**LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH**

**SSI**

**WEEK 10 & 11**

**AFRICAN POETRY: ‘NIGHT’ by Wole Soyinka**

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my

brow.

I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds,

to dare.

Exacerbation from your subtle plough.

woman as a clam, on the sea’s cresent.

I saw your jealous eye quench the sea’s

Fluorescence, dance on the pulse

incessant

Of the waves. And I stood, drained

Submitting like the sands, blood and

brine

Coursing to the roots. Night, you rained

Serrated shadows through dank leaves

Till, bathed in warm suffusion of your

dappled cells

Sensations pained me, faceless, silent

as night thieves.

Hide me now, when night children haunt

the earth

I must hear none! These misted cells

will yet

Undo me; naked, unbidden, at Night’s

muted birth.

**CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “NIGHT” BY WOLE SOYINKA**

Night, a structurally arranged poem of five stanzas, is an expression of Wole Soyinka’s reflection of nightfall effect on him and humanity in general. The beginning of the poem first stanza, particularly line 1, is clearly an indication of the poet’s view of what exactly he thinks of night. Thus, the poet addresses night as someone who intrudes his privacy, apparently creating discomfort and horror each time it arrives. The poet complains bitterly.

**Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my**

**Brow**

The poet’s use of upper case letter to inscribe “Night” in the middle of line 1 of the poem is to give successfully the attribute of human to night. Humans are not stagnant beings. Movement from one place to another is a major and essential thing that characterized human. Night, like human, moves also, paving way for day to manifest. To the poet therefore, night has a hand – **heavy hand.**

In spite of night being extremely meddlesome to the poet, he avers plainly that he “bears(s) no mercuric heart like the cloud” towards it. By heart mercuric, the poet refers to changing of thought about the night. Night will remain night. Consequently, he cannot change his reflection of what night is to him. He remains unmoved about his thought. The cloud may decide to change from bright to dark. It does not really matter to him. What actually matters is that he is screamingly irksome – “to dare”2 – about his powerlessness towards the night, which keeps coming accompanied with terror.

In stanza two, night is portrayed as a woman who is jealous. The poet conjures the image of jealousy through a sea creature called clam. The closing and opening of clam is associated with the meddling of nigh which keeps coming and going. Night is, of course, jealous of light. Light is described as fluorescence and people are more attracted to it and this has thus made night more jealous. Even the brightness of 5he Sea is darkened at night.

**I saw your jealous eye quench the sea’s**

**fluorescence**

In stanza 3 the poet concedes to the inevitable nightfall which no one can dare to stop. The poet, in fact, divulges that he submit “like the sands” to the irresistible coming of the night, he stresses: “Night, you rained.”

The poet forges ahead in stanza 4 and 5 respectively to recount his emotional experience of how he feels. He expresses this through words such as “suffusion” – feeling and darkness of the night, and dappled cell – an indication that he is restricted in movement and to do some works which will create noise and disturb the neighbourhood. All this is simply because night comes with different horrible things, therefore:

**Hide me now, when night children**

**Haunt the earth**

It is mainly in the night that armed robbers, thieves, witches and all evil vices are put into action. When night comes, he is absolutely “naked”- unprotected from the deadly ploy that accompanies it. Truly, night is “unbidden”- not invited, and it approaches him silently – “Night’s muted birth.” By “Night’s muted birth,” the poet also means the repeated comings of night, which he sees as “birth.”

**PLOT OF “NIGHT” BY WOLE SOYINKA**

In the poem **“NIGHT**” by Wole Soyinka, the speaker reflects on the role that darkness has played in his own life, describing how it has been both a source of fear and a source of comfort. He speaks of how it has hidden him from the world and allowed him to escape from the pain and turmoil of his reality.

**STRUCTURE OF THE POEM “NIGHT” by Wole Soyinka**

The poem NIGHT is a triplets with the first and third lines of each stanza rhyming. It has five stanzas and fifteen lines. The poet describes nightfall and its effect on him.