

Free Creative Writing Correspondence Course

A publication of Society of Young Nigerian Writers

Stage Two

Short Story

Prepared By:

Wole Adedoyin

**CREATIVE WRITING
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE**

Stage Two

CATEGORY: SHORT STORY



For The Literary And Creative Development Of Nigerian Young Writers

Prepared by:

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Dedication

This publication is dedicated to all the contributors

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INTRODUCTION

Our Creative Writing Correspondence questions are written by recognized and dedicated writers. We have nearly fifteen to twenty young and upcoming writers working on our works. They are writers who are just coming up and they are people who we think needs criticism and commendations.

The Society not only prepare questions to their write-ups, they also keep them constantly updated. Every year there are changes, because we need to use other upcoming writers works. It is vitally important that our course are kept up to date. That is why our correspondence course insists on using works by upcoming and aspiring young writers in the country.

Also, these expertly prepared questions are available for you to study at your own pace, in your own time, in your own home. At the end of the day, you can relax by your own fire side and read through your studies. No turning out at night and traveling to evening classes. No taking notes from lectures, everything is written down for you to study at will and revise as often as you like. No being held back because of slower students in the class. No being rushed too quickly ahead because a lecturer has to keep up with a timetable.

You don't have to take a chance on how good you are. You can rest assured that your interests are in our interests and we make the best talent available to you to achieve your aim.

How to enroll

The Letter of Introduction is normally accompanied by an enrolment form. If you require further copies of these documents, please contact the following contacts:

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About the Society

SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS is a literary organization based in Oyo State, Nigeria. It was established to promote literary and creative writings among youths in the country.

SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS is an international and local affiliate of Winning Writers Association, Association for the Study of Poets, Playwrights and Novelists lives and works and World of Poets and Literary Society.

Our thematic areas are creative writing, poetry, essay, drama, diary and short story writing. In a bid to effectively address some social issues like politics, corruption, bribery, child hawking, religion malpractices to mention but few. We use various creative writing means such as poetry, drama, short stories, diary, novels and other forms of literary and creative arts to express our opinions and different views.

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COLORS OF DREAM

Emmanuel Ugokwe

First came the war that never ended. It was the war that paralyzed the whole region for ten years or more and made me miss a wonderful childhood experience. Women and young children left home at dusk, hiking to an unknown place and when darkness falls over the bush, they slept in cold nights. There, they dispersed buildings, houses and courtyards in fear for the next action. They tirelessly walked to a nearby border, passing deserted villages strewn with bodies of dead children and pregnant woman. Corpses piled up faster than any could be buried and I was watching.

I was only twelve or more, I do not know exactly. My father died when I was too young to understand death and the war had claimed other members of my family leaving my old grandfather and my young mother. My mother took me by the hand and followed my grandfather. We set out that morning like others to an unknown place moving toward the bush and leaving our beautiful houses and neighbors behind. A large part of these places consisted of rugged jungle mountains, accessible mainly by foot, as well as beautiful coastal lake and sea.

We passed through many bloodied men whose major language was pull down and destroy the opponent. They were the many faces who we could never see again. Their numbers were going down in seconds and they were more ready to rebel against the other group. Thousands of them who were in their healthy looks were cut down during the most productive years of their life. Many others were bored teenagers who had drifted into delinquency as a result of the war.

Night caught us in the heart of that desert, but we continued walking. We do not know where we were going. We only followed steps and voices. It was a moon night and we saw the path and everything around faint figures, and the walking sticks of others clearly. Suddenly, the real killer of my father halted us and he stopped us. My mother looked into the eyes of the blood thirst killer and cried openly for reminding her how he gruesomely murdered my father, one early morning in our home and pedaled away to a safe distance when the war began. Father was an earlier victim of the war like his other brothers. Since then Kwame as he was called, was a never- do- well by his look and by what mother told me, who had no power to say no against violence. The ripe hour of his youth had been spent in bloodshed since the war began - a thing he could do efficiently and saw it as mere water. The seed of hatred against him was sowed then. He had made me fatherless for life and as for father I only saw him by description of mother and grandfather.

Ewa was a minor tribe, which I belong, and so we were their targets. Our youths had rebelled because of many years of oppression. For all these warring years, we were treated as slave unfit to be torched and it was not for our good. Such treatment would continue, as we were only minor. Kwame had trained many youths to embrace such life, the life of violence and hatred. Some learned faster, while others did not. For the later, when their backs were turned they would be shot dead in cold blood to make us believe that they were ready to sweep us out.

As we walk past him, he called mother back and ask his men to excuse him. Mother went and answered his call out of fear and I was standing with grandfather who was too weak to say anything in defense to mother. At first, he could not say anything. They own our loyalty and respect and had to be obeyed even under the strictest circumstance.

He kept looking at mother fiercely and then lustfully, and she begged to look on the ground to avoid his angry eyes. He asked mother to pull up for him to seek a carnal pleasure with her in the presence of everyone around I trusted mother with my little sense that it would either cost her life to fall for such obscenities. Anger was creeping into his voice and more delay would earn mother hard and painful exercise in the adventure.

Mother quickly disengage her hand from me and ran as fast as she could. Kwame smiled toothlessly and whistled. Two boys in wait ran after her and soon caught her. She was only a woman who had walked tirelessly all day without food and water. With the brief time I stayed in their midst, I saw more than I could understand and heard more than I could remember. The young boys and girls smitten with body worship and vulgar exhibition of what ought to be private who had discarded lots of ideals clustered around my grand father and me, yelled and taunted at us. I felt for the old man; for he was humiliated by young children who were too young to be his own grand children him.

A young boy of either fifteen or more I do not know exactly walked to me and jammed a cigarette into my mouth, but I twisted out of the way, the other blew the smoke to my face, but I shoved aside. I was scared to my bone.

Mother was caught and was dragged along and was placed in front of him where he sat and at intervals blew out columns of smoke from cigarette into the wind. He looked with pleasure the vanishing mist returning to his face, shouting his restrictions at her as if she was a slave. I started crying and raising my voice high like a small child, though I was one. My eyes caught him and I hated him more. My mother looked up and her eyes dilated like a child's as she looked hopefully at me. I was her pride any day. I could have saved her at that

moment. She held me by the neck and shook me excitedly. I looked searchingly into her eyes and our emotion for each other heightened and I began to read it in her heart and such look tipped our relationship into great intimacy. Love of a mother to his only son. I prayed she should not be harmed, but I was in no position to right the situation.

I opened my mouth to plead in behalf of mother. Word came but I did not know her offence. Pleading could earn her guilt. I faced the other way and watched with painful pleasure thick full of smoke snaking it's way several meters in the air and black the beautiful skyline. I was nearly carried away. I remembered myself quickly. My mind was frozen with horror. Mother could be taken away any moment. I was more fearful gasping for breath. I watched as they took mother to a dark side and he gave out what he had on her. Mother screamed, called our names in high voice, but neither grandfather nor I could rescue her. The old man shook his head painfully and nearly cried. I was only hoping that mother would come back after receiving a punishment on something she did not do. I was wrong for she did not return and I could not see her again. That was the last day I saw mother the last time. That was the day, he was taken away from me and I became an orphan.

Grandfather muttered some words, but they were not audible. Even if they were I could not really understand. As a child, I did not know such matters of having a carnal knowledge of a woman; they were too deep for me. I stumbled out of the black night to a tree stand away from father, sobbing and my legs wobbly with fear. Grandfather sat cross-legged in the fire made for warning of their body at cold nights and called me with his voice. He could not see me anymore, for the smoke had formed a bridge between us. I could have answered him,

but mother was to me everything and I could hardly survive without her.

I could not wait. I could not believe that mother could not come back like many mothers who had been raped and killed in the war. I called my mother out in a loud voice, and the desert bounced the name back at me. I felt fearful, lonely and deserted. Kwame and his men had taken their turns in her and inflicted bodily harm on her, and with the last strength in her, she was calling for help, trying to run out of the danger for rescue, but strangely remained rooted on the spot, confused on what next to do. Basically, it was a lot of anger building up inside of me. It was like a dream that could never repeat itself. I failed down and open my eyes only to see the next morning. Mother was nowhere to be found. The birds were soaring high in the rural sky chirping and singing freely with their young and old in the standing trees, but I could no longer see mother for she was no more.

The war was still on and any moment probably could give way to more dangers. I ran back to grandfather and softly I woke him up. He rose and stretched his legs wearily. Sleep still weighed heavily on his eyelids. He knew by my look and the noiseless nature of the whole place that mother was no more. He yawned as he robbed off the soft mote at the side of his eyes. Kwame and his men had left him. Heartily we locked in deep embrace and separated. I looked at him and felt I should tell him that mother was no more and how like some he had been to me and especially from that moment. For the next five years, the war lasted; we stayed rooted there as Kwame and his man had transited to another camp and no one disturbed us. I grew under his protective arm. His bone for sure had gone so bad and he was badly weak and needed care and attention. Time had healed the wound of the

loss of mother, but the war was still on. One night he called me up for a talk. I was worried, but I had to hear him out.

“My son, do not worry so much. The young must see what the old saw. I am now old and cannot see clearly despite that the day is clear, that shows that my death is coming. I see only my death. I see only unfamiliar sight. I have added years, wrinkles, and have been sick every time. I have lost everything, almost everything except you. One two, three, four, and five...” he kept counting the numbers of children that the war had claimed off with his right fingers against the left.

“I am sorry, papa” I said to him.

“My son, I should be the one to say sorry. Soon I shall leave you to suffer alone. Too many wars have been fought end war because we believe we can end war. Our children had gone rebellious and they should partly not blame. We were wrong. Our kingdom like others had seen sad times we are hated and badly treated. Now as young as you are, you can feel the sign of death over our heads. Young children bitten and battered by thorns of life. Some of our brothers had died painfully without seeing their mothers and children again. They have died in lands, seas and deserts, with the result that the vultures had to make meal out of their dead bodies. You watched the widows and even your own mother, all in tears, their sons are no more, their daughters had been raped and their husbands had all disappeared with the infraction. From my youthful years, I have fought wars, I have seen wars fiercer than this and the acrid smells of blood, they don't surprise me. You saw on the last night of your mother's death how young boys molested me. They only believe in what their eyes can see and what their strength can accomplish, but those matters do not bother my mind any longer. I am only bothered about you.”

“Papa, I must see to its end. I shall revenge” I cut in and shouted almost in anger as tears rolled down my eyes.

“Death at war had been a thing that most distinguished my household from many other homes. Generally, it is easy to begin any battle, but resolving it poses a problem. More bloods and heads invoke more hatred and animosity. Our tribe had lost young men who would replace us. If not for my age I would have loved the war to continue till Dupe tribe sweeps us from the earth. Soon such thought would come into you and becloud your sense of judgment. The aftermath of war is unimaginable and beggars like us all contemplation. The wreckages, the ravages, the destruction and spoils are all its danger. We kill our friends, neighbors loved ones and those we ought not to. The young son’s of ours have learned wicked from muzzle of guns and edge of sword. Natural affection had been replaced by wickedness as they cut down and waste our heroes and laugh over it. Rare great names we had so much cherished for long that will never come back had gone. Eating grasshopper and alligator pepper all night in jungle and thinking all night in pain and anguish. Gnashing their teeth like age-old men who are nearing the death path. Such life increases their fear, their hatred, their frustration, and lost hope that peace would ever return. They left home vibrant and full of energy on a day like many others. They go to farms or field for adventure, but do not come back, they disappear, vanish into nothing. The scars and tears are legion, the deserts, houses, the empty streets, the fallen rafters and the hungry leftovers, all send more grief to our hearts.”

“Papa for how long shall we continue living a life like this. It makes life miserable. Not sweet for life. I shall do anything to revenge Kwame. The gods know I will”. I said to him as I sat making quick mental calculation on what next to say and do.

“They will survive. We shall survive. Blood had spilled so long for God almighty to hear our entreaties. The smaller gods have seen that it is not their fight, yet we trust them. The old men and women with their grand children have suffered. You are too young to understand. Go to the roadside, where they are seated, they sing and talks barrack-the resting place of the soldiers. They are running for their lives, others like us lying down in the melting snow and heating sun. We left home for the alien people who are now clutching our gods. My first son, your father had a large heart like you. I loved him as a son and like my own son. He was a good son who knew my heart even more than anyone else. He thinks and behaved like me, but also your own resemblance. He suddenly left home for the war some years ago, when your mother was a few months pregnant and shortly came home to show himself that he would soon be no more. That night he was murdered in cold blood in his own room in my presence. I prayed for a son who will carry after him and the prayer was answered the day you were born, I saw him in you. Some said, he had returned through you and you were named after him. As you were growing, I also saw him in you. My second son that took your mother and who later died when you were eight could not claim his paternity in you. You are the son of my loved son. I saw the resemblance and feel the blood attraction in you more now. Who knows if the gods had made you live after all these losses? The other children of the house were good too , especially the one that took after him. Even after many years, many could not believe he was no more. We searched for him, desperately searched for him, but there were only faint traces, insufficient clues, few and uncertain eye witnesses. Your mother was made a young widow the second time. She was such an enduring and loyal woman”

He paused and was blinking heavily. I know he would let out cry, if he had continued. So I fell at him and whispered words to his ear. I felt deep inside me that such innocent man had seen hard times.

“Come my son, for a long time I have watched you grow strongly and handsomely. Children of your age hold the topmost secret. I cannot project beyond the dawn, that is why I am telling you all these from the depth of my heart. Despite my age, the future is one of the many abstract concepts I lack. I know the reason. Our tribe had known no peace. I tried hard to forget the past, but the heart is too small to hold my pain. Immediately your mother was taken out come five years ago, a radio telegram came from the barrack the home of refugees that the war has been called off. Though we have been here all these years the road is safer now and you shall go as fast as possible for a new restoration process to our deserted clans and villages. It’s darker now and we shall have to sleep”. He said no more.

I read all meaning to what he said, but another thing filled my mind and troubled me. For a man who killed both of my parents and my mother’s second husband deserved nothing good. Grandfather slept and I walked outside thinking ahead of the next day. I swore in the name of our gods and the little knife that had been in my possession that I must kill Kwame before I die. I wish and prayed the war to end only when Kwame must have died. Unknown to me the war never ended as a gun shoot and loud noise came from a distant camp.

Out of fear, I ran into the tent and met grandfather breathing slowly. Though hunger had taken toll on him, but what was surprising to me were his unpleasant feel and smell of his body. He called me for a whisper, and I walked fast to him and sat close. It was the heart of the night and now even a whisper could be heard afar. His strength started

failing him and he was struggling to breath, but could not. His spirit departed from him.

I suddenly took fright that I was all alone. It was slowly occurring to me that he had died. I shook him with all my strength, but he could show any sign of life in him again. I ran to the darkness and come in again looking intently at him, he lay like one sleeping peacefully, I made a feeble attempt to run away but I could not for I loved him even at death. I squatted on my mat and silently grimed waiting for the morning to come.

That night I became a young man and took a big decision. I dug the ground though not too deep and buried my grandfather alone. He was among the war victims that had an honorable burial, for others were not buried.

I was the only person around when he was laid to rest to the dust of the earth the next evening; I almost followed him to the grave. I cried and consoled myself that crying my eyes out for him could not help mater. I was the only thing remaining in my lineage. I stayed all day thinking deep into many things and slept on top of his grave all nights. I mourned grandfather for days and many past memories reoccurred again and again.

The next morning, I became afraid and could not talk to anyone. Basically, it was a lot of anger building up inside of me. I walked down the passing stream located close to our camp. All these years it has been our source of water and for the others. I sat down watching the calm and quite passing water, the fishes performing and repeating it by their dives. The only disturbance was the voice and the disturbance of seabirds, who were drinking in tiny sips at the edge of the passing water and the ant cooperating orderly, working together to

drag home object much larger than themselves. I was not busy though but my mind was not at rest.

A bird chirped nearly somewhere and I look at that direction and saw a very beautiful Maiden coming towards me. As she was coming, she must have sensed, I was a strayed young trainee from another camp. She kept looking at me and I begged to look on the ground to avoid her eyes for she was beauty parked relatively in small frame. She was dearly an illiterate, but she behaves like one well brought up.

“Who are you”. She asked

‘I am Kome’ ‘I answered

“What brought you here?”

“Nothing, I lost the last surviving member of my family few days ago and all other ones had been claimed by war” I answered’.

“Where are you from”? She asked again now more interested.

I was not quick in getting answer to that question it would mean either my end or another problem.

“Ewa” I said in stammer.

“Why are you here then”?

“I am tired of life. I want to die. Our town had seen sad times, though it sounds as though the war ended. But...” I replied.

“The war is still on. But a straying bullet caught Kwame the headman of the opposing group and some of his men had to flee for fear of being captured. Now he is in hiding and I am here to get him water and fruits”.

She approached and opened her hand for embrace; I was too ashamed to go in lock in return. I stood up and for the first time, I felt love and loved in the hand of this beautiful girl who had just blossomed out into a beautiful young woman. Heartily we looked in deep embrace

and separated. Slowly we slapped our barefoot on the dried sand and walked slowly to the camp.

“Your bones and skin had gone so bad. What happened to you” she asked.

“Hunger” I answered.

I looked searchingly into her eyes and our emotions for each other heightened and began to read it in her heart that she loved me. Her relationship with me tipped into a greater intimacy as we chatted home, to that part of the world where the dwellers survive from day to day, without any apparent purpose or hope for a brighter day.

Nabe as she told me was her name kept me off from Kofi’s eyes and fed me for many days. I did not forget my grandfather or my dreams. At a cheerless hour of the night of that same day, when everyone has surrendered to nature. She came to me and started questioning me again. I was not retentive enough to carry on all that was discussed. She watched me closely and was only sizing me up, trying to determine when it would be safe to break me into her graft. I almost answered all her question but I was still in fear. My brief dream before her coming in had some colors of which I do not know fully. Many things kept my mind busy, which basically was that I was now in a danger zone of the man who was responsible for my parent’s death.

Soon a voice was heard a far end, the voice muezzin, repeating his prolonged hypnotic chant for As-sub, the first muslim prayer of the day. The night and innocent leaves around felt at peace and maintained quietness. The tranquil nature of that time of the morning was exceptional. I do not know the reason, but for the first time in my entire life, I had not witnessed such.

“Good morning” she quickly said and joined the darkness.

“Good morning” I replied.

I soon saw a fresh morning. My mind was walking on many things. I tiptoed to a nearby room where I saw the cruel Kwame groaning in pain and gnashing his teeth fiercely. He was wiggling in pain all over his body. I felt sick at my stomach. Nabe was busy squeezing a green leaves which she had stripped from a tree limb. She was pouring the juice right into a small bowl. Nabe was the most kind. She cleaned and washed his body parts, which were exposed only to torch. She was carefully robbing him as one who had gotten his prescription from a doctor. I was soon back to my little tenth, which Nabe kept for me.

Kwame's boys had greatly reduced in numbers and the few remaining one had sneaked out to hiding. So the whole camp was scanty unlike then when it was hard for predators to approach undetected, now it was an open home. Some of them whose duty where to keep alert to dangers and report in whistle had equally disappeared to the unknown. A bad spirit entered into me as I sat watching the ants cooperating orderly working together to drag home object much larger than them. It was one of the many things I enjoyed watching. I wondered why the object called man could not do the same. It was all caused by kwame ' I reasoned. I started hating him the more and wanted him dead. I stumbled out of the room sobbing and gnashing my teeth against each other. I was usually uncomfortable. That morning, I bite the edge of the little knife I was having in my possession as a way of taking oath and vowed that I must silently send kwame to the world beyond. My plan did not last long as it took Nabe all day to convince me to forget my dream and ambition. I had grown liking for her and tried my best to make her happy.

At the next day, I got up from my local made bed at the very crack of dawn to see kwame . The local made lamp was placed at the

center of the room and it shone everywhere. I had conditioned myself to rise at that hour to work out a plan. I remembered immediately, my eye contact with him, the day he killed my mother. He was not sleeping as he stared at me. I could see some effort in his looking my way staring at me in utter hopelessness and despair. None of us could say anything; only that hatred had been established. I sat close to him and could not say anything .

“If you die now” I suddenly started talking ‘it will not be enough to pay for many dear life, you wasted in the name of war. Many great and rare name were wasted by you. Years shall not restore what has been lost through you. You have made us see hard times. Many have moved toward the bush and leaving many houses behind and could not come back. You should know that no one is indispensable. I shall not continue to see you living. You must go back to tell how you lived your life. You are just paying for your sins. A life of bad record. Good night’.

kwame did not say or do anything. I was also careful by using few words which were not audible to anyone outside. He was only looking towards my direction and I hated that. I dipped hand into my small bag, brought out my knife and inserted it into his lungs twice and he silently died. The charms, he had crossed all over his body and others he bodily inserted into his veins could not easily allow him die peacefully, but I ensured he died.

I left the camp to the dark early morning dew and vanished into the early hour’s darkness to my home for a fresh restoration process.

Next was a dream that came through. I closed my eyes and opened it to see the next day. It was a special day for us all children in the garden city. Few hours brought the first independent day

celebration for the country. It was a long awaited day, the 1st of October 1960 morning. We had been told that the mighty Union Jack would be lowered and we waited for it.

The consulates had closed and would join the Queen and the new head of state and new head of government the next morning in the capital city, then in Lagos while the regional representatives came down to Pourtharcourt to address us. Foreign visitors had come into the state for the observance and school children had lined up activities for the next day.

The radio houses had been full of words informing their listeners that the 1st independent celebration would be a stepping stone to the coming in of democracy as the best form of government . The Queen would be aired live on the televising the next day.

The mood was in the air especially in the capital territory. It would be a delight to many people, at least the country was now free and we the children will be the children of Nigeria. We would henceforth go by that identity. In previous years we only watched groups of selected children stand with their Union Jack flags, ready to welcome Queen in Lagos , but things will now change .

I saw the children sang the new national anthem *arise oh compatriot* and no more *Nigeria we hail thee*. The original flag had a red sun with streaming rays placed at the top of the white stripe. While the other was green white green. The green bands represent the forests and abundant natural wealth of Nigeria while the white band represents peace. It was designed by Michael Taiwo Akinkunmi a Nigeria Student of Agric Engineering of Norwich Technical College, England in 1959.

We sang and sang loudly to the ears of us all. It seemed to us that it would continue that way. The soft breeze carried the soft flag to and fro in the open and we were watching as we all children would be addressed on the future of our country, on our future as children of Nigeria. It was really a unique day for us all. We cried in joy for receiving the new package from British government.

We watched finally when the Union Jack was lowered for Nigeria Flag in the colour green white green to take its place on air. Massed bands played "God Save the Queen" and Nigeria and We Hall Thee". That was the last time it was sang in the soil of this African part. Then splendid fireworks gave the signal for boisterous rejoicing by huge crowds of jubilant Nigerians.

During the first minutes of October 1, 1960. The green and white flag of the Federation of Nigeria flew in its place over African soil, everyone stood silent and in expectation. Nigeria had become a sovereign federation. The many supporters of independence had hated the Union Jack with all their heart because it divides the people wherever it goes. It is a symbol of persecution, of domination, a symbol of exploitation. We have passed the age of petition, the age of resolution, the age of diplomacy. This is the age of action — plain, blunt and positive action. That was our thought, the thought of most of us.

We went home with high hope that evening to watch how it all went in Lagos, the capital of the new independent Nigeria on our old black and white 14 inch television. The event of the previous night was aired. The clock chimed 12 midnight at the Church Missionary Society, CMS, tower in Lagos, ushering in October 1, 1960. At that precise

moment at the Race Course, a kilometer away, the flood lights went off, a hush fell on the several thousand people gathered there.

In the semi-darkness, the Union Jack (British flag and symbol of colonialism) came down the pole. As the flood lights came on again, the Green-White-Green flag (symbol of freedom and liberty) of the newly independent nation went up. The crowd exploded in joyous frenzy. With that, Nigeria began her journey as an independent nation.

The Queen of England was also full of hope for the new nation. It was time for her to talk to the awaiting crowd “As you assume the heavy responsibility of Independence, I send my good wish for a great and noble future...” was her message to the joint session of parliament on independent day, which was read by her cousin, Prince Alexandra. And the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa’s response too: “Today is Independence Day. October 1, 1960 is a date which for two years every Nigerian has been eagerly looking forward to. At last our great day has arrived and Nigeria is now indeed an independent sovereign nation. Words cannot express my joy and pride at being the Nigerian citizen privileged to accept from her Royal Highness these constitutional instruments which are the symbols of Nigeria’s independence. It is a unique privilege which I shall remember for ever, and it gives me strength and courage as I dedicate my life to the service of our country.”

Everyone in the house felt so happy for seeing that day. We ran outside and embraced ourselves. We ate heavily the nice food mother prepared. I was now close friend to mother who was happy over my recent changes. Father was around too to entertain us with drinks and grandmother was also watching the mood and happiness. I was

now happy like Nigeria and my independent have been broken. I was proud that I was now part of a new Nigeria and the family.

Questions

1. Choose one situation in the story and improvise a scene about it.
2. Write short notes about the prosaic style and techniques utilized in the story.

Short Profile

Emmanuel Ugokwe is a Nigerian writer, a trained film producer, a translator and a journalist. In 2008 he got his first prize in in England, for Wordinaction International Writing Competitions 2008 his drama 'the silence within'. -2008 Association of Nigeria Authors/Things Fall Apart at 50 Art Prize and wrapped the year up with Association of Nigeria Authors/Ken Nnamani Prize for Igbo Literature. Princess Hastrup Prize for The Best Researched Work was an award he won in 2009. And in 2010 won Preemptive International Essay Competition and Nigeria 50 Stars @ 50 Award. In 2010 he was a Nominee for Young Writers Achievers Award for Nigeria 50 Years Golden Jubilee by Commonwealth Club London. He was the 2011 Ebedi International Writers Resident, in Iseyin Oyo state. And 2011 Ugreen Essay Contests shortlist.

PADDLING WITH THE DEVIL

Tobechukwu ugo.

I suppose the loss of one's sight in might age must, by any standards, be an outstanding crisis in a man's life.

In simplest terms, I felt like the devil had dropped his clog on me.

At that time, 12 years ago, I expected to be double-paddled for one week, out of hospital in three, and back to work in six. Twelve years ago, the event I awaited was not as it turned out, the first operation; it was merely the operation. In retrospect, it all happened to another man, bearing my name and looking something like me, but younger and less

carefree. That man, and a part of me, was in hospital for six months and we lost forever, except for very brightly in the mind's eye, the shape of hills, the pictures in the fire, the printed page.

While I was waiting for that operation I made use of the only occupational therapy I knew anything about. I wrote a poem, a subjective poem, written from inside myself. Forever is the dark minute, I said, forever is until the pyramids blow down and the dust settles on the sea.

They hadn't told me about the ritual after an eye operation. I knew it was important not to move my head or touch my bandages but I hadn't expected that, when the night nurse came on duty, she would solemnly tie my hands to the sides of the bed, to prevent me from touching my bandages while asleep.

She put a bell-push in my hand and I heard the door of my room close. I had my concentrated mind and the emptiness of the quite night for company and I have never been so alone in my life.

By the time I came out of hospital I had found one simple strategy for myself. It was never to begin anything with the words "if only" or "I wish". The negative thought was easy and self indulgent; in moments like this, if we can make the effort to stand aside from ourselves, we begin to see that we are slightly in love with suffering and it is of No earthly use to us. No one was ever ennobled by suffering. A man is ennobled by finding the resources to give up the suffering, to let it go.

Life is not fair and can never be, so get use to it. Life is painful and unbearable but only the optimistic ones go after their goals and challenges and succeed.

Questions

1. How does the story begin?
2. At what point does the initial tension occur?
3. What is the Climax?
4. List the character(s) involved

5. What is the theme? (answer in one sentence)
6. What part can be called the crisis?
7. Where does the story take place?
8. At what time of the day

Short Profile

Devon Ugo presently resides in Lagos where he writes poetry and short stories.