ORAL LITERATURE: Part 1. (With explanation and examples)

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Copy the following notes in your Exercise book.
2. Do not copy the stories in your exercise book. Just read

The work is due on Monday 8th June 2020

DEFINITION OF ORAL LITERATURE
The word oral means by word of mouth secondly the transmission is from one generation to another. Thirdly, what is transmitted is the content of oral literature, that is: oral narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters.

FUNCTIONS OF ORAL LITERATURE
Function refers to the reasons as to why oral literature is studied. Different forms or oral literature may perform different functions but generally, the following are functions of oral literature:

1. Oral literature is a source of entertainment. People derive amusement or fun from such aspects of oral literature as cultural songs E.g. as they are performed in wedding, Harambee meeting and other communal gathering. Oral narratives help people to pass time and derive enjoyment.
2. Oral literature teaches or educates people on moral values or good behaviour; songs for instance communicate a direct message and attack immorality. Proverbs also speak a direct moral message which narrative lead to moral lesson.
3. Oral literature sensitizes people on social and communal values. Virtues upheld by the community are taught through oral literature. On the importance of unity for instance a community would have proverbs like “Unity is Strength” Kidole Kimoja Hakivunjji chawa’ (one finger alone cannot kill a louse)
4. Oral Literature teaches about culture is a people’s way of life and it is well reflected in oral literature for example, the way people were governed, their form of religion, division of labour, rites of passage, mode of dressing etc.
5. Having learned about culture, this gives people confidence in their culture as they get to understand why a community lives the way it does.
6. Closely related to this is that we get to learn about our history or heritage. The study of oral literature provides a useful links with our roots. For example, myth of origin tells the community’s origin and progress up to present.
7. This means the world of our ancestors is laid bare for present generations to see.
8. Such a link with the past enables us to understand ourselves. The present is a product of the past to understand where we are and where we are heading to, we first know the past. Today many young people know their names that seem to tie them to a certain past name of their clan and tribes.
9. Having understood our culture forms of good background for us to know other people’s culture. This fosters good neighbourliness and the spirit of nationalism as we understand and appreciate other people.
10. The study of oral literature provides us with heroes from the past for us to emulate. We get to know of courageous women like Wangu wa Makeri and Mekatilili, Brave men like Wang’ombe wa ihura and Lwanda Magere.
Such heroes provide an aspiration for present generations as we see the way they struggled and made a name for themselves.

11. Oral literature helps to develop language skills, sense of creativity, wit and even to sharpen speech. Skill of speaking and listening can be enhanced for example; one would know how to be eloquent by appropriate use of proverbs.
This means that Oral literature is an important tool for shaping the individual into an all-round character who can fit into the family, community and nation at large.

CLASSIFICATION OF ORAL LITERATURE
In every community’s oral literature exists in various forms or groups or categories that are referred to in academic jargon as genres of oral literature. It is not the academicians who classify oral literature rather it is the individual communities that do this classification.
The following are the main genres of oral literature.
  a) oral narratives
  b) songs or oral poetry
  c) proverbs and wise sayings
  d) riddles
  e) Tongue twisters or verbal play.
The last three are sometimes put into a broad category called the short-fixed forms or oral short forms. This includes the oral literary forms that are brief and compact in comparison to the songs and narratives. This broad category of oral literature would include genres like puns, jokes, and idioms etc. However, it is important to confine ourselves to the five classes or divisions of oral literature to avoid confusion. Each of these five genres will be looked at in detail.

ORAL NARRATIVES
Where did our Oral narrative come?
The following are some of the theories put forward to explain the origin of oral narratives:

1. The existence of oral artists in society these are the men or women with creative prowess who are able to spin stories and recreate existing ones afresh. These are the people who created the stories we pass from one generation to another.

2. Group work. Groups of people relaxing together spin a story to logical conclusion. Even today, a class can create a story by simply asking one student to start any way and others creative can on in turns until they are a logical story.

3. It is also possible that some stories may be have been deliberated created in those in authority to valid existing order of things. Elders for example would spin a story to force compliance.

4. Some ordinary happens become distorted and exaggerations such that in them they rich epic and fictional. Proportions. Many of the legends are likely to have been created this way.

5. The fear of mystery and the unknown could have led to generation of related stories. That is the reason why the communities living near forest had stories about ogres/giants etc. Those living near large rivers and masses of water had stories of mermaids while those living near deserts would imagine of formidable reptiles. To a creative eye and mind, nature has phenomena that naturally raises curiosity and can easily render itself to a story. The very nature of a tortoise is that way. It is for this reason that different accounts on the same phenomenon are available.
Whatever theory is put forward on the origin of the stories is acceptable for at the end day it is these stories that passed on from one generation to another.

MODE OF STORY – TELLING
In most of the communities, stories were told in the evening around the fire-place as a recreational activity. It was a taboo to tell stories during the day. This was done in the realization that stories can go captivating that they would disrupt work. So, story-telling sessions were held in the evening to help pass time as people were waiting for the evening meal. These sessions would involve either
a) Adults telling stories to children
b) Adults telling stories to both children and adults
c) Children telling stories to both children.
d) Children telling story to a mixed group of children and adults.

In telling stories there was conventional style of announcing the intention to tell a story. The narrator or storyteller would call attention as follows. Narrator: I would like to tell you a story (Kiswahili Hadithi Hadithi)
Audience: Tell us (Kiswahili Hadithi Njoo).

Different communities would put it into different ways but the concept is the same.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE
The audience refers to those who listen to the story. They are as important as the storyteller or the narrator. They act as a stimulus or the catalyst to the creating and imagination of the narrator. The mood of the audience directly affects the narrator.
They urge the narrator. There are two types of audiences.

a) **Active Audience.**
These are the listeners who are lively during the performance. They remain active throughout the performance. Through such action as laughing, nodding, clapping, asking questions, joining in the repetition or singing showing the appropriate emotion etc.

b) **Passive audience.**
These listeners are attentive but they remain dormant. They keenly engage their ears and eyes but do not play any role in enhancing the liveliness of the performance.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD STORY TELLER:
A storyteller should possess certain qualities/abilities/characteristics in order to stand before the audience and tell a story and captivate the audience throughout the narrative.
The following are qualities of a good storyteller.

1. A good storyteller should be bold in order to stand before the audience, face them and tell the story freely. A fearful person would shy away from the audience thus; his story would not be interesting. Eye contact in any communication is vital for effectiveness rapport building and for the purpose of registering the response of the audience.

2. A good storyteller would have a good memory in order to recall details of the story many of the stories told are adaptations of the old ones and it is important to remember the plots of the story.

3. A good storyteller would be creative and imaginative in order to make the story interesting.

When an old story is re-told imaginatively, it sounds new, fresh and interesting. A creative
storyteller reads the mood of the audience and adapts the story appropriately for example one would introduce a song in order to involve the audience. This requires a lot of creativity.

4. A good storyteller should be interested in various cultures. Stories, like all literature, reflect the culture of a people. For a storyteller to be effective he should be well versed in a variety of culture so that his stories are within cultural contents of the community in question.

5. A good storyteller should know about the past of his people and also a keen observer of what is happening today so that his stories are dynamic and can appeal to present generations. The artist in society is a bridge between the world of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

6. A good storyteller should be sensitive in order to ensure that he does offend or embarrass the audience. To be sensitive is to be careful about other people’s feeling in a mixed audience in terms of age, sex, and ethnic background, the artist must be very careful not to sound rude or obscene. In certain instances, she will employ euphemism instead of use of the taboo words.

7. A good storyteller should be a teacher of morality so as to inculcate the necessary values and practices in the evidence. Besides entertainment, oral narratives are expected to teach good morality in society.

8. A good storyteller should be a good actor in order to keep the audience attentive throughout the performance. Accordingly, he will employ narrative techniques such as dramatization, gestures, facial expressions etc.

TECHNIQUES OF STORY-TELLING
To make the story interesting and to keep the audience attentive throughout the performance, the storyteller should employ certain techniques.
They include:

1. Dramatization: - certain aspects of the story or even parts can be re-enacted by reproducers by the narrator for the audience to have a visual insight into how they happened. E.g. the narrator would sit up the way they had done in a meeting.

2. Use of gestures: - this refers to the use of hands to demonstrate actions within an oral narrative. The hands can be used to demonstrate cutting down a tree, throwing objects, lifting etc.

3. Facial expressions: - the face can be used to capture very many feelings and moods like shock, anger, joy, pain, disgust, suspicion etc. The narrator should use his face to show the audience the feeling of various characters in the story.

4. Tonal variation: - the intensity of sound and projection can reflect different tones and moods; the voice can portray urgency, fear, and excitement etc.

5. Mimicry: - this is the ability to imitate people or animals for the purpose of making fun. The storyteller mimics the character in the story in order to make the story interesting.

6. Involvement of the audience: -
The storyteller should ensure that the audience is active throughout the story through being involved in such areas as the opening formulas, repetition, singing, asking questions and any other area that they can come into the story.

7. Use of costumes and decorations this involves the use of objects to drive home the message. Where for instance, the hare has glued horns to his head in order to attend a meeting of animals with horns, the narrator can use small sticks to show these horns.

8. The use of dramatic pause: -
At a strategic point in the story, the narrator can pause for effect. Dramatic pause can work best where there is heightened feeling like shock, surprise and unbelief.
These techniques re married together and used where appropriate to make the story real and lively for the audience to enjoy, follow and understand.
CLASSIFICATIONS OF ORAL NARRATIVES

Oral narratives can be sub-divided into various sub-genres as follows: -
a) Tricksters stories
b) Ogre/Monster stories
c) Explanatory/etiological/why stories
d) Dilemma
e) Myths
f) Legends

TRICKSTER STORIES:
The stories involve trickery where one character, the tricksters, uses his wit to undo another dupe. The trickster is presented as a wise and cunning character while the dupe is usually foolish and gullible.

Each community tends to have its tricksters and dupes. Common tricksters include the hare, the squirrel, Chameleon, tortoise, spider, and monkey etc. The most common dupe is the hyena. There is a trend where smaller and weaker animals seem to outdo the stronger and the bigger ones. Is this done to despise the bigger characters?

No, this is done with the following reasons: -

i. To pass a moral message that might not always be right.
ii. To encourage children that they can also excel in spite of their size.
iii. To encourage the weak in society to fight for their rights in spite of their disadvantages
iv. To show the importance of being wise in society. Sometimes the dupe is depicted as evil and his defeat is a celebration of good over evil.

However, the trickster occasionally finds himself outwitted. This serves as a warning to those who are sly in the society for, they could get a taste of their own medicine. Besides, no community would like to encourage slyness and deceit as ways of survival.

Example of a trickster narrative

The monkey and the crocodile (Meru version)

NOTE: DO NOT COPY THE STORY IN YOUR EXERCISE BOOK. JUST READ

Once upon a time the monkey and the crocodile were good friends. The crocodile used to come to the river while the monkey sat on the branches of trees on the banks of the river, and there the two friends would spend the whole day chatting. The crocodile would take long hours telling the monkey interesting stories about the world of water, and the animals that lived in the river. The monkey would in turn tell the crocodile stories about the animals that lived on the dry land.

The friendship continued for a long time. However, one day the ostrich warned the monkey that the crocodile was a cunning, dangerous animal.” You wait and see. It will not be long before the crocodile wants to eat you,” the ostrich told the monkey as he went on his way. Though the monkey began to be careful with the crocodile their friendship continued. Soon after the crocodile told his friend that his wife had a new born baby. And the crocodile went on to tell the monkey: “My wife and I would be very happy if you would visit us and see our new-born baby. “The monkey without a second thought, agreed to visit the crocodile and his wife the next day. It was arranged that the crocodile would meet the monkey the next afternoon, and carry him on his back to the island on which the crocodile’s home was. On the next day the monkey, full of excitement, went to meet his friend. And he found the crocodile waiting for him at
the bank of the river. After exchanging greetings, the monkey jumped on the crocodile’s back and the crocodile began to swim onto the deep waters.

They were in the middle of the river when the crocodile began to laugh loudly:”
Haa……haa….haa……”. The monkey was surprised for he could not understand why his friend was laughing. “Why are you laughing?” he asked. In a warning voice the crocodile said, “At last I have caught you! For months I have longed to taste your heart and I will do so today.”

The monkey was worried and he began to think how he would escape. After a short while the monkey told the crocodile: “Why didn’t you tell me that you wanted to eat my heart? I would have given it to you, but you are unfortunate because my heart is at home. “And the monkey went on to explain to the crocodile that when monkeys go on a journey, they leave their hearts with their grandmothers so that grandmothers spice and flavour the hearts. The monkey persuaded the crocodile that if he really wanted to eat his heart, he should take him back to the shores of the river. “Take me back to the banks of the river and I will ask my grandmother to give you my heart…” The monkey pleaded with the crocodile.

The crocodile, without thinking, headed back to the banks of the river. He swam fast for he believed that the monkey would give him his heart. Within no time they were at the bank of the river. The monkey jumped from the crocodile’s back onto a tree and he began to jump from one tree to the other. When the monkey was well seated on a branch on a big tree, he spat at the crocodile and cursed, “May you and your wife and children perish! And as for my heart, you will never taste it. “And so, saying the monkey threw a dead branch at the crocodile, which swam back into the deep waters. And that is how their friendship ended.

EXPLANATORY/AETIOLOGICAL STORIES:
They are called why stories because they attempt to explain the origin of phenomena.
These stories usually end with “and they are why………………”
It is important to clarify that they do not explain the origin of the universe and communities (myths) rather they pick on the specific trend or aspect of life and explain its origin. They may explain physical attributes of animals and nature and trace the origin of present relationships.
Examples – why the hyena limps, why the hare has a short tail, why the zebra has stripes, how the dog became a domestic animal, why women do not own animals, how the hawk and the hen became perpetual enemies.
Examples of explanatory narratives
Why cats like to stay by the fire place (Bukusu)

NOTE: DO NOT COPY THE STORY IN YOUR EXERCISE BOOK. JUST READ

The cat was formally a wild animal and lived in the forest. The forest was too dangerous for the cat so, seeking protection, it attached itself to an elephant (whom it thought was the most powerful animal). A lion came along and killed the elephant. The cat thought that the lion was after all, the most powerful animal. For its defence, it had to make friends with the lion.
Then the hunter came along with his bow and arrows and spear. He killed the lion, which had attempted to attack him. On his way home the hunter was followed by the cat. While at the hunter’s home the cat remained hiding until an opportunity showed up the cat’s desire for the hunter’s friendship. One evening, a rat which was discovered eating the hunter’s meat was chased past where the cat was hiding. The cat, having a natural hatred for rats, joined the chase and killed it. The hunter had no choice but to persuade the cat to remain in his house and kill rats, which were a threat to his food.
This is not the end of the story.
One cold evening, the hunter went round to a fire place whose manager was his wife. All the orders at the fireplace were given by the hunter’s wife and the hunter had to obey. The cat, watching this relationship, was quick to notice that the hunter’s wife was stronger than the hunter himself: she ordered him about. So, the cat decided to stay around the fireplace under the protection of the hunter’s wife. And up to this day, cats like to stay by the fireplace.

THE VULTURE AND THE HEN
Long ago the hen and the vulture used to live on excellent terms, helping each other at any time they needed a hand to procure their domestic necessities.
One day, the hen thought of borrowing a razor from the vulture to shave their little ones. The shaving was already much overdue, but it couldn’t be helped, because she had no razor. And was depending on the kind ness of her neighbours. So, the hen went to see vulture and said,”
Dear vulture, I should like to borrow your razor; mine was lost months ago. My little ones are looking very ugly, and also very untidy, with their long, unkempt, overgrown hair.”

The vulture listened to the hen with great concern, after a short silence, said, Dear hen I cannot refuse you this favour. Tomorrow perhaps I might need your help as well, and we must help each other. However, you must remember one thing. You know what the razor means to me. I have no other income except the rent of that razor; that is to say the razor is my field, whence I get my daily food. I do not intend to ask you any fee as I do with others; but please be careful to return it to me as soon as you are finished with your shaving.”
“Thank you, brother vulture, I quite understands what you say, and I am very grateful to you. I’ll bring it back to you.”
The hen was very glad of the favour and as soon as she arrived home, made arrangements to be shaved by another woman. The following morning, she shaved her little ones, so that the whole family was now shining like the moon. The work over, she put it in a leather purse, which was hanging in a corner of the hut.
The days passed and passed away like the water under a bridge, but then he never thought again, of returning the razor to the vulture. She forgot it completely. The vulture grew impatient, and deeply resented in his heart the unkindness, nay the ingratitude of the hen. Pressed by necessity, he decided to personally go to the hen and demand his razor. “Oh, dear vulture,” said then hen with confusion and great regret,” Forgive me; I am so sorry for my negligence really intend to return your razor very soon, but I put it my leather purse and forgot about it completely. Let me go and bring it; you will have it in a minute.”
“Yes, I know you are a forgetful creature; but look at the damage you have me. You have deprived me of my sustenance for many days. Mind you, if you have lost it, you will pay for it and very dearly”, said the vulture. The hen rushed into the house to fetch the razor. She plunged her hand into the leather bag, but alas! It was empty; there was no razor in it. She was very shocked at the unpleasant disco very. She started searching on the floor to see if by any chance it had dropped from the bag, but there was no finding it. She looked under the children’s bed, rear the fire stones, in the store; but there was no sign of it. Have mercy on me! I will search better; I am ready to demolish my hut altogether, and arch for it diligently until I find it and return it to you.”
“I told you to be careful, and I repeat it again; I want my razor back! But mind you, I want the very razor I gave you, and so substitute.”
The poor hen spent all day searching and searching, but nothing came to. She demolished her
hut, and started searching in the roof grass, among the rubble of the walls, between the poles, in the ashes and even in the rubbish pit; but nothing was found.

The following day the vulture came to see the results of the searching. He found the hen still scratching the ground among the heap of dry grass and ox dung; but no razor was yet discovered. “I am very sorry dear hen,” said the vulture, “but now I cannot wait any longer without compensation for my razor. For today you must give me a chick. Tomorrow I will return and see what has happened in the meantime?”

So, the vulture flew away with a chick gripped within its talons under its breast. The following day he returned to the hen. She was still scratching the ground; but she couldn’t see the razor. Another chick went away with the vulture. And the same thing happened in the following days until today. That is the reason why the hen is always scratching the ground, and the vulture swooping on chicks even in our days. The hen is always searching for the razor, and the vulture compensating himself for its loss.

**OGRE/MONSTER NARRATIVES:**

Ogres are characters that are half human and half animal. They are super to change from human characters that have the ability to change from human beings to animals. They feed on human beings and have the ability to devour everything that comes to sight. In many of the stories, they appear in human gatherings as perfect human being for example, very handsome young men but late they old turn to ugly man-eating creatures.

Ogres are an embodiment of evil that successfully camouflages as good among human beings only to reveal itself later. Ogre stories serve to caution human beings to be careful and on the lookout for evil that could be camouflaged around us. Children were especially warned against strangers.

Example of a monster narrative

**THE GIRL AND HER MOTHER**

**NOTE: DO NOT COPY THE STORY IN YOUR EXERCISE BOOK. JUST READ**

Along time ago, there was a girl and her mother. The mother of this girl had been sick for along time. When the old men went to a diviner to get a diagnosis, they would co me back and say that they had been told to have a go at slaughtered. They would slaughter the goat, eat it but the mother would not have her wound healed. They would go, again and return to repo rt that the goat should be slaughtered. They would slaughter the goat, eat it but the mother would not get her wound healed.

One time, the girl followed them and hid herself. She, therefore heard that her mother would only be healed by the wool that is found between ogres, i.e., their wool that gets blown by the wind. “Now,” she said “I will go. I had better die and have my mother healed.” The girl then travelled and travelled and climbed up a mugumo tree. When she climbed the mugumo tree, she climbed higher and higher until she got to the top most part. She then goes to the wool that was on the ogre’s mugumo tree.

When she got it, the ogre heard the girl climbing down the tree. He told her: “I will cut you ng ’we ng ’we and cut you again ng’we ng’we.”

It is the ogre now telling the girl. And the girl started singing as follows:
Kamau, our Kamau, meet me, meet me.
I am coming from getting the wool, yes, the wool
Between the ogres, between the ogres and the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me
He says he will bite me.

Now the girl in only racing. And the small ogre called mono-eyed was behind her saying:
I will cut you ng’we ng’we
And cut you ng’we ng’we
The ogre would then sing: 
Kamau, our Kamau meet, meet me, meet me
I am coming from getting the wool, yes, the wool
Between the ogres, between the ogres
And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me
He says he will bite me.

The girl is still running and small ogre is still following her saying:
I will cut you ng’we ng’we
And again, cut you ng’we ng’we.

Now it would throw the knife. The knife would cut off tree branches because the girl is still racing. The girl would then sing
Kamau, our Kamau meet, meet me, meet me
I am coming from getting the wool, yes, the wool
Between the ogres, between the ogres
And the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me
He says he will bite me.

The girl then sings:
I will cut you ng’we ng’we
And again, cut you ng’we ng’we
The girl ran. She got near her home, Kamau began hearing echoes:
Kamau, our Kamau meet, meet me, and meet me
I am coming from getting the wool, yes, the wool
Between the ogres, between the ogres and the mono-eyed ogre is still behind me
He says he will bite me.

The ogre would then sing:
I will cut, cut you ng’we ng’we
And cut you again ng’we ng’we
When Kamau heard, he ran and climbed up a tree. Now when the ogre running after the girl passed through, Kamau speared it from up the tree. The ogre would pull the spear out and throw it away. The girl’s brother would get hold of the spear and spear the ogre again. When the ogre was speared and slashed with a sword it died. The girl went home and found her mother. She put wool in the fire. The mother gained her consciousness and asked for water to drink. The girl then put some of the wool in the wound and it healed. So, the mother recovered and the ogre died.
The girl stayed with her mother. The mother did not die and the girl did not die too.

DILEMMA STORIES:
A dilemma is a situation where a character is torn between two things and cannot decide what to do and the listener or reader is left to look for the solution. The two or more choices that fact the character or community are usually of a moral nature requiring critical judgement. The dilemma is meant to test our wit in critical issues of life, initiate debate among listeners or readers and to prepare us for such moments in life.

LEGENDS/HERO STORIES:
Legends are stories of human characters that lived in the past and exhibited extra – ordinary qualities. These characters are of super human nature and their exploits are of epic proportions. The belief among the respective communities is that these heroes are historical figures. What happens is that unique individuals are celebrated by society and with time, their prowess is exaggerated down the line to reach epic proportions.

There is a legend among the Kikuyu known as Wamugumo who was famous to eat volumes and volumes of food. A research I carried out on the same revealed that this man did exist like you and I; he was a very hardworking man and his food consumption was definitely commensurate with his volume of work. To ordinary mortals, this was too much food and his culinary tendencies spread from hill to hill with each making an addition to the abilities. Eventually what emerges today is a figure that could eat a whole will and ask for a second helping while performing work for a hundred ordinary men.

Legends provide us with heroes to copy or emulate for they excelled in various fields e.g. Wangu wa Makeri of the Agikuyu excelled in leadership which was previously a domain of men. Lwanda Magere of the Luo was ideal examples of bravery during the times of inter – clan and tribal wars.

Example of legend THE ARINKON (Maasai)

There were once a people known as the ilarinkon who were owners of the land that the Maasai occupied after their ascent from the Kerio escarpment. These people had a leader who was a mighty giant. Since he was very much feared, it was deemed wise to avoid him for fear that upon the slightest provocation; he might decide to wipe out the whole Maasai population. But the Arinkon remained resentful of the Maasai occupation, spreading over their land. They sent messages telling them to leave. But the Maasai were unwilling to leave the richly endowed country, having just recovered from the formidable ascent of the escarpment. At the same time, they were reluctant to fight people whose might they were unsure of, especially having observed signs of great physical might in their leader. They instead played tricks on them. They started by bribing them with gifts of cattle, sheep and various other items, with the hope of being permitted to stay on. But these people developed a habit of pestering the Maasai with the intention of getting them fed up, hoping to make them leave, either to wherever they had come from or elsewhere. One day, the Arinkon chief sent a message to the Maasai saying, ”We will let you stay if you bring warm frothing milk.” The Maasai said:” Very well, give us eight days and we will bring it,” Since the Maasai lived a long way off, the milk would without doubt have coo led before they go t to the Arinkon chief. As soon as they got ho me, the Maasai called a meeting. Close by the meeting place, there was a little boy y who was herding calves. He hears d what the elders were discussing and said to them:” Fathers, do not worry yourselves, go and drive away that cow whose calve is dead and when the enemies have assembly led, milk quickly and take the milk while it is still frothing.” The Maasai waited until the enemy had assembled, waiting to kill them, not expecting them
to produce the milk. They milked the cow and quickly took the milk. The Arinkon were staggered with shock. They immediately knew that they must have been tricked. The ruler said: “Very well, they have beaten us on this one.” He then told them to go and return on a certain day. On the arranged day, they returned to the Arinkon.

When the Maasai returned the Arinkon ruler said to them, “I now want you to bring me a sandal with hair on boy the sides.”

The Maasai were in a fix, for who had ever seen a hide which is hairy on both sides? As the saying goes, “Abilities and determination are no equal.” The Maasai said, “Very well.”

Back at the same meeting place, the young boy y was briefed on what had trans irked. He said quickly: “It is a simple matter, go and find a donkey and cut off one ear, make e a sandal and take it to him.”

The elders replied: “He has spoken the truth. “The Arinkon ruler received the sandal with great consternation for he had not expected the Maasai to obtain it at all.

The ruler said to the Maasai, “You may now go back and when I need so meting else, I shall send for you u.” As soon as the Maasai departed the Arinkon held counsel to figure out the most difficult let item to request the Maasai, so that failure to pro cure it woos ld. lead to a fight. When the AR ink n chief next sent for the Maasai, he said to them: “Go and fill up a guard and bring them to me when they are still ho piping about.” The elders went back to the clever boy, who had, by then been nicknamed ‘clever one’ and informed him of what they had been told. When he heard it, he said:” Oh! Fathers, this is difficult, but it is easy at the same time, but do not worry yourselves for we will find them fleas. Take hold of a donkey and cut off so me hair s from the mane and crush in a buffalo horn container and put them in a gourd. When you hand the Arinkon the gourd you must make sure you face the windward side.

The elders did as they were directed and soon delivered the `fleas. As they were handing over the gourd, they tilted it so that the hair s was blown about by the wind, creating an impression n that the fleas were dashing about. “There get hold of them!” the Arinkon shouted. But could they get hold of them when they had already dispersed? The Arinkon had never before been so flabbergasted!

Another day passed, and still the Arinkon did not know what to do with a people that were proving too smart for them. They again held counsel and when they next summoned the Maasai, their leader said to them: “I want you to bring me only two more things. Bring me a metal toothbrush and find me a way that leads to heaven.” The Maasai drew their hands to their mouths in amazement. They requested him to give them three months to find those items. When they returned home, they held a meeting that lasted the whole day.

When the clever boy was informed of what had been requested, he said: “Go and brain me a club and I will show you how to make a metal toothbrush.” They went in search of it.

Several clubs were taken to the boy, but each time he tried to use one its wo old break. Many clubs got broken. Eventually, he said to the elders: “Go to a place called Oletukat and get me a club from the ologol- tim tree, whose stem had been bitten off by the rhinoceros and the water has gone down to the roots.” After a long search, the tree was found, uprooted and taken to the boy. When he tried it, it did not break? He said. “Now let us go to the Arinkon where I will tell you of the metal toothbrush.” At the first flicker of dawn, the people started o ff to the enemy country. The boy was among the rest with his club tucked under his armpit. They found the Arinkon having gathered to receive what was brought. The meeting was opened with the exchange of news. What the boy was going to do was by now obvious to the Maasai. The father of the clever boy stood up and said: There he is in a crouching position with the notorious one**whose shaft is black and who see organs of sight
detect us. If you are for the affirmative confirm so we can fold the knee and approach above the organs that is bent so that the brain may pull out through ugh the nostrils. If you are for the negative confirm so that we beat a retreat.” The Arinkon did not understand what was said, and started asking themselves;” What are these people saying?” The elder answered: “We have simply said that we have brought the metal toothbrush……” the boy stood up as though he was going to hand over the toothbrush. He hit the Arinkon chief and the eyes popped out and the brain oozed out through the nostrils. While they were being beaten, the Arinkon were being told “Arinkon, here, have what you have always sought.” That was when the Arinkon race has always sought” originated.

MYTHS
Myths are creation stories that trace the origin of communities and the universe in general as having come through supernatural powers.

The difference between myths and legends is that myths involve the activities of the supernatural or gods while legends are main about human beings but who have super – human qualities.

The function of myths is to explain the origin of mankind and the Bio-physical universe. Thus, myths validate social systems and authority and educate or socialize community members. Each community has its myth though quite a number seem to be similar.

Example of a Myth

THE ORIGIN OF DEATH (Kalenjin)
According to the Kalenjin, the number of hunters in their land had increased so much that the wild animals Where been wiped out. These hunters decided to hunt all the animals of the plain. One day one of the hunters stopped to drink from a pool. As he was drinking from the pool, he noticed a reflection in the water. The reflection was very beautiful. It was a bird that looked like a co ck. The feathers were very beautiful but instead of having two legs this bird had four. The head was large and had a blue comb. The hunter wondered what this bird was. He had never seen such a creature in all his life. He thought he was dreaming. He finished drinking water and rose to go, but then he realized that the creature was a reality. The creature moved and watched the hunter. The hunter in turn watched the creature. Certainly, the creature was strange. The hunter decided to aim an arrow at it. “Perhaps the meat of the unknown creature was very sweet,” he thought as he released the arrow.

After the strange creature fell dead, there followed rain that was heavier that had ever been known before. The rain was full of thunder and lightning. Nobody knows where the hunter went. All that is known is that he never returned to his family. And from that day of heavy rain, people began to sleep forever.

As the Kalenjin say, thunder got very angry at the shooting of his innocent son, and so he sent heavy rain and death as punishment to people. Before the heavy rain, people had slept and woken up as usual. Thus, the long sleep known as death was caused by the hunter’s curiosity.

Note
This story attempts to explain the origin of death, an important phenomenon. It is delivered in a serious tone and involves powerful super natural being, thunder.

OTHER STORIES:

a) FABLES.
This is a story that involves the use of animals as the main character with the aim of delivering a moral message. There is a story about the hyena that went out looking for food during famine after many days of starvation he came across a carcass and ate and ate until he died. This story is neither of the six categories above it is fable.

b) **HUMAN TALES.**
These are the stories where human beings are the main character. Sometimes they may interact with animals but it is they (men) who are his focus of the story. We have other stories about girls seeking beauty and becoming jealous of the most beautiful one among them whom the unsuccessfully try to eliminate leading to their punishments. Such is a human tale.

c) **STORIES ABOUT SPIRIT**
we also have stories that highlight the work of spirits among men; the way they live among men influence and control the lives men and generally their existence in the human world.

**STYLE IN ORAL NARRATIVES**

Oral narratives employ certain feature forms or qualities to deliver their message. Style has to do with the way language is fashioned or used artistically to communicate. These features of styles include:

1. **OPENING FORMULAE**
   this is when the story begins with word; a long time ago, Long long time ago or once a upon a time.
   When a story begins this way, it achieves certain effects or functions including.
   i. It marks the beginning of the story.
   ii. The person who utters those words is immediately identified as the narrator.
   iii. These words call for attention from the audience as the story has started.
   iv. The words clearly indicate that we are moving away from the natural world and entering the fictional world of the narrator since we are dealing with long time – ago the infinite past.
   NB: However not all stories start with the opening formulae myths and legend for instance do not start with it for they are believed to be true by their respective communities.

2. **CLOSING FORMULAE**
This is when the story ends with the words; there ends my story and that is my story of similar words.
This kind of ending has its effects or functions.
   i. It marks the end of the story.
   ii. Since the story has ended the audience is removed from the narrative fiction world and released from concentration.
   iii. The audience is also free to participate by reflecting on the story or asking questions.
   iv. The present narrator makes way for another narrator or presentation
3. **TIMELESSNESS**
The time when the events of the narrative took place is not specified. The story is said to take place. Long time ago, one day, at that time, those days etc.

Timelessness enhances the fictional quality of the narrative as there is no reference time. The story becomes believable since it did not take place yesterday but infinite past when those things were possible. So, the narrative becomes time in the content of the time.

4. **FANTASY.**
This refers to elements, situations, events or happenings in the story that are impossible in ordinary day life. Fantasy is the opposite of reality. Example of such includes characters dying and coming back to life. Animals changing into human beings and vice versa: plants and the inanimate objects acquiring human nature etc.

However, the use of the animal characters not fantasy for it is nature of oral narratives. Animals are characters just like human beings.

Fantasy is a source of humour in the story. It also helps to enhance plots by providing for the impossible.

5. **PERSONIFICATION/USE OF ANIMAL CHARACTERS**
Personification goes beyond the use of animal characters as other forms of life may be given human attributes as well. The use of animal characters is almost synonymous with oral narratives animals are indeed the characters in the narrative.

Why are animals’ characters used in the oral narratives?

(i) To create humour: - the imagination of why the animals are able to do is a great source of humour.
(ii) To achieve in direct castigation or to avoid directly attacking human beings. This is the principle purpose so as to make human beings see their folly in behaving as those animals do.
(iii) This leads to passing a moral message. Animals are used to teach us.
(iv) The universal nature of animals helps to universalize the issue at hand. The use of certain objects may tend to localize the message but animals have a universe appeal and their use send the message across various divides.

6. **REPETITION:**
Words or phrases may be repeated in a story. A common repetition is they went and went, they worked and worked, they ate and ate.

Such repetition serves the following functions:

i. It creates some rhythm or regularity.
ii. It is a source of humour.
iii. It emphasizes or stresses what is being talked about.
iv. It may serve to show a sense of continuation or cumulative e.g. They walked and walked indicates they walked for a long time and covered a long distance.
v. Repetition may also indicate a tone or set of moods of the narrative. When a sad phrase is repeated severally, it creates the mood of sadness.

7. **RHETORICAL QUESTIONS**
This is a question asked but whose answer is not provided or needed rather it is left up to the audience to think in search of the answer.

The function of such a song includes: -

i. It entertains the audience and breaks the monopoly of narration. The song provides a good opportunity for the audience to participate in the narration.
ii. It enhances plot development by prolonging the story and joining up different episode in the story.

iii. It captures the mood of the moment as it can express joy or sadness. This cases or relief tension in the story.

iv. A song creates suspense in the story and can be used to anticipate the climax of the story.

v. A song may become a source of communication between characters in the song. E.g. a bird may deliver a message in a song. A song may help character development when it exposes aspect of character.

8. DIALOGUE:
This refers to a conversation between two or more characters in the story. Dialogue enhances plot development it may help in character exposition and bring realism into the story.

9. HUMOUR/COMIC RELIEF
Some elements of a story elicit light moments and laughter from the audience. Humour helps create interest in the audience and keep them glued to the story. Humour also breaks away tension among the audience.

10. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE/FIGURES OF SPEECH.
These like imagery, refer in a narrow sense to the use of simile and metaphors. Similes are images that directly compare two or more things using words like as, than: as black as charcoal, black like coal, black than darkness itself. A metaphor is a comparison in which one thing is called another. She is peacock.
These comparisons help to create a mental image of what is being described by making what is abstract become concrete. Some comparisons can be source of humour. Note that figurative language or imagery can broadly include similes, metaphors, personification, symbolism and exaggerations.

11. EXAGGERATION/HYPERBOLE:
Some elements of reality are deliberated blown out of proportion such that they look large than life. This creates humour and occasions help us to visualize issues through magnifying them.

12. SYMBOLISM.
This refers to the use of a person, animal or object to represent an ideal or something else. In life, we have come to see a cross as a symbol of Christianity. Some animals also seem to carry a certain idea e.g. a dove usually represents peace.
However, students should be cautioned against symbol hunting, the tendency to read symbols behind everything they read.

13. SUSPENSE
Like humour, it is both a style and effect of other style. Suspense is a state of poised anticipation or expectation. It arises from delayed activities that we look forward to a successful story should carry suspense throughout the story so as to whet the appetite of the audience as they eagerly look forward to what happens next.

14. USE OF PROVERBS AND WISE SAYING.
Proverbs can be used in oral narrative to convey a message. They carry both literal and metaphorical interpretations.
15. **IRONY**
This refers to a deliberate misrepresentation of the truth. A mode of communication where meaning is expressed through deliberately expressing the opposite of what is intended in the hope that the audience (or reader) will decipher the true meaning it can thus be called honest deception. Irony also accrues from situations where what happens is the opposite of what seemed obvious. In a story a jealous step – mother puts poison in food expecting to kill a step-son but it is an ironic twist, the food is eaten by her own son who dies.

16. **IDEOPHONES:**
These are sound produced by man, Animals and nature that have been coded into words. The barking of the Dog gugugu! the hissing of the snake ssssh! mooing of the cow Moooh! Laugh, Kwa! Kwa! Kwa! Or hehehe! Or Waaah!
To help create realism in the story, break monotony of story and may be a source of humour.

17. **ONOMATOPOEIA**
Certain words or expressions are derived from their natural sound or ideophones. Consider the following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONOMATOPOEIA</th>
<th>IDEOPHONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moo</td>
<td>Moooh! Moooh! Moooh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mew/miaow</td>
<td>Miaoh! Miaoh! Miaoh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howl</td>
<td>Hooo! Hooo! Hooo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bang</td>
<td>Ba! Ba! Ba!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croak</td>
<td>Croo! Croo! Croo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>Zoo! Zoo! Zoo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>Ngo! Ngo! Ngo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiss Boom</td>
<td>Ssssssh! Ssssssh! Ssssssh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hum</td>
<td>Booo! Booo! Booo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mmmm! Mmmm! Mmmm!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LESSONS LEARNT FROM NARRATIVES**
Each moral oral narrative is meant to pass a moral message to the audience. In fact, at the end of the narrative the narrator is supposed to lead the group into deducing the moral lessons of the narrative A moral lesson has a given structure.

1. It is supposed to be positive when we want to teach something, we put it positively as opposed to commandments that is put negatively. We should not .......... (commandments not a moral lesson)

2. A moral lesson should imply consequences. These consequences are either a reward or punishment. This means that when we advise we tell what to do and the benefits or the repercussions of doing so. E.g. we should be careful in choosing our friends for some can be deceitful and mislead. The most ideal moral lesson is the fourth commandments. Unlike other commandments that are negative and do not imply consequence. It is well formulated positively and with consequences for instance obey your father and mother so that your days on earth may increase.
3. After stating a moral lesson, it should be explained in the context of the narrative. This means that the relevance of moral lesson to the narrative must be traced. In a very simple language. The moral should be illustrated from the story. This is because the moral is derived from the story. Sometimes a proverb can capture a moral lesson such a proverb must be both positive and implying a consequence. Examples of such proverbs includes:
   a) Pride comes before a fall.
   b) Mtaka yote hukosa yote. (He who desires all loses all)
   c) Unity is strength.
   d) Mtegemea cha nduguye hufa maskini (whoever relies on his siblings dies poor).
However, it is important to know that each story has its own moral lessons and there are no moral lessons that can apply to all stories

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
These are activities through which a community meets its basic needs and wants as you listen to or read a story you notice activities that are geared towards meeting the needs and wants of the community. They may include cultivation of crops, keeping of livestock, hunting, gathering, fishing, blacksmithing, trade or commerce wearing etc.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
This is the people’s way of life and as we listen to or read a story, we get to see trends of a community set up in terms of religion rites of passage, division of labour, mode governance. Food, housing, education, solid set-ups, celebrations and festivals etc.