

## LITERATURE AS A TOOL IN NATION-BUILDING: THE SUGGESTED OPTION FOR NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

When a work of Literature is read and properly understood, it becomes a tool for national development. Literature has erroneously been overlooked as one of the instruments that are needed for nation- building and national development. This paper examines the role Literature can play in nation-building. It examines the common bond between Literature and History; the importance of literary studies in our schools such as: bringing about creativity, x-raying of a people's culture, language crossbreeding, among others. Ancient literary works such as the Israeli and Egyptian literatures have impacted so much on literary development of nations. This paper looks at those impacts in relation to the Nigerian needs in the present situation of political, economic, and social upheavals. It suggests a literary solution to these problems. Finally, the paper shows why there is apathy for reading and utilization of literary ideas by Nigerian students today and suggests remedy.

**Key words:** Literature, Nation-building, Nigeria, National identity

### **Introduction**

The term "Literature" has come to stand for several things among the diverse people that use it. Hornby (2010), says that Literature are pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems in Contrast to technical books and newspapers, magazines etc. Robinson and Davidson (2004) add that literature constitutes the whole body of written works of a particular country or period in time, the whole body of information published on a particular subject.

Some authors have seen literature from an etymological view point. Wikipedia (2014) posits that the term literature derives from the Latin word *literatura/litteratura* which means "writing formed with letters". Other writings add that the word literally means "acquaintance with letters", and includes reflective essays or belles-lettres. Literature, belles-letters, letters, refer to artistic writings worthy of being remembered ("Publish Poetry in Africa" 2015). Literature in its broadest sense includes any type of writings on any subject, especially writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography and essays. Literature also includes the writings dealing with a particular subject. According to Wikipedia (2014: 1):

More restrictively, it is writing that possesses literary merit, and language that foregrounds literariness, as opposed to ordinary language. Literature can be

classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose; it can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expressions (genres)

Going by all the fore-going additional information on Literature, we then begin to include every other work that provides sufficient information on a people's way of life, their belief system, values and historical antecedents.

The literature of a people might as well include some scientific works that aid the understanding and analysis of a people, their way of life and their language. Lombardi (2009) notes that literature is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works. Literature, according to her represents a language or a people; culture and tradition. The Slave narrative of Olaudah Equiano (1789) captured the African way of life, food, education, and belief system. This historical narrative has formed a basis for African literature. Literature therefore can be said to represent a people themselves. Bakhshi (2007) avers:

If staticians among you forgive this dotty averment, I would suggest that 80% of the pre-modern Islamic legal corpus is probably an exploration, prevention and explanation of the remaining 20% textual source. The hypothesis does not mean to undervalue the creativity or question the originality of classical legal texts but merely purports that what is chiefly believed to be a tradition of Islamic law may alternatively be understood as a tradition of literature transmitting Islamic legal philosophy as a distinguishable part of the conversation.

Literature therefore incorporates a people's customary way of doing things, such as deciding legal matters. When nation-building is mentioned, national identity will quickly come to mind. Czimbalmos (2004) avers that one of the main issues that concerns those pre-occupied with nation-building involves the concept of national identity, ethnic identity, and other factors closely related to the concept. In the process of trying to construct a nation, identity is one subjective element which though remains hidden but it is the driving force. This work will examine the role which literature plays in national development.

### **Literature and History**

If we agree with Robinson and Davidson (2004) that history is an account of past events and developments, a methodical account of the origin and progress of a nation, institution, the world etc; and accept that literature captures the life and culture of a people which equally includes their past, then history and literature share very common characteristics to a very large extent.

*The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano (1789)* can be called a "literary history" since it captures the life and culture of a nation in the South Eastern Nigeria. The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest known literary works which falls into this group. According to Lombardi (2009), this work is a Babylonian epic arising from stories in the Sumerian language. This epic deals with themes of heroism, friendship, loss and the quest for eternal life. Beowulf, a

mythical figure is another epic literature of the medieval period which deals with historical narrative. According to Kermode, Hollander, Bloom, Price, Trapp, and Trilling (1973), Beowulf is the finest surviving long poem in old English, now written in a single manuscript. They aver that there is no knowledge of the author of this long epic, neither was it given the title until 1805. Before it was put into print in 1815, it had remained an oral tradition. Apparent historical periods are reflected in their literature. National and ethnic relationships, in politics, economy and wars are often reflected in literary accounts. The epic of Sundjata composed in medieval Mali is, according to Senanu and Vincent (1988), a historical account of Susu Sumanguru Baamangana, also called Sosso Soumaoro Kanté, a sorcerer who ruled Sosso. Senanu and Vincent (1988) say he had conquered Mali, defeating Dankaran Touman, a half-brother of Sundjata, who had usurped the throne of Mali against the will of Nare Maghan their late father. *The vulture* by Birago Diop, in Senanu and Vincent (1988), x-rays the imperialistic savagery of the colonial masters on African natives. The colonization of Africa is a historical fact which is captured also by literature.

### **Literature; a Weapon in Nation-Building**

In building a virile and formidable nation, the role of literature cannot be underplayed. There can be no hopeful future without a past, captured in the present. Works of literature are very instructive in trying to construct a goal-oriented generation in any nation. In trying to see the importance of literature in nation-building, we need to examine some of the importance of literary studies especially in our schools. Some of the reasons why literature should be taught in our schools include:

#### **Creativity:**

Literature is a creative work of art which makes use of language. Novels, poems and drama as different genres of literature are creative works. A creative mind is a productive mind. The contribution of creative writers in the development of any nation can in no way be under-estimated. Professor Wole Soyinka is a Nobel Prize winner due to his literary creativity. Professor Chinua Achebe was a literary icon that attracted international recognition and reputation for Nigeria. In his Citation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convocation Ceremony of Ebonyi State University held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012, professor Egwu U. Egwu described him as "... the man who taught the English people how to write the English language" and according to Egwu, to underscore Achebe's international importance, the Mayor of the city of Washington DC declared February 14, 1998, as Chinua Achebe Day. This is a great honour for the Nigerian nation. If we view this against the background of the disrepute the nation has suffered as a result of people who portray the country in bad light, we then see the power of literary works in nation building. Creative minds are great minds that do great things for their country. Literature creates great minds that launch their country into greatness. Poetry takes us into deep thinking and everyone knows that every idea that launches any nation into greatness comes from deep thoughts. The computer system, internet services, mobile telecommunication network and their likes, are all products of innovative thoughts. In technology, new products are manufactured; in literature, new ideas that unravel new methods of problem-solving are brought up.

### X-ray of a People's Culture.

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. A people's culture is their way of life, their food habits, their dressing code, their means of livelihood, etc. Literature shows us our culture in practical terms. Nigerian artifacts have stood high even in Europe. Works of art such as sculptural works, tell the history of a people. *Breaking Kola nut* is a poetic rendition of the cultural importance of kola-nut in attracting divine guidance and companionship. In this traditional poem, Lawrence Emeka in Senanu and Vincent (1998) portrays the Igbo nation of Eastern Nigeria as a religious people who have much dependence on God. They believe that God is "...the creator who lives on high and his eyes cover the whole ground...", a God of justice and equity who would not allow the innocent to be punished like the wicked. Emeka in Senanu and Vincent (1998) captures the words of the libation of an Igbo man in which he intends to declare his innocence this way:

I am a little innocent child, who washes his stomach, but your eyes see me,  
and you can judge. If I have ever touched the wife of a relation or seen the  
nakedness of a sister ..., May this our land and the mother Earth eat me.

Culturally, it is an abomination in Igbo land for a man to go into the wife of a relation or to see the nakedness of one's sister. This taboo is echoed in Leviticus 18: 6, 9-13. There is an affinity between the Igbo and other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria when it comes to the use of the kola-nuts. However, among the Igbo, the kola nut commands a very strong cultural significance. The kola nut is used as an object of communicating with the gods and spirits. The kola nut serves as food and stimulants among all the ethnic tribes of Nigeria. Among the Igbo, apart from serving as the food for the gods through which ancestral prayers are believed to be carried to God, it is also an object for welcoming visitors. It is in fact believed among most Nigerians that three of the four-lobes of some species of the kola-nut represents the three major ethnic nationalities of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, while the fourth part represents the minorities in block. The Igbo however believe that the four-lobed kola-nut represents the four Igbo week days of *Eke*, *Orie*, *Afor* and *Nkwo*. By x-raying our cultural similarities, literature builds a common bridge of relationship among us. Religiously, the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islamic religions have several things in common. Firstly, all the three religions which hold sway in Nigeria emphasize the supremacy of the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God. All of them have some form of morality; the only difference lies in the mode and purpose of worship. Both the Jews and the Arabs through whom came Christianity and Islam have a common ancestor; while the Christians call him (*father*) *Abraham*, the Muslims call him (*father*) *Ibrahim*.

We need Nigerian creative artists who would devote time to create literary works that bring out the similarities of both religions. This move will definitely bring about a harmonious co-existence as against the present situation of ethno-religious rancour and acrimony. The Bible extensively captures Israel's history which embodies her cultural and religious life. Let us at this point attempt to x-ray the cultural, religious, literary and social history of the Israelites and the Egyptians which the Bible helps to reveal:

### **Israel and Literary Development**

The Holy Bible gives us in details the formation of the Israeli nation. This formation is begun in Genesis 12: 1-4. God had called out Abraham from his father's home in Haran which is the present day Syria. From Syria, he had migrated to Canaan where he settled and begot Isaac from whom Jacob who became Israel was born. This historical tracing of the Israeli nation to Abraham, a friend of God remains the pride of Israel till date. The New Testament book of Matthew 1: 1-17, captures it this way:

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren ... so all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

What a great people! Today, revenue from tourism accounts for a great percentage of Israel's national economy. People who visit Israel on pilgrimage do so for these historical religious antecedents and the inspirations derivable. Israel has the culture of record-keeping as revealed by literature. There were recorders in the days of Nehemiah as revealed in the book of Nehemiah chapter 3 which gives a detailed account of the rebuilding of the broken down walls of Jerusalem. There are for instances the location of each gate, and which families that built them. Dake (1961) says that the destruction that necessitated this work of rebuilding was done by the Babylonian army wherein both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel were carried captives into Babylon. Literacy was extolled by the scribes who were custodians of history.

### **Egypt and Literary Development**

Egyptians had a literary history dating back to thousands of years ago. According to Wikipedia (2014:1) "Egyptian literature traces its beginnings to ancient Egypt and is some of the earliest known literature. Indeed, the Egyptians were the first culture to develop literature as we know it today." In fact, it can be argued that Moses learnt the art of reading and writing from Egypt, having been adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter. He read and interpreted God's commandment written by God (through His angel) (Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 34:28). Hieroglyphics which dates back to 3000 BC were a formal script used in stone monuments and in tombs that could be as detailed as individual works of art. Clement (1936) states that the earliest Egyptian alphabets were invented at some dates before 3000 BC and had about 24 letters. The Pithom and Ramses mentioned in the book of Exodus 1:11 were great cities of historical records built by Pharaoh Ramses 11 by direct labour using the Israelite slaves. The abuse of the rights to life and freedom which Pharaoh Ramses 11 exhibited was what drew God's wrath against him and the entire nation of Egypt. In the book of Exodus 1:8-22, the Bible tells us of this Pharaoh who knew not Joseph who devised very harsh policies aimed at decimating Israel. According to Dake (1961), this Pharaoh that knew not Joseph was Menepthah, the son of Ramses 11 the Assyrian who conquered Egypt and set up a new dynasty in Egypt. However, Clement (1936) maintained it was Ramses 11 himself that built city Ramses. Whatever be the case, it shows that the Ramses

Dynasty was probably the last Dynasty in Egypt. Clement (1936) gives Ramses 11 the credit of being the last Pharaoh that tried hard to revive the Egyptian Empire having had the longest reign of 75 years (1300-1225 BC). Clement further writes that this pharaoh was a great builder, but a very proud and autocratic ruler who even rubbed out the names of other pharaohs from their monuments to inscribe his own name. A great lesson is to be learned here; there is a repercussion for every evil done here on earth. Most evils are committed under the intoxicating influence of the power of rulership. Idi Amin of Uganda unleashed mayhem on his subjects. Nwosu (2012) reported that Idi Amin, the former Ugandan leader, was the son of a self-proclaimed sorcerer, and acting in the spirit of his mother, he unleashed one of the worst acts of terror known in human history on the subjects he was meant to protect. He perished unsung. In like manner this Pharaoh Ramses perished ignobly. According to Dake (1961), the departure of Israel from Egypt put a serious crack on the walls of Egyptian existence as a nation. The book of Exodus in chapters 3– 14 has the account of the process of Israel's departure from Egypt. During this process, God brought vengeance upon Egypt for the unjust treatment and human rights violation meted upon Israel by Egypt without provocation. The book of Exodus 14:13-31 records how the Pharaoh Ramses' Dynasty finally came to an end when the king with his army was drowned in the Red sea. Clement (1936) records that after the death of Ramses 11, the story of Egypt became mostly one of decline and conquest by foreign powers. Other countries according to Clement conquered Egypt as they rose to power, until 1000 B C. The story of Israel and Egypt are literary records of both historical and moral significance to nation-building. Literary records have shown Egypt as being notorious in occultism. The Pharaoh Ramses 11 used this medium to hold Israel as slaves for long and to equally resist God's mandate to Moses to free them, (Exd. 5:2; 7:22-23; 8:6-7)

And Pharaoh said, who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments and Pharaoh's heart was hardened... And the magicians did so with their enchantments and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt (Exd. 7:22; 8:7)

No developmental stride can be complete without any reference to these ancient historical facts. These pieces of historical information have featured very prominently in Egyptian literary works.

According to Wallis Budge (2005), some of the best known pieces of ancient Egyptian literature, such as the pyramid and coffin texts were written in classical Egyptian which continued to be the language of writing until 1300 BC. Later, Egyptian was spoken from the new kingdom onwards. Literature brought the Egyptian language into a global limelight, because the vernacular language became more popularly employed to write popular literary pieces. Works of literature has today helped in bringing out the rich cultural heritage of the Egyptians right from ages past. Agriculturally, architecturally, educationally, spiritually, and economically, Egypt has stood out in global records. Literature and literary works often expose the appreciable aspects of other people. It does not mean however that we will accept all that are found in others, but even when we reject other people's life style or belief system, we see ourselves close to understanding them through their literature. There are several appreciable values among the various ethnic

nationalities in Nigeria. Works of literature have brought out some of them, but the greater part still remains hidden and can only be revealed through further works of literature. The ethnic bickering in Nigeria can be resolved by literary expositions of these cherished values. Nigeria will be better off in terms of harmonious existence when we, through literature expose these rich values that are worthy of emulation.

### **Development of Critical Thinking**

Literature develops critical thinking among its patrons. Critical thinking among a people leads to real development. Works of literature are products of critical thinking; or how could any person believe that the events in *Julius Caesar*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, among other works of William Shakespeare, are not all real, rather, that Shakespeare exploited real events blended with imaginary settings to create completely fresh and convincing situations. This is literary creativity. America, Japan, Russia, China and today's world powers are leading the world by their technological and creative ingenuity. Creativity is all about bringing into existence that which was not previously in existence. Going by Lombardi (2009), literature is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, and so technological inventions form a people's literature. Technology is therefore a brain child of creativity which is the major tool of literature

### **A Source of Advancing National Life**

We can draw from literary works to advance our nation, economically, academically, and technologically. After the fall of old Ghana Empire in 1076 AD, the State of Kangaba broke away and became Independent. Onwubiko (1967) writes that it was Sumanguru of the State of Kaniaga that brought the old Ghana Empire into ruins, after executing eleven out of the twelve heirs of Kangaba except Sundiata, a sickly, weakling. Surprisingly, it was this same Sundiata (also known as Marijata) that eventually grew and ascended the throne of Kangaba. Kangaba later became what is today Mali. History credits the foundation and imperial greatness of Mali to Sundiata. Both Sumanguru and Sundiata wrote poems and other inspiring literature works that x-rayed their military, economic and technological exploits. Other rulers made their literary contributions. There is the *Epic of Sundiata* written in medieval Mali, the *KebrNegast* or book of kings from Ethiopia, the *Epic of Dinga* of old Ghana Empire, *Zambia Shall Be Free* by former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, *Because I am Involved* by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu among others. These are inspiring literature books that unveil both the military and leadership experiences of these leaders. What was the magic of Sundiata for Instance? How was a sickly, weakling able to survive after the extermination of his whole family? How was he able to come to the throne in view of the avowed hostility of Sumanguru? What was his military secret? What was his economic secret? No doubt, these must be revealed in the *Epic of Sundiata* knowing full well that epics are literary records of kingly exploits. Ancient historical records hold that Sumanguru was a sorcerer – who used occultism extensively to consolidate his hold of the newly born kaniaga Empire but alas, it was the sickly, weakling Sundiata that terminated both he and his empire. What a colossal disappointment to any ruler that would want to use diabolical means to both establish his kingdom and remain on the throne?

Idi Amin unleashed the worst terror on his subjects only equaled in the recent times by those of Samuel Doe of Liberia, Charles Taylor and the late Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya. Just like Sumanguru of Mali, It was the soft –speaking, gentle Julius Nyerere of Tanzania that sacked the murderous government of Idi Amin of Uganda. Great lessons abound for leaders who would think that might is right. Any City built on terror and occultism must collapse and with much ignominy.

The reign of terror and racism in Africa and the obnoxious apartheid government in South Africa were captured by such literary artists as Denis Brutus, David Diop, Kwesi Brew, and Oswald M. Mtshali among others in Senanu and Vincent (1998). In Denis Brutus' *A Troubadour I Traverse*, he pictures a medieval European knight called *Trabadour* who dedicated his life to the service of a lady. His service would often entail fighting to rescue the lady- his mistress- from monsters and other unfaithful Knights. In this poem, the land of South Africa has become the lady mistress which Brutus is fighting to liberate. David Diop in Senanu and Vincent (1998) pictures Africa in three stages of history: the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-colonial Africa. Pre –colonial Africa was the period of Africa's glory when they prided in their warriors, a time when Africa had sovereignty and flourished, then came the next gloomy and hopeless period of colonialism when African pride was taken from her and replaced by the mockery of the colonial masters. But there is hope for Africa in future when colonialism would be over thrown to restore the black man's dignity. In his poem *Africa*, David Diop pictures the pre- colonial, colonial, and post-colonial states of the African continent. In the pre-colonial era, Africa prided in her local warriors who defended their territorial borders from external aggression. The colonial era witnessed the humiliation of this great continent with her continental warriors by the colonialists. Hope however resurges at the end when the colonial oppression is over thrown thus restoring the African pride. David Diop in Senanu and Vincent (1998:73) captures Africa this way:

Africa my Africa  
 Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs  
 ...The work of your slavery  
 The slavery of your children  
 Africa tell me Africa  
 Is this your back that is bent?  
 The back that breaks under the weight of humiliation  
 ...But a grave voice answer me  
 Impetuous child that tree young and strong  
 That tree over there

Splendidly alone amidst white and faded flower  
 That is your Africa springing up anew  
 Springing up patently obstinately  
 Whose fruits bit by bit acquire  
 The bitter taste of liberty.

A common feature in the poems of Africa freedom fighters is the hope they build in their readers that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Denis Brutus in *The sun on this Rubble* in Senanu and Vincent (1998) reveals the hope of things being well again after the destructive period of the ravaging storm of the South African Apartheid government. No doubt, the literary succour provided by these artists became the basis of hope that sustained the liberation struggle through to independence in 1990. We can safely say that the nation of South Africa was built mainly by the courageous words of literary scholars.

### **The Nigerian Situation**

The Nigeria of today is seriously challenged by several factors which in fact, threaten the very existence of the nation. Among the deadly venoms trying to snuff life out of our beloved father land are corruption, armed robbery and official banditry, militancy, kidnapping and terrorism. Indeed, these cankerworms have made life in Nigeria unsavoury. Nigeria is in a siege and most people are hardly sure of the next day. Literature is already in creation and literary writers, like their South African and Negritude counterparts, pick up their pen to put hope in the people. Evil has never triumphed over good, the reason is that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of, (Psalm 24:1).

Senanu and Vincent (1988) say that *The Vultures* of David Diop is a description of European imperialists in Africa. European imperialism was as ugly as the Vulture just as corruption, poverty, terrorism and other social vices manifesting in Nigeria today are as ugly as Imperialism. Jegede, (2012:56) writing on the common front forged by former Nigerian Leaders, Obasanjo and Ibrahim Babangida says:

Unfolding events in our dear motherland, Nigeria over the last few years are threatening to unravel the nearly acentury old labour of our founding fathers and subsequent generations in building a strong, united, peaceful nation that can accommodate and cater for the needs and aspirations of our diverse communities. Internecine crises are raging across the land unabated with damaging consequences on the social, political and economic life of the nation. And in the process, untold hardships are being visited on all citizens in one form or another in a daily basis. The loss of innocent lives being experienced by the day across the nation is simply unbearable.

Jegede adds that the current situation in Nigeria is that of fear and uncertainty that virtually all citizens have had difficulties going about their business on daily basis and concludes his referenced statements of the two ex-heads of state with a hopeful statement of "this cannot be allowed to continue". This statement immediately douses the palpable fear and raises hope of a better Nigeria. How much therefore literary works can add to the building of the Nigerian state cannot be underrated.

### **Nation-building and National Identity**

Every nation is what it is, due to its unique identity. Identity incidentally remains the unseen motivation behind every effort at nation-building. A close look at most literary works will help to reveal this often unseen element. The negritude and apartheid writers were all driven

by the love for native land, their colour and their culture, and the need to preserve them. In the poem, *Africa* by David Diop in Senanu and Vincent (1998), he tries to paint the African continent and her people in a beautiful, brave colour. Africa is shown as the land of proud warriors whose exploits in the savannah region was the song of every one in times past and wonders that the colonial masters of inferior make have got the effrontery to enslave and brutalize Africans. Language has remained a strong identity mark of any people and played a prominent role in African nationalism. To bring out the Igbo identity through language, Achebe in most of his works uses code-mixing to both bring in some Igbo vocabulary and expressions because of their effects in what he wants to say, and then brings in the English equivalents which of course have less effects. Talking about Ezeulu the chief priest of the *Ulu* deity whose prerogative it is to announce the appearance of the new moon that herald the eating of the new yam, Achebe (1964) says, “His *obi* was built differently from other men’s huts... on his right hand, he carried *Nneofoto*, the mother of all staffs of authority in Umuaro”. Surely, the significance and effects of *obi* and *Nneofoto* the Igbo are not of the same weight with the English equivalents only inserted to give the idea to non-native speakers of the language. Similarly, the *ogene, alusi* and *Nkwo* market day have weightier effects to the language owner than to a non-native speaker. Most of Achebe’s works written in the colonial and immediately after the colonial era have this feature.

It is unfortunate however that fifty five years after political independence, Nigeria is yet to develop a national language of identity. Though the language consciousness was high before, during, and immediately after independence, we appear to have lost focus. One of the undoing of Nigeria has been the apathy towards their indigenous languages and thinking it more appropriate to define and interpret their cultural concepts using a foreign language. I think this has really contributed to the negative direction towards which this nation is moving. One good work which current literary artists should embark on should be to begin to re-discover and re-identify Nigeria through literary works by looking into how our indigenous languages would be portrayed in their writings.

### **Literature and its Presentation**

It is no more news that Nigerian reading culture is on a woeful decline. This has really affected the student population which is expected to lead the country tomorrow. Ngwoke (2006) laments that our students and most graduates from our institutions of learning are semi-literate who can hardly express themselves in clear, error-free English, due to their total apathy to reading. He equally decries the disheartening attitude of substituting reading which is a noble academic exercise for night clubs, movie-watching, smoking, and cult activities. Sadly still, Nda- Isaiah (2012) regrets that we have not been able to direct the minds of youths towards using the internet for academic purposes and learning, but we have only succeeded in reconciling internet with entertainment. An average student doesn’t use the internet for education purposes but takes delight in downloading music, games, and face book among others.

To derive the intended lesson from any literary work, such work has to be read and understood; to do that, students must be made to develop good interest

in reading. Thought presentation is a very important strategy in attracting readers to a book. How a literary text is presented is very important as it can stimulate or stall interest in the book. A very interesting and educative literary text, when wrongly presented both in terms of thoughts and its packaging, will stall the readers' interest thus hiding away the lessons that could be learnt there from.

Both literacy and proper thought presentation of literary works are important in enhancing reading of literature. If the nation does not tap the enriching contributions of literature in national development, it is largely because the literacy level in Nigeria has been very low, and most people do not attach appreciable importance to reading of literary works. This apathy to the study of literary works cannot equally be unconnected with the way and manner these works are presented to readers. What terms have been used and how appropriate to the situation are the thoughts are important especially in the teaching and reading of literature at the junior levels. The Nigerian nation will advance greatly when premium is attached to literary studies.

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