrey again, since Dunsey was not within reach.

'Well, Sir, I don't know,' said Godfrey, hesitatingly. That was a feeble evasion, but Godfrey was not fond of lying, and not being, sufficiently aware that no sort of duplicity can long flourish without the help of vocal falsehoods, he was quite unprepared with invented motives.

'You don't know? I tell you what it is, sir. You 've been up to some trick, and you've been bribing him not to tell,' said the Squire, with a sudden acuteness which startled Godfrey, who felt his heart beat violently at the nearness of his father's guess. The sudden alarm pushed him on to take the next step - a very slight impulse suffices for that on a downward road.

'Why sir,' he said, trying to speak with careless ease, 'it was a little affair between me and Dunsey; it's no matter to anybody else. It's hardly worth while to pry into young men's fooleries: it wouldn't have made any difference to you, sir, if I'ud not had the bad luck to lose Wildfire. I should have paid you the money.'

1. What is the story behind the money in question? (4)
2. How had Dunstan planned to raise the money? (2)
3. What had kept Dunstan away from home for so long? (8)
4. How had Godfrey learnt of what Dunstan had done? (4)

5. Comment on the Squire's reaction to Dunstan's absence. (4)
6. How had Dunstan's absence inconvenienced Godfrey? (4)
7. Consider Godfrey's uneasiness during his conversation with the Squire. What do you think the reasons were? (8)
8. What impressions do you get of Godfrey's character from this extract ? (10)
9. Mention three things the Squire threatens to do soon after this conversation. (6)

OR

ESSAY

5. How far do you agree that the characters we meet in the novel SILAS MARNER are like characters we meet in everyday life, even today. (50)

OR

6. Trace the events in Marner's life to show how he progresses from the heat of youth to the tested maturity of age by the end of the story. (50)

Total = 100 Marks





ANNEXURE C     TWO QUESTIONS ON THE UNIT STUDY OF  
'THINGS FALL APART' BY CHINUA ACHIBE

UNIT I     Chapters 1 - 5 (Okonkwo's rise to fame)

Ch. 1

1. How had Okonkwo become famous?
2. What was the contrast between Okonkwo and Unoka?
3. What images occur to your mind when you think of Okonkwo's rise to fame?
4. What amuses you about Unoka's attitude to being indebted?
5. Describe your feelings towards Unoka as a person.
6. Does any part of the chapter remind you of any part of George Eliot's novel Silas Marner? If so, which part is it? Show how it is similar?

Ch. 2

1. How were the people called to assemble in the market-place?
2. Why did the people assemble on this morning?
3. Why was it said that Umuofia was a just clan?
4. What new achievements of Okonkwo do we learn of in this chapter?
5. How did Ikemefuna come to join Okonkwo's household?

Ch. 3

1. Why is it said that Okonkwo did not have "the start in life which many young men usually had"?
2. Quote examples of occasions, from these chapters, when the Oracle was consulted?
3. What was the real cause of Unoka's failure as a farmer?
4. Why was Unoka described as having a bad chi?
5. Why was Okonkwo uneasy when Nwakibie joked about Obiako's dead father?
6. Why were Okonkwo's early attempts at building a fortune through share-cropping described as "pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes"?
7. What had made that year "go mad"?
8. What does Okonkwo's survival that year show us of his character?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Mention as many customs as you can remember from these three chapters.
2. Which of them are similar to any of your customs?
3. Mention as many proverbs, also, as you can remember.
4. Comment on the language you find in this book.
5. What difficulties related to the text do you encounter in understanding the story?

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UNIT 2    Chapters 4 - 6    (The development of Okonkwo as a character)

Ch. 4

1. It is said of Okonkwo that he knew "how to kill a man's spirit". Say how he did this to Osugo.
2. Why was Okonkwo impatient with people like Osugo?
3. What proves that Okonkwo had cracked his palm-kernels himself?
4. What did the elders decide about Ikemefuna?
5. How did Ikemefuna react to his new home in the beginning?
6. Why did Ikemefuna become so popular among the children in Okonkwo's household?
7. How did Okonkwo break the Peace that Week?
8. How was he punished for breaking the Peace?
9. Why did people say that Okonkwo had no respect for the gods of the clan?
10. How were people who violated the Week of Peace punished in ancient times?

Ch. 5

1. What was the significance of the Feast of the New Yam?
2. What caused Okonkwo to lose his temper with his second wife on the eve of the Feast of the New Yam?
3. Would you agree with a description of Okonkwo as "a gun that never shot", especially in view of an earlier description of his stammer that caused him to use his fists against people when he couldn't get out his words fast enough?

4. What usually happened on the second day of the celebration?
5. Why was Okonkwo fond of his daughter Ezinma?

### Ch. 6

1. Distinguish the elders and the grandees of the village who came to the ilo to watch the wrestling contest.
2. Judging from the conversation between Ekwefi and Chielo say why you think they were worried whether Ezinma would stay?
3. Contrast Chielo's dual role as priestess and ordinary woman.

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## UNIT 3    Chapters 7 - 8    (Ikemefuna)

### Ch. 7

1. Who was responsible for Nwoye's development in masculine tastes?
2. Why did it please Okonkwo to hear Nwoye grumble about women?
3. Why did Nwoye pretend to enjoy Okonkwo's tales of tribal wars in preference to his mother's stories?
4. What was the explanation concerning the coming of the locusts?
5. What had Umuofia decided to do with Ikemefuna?
6. What did Ogbuefi Ezeudu advise Okonkwo to refrain from doing?
7. Why was Ikemefuna so sure that he would not be seeing his family?
8. Why did Okonkwo eventually partake in the mission on which they were taking Ikemefuna?
9. Discuss Nwoye's softness of nature in comparison to the character of Okonkwo and Unoka?

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### Ch. 8

- I. Discuss the effect that the death of Ikemefuna had on Okonkwo.

2. How did Obierika criticize Okonkwo for taking part in the killing of Ikemefuna?
3. Show how Okonkwo's notion of strength of mind is a confused notion by discussing his reaction to the simultaneous death of Ndulue and Ozoemena.
4. Why could people such as Obierika and Okonkwo not tap their own palm trees?
5. Describe how the Ibo fixed the bride price.

#### UNIT 4    Chapters 9 - 12 (Ezinma)

##### Ch. 9

1. What are ogbanje?
2. How could stubborn ogbanje be recognized?
3. Why did Ekwefi begin to believe that, after all, Ezinma may have come to stay?
4. Why did people suspect Ezinma of being an ogbanje?
5. What was the iyi-uwa?
6. How could iba be cured?

##### Ch. 10

1. What function did the egwugwu perform?
2. Why were people so respectful to the egwugwu?
3. How do you know that only serious cases were brought to the egwugwu?

##### Ch. 11

1. Why were people not surprised to hear Chielo's **propheying that night** ?
2. Why did Chielo visit Okonkwo's hut that night?
3. Ekwefi realized that Chielo had gone past the shrine of the Oracle. Where exactly was she heading?
4. Why could **Ekwefi not** enter the shrine of the Oracle?
5. What surprised Ekwefi as she waited outside?
6. Why had Okonkwo not married Ekwefi in the beginning?

##### Ch. 12

1. Why was Ekwefi late in going to Obierika's house?
2. How did the Ibo celebrate their daughters' uri?

UNIT 5    Chapter 13 (Okonkwo's expulsion from the clan)

Ch. 13

1. Whose funeral was Okonkwo attending?
2. What accident occurred at the funeral?
3. What is a female crime?
4. How was Okonkwo punished?
5. What was the full significance of Obierika's participation in the destruction of Okonkwo's property?
6. What occasions had Obierika had to deplore the injustice of the laws of the clan?

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UNIT 6    Chapters 14 - 15 (Okonkwo in exile)

1. How do we know that Okonkwo's mother was dead?
2. Why did Uchendu not ask Okonkwo why he had come home?
3. How did Okonkwo acquire seed yams to plant on his farm?
4. Why is the isa-ifi ceremony held?
5. To which ceremony of Okonkwo's father's village could it be compared?
6. How did Uchendu try to convince Okonkwo that he should not be despondent while living in his mother's clan?

Ch. 15

1. How had Okonkwo obtained the money he brought to Okonkwo in Mbanta?
  2. Why had Abame been destroyed?
  3. What did the Oracle predict concerning the white men?
  4. What confusion was there between Obierika and his companions over the last words of the dying white man in **the story they had just heard** ?
  5. Contrast the reaction of Okonkwo with that of Uchendu, to the destruction of Abame.
  6. Where did they think "white men" came from?
  7. What is ironic about Obierika's suggestion to Okonkwo to kill himself or his son in order to show his gratitude?
-

Part 2. Chapters 16 - 18 (Nwoye and the advent of the missionaries)

Ch. 16

1. Why did Obierika visit Okonkwo the second time?
2. Describe that section of Umuofian society from which white men got converts?
3. Why did the people of Obierika's village respect the Ibo interpreter who accompanied the white man, in the beginning?
4. Why was Nwoye captivated by the words of the evangelists?

Ch. 17

1. Why did the rulers of Mbanta offer the Evil Forest to the missionaries to build their church?
2. How did the people of Mbanta interpret the survival of the missionaries in the Evil Forest?
3. Justify the statement that "Living fire begets cold, impotent ash," in Okonkwo's case.

Ch. 18

1. Why did not the people of Mbanta mind the activities of the missionaries ?
2. When did the priests of the clan first clash with the missionaries ?
3. How did the admission of the osu into the church prove
  - (a) the weakness of the faith of some converts,
  - (b) Mr. Kiaga's unshakable faith, and
  - (c) the fanaticism (excessive faith) of the new OSU converts ?
4. Why could the clansmen not kill the converts ?
5. Why did the people of Mbanta refrain from avenging the death of the sacred python in the beginning?
6. What was Okonkwo's view about this?
7. Eventually what course of action was decided upon against the converts?
8. How did the gods of the clan avenge the death of the sacred python?
9. What do you find similar to your culture in this chapter?

Ch. 19

1. Why did Okonkwo not ask Obierika to build his obi for him in readiness for his return to Umuofia?
2. What do we learn of **Okonkwo's** character from his preparations for the thanksgiving feast for his mother's kinsmen?

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UNIT 8    Chapters 20 -24 (Plot and character development)
Ch. 20

1. Why does Okonkwo compare the clan to a lizard?
2. What losses did Okonkwo incur as a result of his exile?
3. What were Okonkwo's plans for his return to Umuofia?
4. **What effect did Nwoye's joining the missionaries have on Okonkwo ?**
5. How did Okonkwo try to ensure that his five other sons did not follow Nwoye's example?
6. Explain why Okonkwo was **"lucky" in his daughters ?**
7. Why did Okonkwo not want his daughters to get married until he returned to Umuofia?
8. Why did Okonkwo wish that Ezinma had been a girl?
9. What was ironic about Ogbuefi Ugonna's conversion to Christianity?
10. Why do you think it is said that the court was the place where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance?
11. Why were the kotma so hated?
12. Why could the clan not drive away the missionaries?
13. How did the white man put "a knife on the things that held" the clan together?
14. Describe briefly the changes that occurred in Umuofia when Okonkwo returned from exile?

Ch. 21

1. Why did some Umuofians not resent the white men as much as Okonkwo did?
2. Why did the white man's religion appeal to some Umuofians?
3. How did some great clansmen show their respect to **Mr. Brown ?**

4. What did the conversations between Akunna and Mr. Brown reveal?
5. Having realized that "a frontal attack" on the clan's religion would not do, what did Mr. Brown set out to do?
6. Why was it important for Umuofians to send their children to school, according to Mr. Brown?
7. Why did Mr. Brown leave Umuofia?
8. Why was Okonkwo's return to Umuofia not as memorable as he had wished it would be?
9. Discuss the cause of Okonkwo's grief on his return from exile.

#### Ch. 22

1. Contrast Rev. James Smith's policy with that of Mr. Brown.
2. What was ridiculous about Rev. Smith's speech?
3. Why did converts like Enoch flourish under Rev. James?
4. How did the egwugwu avenge the outrage on their fellow-egwugwu who was unmasked by Enoch?
5. What do you feel about Rev. James' character in the stand he put up against the avenging egwugwu?

#### Ch. 23

1. Comment on Okonkwo's feelings after the egwugwu burnt the church.
2. What do you think of the District Commissioner's behaviour during his meeting with the leaders of Umuofia? Discuss with reference to
  - (a) his opening remarks
  - (b) his invitation of the court messengers into the meeting
  - (c) his parting words to the Umuofian leaders.
3. Why did the District Commissioner order the court messengers to treat the Umuofian representatives with respect?
4. How did the court messengers treat the leaders of Umuofia?
5. What was the condition set for their release?
6. What effect did the detention of the Umuofian leaders have on the people?

Ch. 24

1. Describe the scene as the six Umuofian leaders made their way home after their release.
2. Why was Okonkwo plotting a personal revenge?
3. Why could the clansmen not fight the strangers effectively?
4. How did Okonkwo know that Umuofia would not go to war after the incident in which the head messenger had been killed?

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 UNIT 9 Chapter 25 (The resolution)
Ch. 25

1. What was one of the irritating habits of the Ibo according to the District Commissioner?
2. Why did Obierika request the District Commissioner's men to cut down Obierika's body from the tree?
3. Do you agree with Obierika's accusation **against the** District Commissioner that he had driven Okonkwo to kill himself? Why?
4. Why did the District Commissioner not want to take part in the removal of Okonkwo's body from the tree?
5. Why was the District Commissioner interested in knowing details of the Umuofian customs in this scene?
6. What impression did Okonkwo's death have on the District Commissioner?
7. What, in your opinion, was really tragic about Okonkwo's end?

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 GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Did you find the book interesting? Why?
2. What, would you say, is the one most striking aspect of the book?
  - (a) story
  - (b) language
  - (c) culture (social customs, etc.)
  - (d) characters.
3. If you were asked to compare Things Fall Apart with Silas Marner, what comments would you make?

4. Did you experience any difficulties with Silas Marner?
  5. On what levels did you experience difficulty with Silas Marner?  
(a) story (b) language (c) culture (d) character.  
Explain in detail.
  6. In spite of the difficulties you may have encountered, why is Silas Marner memorable?
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ANNEXURE R     STD. 10 LITERATURE PAPER GETS A NEW LOOK!

(A note attached to the Departmental Examination Instruction No. 46 of 1987 by Hlaziya In-Service Teacher Training Centre, Mdantsane.)

Changes in the syllabus and the need for ever more accurate marking have led to a new format for the NSC English Second Language H.G. Paper II.

The new syllabus issued by the Department of Education and Culture (House of Assembly) and amended in Examination instruction No46 of 1987 states that "candidates will be given a choice between contextual comprehension questions on each of the prescribed works. Questions will be of equal value (50 marks)."

Choice here refers to the four books prescribed for the year. Candidates may choose which two they would like to answer questions on

The syllabus change means that the essay question has been removed from this paper, just as it has been from the JMB core syllabus and from all the other syllabuses based on it.

Those of us who have taught Std 10 classes are greatly relieved at this change. Our pupils used to prepare for the essay questions by learning summaries instead of studying the text itself - a joyless gamble which stifled their interest in reading. Only the story counted - the plain sequence of events; anything interesting was unimportant.

Those of us who have marked the Std 10 examination are even more greatly relieved that the essay question has gone from Paper II. Even the best teachers sometimes disagree when they are given the same essay to mark. This is unacceptable in a public examination, where each candidate's mark should be unvarying no matter who marks his paper. The essay question made this difficult to achieve.

A contextual question is a much more suitable test. Of course it is not new to Paper II - candidates have always had to answer at least one contextual question. But this kind of test is flexible enough to be adapted to reinforce the aims of the new communicative syllabuses. The rest of this article explains and illustrates the thinking behind these adaptations.

Teaching and testing should reflect each other. Paper II must test what should have been taught; teachers will teach towards the exam. The new Paper II means to use this 'backwash effect' to emphasise the centrality of meaning in communication.

What this means for teachers is that classroom time should be spent on the text itself, not on study guides or summaries. Understanding the text richly is in; memorising words about the text is out. When the syllabus says "contextual comprehension questions' it means just that.

This does not mean that pupils sit silently in their desks while the teacher explains every word in every line for six weeks. Instead the teacher should aim at skills integration around the text by using it as a source for a variety of spoken and written activities.

And so the exam includes questions which assume that class time is used for activities such as debating issues raised by the text, for role play, improvisation and dramatisation, and for writing letters or reports or newspaper articles relating to the text.

A good candidate may well pass even if he has not done any of this, but he will pass better if he has, and he will do better on Paper I too, and he will communicate better whenever he has to speak English.

With that as background, here then are the aspects of close reading of a prescribed text which Paper II tries to test (The references in brackets are to questions in the samples that follow):

1. Knowledge of the story and the plot (Silas Marner Q1 & 4)
2. Understanding character (Macbeth Q7 & 8; Tunnel Q6)
3. Familiarity with the text (Nearly all the questions test this to some extent)
4. Skills for intensive reading, such as
  - understanding main ideas (The Wind at Dawn Q1)
  - deducing a word's meaning from its context (Macbeth Q3 & 6; The Wind Q7; Silas Marner Q6)
  - responding to structuring cues (Macbeth Q1 & 2)
  - interpreting metaphor (Macbeth Q3, 4 & 5; The Wind Q2; Silas Marner Q3)
  - inferring feeling, tone and motive (Macbeth Q7; Tunnel Q3 & 4)
  - seeing the action from different points of view (the final question on each book) *(paraphrasing)* *(approx. 10 marks)*  
*(sub-texting)*

Below are the sample questions themselves. Only one extract per book has been included here, whereas at the end of the year there will be at least two extracts with questions worth a total of 50 marks set on them. Taken collectively, however, the extracts used here give an idea of the range of question types to expect in November.

## ANNEXURE S      A LIST OF BOOKS PRESCRIBED BETWEEN 1981 AND 1990

	Drama	Poetry	Novel	Other Prose
<u>1981</u> Std. 10	Macbeth	A Galaxy of Poems Old and New, ed. E.W. Parker	Scruffy	Literary Gems (a selection of short stories), ed. B. Scheffler
<u>1982</u> Std. 9		Verse for You, Bk. III, ed., J.G. Brown	Far from the Madding Crowd	Modern Short Stories, ed., John Hatfield
Std. 10	Romeo and Juliet	Verse for You	Silas Marner	Close to the Sun (Stories from Southern Africa), Selected by G.E. de Villiers
<u>1983</u> Std. 9		Verse for You, Bk. III, ed., J.G. Brown	Far from the Madding Crowd	Modern Short Stories
Std. 10	Romeo and Juliet	Verse for You, Bk. III ed., J.G. Brown	Far from the Madding Crowd	Modern Short Stories

	Drama	Poetry	Novel	Other Prose
<u>1984</u> Std. 9		For All Seasons	Tess of the D'Urber- villes	Short Story Study, eds. Smith, A.J. and Mason, W.H.
<u>1984</u> Std. 10	Julius Caesar	The Oak and the Peach, ed., F.M. Olver	Wuthering Heights	Ex-Africa Stories for Secondary Schools, ed. Oliver F.W. van Straaten S. (ed.)
<u>1985-9</u> Std. 9		The Oak and the Peach, ed., F.M. Olver	Animal Farm	Shades of Fear (selection of short stories), G.E. de Villiers
<u>1985</u> Std. 10	Julius Caesar	The Oak and the Peach, ed., F.M. Olver	Wuthering Heights	Ex-Africa Stories for Secondary Schools, ed. Oliver F.W. van Straaten S.
<u>1986</u> Std. 10	Richard III	The Oak and the Peach, ed. F.M. Olver	The Great Gatsby	Moments, ed. A. Adkins and M. Shackleton

	Drama	Poetry	Novel	Other Prose
<u>1987</u> Std. 10	Richard III  <u>or</u> Julius Caesar	The Oak and the Peach, ed. F.M. Olver	The Great Gatsby  <u>or</u> The Pearl	Moments, ed. A. Adkins and M. Shackleton
<u>1988-9</u> Std. 10	Macbeth	The Wind at Dawn, eds. Smyth and V. Swacina	Silas Marner	Romantica Book of English Short Stories, ed. K. Vice
<u>1990</u> Std. 9	Short Plays for Students, ed. Hope Dube et al.			Across the Road, ed. Houghton I. Hawksley
Std. 10	Romeo and Juliet	The Wind at Dawn	I heard the Owl Call my Name	Close to the Sun, ed. E.C. de Villiers

ANNEXURE T      THE ACTUAL PUPIL RESPONSE TO SILAS MARNER

The struggles and difficulties experienced by Black pupils in Ciskei were witnessed personally by the investigator. At the school where the investigator taught, the attitudes and responses of Std. 10 pupils, concerning certain aspects of the novel, Silas Marner, that posed problems generally, were observed. Despite the fact that this may be regarded as a crude form of action research, it was conducted from personal interest. The results are included here as they may interest readers, and corroborate the findings of the more formal investigative procedures recorded in Chapter Five.

Most of the Std. 10 pupils of Gasela High School were of mixed ability and were perturbed by the high level of language difficulty and the discursive style used by George Eliot. In spite of having been provided with the outline of the story up to a point of interest, the pupils were bewildered by the unfamiliar language. The two pages which open the novel consist of a long, philosophical contemplation by the author, well beyond the grasp of most Black pupils and even that of many Black adults/teachers.

Pupils indicated other digressive sections in the text that baffled them, such as:

- the introductory section in Chapter Five, where George Eliot discusses Silas' reasons for leaving the door unlocked on the fateful night of the robbery;
- the conversation between the unusual customers at the Rainbow Inn the night before Silas reports the theft.

- the conversation between Silas and Dolly Winthrop when they discuss the working of Providence in Silas Marner's expulsion from Lantern Yard.

The colloquial conversation is an impediment to comprehension. Consider, for example, this extract from a conversation between Mr. Macey, the parish-clerk, and Mr. Tookey, his deputy. It was emphasised by the pupils, as one of the many examples of linguistic hazards present in much of the dialogue in Silas Marner

'I see what it is plain enough,' said Mr. Tookey, unable to keep cool any longer. 'There's a conspiracy to turn me out o' the choir, as I shouldn't share the Christmas money - that's where it is. But I shall speak to Mr. Crackenthorp; I'll not be put upon by no man.'

'Nay, nay, Tookey,' said Ben Winthrop. 'We'll pay your share to keep out of it - that's what we'll do. There's things folk 'ud pay to be rid on, besides varmin.'  
(Silas Marner, 1983, Everyman edn., pp. 54-5)

Such dialogue could easily wreck the tenuous grasp of verbs, auxiliaries, word order and spelling within the ability of the ESL speaker. The humour of Chapter Five in the scene in the Rainbow Inn found a response in only 3 of the 138 Std. 10 pupils that the investigator taught at her school in 1989. At the end of a year's concerted effort, on the part of both teacher and pupil, it is a fact that the pupils are still hesitant to say that they enjoy Silas Marner or that it is relevant to their lives.

As a matter of interest, three pupils from that Std. 10 class were chosen for a private experimental exercise. These pupils had different language ability, ranging from; fairly competent; average; weak. Their

ability was determined from personal knowledge of their usual performance in English in class. On an average, they had scored approximately 70%, 50% and 35% in English during the year. These three pupils were requested to rewrite in their own words, exactly, and without omitting any significant detail, two typical George Eliot passages from Silas Marner that usually proved problematic in class. The passages selected were pp. 1 - 2, Chapter One, and pp. 45-6, Chapter Five, from the Everyman edition. The efforts of the pupils are reproduced exactly on the following pages (pp. 234 a - h). Any smudges evident on the reproductions of the attached reproductions are declared to be the pupils' own attempts to erase or cross out their own mistakes.

1. 1(a) The response of Thembeke Mei (70% score)  
Ch. 1, Silas Marner, pp. 1-2

(a) It was during that time in life when people were staying in farms. All their jobs involved working with their hands. Everybody was anxious to know about weaving. Even rich ladies who wore expensive clothes like linen and lace experimented weaving.

There were weavers who were usually carrying heavy bags on their backs. All people looked at them as if they were strangers. They did not anticipate travelling. They felt as if travellers were people who had nothing to do, so when they saw these weavers they became suspicious and they believed that these weavers were helped by the devil.

During that time they recognised somebody if they knew his parents. These farmers were only interested in things that were happening in their neighbourhood. Everything beyond their neighbourhood was mysterious and none of their concern.

So if one settled in their neighbourhood, they looked at him suspiciously and if something <sup>bad</sup> happened in the village shortly after the new settler has arrived, they suspected him. Circumstances were even more tense in cases where these new settler was a weaver or showed signs of cleverness. So that new a settler was always alone.

✓

1 (b) The response of Thembeke Mei (70% score) 234b  
Ch. 5, Silas Marner, pp. 45-6

(b) It was not long after Dunstan had left Silas's cottage, Silas appeared a hundred yards away. He was carrying a lantern in his hand and he was wearing a sock around his shoulders. He was tired. It never occurred in his mind that there might be something wrong in the house.

Silas lived a monotonous life and he was not aware of the changes that occur in everyday so in his life too he never expected any changes

Silas was only thinking about his piece of pork which he had left roasting in the fireplace. Silas enjoyed eating supper. It was ~~one of~~ the best meals he ate of the day. He enjoyed eating supper, he could eat it whilst he is counting his gold coins, and pork was delicacy. He got when one of his customers has blessed him.

This evening he had just tied his piece of pork with a string and twisted the string to his door-key. The he remembered that he did not buy a piece of twine which was very important in the weaving process. He thought about buying it in the morning but he remembered that he was fond of losing time in the morning by things which he could have done earlier. There was a nasty fog outside but Silas respected his job more than his comfort. So he went out into the foggy night. He could not lock the door because the key was used to tie the meat. After all nobody could come at the Stone pits especially ~~at~~ <sup>in</sup> this foggy night. Actually Silas never asked himself these questions because he never felt anxious about anything.

2 (a) The response of Ntombendla Ponoyi. (50% score)  
Ch. 1, Silas Marner, pp. 1-2

2. PONUYI NTOMBENDLA SIB 10A

SILAS MARNER

CHAPTER I - 2

(a) The writer tells us about people of the last century. The people were ignored, and they were hand-in-hand with work. These people were found far away in the districts among the narrow passage way. But in those people there is a wonderful man and no one knew where he comes from or his origin.

This man was a linen-weaver and believed that, <sup>who?</sup> that work could carried completely without the help of Evil One. They <sup>?</sup> believed in God. They were honest and they believed only in the honest truth of God. In that days if a person showed any thing which is good and a value, they believed that you are the one who committed a crime. That man was a weaver, because of that they believed that he is committed a crime. and even the speech. They were not clever than the others but they were the hard workers.

That man was looking very angry and they belong on the state of loneliness.

✓

(b) CHAPTER 5 45-46

As soon as Silas Marner left his cottage, Bunster Cass arrived the cottage. Silas Marner was looking for food, food for supper. His mind wasn't think about the changes happened in the cottage. The security was not right in the cottage although he left his gold. He love it got the alarm.

Silas Marner was a hard worker. He didn't think that there is a person who is going to enter in his cottage. Silas Marner was a man of man even in his early years. It is obvious that as the time goes on, hard things gets on a human being. If he saw other kind of people, he didn't change his mind. Before he left his cottage he was with Mrs Priscilla Lammet and Mrs Priscilla Lammet was carried a piece of linen for her home.

His favourite dish was the meal and the park. His mind was upset minded because going round to Mrs Lammet and there was a fog outside. The are something which Silas loved, thing of the future than his own things. When he got his supper he turned back to his cottage. In his road to his cottage was brought because of his lantern which he was carried. at that night

He locked his door with knotted string. He quest

Let me what thief would find his way to the  
Stonepits when he saw that the door opened  
before he saw that he felt free. The other  
question(s) ~~was~~ that why he took so long  
when he goes looking for his supper, and why  
x || that thief didn't come so many years ago.  
But those questions didn't come <sup>when</sup> earlier in  
his mind. It is the honest truth that when  
you are going to get trouble your mind is  
going to feel free and nothing wrong you think  
about that.

✓

SILAS MARNER

(a) CHAPTER 1

page 1-2

For Silas's first day at Raveloe, he saw things that he had never seen in his life. He saw ladies dressed the thread made by an insect and which is used for making the best kinds of dress materials and wear thin wool. Others, who were taking care of sheep and cattle were sitting with their dogs which began to bark immediately they saw Silas having his heavy bag of weaving material.

The shepherd didn't stop the dogs which were barking, Silas because he thinks that he was the devil. At that time person like him in Raveloe were unwanted and regarded as strangers. There was no show of skilled work made by hands. One who form cloth from the thread they consider him as others. Their neighbours has called him like that, and a person will begin to sit and stay alone.

In the first years of that one hundred years the weaver was doing his work at his usual employment in a stone cottage. When the boys hear the sound of winnowing - medicine they leave off their knitting or birds-nesting to look at secretely and for a moment at windows.

CHAPTER 5 (Silas Marner)

(b) Pg 45 - 46.

Immediately Dunster Cass move away from the stone pits where Silas live, Silas was not at a far distance from his cottage. Silas was having a luggage round his shoulders and having an old styled lamp on his hand to see clear the road to the cottage. Silas walked quickly to the house. His mind was not expecting nothing happen to the house.

Silas had knew that he had stayed for some years there but none had enter his room. When he enter his house, he was thinking about the meal is going to satisfy him either warm or of which will make him feel warm or of which is going to unpaired. Silas had ate a braai of a pig's meat which he was given by Priscilla a hammer.

Supper was his meal which he like and it was satisfying him because it comes by the time of rest of his heart. He never eat a fried-meat of his pork during the days he prepared it for supper. On the day, when he was leaving the cottage he connect a little piece of pig's meat on the lock of the door with a twine. After some time silas thought that he had left his stonepits and he did not lock the door. In his mind he was having

X | questions, ~~that~~ these questions were not clear  
in Silas's mind, these questions were  
doing what is needed to cause Silas  
think of the thing which is not properly  
understood to his state of being free  
7 | from the feeling of fear and doubt  
about the future.

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Your co-operation is sought in an English research project on attitudes to certain setbooks among Ciskeian pupils in senior secondary schools. This questionnaire is being administered to you as to be-matriculants to explore your experience with literature/prescribed texts. All responses will be treated as confidential and the source of individual opinion will not be divulged.

This research project is in progress in this school with the approval of the Directorate of Education, Zwelitsha North Circuit.

Part I: Personal Information

1. Surname: ..... Other names: .....
2. Date of Birth: ..... Mother tongue: .....
3. Class in which you are studying: .....
4. Are you appearing for the matriculation, this year,  
for the first time? Tick YES ..... NO .....
5. If you are repeating Std. 10, please answer the following questions
  - a) How many times have you repeated Std. 10 before this?.....
  - b) What set books did you study then?.....
  - c) Which of the books that you have studied did you enjoy most?  
.....
  - d) If one of the books that you have mentioned is a novel, name it  
.....
6. Which of the three languages you study do you perform well in?  
.....
7. Why, do you think, you fare (do) better in this? .....

Part II Attitudes to Literature

8. Do you enjoy literature? YES ..... NO .....
- Why? .....
- .....

10. Have your teachers of English been responsible for this in any way? Explain. (This information would be regarded as strictly confidential, so please feel free to be honest in your opinions.)

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

11. Do you enjoy Literature in Afrikaans? YES ..... NO .....

Why? .....  
 .....  
 .....

12. Do you enjoy Literature in Xhosa? YES ..... NO .....

Why? .....  
 .....  
 .....

13. Which aspect of literature do you find most difficult (Tick the appropriate one.)

- a) Poetry ...    b) Drama ...    c) Novel ...    d) Short Story ...

14. What comments would you make of the English setbooks being taught in your school? Please name the book first and then make your comments.

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

ANNEXURE V      THE READING PROGRAMME FOR STDS. 9 AND 10  
ADAPTED FROM THE 1975 AND 1985 SYLLABI

<u>1975</u>	<u>Std 9</u>	<u>Std 10</u>
	<u>supplementary reading</u> by pupils, on their own, of at least <u>five</u> books	<u>supplementary reading</u> of <u>six</u> books
	<u>quick, controlled reading</u> of periodicals, journals, leading to discussions in class	<u>quick, controlled reading</u> of the same type of literature for similar reasons
	<u>study of any <u>two</u> prescribed books</u> from a list prescribed by the department	<u>study of any <u>two</u> prescribed books</u> from a prescribed list
<u>1985</u>	<u>Stds 9 and 10</u>	
	- teacher-assisted private reading programme	
	- study of any <u>two</u> books from a prescribed list of books, which, for Std 10, includes the four genres : drama, poetry, novel, short story or prose, and for Std 9, <u>two</u> books from a list of three until 1989. In 1990, only <u>two</u> books have been prescribed. Such definitive legislation eliminates a choice.	

ANNEXURE W      THE AIMS OF TEACHING READING/LITERATURE  
SUMMARIZED FROM THE 1975 AND 1985 SYLLABI

<u>1975</u>	<u>1985</u>
1. To teach the pupil to express himself correctly and clearly in spoken and written English, and to enable him to use English with increasing ability and assurance.	To foster a desire to learn English, and to assist pupils meet the challenge of living in multilingual environment.
2. To interest the pupil in English literature so that he will read English books of his own accord and develop a sense of discrimination in his reading.	To help pupils to listen with accuracy, sensitivity and critical discrimination.
3. To familiarise the pupil with English usage.	To help pupils to speak fluent and acceptable English, clearly, confidently, and with a sensitive awareness of audience.

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|----|---|--|
| 4. | To make the pupil aware of the importance of English to him as a key to knowledge and communication in South Africa and in the world. | To guide pupils towards reading with increasing comprehension, enjoyment and discrimination. |
| 5. |   | To develop pupils' ability to write English appropriate to their purposes.                   |
| 6. |   | To promote pupils' control of English through a knowledge of its structure and usage.        |