



La-Net

THA 201

**AFRICAN DRAMA
AND THEATRE IN
THE COLONIAL ERA**



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COURSE TITLE : African Drama And Theatre In The Colonial Era

COURSE CODE THA 201

COURSE UNITS 3

Series 1: Colonialism and the Transformation of African Theatre

Series 2: Indigenous Theatrical Activities in the Colonial Era

Series 3: Pioneers of African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Period

Series 4: Colonial Institutions and Their Influence on African Drama

Series 5: Anti-Colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa

1.1: Colonialism and Its Disruptive Role in African Theatre

- Meaning and context of colonialism in Africa
- Disruptive effects of colonialism on indigenous drama and performance traditions

2.1 : The Colonial Office and Missionary Influence on African Drama

- Role of the colonial office in shaping theatre practices
- Missionary interventions and their impact on African performance traditions

3.1: Evolution of Drama Forms in the Colonial Period

- Emergence of modernism in colonial theatre
- Development of physical theatre and new performance approaches

4.1: Plays and Themes of the Colonial Era

- Reading and analysis of plays written during or about the colonial era
- Themes of insurgency and resistance against colonial administration



Introduction

Colonialism left a profound mark on African societies, reshaping cultural expressions and disrupting indigenous traditions. Theatre, which had long served as a medium of storytelling, ritual, and community bonding, was particularly affected. The colonial encounter introduced new influences, restricted certain practices, and redirected the course of African drama. This Series is therefore crucial, as it sets the foundation for understanding how colonialism transformed African theatre and why these changes remain significant in the study of African drama today.

The aim of this Series is to examine the disruptive role of colonialism on African theatre and to analyse how colonial institutions and missionary activities influenced drama and performance. It also seeks to highlight the evolving forms of theatre during the colonial period and the themes reflected in plays of the era.

We shall commence this Series by exploring colonialism and its disruptive role in African theatre. Next, we will consider the influence of the colonial office and missionaries on drama and performance traditions. Following that, we will examine the evolution of drama forms in the colonial period, focusing on modernism and physical theatre. Finally, we will wrap up by analysing plays and themes of the colonial era, including those that addressed insurgency and resistance against colonial administration.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 1.1 define colonialism in the African context,

SLO 1.2 explain the disruptive role of colonialism in African theatre,

SLO 1.3 analyse how the colonial office influenced drama and performance practices,

SLO 1.4 evaluate the impact of missionary interventions on indigenous theatrical traditions,

SLO 1.5 describe the evolution of drama forms in the colonial period, and

SLO 1.6 interpret plays of the colonial era by identifying themes of insurgency and resistance.



1.1 Colonialism And Its Disruptive Role In African Theatre

Colonialism refers to the political, economic, and cultural domination of one nation over another, often involving the imposition of foreign systems and values. In Africa, colonialism disrupted indigenous traditions, including theatre, which is defined as a form of performance that combines storytelling, ritual, music, and dance to communicate cultural values and social messages. African theatre had long been rooted in community life, serving as a medium for education, entertainment, and spiritual expression. However, colonial rule introduced new structures that undermined these practices, replacing them with Western models of performance and restricting indigenous creativity.

Fill in the blank: Colonialism refers to the _____, economic, and cultural domination of one nation over another.

1.1.1 Meaning and context of colonialism in Africa

Colonialism in Africa was not only a political system but also a cultural project. European powers sought to reshape African societies by imposing their languages, religions, and educational systems. This had a direct impact on theatre, as indigenous forms were often dismissed as primitive or pagan. Instead, colonial authorities promoted Western-style drama, which emphasised scripted plays, proscenium stages, and individual actors rather than communal participation.



Plate 2.4 Festivals in modern society

Figure 1.1 Colonialism as a disruptive force in African theatre



1.1.2 Disruptive effects of colonialism on indigenous drama and performance traditions

The disruptive effects of colonialism on African theatre were profound. Indigenous performance traditions, defined as community-based practices involving music, dance, storytelling, and ritual, were often suppressed or rebranded to fit colonial expectations. Festivals and rituals that once celebrated communal identity were discouraged, while missionary schools introduced plays with Christian themes to replace traditional narratives. This shift weakened the role of theatre as a collective cultural expression and redirected it towards serving colonial interests.

Fill in the blank: Indigenous performance traditions in Africa involved music, dance, storytelling, and _____.

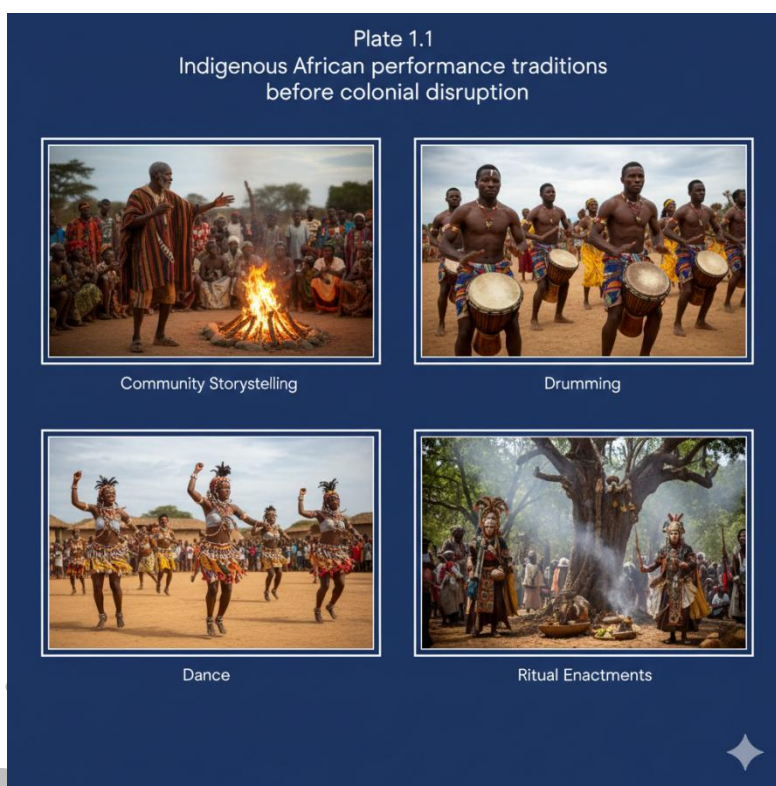


Plate 1.1 Indigenous African performance traditions before colonial disruption

Pilot Questions [Part 1]

1. Define colonialism in the African context.
2. State two ways colonialism disrupted indigenous theatre.
3. What is theatre, and how was it traditionally practised in African societies?
4. Explain the role of performance traditions in African communities before colonialism.



5. Give one example of how missionaries influenced African theatre during the colonial era.

1.2 The Colonial Office And Missionary Influence On African Drama

Colonial institutions played a decisive role in reshaping African theatre. The colonial office, defined as the administrative body responsible for implementing colonial policies, often sought to regulate cultural activities to align with European values. Theatre was seen as a tool for social control, and performances were encouraged only when they promoted colonial ideals such as obedience, Christianity, and Western civilisation. This meant that indigenous forms of drama were either suppressed or restructured to fit colonial expectations.

Fill in the blank: The colonial office was the administrative body responsible for implementing _____ policies in Africa.

1.2.1 Role of the colonial office in shaping theatre practices

The colonial office influenced theatre by introducing Western-style drama into schools and public institutions. Plays were often staged to celebrate colonial achievements or to reinforce loyalty to the empire. Indigenous performances that carried political or spiritual significance were discouraged, as they were perceived as threats to colonial authority. This intervention shifted theatre from being a communal cultural practice to a regulated activity serving colonial interests.

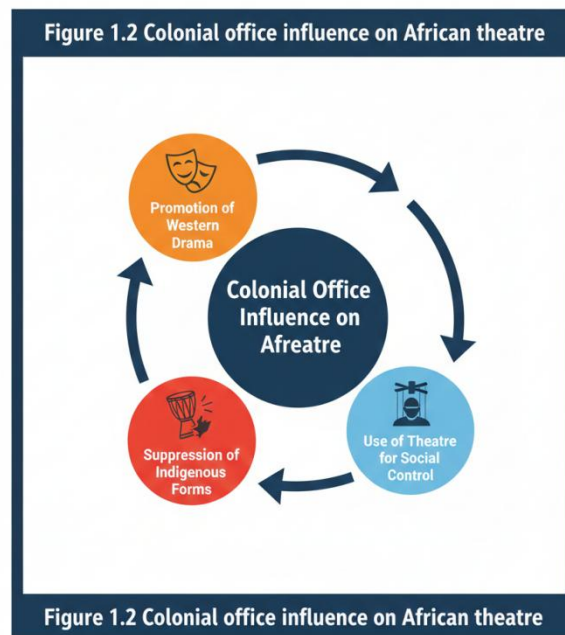


Figure 1.2 Colonial office influence on African theatre



1.2.2 Missionary interventions and their impact on African performance traditions

Missionaries also played a significant role in transforming African theatre. Missionary schools introduced Christian drama, defined as plays with biblical themes and moral lessons, to replace indigenous storytelling and ritual performances. While these plays provided new opportunities for literacy and performance, they often undermined traditional values by labelling indigenous practices as pagan or immoral. Over time, missionary drama became a dominant form in many communities, reshaping the cultural landscape and limiting the scope of African theatre.

Fill in the blank: Missionary schools introduced _____ drama to replace indigenous storytelling and ritual performances.

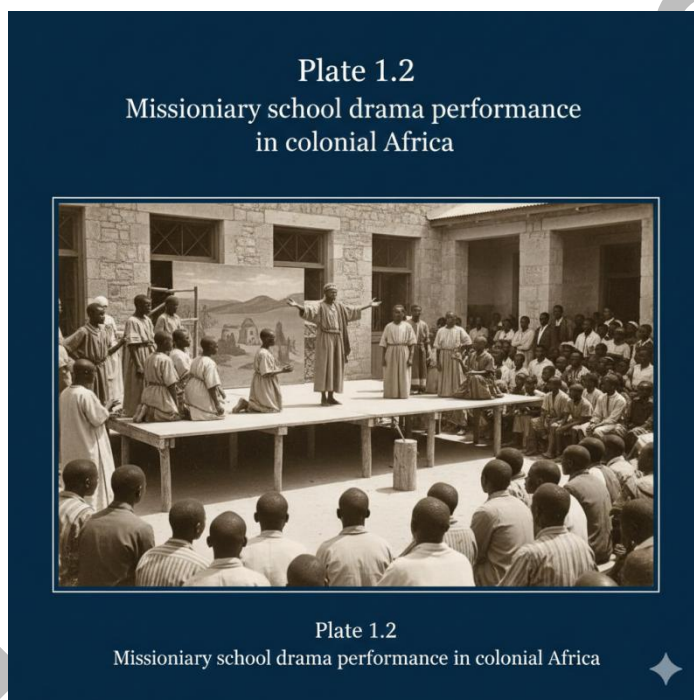


Plate 1.2 Missionary school drama performance in colonial Africa

Pilot Questions [Part 2]

1. What was the role of the colonial office in shaping African theatre?
2. State one way the colonial office used theatre for social control.
3. Define Christian drama as introduced by missionaries.
4. How did missionary interventions affect indigenous performance traditions?
5. Give one example of how colonial institutions restricted African theatre.



1.3 Evolution Of Drama Forms In The Colonial Period

Colonialism did not only suppress indigenous theatre, it also gave rise to new forms of drama. The encounter between African traditions and European influences created a hybrid space where modernism, defined as a cultural movement that emphasised innovation and departure from tradition, began to shape theatrical practices. African playwrights and performers experimented with new techniques, blending Western dramatic structures with local themes. This evolution marked a turning point in African theatre, as it moved from purely communal performances to more formalised productions.

Fill in the blank: Modernism in theatre refers to a cultural movement that emphasised _____ and departure from tradition.

1.3.1 Emergence of modernism in colonial theatre

Modernism in African theatre during the colonial era was characterised by the adoption of scripted plays, the use of proscenium stages, and the introduction of individual actors rather than collective storytelling. While these innovations reflected European influence, African dramatists adapted them to express local realities. For example, plays began to address issues such as cultural identity, colonial oppression, and social change. This blending of styles created a distinctive form of African modernist theatre.

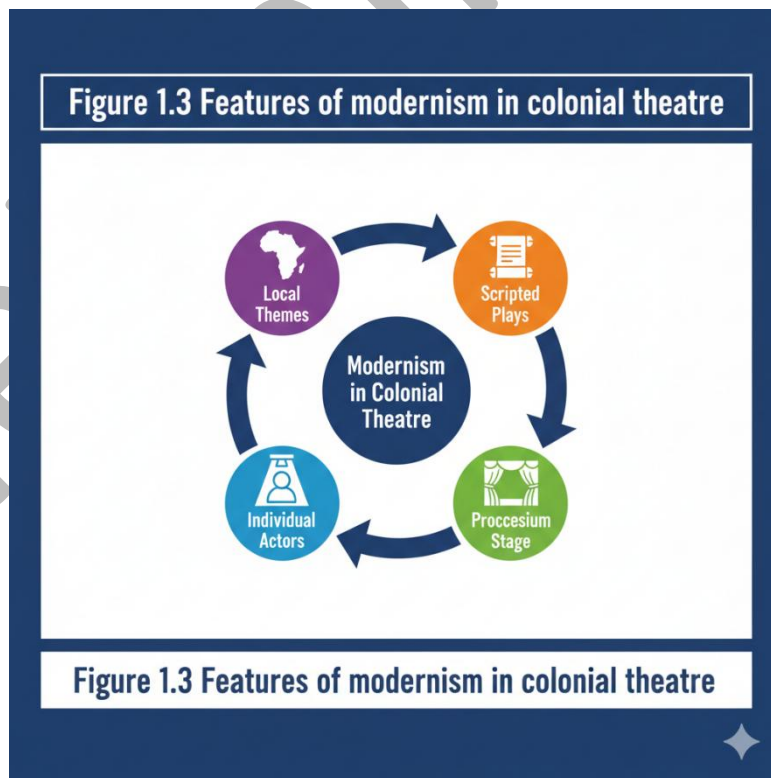


Figure 1.3 Features of modernism in colonial theatre

1.3.2 Development of physical theatre and new performance approaches

Another significant development was the rise of physical theatre, defined as a style of performance that relies on movement, gesture, and the body rather than spoken dialogue. Physical theatre allowed African performers to retain elements of dance and ritual while adapting to colonial restrictions. It became a creative way to express resistance, cultural identity, and communal values without relying solely on words. This form of theatre bridged the gap between traditional performance and modern drama, ensuring that African theatre retained its unique vibrancy.

Fill in the blank: Physical theatre is a style of performance that relies on _____, gesture, and the body rather than spoken dialogue.

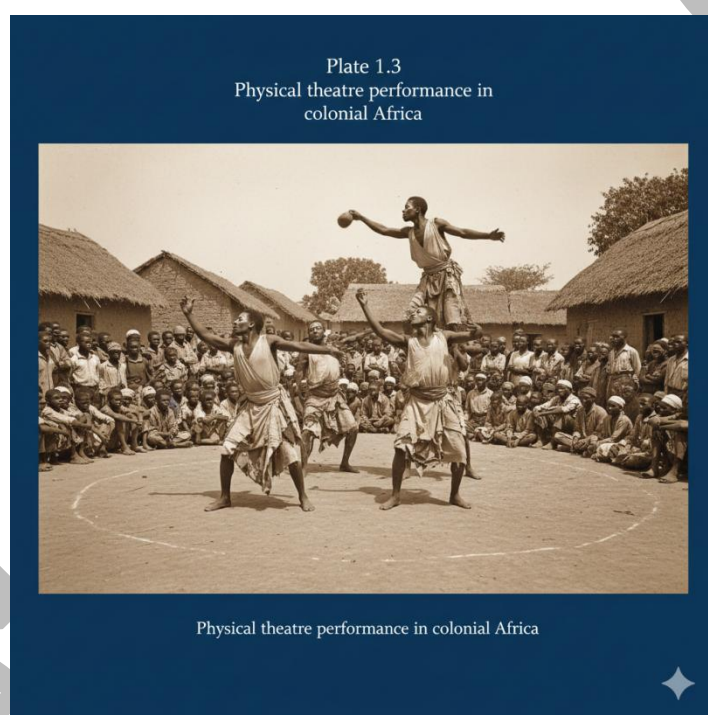


Plate 1.3 Physical theatre performance in colonial Africa

Pilot Questions [Part 3]

1. Define modernism in the context of colonial African theatre.
2. State two features of modernist theatre during the colonial era.
3. What is physical theatre, and how did it develop in colonial Africa?



4. Explain how African dramatists adapted Western forms to local realities.
5. Give one example of how physical theatre preserved traditional elements in African performance.

1.4 Plays And Themes Of The Colonial Era

The colonial period produced a range of plays that reflected both the influence of European dramatic traditions and the resilience of African cultural identity. These plays often addressed issues of domination, cultural suppression, and the struggle for freedom. By examining them, we gain insight into how African dramatists used theatre as a platform to critique colonial authority and to inspire resistance.

Fill in the blank: Plays of the colonial era often addressed issues of domination, cultural suppression, and the struggle for _____.

1.4.1 Reading and analysis of plays written during or about the colonial era

Plays written during the colonial era frequently adopted Western dramatic structures but infused them with African themes. Writers such as Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo created works that blended European techniques with indigenous storytelling, music, and dance. These plays served as cultural documents, preserving African identity while simultaneously challenging colonial narratives. Reading and analysing these texts allows us to see how African dramatists negotiated the tension between imposed forms and local traditions.



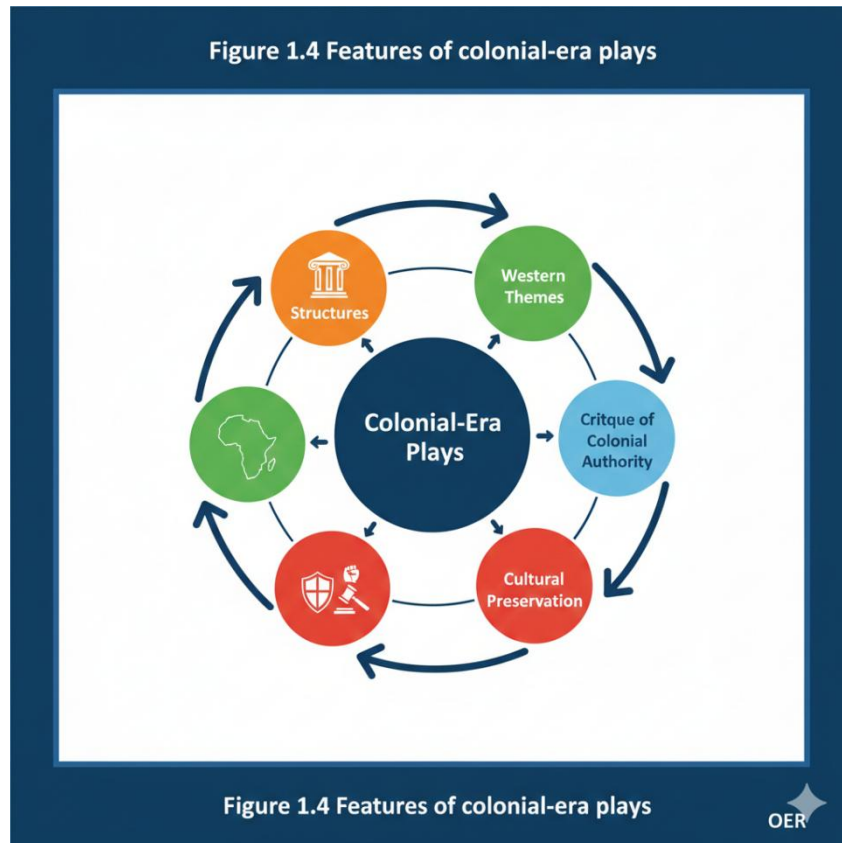


Figure 1.4 Features of colonial-era plays

1.4.2 Themes of insurgency and resistance against colonial administration

A defining characteristic of colonial-era drama was its focus on insurgency, defined as organised resistance against authority, and resistance, which refers to acts of defiance against oppression. Many plays highlighted the injustices of colonial rule, portraying African heroes who stood against exploitation and cultural erasure. These themes resonated strongly with audiences, reinforcing theatre's role as a tool for political mobilisation and cultural survival.

Fill in the blank: A defining characteristic of colonial-era drama was its focus on insurgency and _____ against colonial administration.



Plate 1.4
Colonial-era play performance with
themes of resistance



Plate 1.4
Colonial-era play performance with themes of resistance



Plate 1.4 Colonial-era play performance with themes of resistance

Pilot Questions [Part 4]

1. What issues were commonly addressed in plays of the colonial era?
2. Name one African playwright who produced works during the colonial period.
3. How did African dramatists blend Western structures with indigenous traditions?
4. Define insurgency in the context of colonial-era drama.
5. State one way plays of the colonial era inspired resistance against colonial authority.



Series Summary

This Series has explored how colonialism reshaped African theatre, highlighting its disruptive impact on indigenous traditions and the ways in which colonial institutions redirected cultural expression. Its purpose was to provide you with a foundation for understanding the transformation of African drama during the colonial period, showing how theatre became both a site of suppression and a platform for resistance.

We began by examining colonialism and its disruptive role in African theatre, then considered the influence of the colonial office and missionaries on drama and performance. Following that, we analysed the evolution of drama forms in the colonial period, focusing on modernism and physical theatre. Finally, we studied plays of the colonial era, paying attention to themes of insurgency and resistance. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define colonialism and its impact on theatre, analyse the role of colonial institutions, evaluate missionary interventions, describe evolving drama forms, and interpret plays that reflected resistance against colonial authority.

Glossary of Terms

Colonial office: The administrative body responsible for implementing colonial policies, including the regulation of cultural and theatrical practices in Africa.

Colonialism: The political, economic, and cultural domination of one nation over another, often involving the imposition of foreign systems and values.

Christian drama: Plays introduced by missionaries that used biblical themes and moral lessons to replace indigenous storytelling and ritual performances.

Insurgency: Organised resistance against authority, often expressed in colonial-era plays as opposition to colonial rule.

Modernism: A cultural movement in theatre that emphasised innovation and departure from tradition, often adopting scripted plays, proscenium stages, and individual actors.

Performance traditions: Community-based practices involving music, dance, storytelling, and ritual, which were central to African theatre before colonial disruption.

Physical theatre: A style of performance that relies on movement, gesture, and the body rather than spoken dialogue, often used to preserve traditional elements under colonial restrictions.

Resistance: Acts of defiance against oppression, frequently portrayed in colonial-era plays as challenges to colonial authority and cultural suppression.

Theatre: A form of performance that combines storytelling, ritual, music, and dance to communicate cultural values and social messages within a community.



Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. Colonialism in Africa can best be defined as the _____, economic, and cultural domination of one nation over another.

- A. social
- B. political
- C. artistic
- D. ceremonial

(Linked to SLO 1.1)

2. The _____ introduced Western-style drama into schools and public institutions.

- A. traditional council
- B. colonial office
- C. artisan guild
- D. village assembly

(Linked to SLO 1.2)

3. Missionary schools replaced indigenous storytelling with plays that emphasised _____ themes.

- A. commercial



B. secular

C. Christian

D. entertainment

(Linked to SLO 1.3)

4. Modernism in colonial African theatre was characterised by the adoption of _____ plays and proscenium stages.

A. ritualistic

B. communal

C. improvised

D. scripted

(Linked to SLO 1.4)

5. Plays of the colonial era often highlighted themes of _____ and resistance against colonial authority.

A. celebration

B. neutrality

C. insurgency

D. diplomacy

(Linked to SLO 1.5)

Short-Answer Questions



6. Define theatre in the African context before colonial disruption. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Explain one way the colonial office used theatre for social control. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. What is physical theatre, and why was it significant during the colonial period? (Linked to SLO 1.4)
9. Name one African playwright whose works reflected resistance against colonial rule. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
10. State one impact of missionary interventions on indigenous performance traditions. (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse how colonialism disrupted indigenous performance traditions and redirected African theatre. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
12. Evaluate the influence of colonial institutions on the development of African drama. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
13. Describe the evolution of drama forms in the colonial period, highlighting modernism and physical theatre. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
14. Interpret the themes of insurgency and resistance in colonial-era plays, explaining their relevance to African audiences. (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions

Objective Questions

1. B. Political
2. B. Colonial office
3. C. Christian
4. D. Scripted
5. C. Insurgency

Short-Answer Questions

6. Theatre in Africa before colonial disruption was a communal performance combining storytelling, ritual, music, and dance to communicate cultural values and social messages.



7. The colonial office used theatre to promote loyalty to the empire and discourage indigenous practices by staging plays that celebrated colonial achievements.
8. Physical theatre is a style of performance that relies on movement, gesture, and the body rather than spoken dialogue. It was significant because it preserved traditional elements while adapting to colonial restrictions.
9. Hubert Ogunde is one example of an African playwright whose works reflected resistance against colonial rule.
10. Missionary interventions replaced indigenous storytelling and rituals with Christian drama, weakening traditional cultural practices.

Long-Answer Questions

11. Basic response: Colonialism disrupted indigenous performance traditions by suppressing rituals, festivals, and storytelling, labelling them as primitive or pagan. Theatre was redirected towards Western-style drama, which emphasised scripted plays and individual actors.

Value-added response: Beyond suppression, colonialism created hybrid forms where African dramatists adapted Western techniques to local realities. This disruption also sparked creativity, as theatre became a tool for cultural preservation and political resistance.

12. Basic response: The colonial office promoted Western drama in schools and institutions, while missionaries introduced Christian plays to replace indigenous traditions. Together, they reshaped African theatre to serve colonial interests.

Value-added response: Their combined influence not only restricted indigenous practices but also inadvertently provided African dramatists with new tools. Writers later used these forms to critique colonial authority and inspire resistance, showing how imposed structures were creatively reappropriated.

13. Basic response: Drama evolved during the colonial period through modernism, which introduced scripted plays and proscenium stages, and physical theatre, which relied on movement and gesture.

Value-added response: This evolution reflected both colonial influence and African resilience. Modernism allowed dramatists to address issues of identity and oppression, while physical theatre preserved communal traditions. Together, they created a distinctive African theatrical style that bridged tradition and modernity.

14. Basic response: Plays of the colonial era often portrayed insurgency and resistance, highlighting African heroes who defied colonial authority. These themes resonated with audiences by reinforcing cultural identity and political mobilisation.



Value-added response: Beyond entertainment, these plays functioned as cultural manifestos. They educated audiences about colonial injustices, inspired collective action, and laid the groundwork for postcolonial theatre movements that continued to challenge oppression and celebrate African heritage.

Answers to Pilot Questions 1

Part 1.1

1. Colonialism in the African context refers to the political, economic, and cultural domination of African societies by European powers, involving the imposition of foreign systems and values.
2. Colonialism disrupted indigenous theatre by suppressing traditional rituals and storytelling practices, and by replacing communal performance forms with Western-style scripted drama.
3. Theatre was traditionally practised as a communal performance combining storytelling, ritual, music, and dance to communicate cultural values and social messages.
4. Performance traditions played a central role in educating community members, preserving cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and expressing spiritual beliefs.
5. Missionaries influenced African theatre by introducing Christian drama in schools to replace indigenous storytelling and ritual performances.

Part 1.2

1. The colonial office shaped African theatre by regulating performances and promoting Western-style drama in schools and public institutions.
2. One way the colonial office used theatre for social control was by staging plays that reinforced loyalty to the empire and promoted colonial ideals.



3. Christian drama refers to plays introduced by missionaries that used biblical themes and moral lessons to replace indigenous narratives.
4. Missionary interventions weakened indigenous traditions by labelling them as pagan and discouraging ritual performances.
5. Colonial institutions restricted African theatre by suppressing performances that carried political or spiritual significance.

Part 1.3

1. Modernism in colonial African theatre refers to a cultural movement that emphasised innovation and departure from traditional communal forms of performance.
2. Two features of modernist theatre during the colonial era were scripted plays and the use of proscenium stages.
3. Physical theatre is a style of performance that relies on movement, gesture, and the body rather than spoken dialogue. It developed as a way to retain traditional elements under colonial restrictions.
4. African dramatists adapted Western forms by blending European dramatic structures with local themes, music, and cultural realities.
5. Physical theatre preserved traditional elements such as dance, ritual movement, and communal expression.

Part 1.4

1. Plays of the colonial era commonly addressed domination, cultural suppression, and the struggle for freedom.



2. Hubert Ogunde is one African playwright who produced works during the colonial period.
3. African dramatists blended Western dramatic structures with indigenous storytelling, music, and dance traditions.
4. Insurgency refers to organised resistance against authority, particularly opposition to colonial rule.
5. Plays inspired resistance by portraying African heroes who challenged colonial authority and defended cultural identity.

References and Attributions 1

Course Content References

- THA 201 Course Outline: African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Era (institutional course document).
- General cultural and historical context adapted from open educational resources on African theatre and colonial studies.

Illustrations

- Figure 1.1: Colonialism as a disruptive force in African theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing colonialism as a disruptive force in African theatre: political domination, cultural suppression, Western drama introduction, restriction of indigenous practices.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonialism impact on African theatre diagram OER”.

- Plate 1.1: Indigenous African performance traditions before colonial disruption

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing indigenous African performance traditions: community storytelling, drumming, dance, ritual enactments.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “indigenous African performance traditions OER image”.

- Figure 1.2: Colonial office influence on African theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing colonial office influence on African theatre: Western drama promotion, suppression of indigenous forms, theatre as social control.” Platform: AI illustration tool.



Suggested OER search string: “colonial office influence African theatre diagram OER”.

- Plate 1.2: Missionary school drama performance in colonial Africa

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing missionary school drama performance in colonial Africa: students acting biblical scenes on stage.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “missionary school drama colonial Africa OER image”.

- Figure 1.3: Features of modernism in colonial theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing features of modernism in colonial theatre: scripted plays, proscenium stage, individual actors, local themes.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “modernism colonial African theatre diagram OER”.

- Plate 1.3: Physical theatre performance in colonial Africa

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing physical theatre performance in colonial Africa: actors using movement and gesture to convey meaning.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “physical theatre colonial Africa OER image”.

- Figure 1.4: Features of colonial-era plays

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing features of colonial-era plays: Western structures, African themes, cultural preservation, critique of colonial authority.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial era African plays diagram OER”.

- Plate 1.4: Colonial-era play performance with themes of resistance

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing colonial-era play performance with themes of resistance: actors portraying African heroes confronting colonial authority.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial era African theatre resistance OER image”.

Referencing Style

All references and attributions have been presented in a simplified institutional style, consistent with APA principles for clarity and learner accessibility. Each illustration is either suggested as AI-generated with prompts provided, or linked to potential OER sources for open access learning materials.



Series 2: Indigenous Theatrical Activities in the Colonial Era

2.1 Indigenous Theatre in Churches

- Use of church spaces for performance
- Influence of religious practices on theatrical forms

2.2 Concert Party Bands and Popular Entertainment

- Origins and development of concert party bands
- Role of music and humour in colonial-era entertainment

2.3 Minstrelsy and Adapted Performance Traditions

- Introduction of minstrelsy in African contexts
- Adaptation of local traditions into colonial performance styles

2.4 Pop Songs Groups and Community Expression

- Emergence of pop song groups during the colonial period
- Contribution of popular music to theatrical culture

2.5 Transition Towards Modern African Theatre

- How indigenous activities laid the foundation for modern drama
- Continuities and changes from traditional to colonial-era theatre



Introduction

In the last Series, we examined how colonialism disrupted African theatre and reshaped its forms and themes. Yet, despite these challenges, indigenous theatrical activities continued to thrive in various spaces, adapting to new circumstances while preserving cultural identity. These activities reveal the resilience of African communities and their ability to use performance as a means of expression, entertainment, and resistance during the colonial era.

The aim of this Series is to explore the diverse indigenous theatrical activities that emerged and flourished under colonial rule. It seeks to highlight how these practices contributed to the survival and transformation of African drama, laying important foundations for modern theatre.

We shall commence this Series by studying indigenous theatre in churches, where religious practices influenced performance. Next, we will move on to concert party bands and popular entertainment, followed by an examination of minstrelsy and adapted performance traditions. Afterwards, we will consider the rise of pop song groups and their role in community expression. Finally, we will wrap up by analysing how these indigenous activities contributed to the transition towards modern African theatre.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 2.1 describe how indigenous theatre activities were practised in churches during the colonial era,
- SLO 2.2 explain the origins and development of concert party bands as a form of popular entertainment,
- SLO 2.3 analyse the role of minstrelsy and adapted performance traditions in shaping colonial-era theatre,
- SLO 2.4 evaluate the contribution of pop song groups to community expression and theatrical culture, and
- SLO 2.5 assess how indigenous theatrical activities laid the foundation for the transition towards modern African theatre.

2.1 Indigenous Theatre In Churches

Churches during the colonial era became important spaces for theatrical activities. The introduction of Christianity created new contexts for performance, where religious practices were combined with elements of drama. Indigenous theatre in churches refers to the adaptation of African performance traditions within church settings, often blending biblical narratives with local storytelling, music, and dance. This development allowed communities to retain aspects of their cultural identity while engaging with new religious frameworks.



Fill in the blank: Indigenous theatre in churches refers to the adaptation of African performance traditions within _____ settings.

2.1.1 Use of church spaces for performance

Church spaces provided venues where drama could be staged in ways that were acceptable to colonial authorities. Performances often included biblical stories enacted by local actors, accompanied by music and dance familiar to African audiences. This blending of traditions made church drama both a religious and cultural experience. It also helped to preserve communal participation, even though the themes were largely Christian.

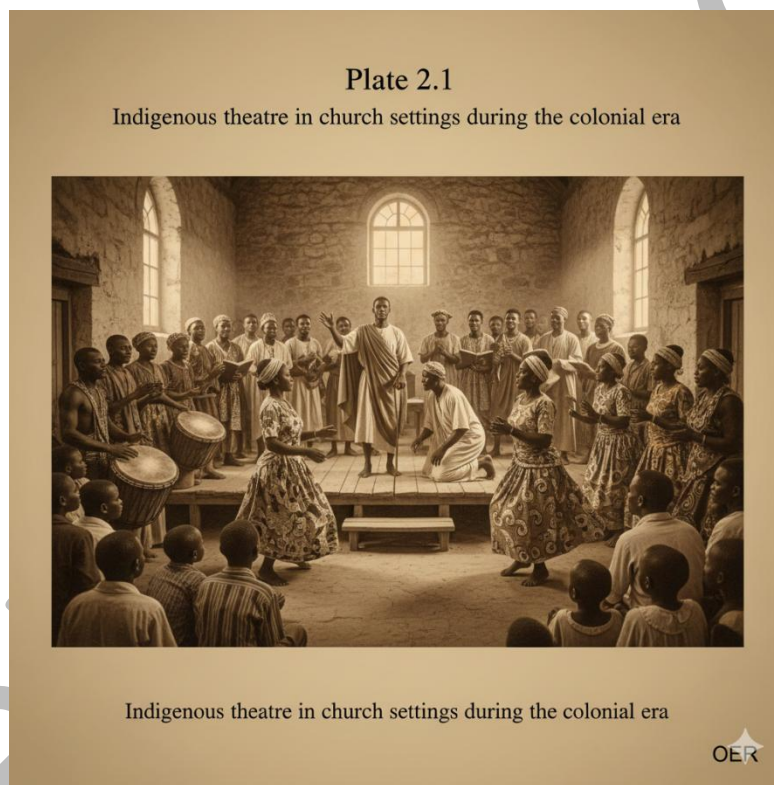


Plate 2.1 Indigenous theatre in church settings during the colonial era

2.1.2 Influence of religious practices on theatrical forms

Religious practices shaped the content and style of indigenous theatre in churches. Christian liturgy, defined as the structured form of worship including prayers, hymns, and readings, influenced the rhythm and organisation of performances. Hymns were often adapted into dramatic presentations, while sermons inspired plays that conveyed moral lessons. This integration of



religious practices into theatre created new forms of drama that were distinct from traditional rituals yet still resonated with African audiences.

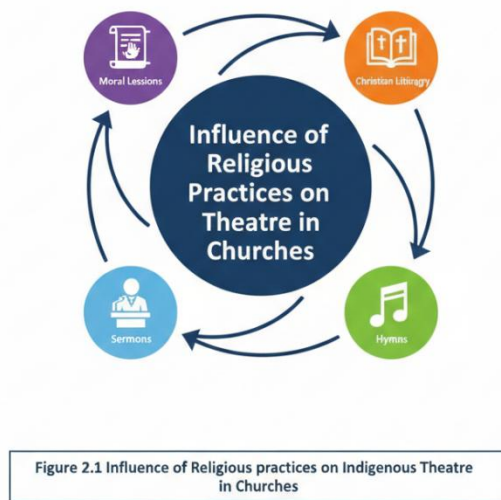


Figure 2.1 Influence of religious practices on indigenous theatre in churches

OER

Figure 2.1 Influence of religious practices on indigenous theatre in churches

Fill in the blank: Christian liturgy, which includes prayers, hymns, and readings, influenced the _____ and organisation of performances.

Pilot questions 2.1

1. Define indigenous theatre in churches during the colonial era.
2. State one way church spaces were used for performance.
3. What role did biblical stories play in church drama?
4. Define Christian liturgy and explain its influence on theatrical forms.
5. Give one example of how religious practices shaped indigenous theatre in churches.



2.2 Concert Party Bands And Popular Entertainment

Concert party bands became one of the most vibrant forms of indigenous theatrical activity during the colonial era. A concert party band refers to a group of performers who combined music, comedy, and drama to entertain audiences. These performances were often staged in community halls, open spaces, and sometimes in schools, providing affordable entertainment that resonated with everyday experiences. They were particularly popular because they blended traditional African humour and storytelling with modern instruments and theatrical techniques.

Fill in the blank: A concert party band refers to a group of performers who combined music, _____, and drama to entertain audiences.

2.2.1 Origins and development of concert party bands

Concert party bands originated in coastal towns where exposure to European entertainment styles was common. African performers adapted these influences, creating shows that included singing, dancing, and comic sketches. Over time, the format became widely accepted and spread across different regions. The development of concert parties reflected both colonial influence and African creativity, as performers used the medium to comment on social issues, mock colonial authorities, and celebrate local culture.

Plate 2.2

A colonial-era concert party band performance



A colonial-era concert party band performance



Plate 2.2 A colonial-era concert party band performance

Fill in the blank: Concert party bands originated in _____ towns where exposure to European entertainment styles was common.

2.2.2 Role of music and humour in colonial-era entertainment

Music and humour were central to the success of concert party bands. Humour, defined as the quality of being amusing or comic, was used to satirise colonial officials, highlight social inequalities, and entertain audiences. Music, often performed with guitars, drums, and local instruments, created a lively atmosphere that encouraged participation. Together, music and humour made concert parties accessible and enjoyable, ensuring their popularity across diverse communities.

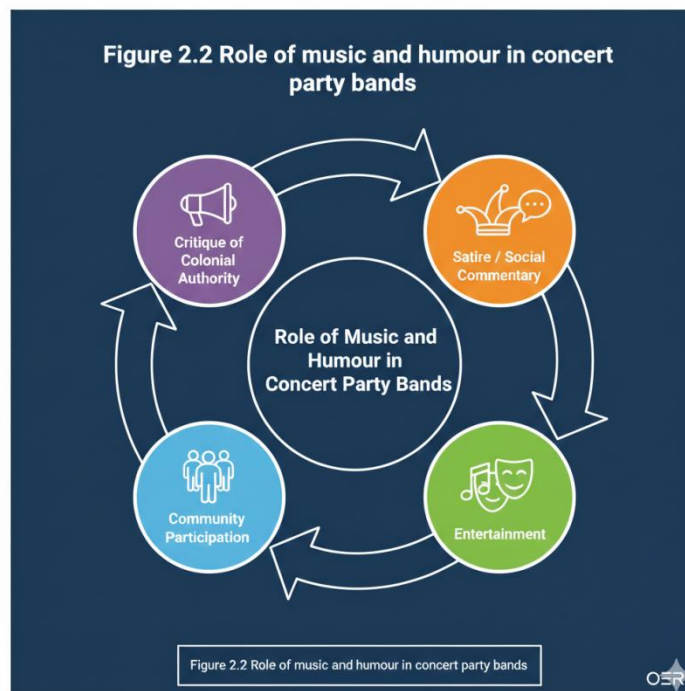


Figure 2.2 Role of music and humour in concert party bands

Fill in the blank: Music in concert party bands was often performed with guitars, drums, and _____ instruments.

Pilot questions 2.2

1. Define a concert party band in the colonial African context.



2. Where did concert party bands originate, and why?
3. State two features of concert party performances.
4. Explain the role of humour in concert party entertainment.
5. How did music contribute to the popularity of concert party bands?

2.3 Minstrelsy And Adapted Performance Traditions

Minstrelsy emerged in Africa during the colonial era as a borrowed form of entertainment from Europe and America. Minstrelsy refers to a style of performance that combined music, dance, and comic sketches, often presented in exaggerated ways. Although its origins were foreign, African performers adapted minstrelsy to reflect local realities, blending it with indigenous storytelling and humour. This adaptation allowed communities to enjoy familiar cultural elements while experimenting with new theatrical forms.

Fill in the blank: Minstrelsy refers to a style of performance that combined music, dance, and _____ sketches.

2.3.1 Introduction of minstrelsy in African contexts

Colonial influence introduced minstrelsy into African towns and cities, where it quickly became popular among audiences seeking entertainment. Performers often used costumes, exaggerated gestures, and comic routines to attract attention. While the form was initially foreign, African artists reshaped it by incorporating local languages, proverbs, and cultural references. This made minstrelsy more relatable and meaningful to African audiences, even though its roots were outside the continent.

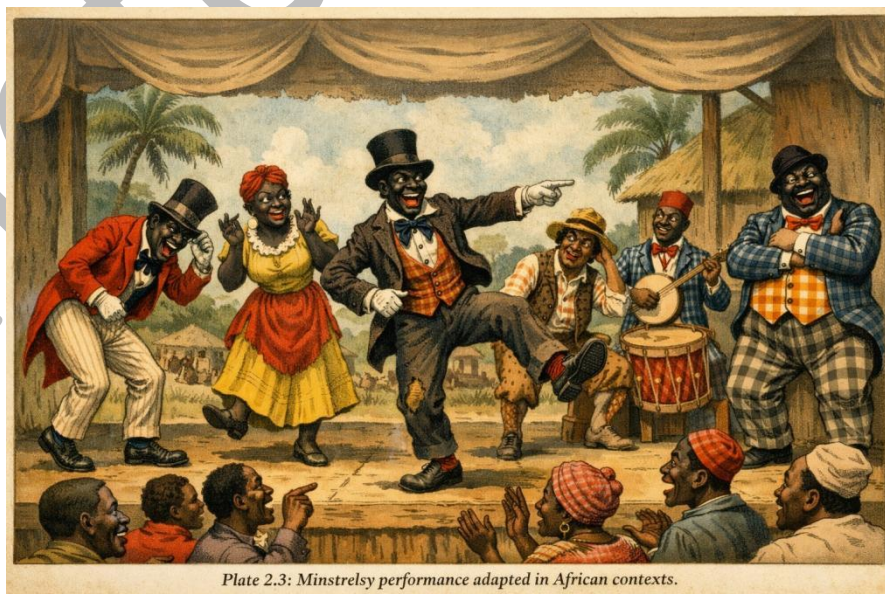


Plate 2.3: Minstrelsy performance adapted in African contexts.



Plate 2.3 Minstrelsy performance adapted in African contexts

Fill in the blank: African performers reshaped minstrelsy by incorporating local languages, proverbs, and _____ references.

2.3.2 Adaptation of local traditions into colonial performance styles

African performers did not simply imitate minstrelsy, they adapted it to suit their cultural environment. Indigenous storytelling, defined as the oral tradition of narrating tales to convey moral lessons and cultural identity, was woven into minstrel shows. Humour was used to critique colonial authorities subtly, while music and dance reflected African rhythms rather than European ones. This adaptation transformed minstrelsy into a hybrid form that carried both entertainment and social commentary.

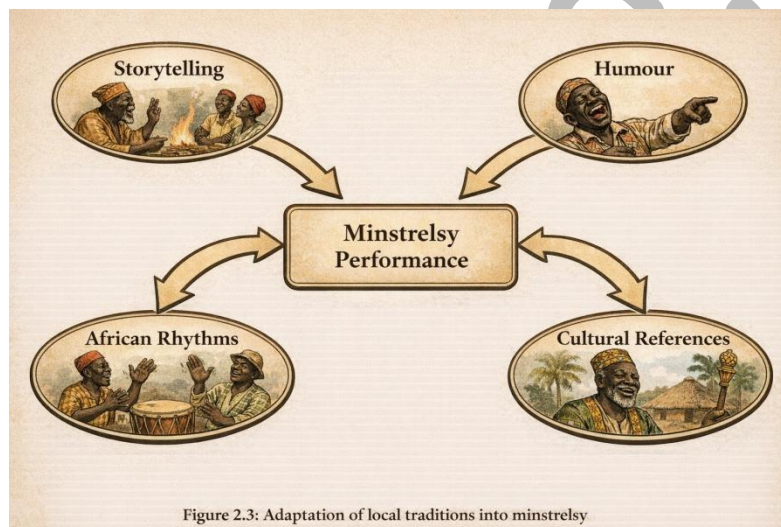


Figure 2.3 Adaptation of local traditions into minstrelsy

Fill in the blank: Indigenous storytelling was woven into minstrel shows to convey _____ lessons and cultural identity.

Pilot questions 2.3

1. Define minstrelsy in the colonial African context.
2. State one feature of minstrel performances introduced in Africa.
3. How did African performers adapt minstrelsy to local realities?



4. Define storytelling and explain its role in adapted minstrel shows.
5. Give one example of how humour was used in adapted performance traditions.

2.4 Pop Songs Groups And Community Expression

Pop song groups became a distinctive form of indigenous theatrical activity during the colonial era. A pop song group refers to a collective of singers and performers who used popular music styles to entertain audiences and express community values. These groups often performed in social gatherings, schools, and public events, blending African rhythms with colonial influences. Their songs carried messages of identity, resilience, and sometimes subtle resistance, making them an important cultural force.

Fill in the blank: A pop song group refers to a collective of singers and performers who used _____ music styles to entertain audiences.

2.4.1 Emergence of pop song groups during the colonial period

Pop song groups emerged as communities sought new ways to express themselves under colonial rule. They drew inspiration from both traditional African music and Western popular styles introduced through colonial contact. Performances often included harmonised singing, drumming, and dance, which created a lively atmosphere. These groups became popular because they provided entertainment while reinforcing cultural pride and unity.



Plate 2.4: Pop song group performance in colonial Africa

Plate 2.4 Pop song group performance in colonial Africa

Fill in the blank: Pop song groups emerged as communities sought new ways to _____ themselves under colonial rule.



2.4.2 Contribution of popular music to theatrical culture

Popular music contributed significantly to theatrical culture by making performances more accessible and engaging. Popular music, defined as music that appeals to a wide audience and reflects contemporary styles, was used to communicate social commentary and cultural identity. Pop song groups often addressed everyday issues such as family, work, and community life, while also embedding subtle critiques of colonial authority. This integration of music into theatre reinforced the communal nature of African performance traditions.

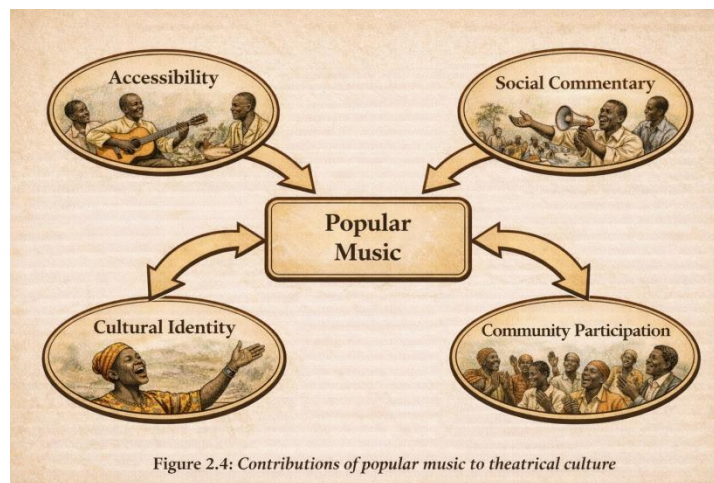


Figure 2.4 Contributions of popular music to theatrical culture

AI prompt suggestion: “Create a labelled diagram showing contributions of popular music to theatrical culture: accessibility, social commentary, cultural identity, community participation.”

Search string: “popular music contribution African theatre OER diagram”

Fill in the blank: Popular music was used to communicate social commentary and _____ identity.

Pilot questions 2.4

1. Define a pop song group in the colonial African context.
2. Explain how pop song groups emerged during the colonial period.
3. State two features of pop song group performances.
4. Define popular music and explain its role in theatrical culture.



5. Give one example of how pop song groups expressed community identity.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the resilience and creativity of African communities through indigenous theatrical activities during the colonial era. Its purpose was to highlight how performance traditions adapted to new contexts, ensuring cultural identity and expression were maintained despite colonial pressures. By focusing on these activities, the Series has shown their relevance to the broader transformation of African theatre and their role in laying foundations for modern drama.

We began with indigenous theatre in churches, where religious practices shaped new forms of performance. Then we explored concert party bands and their blend of music, humour, and social commentary, followed by minstrelsy and the adaptation of local traditions into colonial performance styles. Moving on, we considered pop song groups and their contribution to community expression, and finally we analysed how these activities facilitated the transition towards modern African theatre. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to describe church-based performances, explain the origins of concert parties, analyse adapted minstrel traditions, evaluate the role of pop song groups, and assess the contribution of these activities to the development of modern African theatre.

Glossary of Terms

- Christian liturgy: The structured form of Christian worship that includes prayers, hymns, and readings, which influenced the rhythm and organisation of church-based performances.
- Concert party band: A group of performers who combined music, comedy, and drama to entertain audiences, often using humour and social commentary.
- Humour: The quality of being amusing or comic, used in performances to entertain audiences and sometimes to satirise colonial officials.
- Indigenous theatre in churches: The adaptation of African performance traditions within church settings, blending biblical narratives with local storytelling, music, and dance.
- Minstrelsy: A style of performance combining music, dance, and comic sketches, originally foreign but later adapted by African performers to reflect local realities.
- Popular music: Music that appeals to a wide audience and reflects contemporary styles, used by pop song groups to express identity and social commentary.
- Pop song group: A collective of singers and performers who used popular music styles to entertain audiences and reinforce community values.
- Storytelling: The oral tradition of narrating tales to convey moral lessons and cultural identity, often woven into adapted minstrel shows.

Concept Check Questions 2



Objective Questions

1. Indigenous theatre in churches refers to the adaptation of African performance traditions within _____ settings. (Linked to SLO 2.1)

- A. Market
- B. School
- C. Church
- D. Palace

2. A concert party band is a group of performers who combined music, _____, and drama to entertain audiences. (Linked to SLO 2.2)

- A. Silence
- B. Comedy
- C. Painting
- D. Debate

3. Minstrelsy refers to a style of performance that combined music, dance, and _____ sketches. (Linked to SLO 2.3)

- A. Political
- B. Comic
- C. Historical
- D. Ritual

4. Pop song groups emerged as communities sought new ways to _____ themselves under colonial rule. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

- A. Hide



B. Express

C. Divide

D. Silence

5. Indigenous theatrical activities laid the foundation for the transition towards _____ African theatre.
(Linked to SLO 2.5)

A. Ancient

B. Ritual

C. Modern

D. European

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define indigenous theatre in churches during the colonial era. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
7. Explain one way concert party bands reflected African creativity. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
8. State one feature of minstrel performances adapted in Africa. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
9. Define popular music and explain its role in theatrical culture. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
10. Give one example of how indigenous activities contributed to modern African theatre. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse how church spaces influenced indigenous theatre during the colonial era. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
12. Evaluate the role of concert party bands in providing entertainment and social commentary. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
13. Describe how African performers adapted minstrelsy to reflect local traditions and realities. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
14. Assess the contribution of pop song groups to community identity and theatrical culture. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
15. Discuss how indigenous theatrical activities collectively laid the foundation for modern African theatre. (Linked to SLO 2.5)



Answers to Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. C

Short-Answer Questions

6. Indigenous theatre in churches was the adaptation of African performance traditions within church settings, blending biblical narratives with local storytelling, music, and dance.
7. Concert party bands reflected African creativity by using humour and local languages to satirise colonial officials and celebrate community life.
8. One feature of minstrel performances adapted in Africa was the use of costumes and exaggerated gestures combined with local proverbs and cultural references.
9. Popular music is music that appeals to a wide audience and reflects contemporary styles. It contributed to theatrical culture by making performances accessible and embedding social commentary.
10. Indigenous activities contributed to modern African theatre by preserving communal traditions while experimenting with new forms, creating a hybrid foundation for later drama.

Long-Answer Questions

11. Basic response:: Church spaces influenced indigenous theatre by providing venues where biblical stories were enacted with African music and dance, making performances both religious and cultural.

Value-added response:: Beyond providing venues, churches shaped the rhythm and organisation of performances through Christian liturgy, while also allowing African communities to retain communal participation and adapt religious practices into theatrical forms.

12. Basic response:: Concert party bands entertained audiences by combining music, comedy, and drama, making performances lively and accessible.



Value-added response:: They also served as social commentary, using humour to critique colonial authorities and highlight inequalities, while reinforcing cultural pride and unity across communities.

13. Basic response:: African performers adapted minstrelsy by incorporating local languages, storytelling, and cultural references into performances.

Value-added response:: This adaptation transformed minstrelsy into a hybrid form that carried both entertainment and subtle resistance, blending African rhythms and humour with colonial performance styles.

14. Basic response:: Pop song groups contributed to community identity by performing harmonised singing, drumming, and dance that reflected everyday life.

Value-added response:: They also embedded subtle critiques of colonial authority, used popular music to communicate social commentary, and reinforced communal pride, making them central to theatrical culture.

15. Basic response:: Indigenous theatrical activities laid the foundation for modern African theatre by blending traditional practices with colonial influences.

Value-added response:: Collectively, they created hybrid forms that preserved cultural identity, inspired resistance, and introduced new techniques, ensuring continuity and transformation in African drama that shaped postcolonial theatre movements.

Answers to Pilot Questions 2

- Part 2.1

1. Indigenous theatre in churches was the adaptation of African performance traditions within church settings.
2. Church spaces were used to stage performances that included biblical stories enacted by local actors.
3. Biblical stories provided the main themes for church drama, making performances both religious and cultural.
4. Christian liturgy is the structured form of worship including prayers, hymns, and readings, which influenced the rhythm and organisation of performances.
5. Religious practices shaped indigenous theatre in churches by inspiring plays and integrating hymns and moral lessons.

- Part 2.2

1. A concert party band is a group of performers who combined music, comedy, and drama to entertain audiences.
2. They originated in coastal towns where exposure to European entertainment styles was common.
3. Features included singing, dancing, comic sketches, and lively community participation.



4. Humour was used to satirise colonial officials and highlight social issues.
5. Music contributed by creating a lively atmosphere with guitars, drums, and local instruments.

- Part 2.3

1. Minstrelsy is a style of performance combining music, dance, and comic sketches.
2. One feature was the use of costumes and exaggerated gestures.
3. African performers adapted minstrelsy by incorporating local languages, proverbs, and cultural references.
4. Storytelling is the oral tradition of narrating tales to convey moral lessons and cultural identity, woven into minstrel shows.
5. Humour was used to critique colonial authorities subtly while entertaining audiences.

- Part 2.4

1. A pop song group is a collective of singers and performers who used popular music styles to entertain audiences.
2. They emerged as communities sought new ways to express themselves under colonial rule.
3. Features included harmonised singing, drumming, and dance.
4. Popular music is music that appeals to a wide audience and reflects contemporary styles, used to communicate social commentary and cultural identity.
5. Pop song groups expressed community identity by embedding everyday issues and cultural pride in their performances.

- Part 2.5

1. Indigenous activities contributed to modern African theatre by blending traditional practices with colonial influences.
2. They preserved communal traditions while experimenting with new forms.
3. These activities created hybrid theatrical styles that laid the foundation for postcolonial drama.
4. They ensured continuity of cultural identity while introducing new techniques.
5. Collectively, they inspired resistance and transformation in African theatre.

References and Attributions 2

Course Content References

- THA 201 Course Outline: African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Era (institutional course document).



- General cultural and historical context adapted from open educational resources (OERs) on African theatre and colonial studies.

Illustrations

- Plate 2.1: Indigenous theatre in church settings during the colonial era

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing a colonial-era African church performance: actors enacting biblical stories with African music and dance.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “African church drama colonial era OER image”.

- Figure 2.1: Influence of religious practices on indigenous theatre in churches

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing the influence of religious practices on indigenous theatre in churches: Christian liturgy, hymns, sermons, moral lessons.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “religious practices influence African church theatre OER diagram”.

- Plate 2.2: A colonial-era concert party band performance

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing a colonial-era African concert party band performing with instruments, singing, and comic sketches.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “African concert party band colonial era OER image”.

- Figure 2.2: Role of music and humour in concert party bands

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing the role of music and humour in concert party bands: satire, social commentary, entertainment, community participation.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “music humour African concert party bands OER diagram”.

- Plate 2.3: Minstrelsy performance adapted in African contexts

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing colonial-era minstrelsy performance in Africa: costumes, exaggerated gestures, comic routines.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “African minstrelsy colonial era OER image”.

- Figure 2.3: Adaptation of local traditions into minstrelsy



Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing adaptation of local traditions into minstrelsy: storytelling, humour, African rhythms, cultural references.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “African traditions adapted into minstrelsy OER diagram”.

- Plate 2.4: Pop song group performance in colonial Africa

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing a colonial-era African pop song group performing with harmonised singing, drumming, and dance.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “African pop song group colonial era OER image”.

- Figure 2.4: Contributions of popular music to theatrical culture

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing contributions of popular music to theatrical culture: accessibility, social commentary, cultural identity, community participation.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “popular music contribution African theatre OER diagram”.



Series 3: Pioneers of African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Period

Series 4: Colonial Institutions and Their Influence on African Drama

Series 5: Anti-Colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa

Part 3.1 Early African Playwrights And Their Contributions

- Emergence of African playwrights during the colonial period
- Key contributions to the development of African drama

Part 3.2 Hubert Ogunde and the Rise of Professional Theatre

- Biography and background of Hubert Ogunde
- His pioneering role in establishing professional theatre in Nigeria
- Themes and innovations in his plays

Part 3.3 Duro Ladipo and the Integration of Indigenous Traditions

- Biography and background of Duro Ladipo
- His use of Yoruba traditions in colonial-era drama
- Analysis of selected plays and their cultural significance

Part 3.4 Other Influential Figures and Regional Contributions

- Contributions of other notable pioneers (e.g., Efua Sutherland, Ibrahim Al-Kadiri)
- Regional variations in colonial-era African theatre
- Collective impact on the growth of modern African drama

Part 3.5 Legacy of Colonial-Era Pioneers

- How their work influenced postcolonial theatre movements
- Continuities and transformations in African drama
- Lasting cultural and educational significance



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored indigenous theatrical activities in the colonial era, highlighting how communities used churches, concert parties, minstrelsy, and pop song groups to preserve cultural identity and express resilience. Building on that foundation, this Series turns our attention to the pioneers who shaped African drama and theatre during the colonial period. These individuals were instrumental in transforming performance from communal activities into structured drama, laying the groundwork for professional theatre and influencing generations of playwrights and performers.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the major pioneers of African drama and theatre in the colonial period and to examine their contributions, innovations, and lasting legacies. By studying their work, you will gain insight into how African theatre evolved under colonial influence and how these pioneers helped to define its modern trajectory.

We shall commence this Series by examining early African playwrights and their contributions. Next, we will focus on Hubert Ogunde and his pioneering role in establishing professional theatre. Following that, we will study Duro Ladipo and his integration of Yoruba traditions into colonial-era drama. Moving on, we will consider other influential figures and regional contributions that enriched African theatre. Finally, we will wrap up by analysing the collective legacy of these pioneers and how their work shaped postcolonial theatre movements.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 3.1 define the contributions of early African playwrights during the colonial period,
- SLO 3.2 analyse the pioneering role of Hubert Ogunde in establishing professional theatre,
- SLO 3.3 evaluate how Duro Ladipo integrated Yoruba traditions into colonial-era drama,
- SLO 3.4 explain the contributions of other influential figures and regional pioneers to African theatre, and
- SLO 3.5 assess the collective legacy of colonial-era pioneers in shaping postcolonial African drama and theatre.

3.1 Early African Playwrights And Their Contributions

African playwrights of the colonial period played a crucial role in shaping the foundations of modern African drama. They used theatre as a medium to express cultural identity, critique colonial authority, and preserve indigenous traditions.

Playwrights, defined as writers who compose plays for performance, were among the first to professionalise African drama by creating structured works that could be staged in schools, churches, and community halls. Their contributions helped transform performance from informal communal activities into recognised artistic productions.

Fill in the blank: Playwrights are writers who compose _____ for performance.



3.1.1 Emergence of African playwrights during the colonial period

The emergence of African playwrights was closely linked to the spread of literacy and the influence of missionary education. Schools and churches provided platforms where plays could be written, rehearsed, and performed. Early playwrights often drew on biblical stories, local folklore, and everyday experiences to craft their works. This combination of influences allowed them to reach audiences who were familiar with both indigenous traditions and colonial structures.

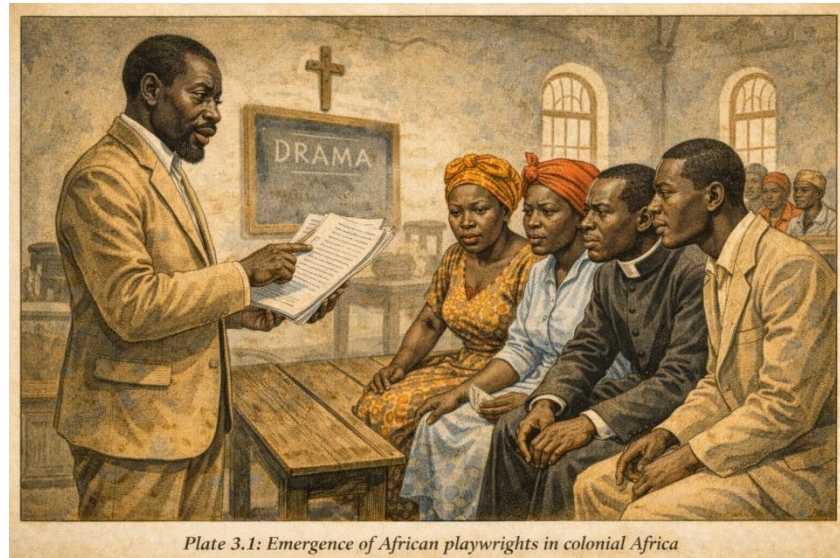


Plate 3.1 Emergence of African playwrights in colonial Africa

AI prompt suggestion: “Generate an image showing an early African playwright presenting a script to actors in a colonial-era African school or church.”

Search string: “early African playwright colonial era OER image”

Fill in the blank: The emergence of African playwrights was closely linked to the spread of _____ and missionary education.

3.1.2 Key contributions to the development of African drama

Early African playwrights contributed by introducing structured narratives, dialogue, and characterisation into performances. Characterisation, defined as the creation and development of characters in a play, allowed audiences to connect with stories on a deeper level. Playwrights also used theatre to address social issues such as colonial oppression, cultural identity, and moral values. Their works provided a voice for communities and helped establish theatre as a tool for education and resistance.



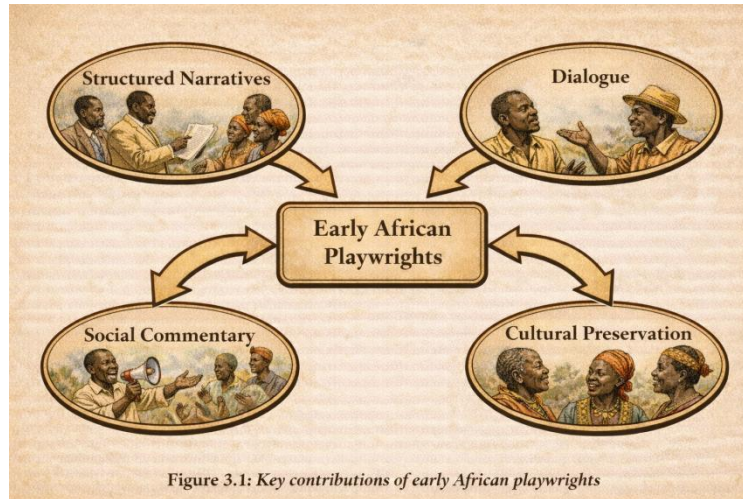


Figure 3.1 Key contributions of early African playwrights

Fill in the blank: Characterisation refers to the creation and development of _____ in a play.

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Define the term playwright in the context of African drama.
2. Explain how missionary education influenced the emergence of African playwrights.
3. State one source of inspiration for early African playwrights.
4. Define characterisation and explain its importance in drama.
5. Give one example of how early playwrights contributed to the development of African theatre.

3.2 Hubert Ogunde and the Rise of Professional Theatre

Hubert Ogunde is widely regarded as the father of modern Nigerian theatre. His pioneering work transformed indigenous performance traditions into structured, professional productions. Professional theatre, defined as organised drama performed by trained actors for paying audiences, was introduced by Ogunde through his innovative plays and travelling theatre company. He elevated African drama from community-based entertainment to a recognised art form, setting the stage for future generations of playwrights and performers.

Fill in the blank: Professional theatre refers to organised drama performed by trained actors for _____ audiences.

3.2.1 Biography and background of Hubert Ogunde



Ogunde was born in 1916 in Ososa, Nigeria, and grew up in a cultural environment rich with Yoruba traditions. He initially worked as a schoolteacher and church choirmaster before venturing into theatre. His early experiences with music and religious drama influenced his later works, which combined indigenous storytelling with Christian themes and social commentary. Ogunde's background gave him the tools to bridge traditional and modern performance styles, making his plays accessible to diverse audiences.

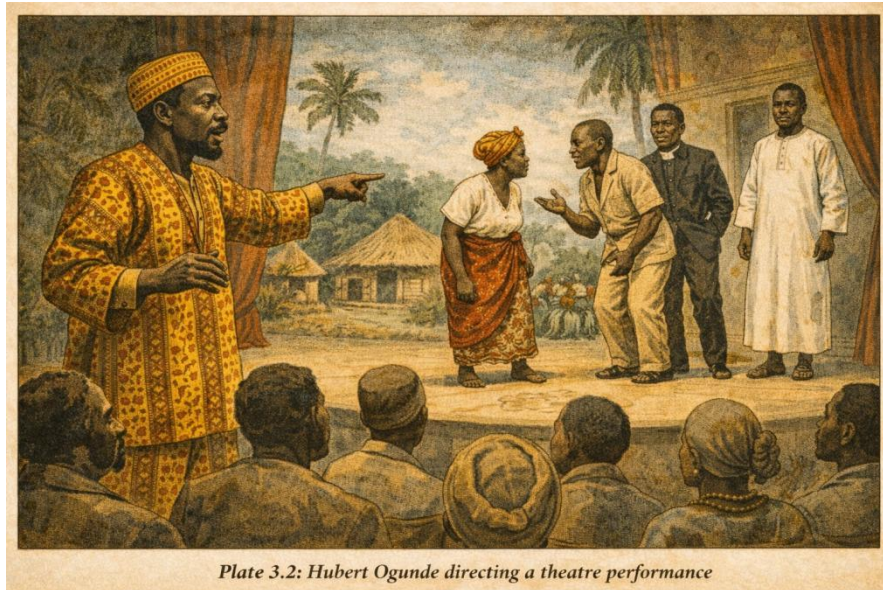


Plate 3.2 Hubert Ogunde directing a theatre performance

Fill in the blank: Ogunde's early experiences with music and _____ drama influenced his later works.

3.2.2 His pioneering role in establishing professional theatre

Ogunde established Nigeria's first professional theatre company in the 1940s, producing plays that addressed colonial oppression, cultural identity, and moral values. His productions were staged across Nigeria and beyond, attracting large audiences and setting new standards for African drama. He introduced ticketed performances, travelling theatre troupes, and structured rehearsals, all of which professionalised African theatre.



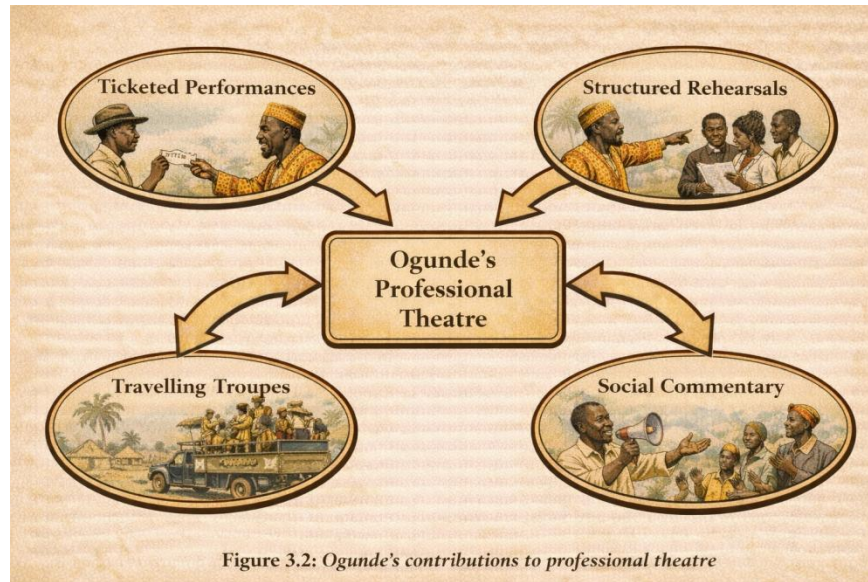


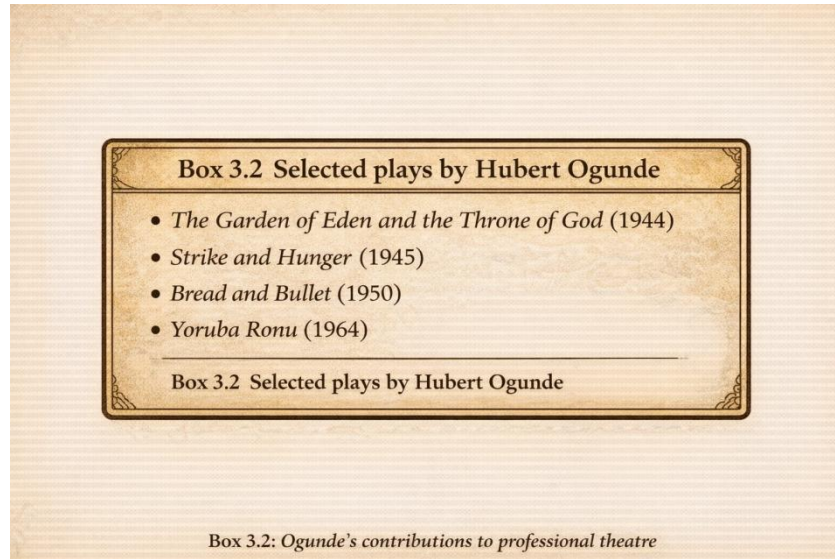
Figure 3.2 Ogunde's contributions to professional theatre

Fill in the blank: Ogunde introduced ticketed performances, travelling theatre troupes, and structured _____ to professionalise African theatre.

3.2.3 Themes and innovations in his plays

Ogunde's plays often explored themes of nationalism, cultural pride, and resistance to colonial rule. Nationalism, defined as the advocacy for political independence and cultural identity, was a recurring theme in his works. He used music, dance, and satire to engage audiences while delivering powerful messages about freedom and unity. His innovations included blending Yoruba traditions with modern stagecraft, creating a unique theatrical style that resonated across Africa.





Box 3.2 Selected plays by Hubert Ogunde

Fill in the blank: Nationalism in Ogunde's plays refers to the advocacy for political independence and _____ identity.

Pilot questions 3.2

1. Define professional theatre in the context of African drama.
2. Describe Hubert Ogunde's early background and how it influenced his work.
3. State one way Ogunde professionalised African theatre.
4. Define nationalism and explain its role in Ogunde's plays.
5. Give one example of an innovation introduced by Ogunde in his productions.

3.3 Duro Ladipo and the Integration of Indigenous Traditions

Duro Ladipo was one of the most influential figures in African theatre during the colonial period. He is remembered for his ability to integrate indigenous Yoruba traditions into modern drama, creating performances that were both culturally authentic and artistically innovative. Indigenous traditions, defined as cultural practices and expressions rooted in local communities, were central to Ladipo's work. His plays demonstrated how African heritage could be preserved and celebrated even within colonial contexts.

Fill in the blank: Indigenous traditions are cultural practices and expressions rooted in _____ communities.



3.3.1 Biography and background of Duro Ladipo

Born in 1931 in Osogbo, Nigeria, Ladipo grew up immersed in Yoruba culture, particularly its music, dance, and oral storytelling. He worked as a teacher before dedicating himself fully to theatre. His upbringing in a culturally vibrant environment shaped his artistic vision, enabling him to draw directly from Yoruba rituals and festivals. This background gave his plays a strong cultural foundation and made them resonate deeply with audiences.

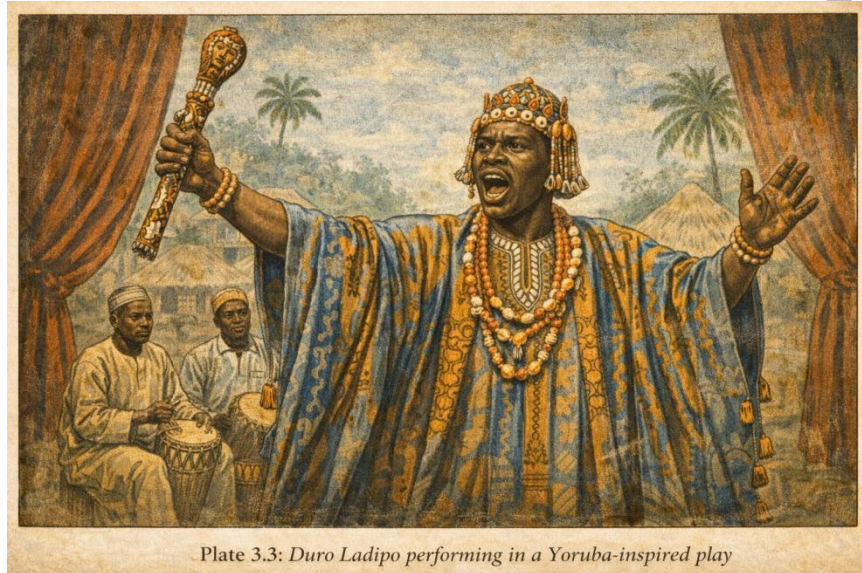


Plate 3.3 Duro Ladipo performing in a Yoruba-inspired play

Fill in the blank: Duro Ladipo grew up immersed in _____ culture, particularly its music, dance, and oral storytelling.

3.3.2 His use of Yoruba traditions in colonial-era drama

Ladipo's plays often incorporated Yoruba myths, legends, and rituals. Myths, defined as traditional stories that explain cultural beliefs or natural phenomena, were central to his storytelling. He used drumming, chanting, and dance to recreate the atmosphere of Yoruba festivals on stage. By doing so, he challenged colonial dominance and asserted the value of indigenous culture. His works, such as *Oba Koso* and *Moremi*, became landmarks in African theatre, blending ritual with modern stagecraft.



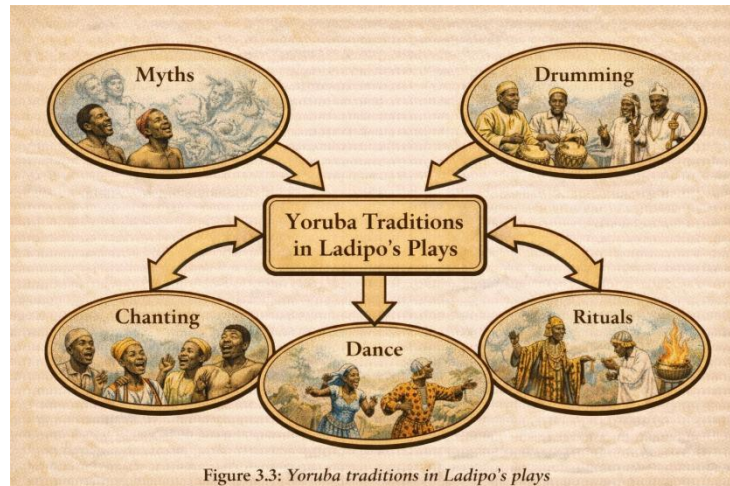


Figure 3.3 Yoruba traditions in Ladipo's plays

Fill in the blank: Myths are traditional stories that explain cultural beliefs or _____ phenomena.

3.3.3 Analysis of selected plays and their cultural significance

Ladipo's most famous plays include *Oba Koso*, which dramatises the myth of Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder, and *Moremi*, which celebrates the legendary heroine who saved her people. These plays highlighted themes of heroism, sacrifice, and divine power. Heroism, defined as the qualities of courage and selflessness in the face of challenges, was a recurring theme in his works. By staging these stories, Ladipo reinforced cultural pride and educated audiences about Yoruba heritage. His plays remain significant for their ability to merge indigenous traditions with modern theatre techniques.

[Insert Box here]

Box 3.3 Selected plays by Duro Ladipo

- Oba Koso (1964)
- Moremi (1968)
- Oba Waja (1968)

AI prompt suggestion: "Create a text box listing selected plays by Duro Ladipo with titles and dates."

Search string: "Duro Ladipo selected plays OER list"

Fill in the blank: Heroism refers to the qualities of courage and _____ in the face of challenges.



Pilot questions 3.3

1. Define indigenous traditions in the context of African drama.
2. Describe Duro Ladipo's background and how it influenced his theatre.
3. State one Yoruba tradition incorporated into Ladipo's plays.
4. Define myths and explain their role in Ladipo's storytelling.
5. Give one example of a theme explored in Ladipo's plays.

3.4 Other Influential Figures and Regional Contributions

Beyond Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo, several other pioneers made significant contributions to African drama and theatre during the colonial period. These figures brought regional diversity and unique perspectives, ensuring that African theatre reflected the richness of the continent's cultures. Regional contributions, defined as the distinct influences of different geographical areas on theatre, helped broaden the scope of African drama and created a more inclusive narrative of its development.

Fill in the blank: Regional contributions refer to the distinct influences of different _____ areas on theatre.

3.4.1 Contributions of other notable pioneers

One of the most important figures was Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian playwright and director who championed children's theatre and community drama. She established the Ghana Drama Studio in 1960, which became a hub for experimental African theatre. Another pioneer was Ibrahim Al-Kadiri, who contributed to Hausa-language drama in Northern Nigeria, blending Islamic traditions with theatrical storytelling. These pioneers demonstrated that African theatre was not confined to one region or culture but was a collective effort across the continent.



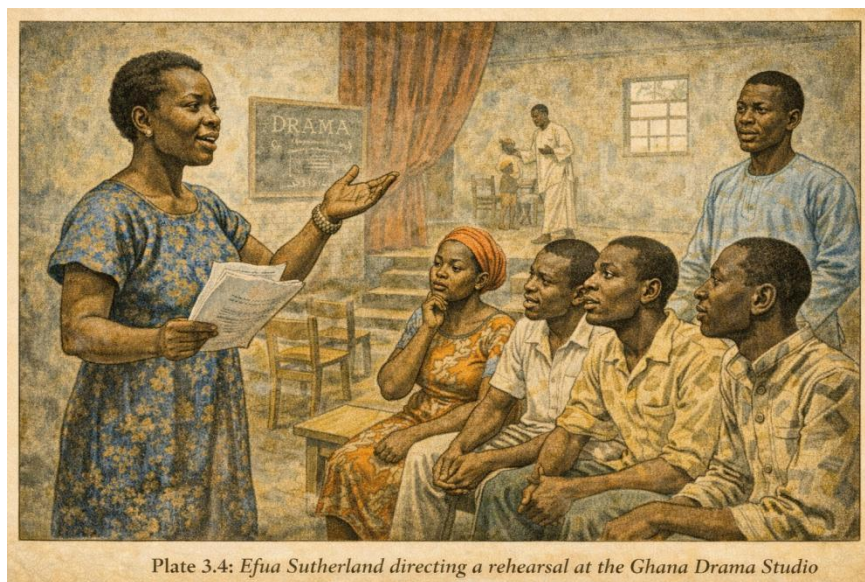


Plate 3.4 Efua Sutherland directing a rehearsal at the Ghana Drama Studio

Fill in the blank: Efua Sutherland established the _____ Drama Studio in 1960.

3.4.2 Regional variations in colonial-era African theatre

Different regions of Africa developed unique theatrical styles during the colonial period. In West Africa, Yoruba and Akan traditions strongly influenced drama, while in East Africa, Swahili storytelling and dance were prominent. Northern Africa incorporated Islamic traditions, with performances often linked to religious festivals. These regional variations enriched African theatre by showcasing diverse cultural practices and resisting colonial homogenisation.

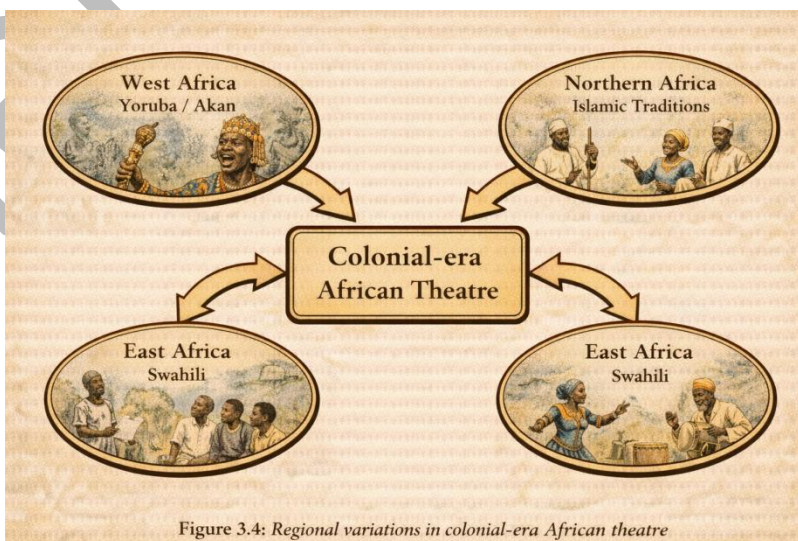
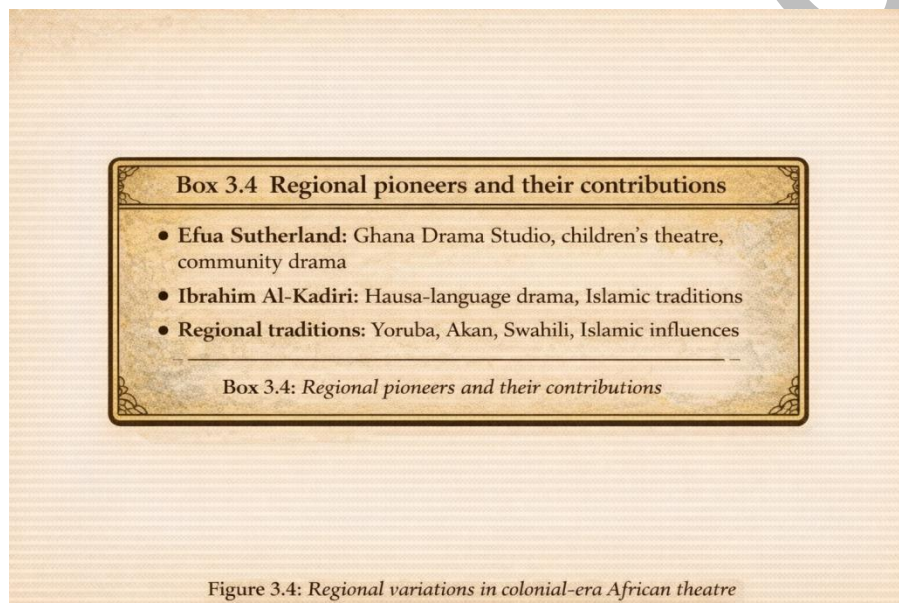


Figure 3.4 Regional variations in colonial-era African theatre

Fill in the blank: In East Africa, _____ storytelling and dance were prominent in colonial-era theatre.

3.4.3 Collective impact on the growth of modern African drama

Together, these pioneers and regional contributions created a strong foundation for modern African drama. Their work demonstrated that African theatre could be diverse yet unified, rooted in indigenous traditions while engaging with colonial influences. Collective impact, defined as the combined effect of multiple individuals or groups working towards a shared goal, ensured that African drama evolved into a vibrant art form that represented the continent's cultural richness.



Box 3.4 Regional pioneers and their contributions

Fill in the blank: Collective impact refers to the combined effect of multiple individuals or groups working towards a _____ goal.

Pilot questions 3.4

1. Define regional contributions in the context of African theatre.
2. Name one pioneer other than Ogunde and Ladipo and state their contribution.
3. Explain one regional variation in colonial-era African theatre.



4. Define collective impact and explain its role in the growth of African drama.
5. Give one example of how regional contributions enriched African theatre.

3.5 Legacy of Colonial-Era Pioneers

The pioneers of African drama and theatre in the colonial period left a lasting legacy that continues to shape modern African theatre. Their work demonstrated the resilience of African culture and its ability to adapt to new circumstances while preserving identity. Legacy, defined as the enduring impact or influence of past achievements, is evident in the way their plays, innovations, and institutions have inspired subsequent generations of playwrights, directors, and performers.

Fill in the blank: Legacy refers to the enduring impact or influence of past _____.

3.5.1 Influence on postcolonial theatre movements

The contributions of pioneers such as Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, and Efua Sutherland influenced postcolonial theatre movements across Africa. Their emphasis on cultural pride, nationalism, and indigenous traditions provided a foundation for theatre that addressed contemporary issues of independence, governance, and identity. Postcolonial playwrights built upon these themes, using theatre as a tool for political activism and social education.

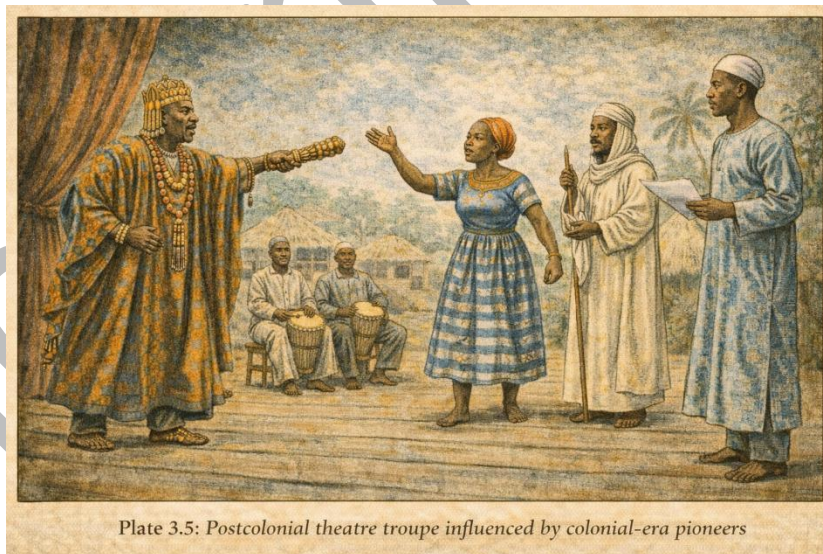


Plate 3.5: Postcolonial theatre troupe influenced by colonial-era pioneers

Plate 3.5 Postcolonial theatre troupe influenced by colonial-era pioneers

Fill in the blank: Postcolonial playwrights used theatre as a tool for political activism and social _____.



3.5.2 Continuities and transformations in African drama

The legacy of colonial-era pioneers is seen in both continuities and transformations. Continuities, defined as elements that remain consistent over time, include the use of indigenous traditions, music, and storytelling. Transformations, defined as significant changes or innovations, include the adoption of modern stagecraft, new themes, and international collaborations. Together, these continuities and transformations ensured that African drama remained dynamic and relevant in changing social contexts.

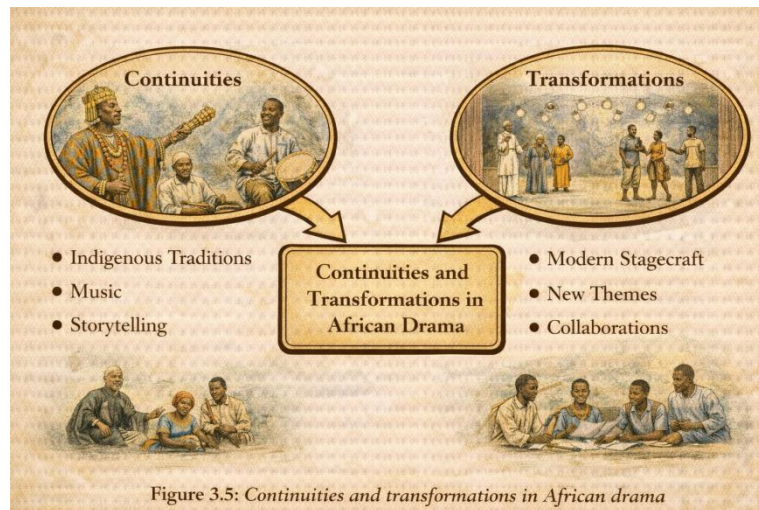


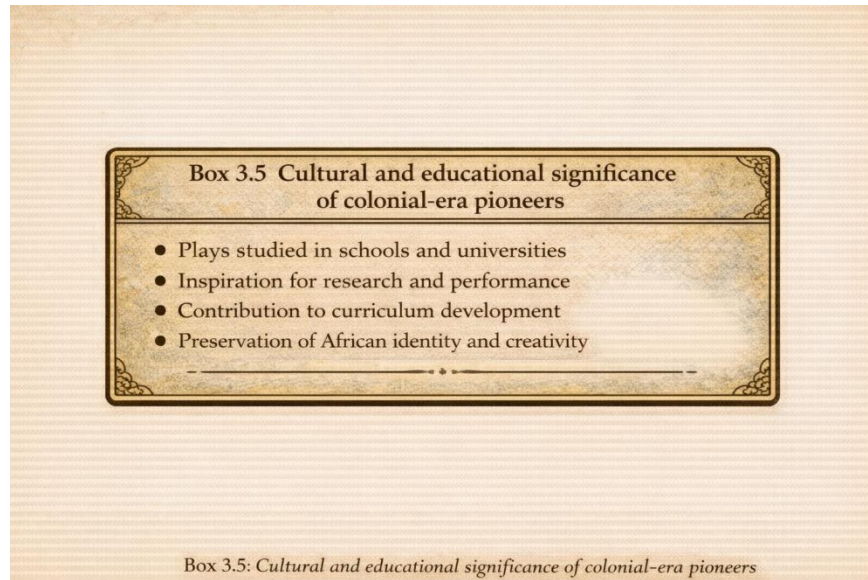
Figure 3.5 Continuities and transformations in African drama

Fill in the blank: Continuities refer to elements that remain _____ over time.

3.5.3 Lasting cultural and educational significance

The pioneers also left a strong cultural and educational legacy. Their plays are studied in schools and universities, serving as resources for understanding African history, identity, and creativity. Educational significance, defined as the value of a subject for teaching and learning purposes, is evident in how their works continue to inspire research, performance, and curriculum development. By institutionalising African theatre, these pioneers ensured its relevance for future generations.





Box 3.5 Cultural and educational significance of colonial-era pioneers

Fill in the blank: Educational significance refers to the value of a subject for _____ and learning purposes.

Pilot questions 3.5

1. Define legacy in the context of African drama.
2. Explain how colonial-era pioneers influenced postcolonial theatre movements.
3. Define continuities and give one example in African drama.
4. Define transformations and give one example in African drama.
5. State one way the pioneers contributed to the educational significance of African theatre.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the pioneers of African drama and theatre in the colonial period, highlighting their relevance in shaping the foundations of modern African theatre. Its purpose was to show how individuals and regions contributed to the professionalisation of drama, the preservation of indigenous traditions, and the creation of a legacy that continues to inspire postcolonial movements. By studying these pioneers, you have gained insight into the resilience and creativity that defined African theatre during this era.



We began with early African playwrights and their contributions, then examined Hubert Ogunde's pioneering role in professional theatre. Following that, we explored Duro Ladipo's integration of Yoruba traditions, before moving on to other influential figures and regional contributions. Finally, we analysed the collective legacy of these pioneers and their lasting cultural and educational significance. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define the contributions of early playwrights, analyse Ogunde's role, evaluate Ladipo's integration of traditions, explain regional contributions, and assess the legacy of colonial-era pioneers in shaping postcolonial African drama and theatre.

Glossary of Terms

- **Characterisation:** The creation and development of characters in a play, allowing audiences to connect with the story.
- **Collective impact:** The combined effect of multiple individuals or groups working towards a shared goal.
- **Continuities:** Elements in drama that remain consistent over time, such as the use of indigenous traditions, music, and storytelling.
- **Heroism:** The qualities of courage and selflessness shown in the face of challenges, often highlighted in dramatic works.
- **Indigenous traditions:** Cultural practices and expressions rooted in local communities, such as rituals, festivals, and oral storytelling.
- **Legacy:** The enduring impact or influence of past achievements, seen in how pioneers shaped modern African theatre.
- **Myths:** Traditional stories that explain cultural beliefs or natural phenomena, often used in plays to convey heritage.
- **Nationalism:** Advocacy for political independence and cultural identity, frequently explored as a theme in colonial-era drama.
- **Playwright:** A writer who composes plays for performance, contributing structured narratives and dialogue to theatre.
- **Professional theatre:** Organised drama performed by trained actors for paying audiences, introduced in Africa by Hubert Ogunde.
- **Regional contributions:** Distinct influences of different geographical areas on theatre, reflecting Africa's cultural diversity.
- **Transformations:** Significant changes or innovations in drama, such as adopting modern stagecraft, new themes, and international collaborations.
- **Educational significance:** The value of a subject for teaching and learning purposes, as seen in the continued study of pioneer plays in schools and universities.

Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. Playwrights are writers who compose _____ for performance. (Linked to SLO 3.1)

A. Novels



B. Poems

C. Plays

D. Speeches

2. Professional theatre refers to organised drama performed by trained actors for _____ audiences. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

A. School

B. Paying

C. Private

D. Religious

3. Nationalism in Ogunde's plays refers to the advocacy for political independence and _____ identity. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

A. Economic

B. Cultural

C. Personal

D. Regional

4. Indigenous traditions are cultural practices and expressions rooted in _____ communities. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

A. Urban

B. Foreign

C. Local

D. Elite

5. Efua Sutherland established the _____ Drama Studio in 1960. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

A. Lagos

B. Nigerian

C. Ghana



D. African

6. Legacy refers to the enduring impact or influence of past _____. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

A. Stories

B. Achievements

C. Conflicts

D. Festivals

Short-Answer Questions

7. Define the term playwright in the context of African drama. (Linked to SLO 3.1)

8. Explain one way Hubert Ogunde professionalised African theatre. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

9. State one Yoruba tradition incorporated into Duro Ladipo's plays. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

10. Name one pioneer other than Ogunde and Ladipo and state their contribution. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

11. Define continuities and give one example in African drama. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Long-Answer Questions

12. Analyse the contributions of early African playwrights to the development of African drama. (Linked to SLO 3.1)

13. Evaluate Hubert Ogunde's role in establishing professional theatre and his influence on African drama. (Linked to SLO 3.2)

14. Assess how Duro Ladipo integrated Yoruba traditions into colonial-era drama and the cultural significance of his plays. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

15. Explain the importance of regional contributions and other pioneers in enriching African theatre during the colonial period. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

16. Discuss the legacy of colonial-era pioneers and how their work shaped postcolonial African drama. (Linked to SLO 3.5)



Answers to Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. C
6. B

Short-Answer Questions

7. A playwright is a writer who composes plays for performance, introducing structured narratives and dialogue.
8. Ogunde professionalised African theatre by introducing ticketed performances, travelling troupes, and structured rehearsals.
9. One Yoruba tradition Ladipo incorporated was drumming and chanting from Yoruba festivals.
10. Efua Sutherland established the Ghana Drama Studio and promoted children's theatre and community drama.
11. Continuities are elements that remain consistent over time, such as the use of indigenous traditions and storytelling.

Long-Answer Questions

12. Basic response: Early African playwrights contributed by introducing structured narratives, dialogue, and characterisation into drama.

Value-added response: They also used theatre to address social issues, blending biblical stories and folklore to educate and inspire communities, thereby laying the foundation for modern African drama.

13. Basic response: Ogunde established Nigeria's first professional theatre company and introduced ticketed performances.

Value-added response: He also explored themes of nationalism and cultural pride, blending Yoruba traditions with modern stagecraft, which influenced theatre across Africa and inspired postcolonial movements.

14. Basic response: Ladipo integrated Yoruba myths, rituals, and festivals into his plays, such as Oba Koso and Moremi.



Value-added response: His plays reinforced cultural pride, highlighted themes of heroism and sacrifice, and demonstrated how indigenous traditions could be preserved while adapting to colonial contexts.

15. Basic response: Regional contributions included pioneers like Efua Sutherland in Ghana and Ibrahim Al-Kadiri in Northern Nigeria.

Value-added response: These figures enriched African theatre by incorporating Akan, Swahili, and Islamic traditions, ensuring diversity and resisting colonial homogenisation, which broadened the scope of African drama.

16. Basic response: The legacy of colonial-era pioneers is seen in their influence on postcolonial theatre movements and education.

Value-added response: Their work created continuities in indigenous traditions and transformations through modern stagecraft, leaving cultural and educational significance that continues to inspire research, performance, and curriculum development.

Answers to Pilot Questions 3

Part 3.1

1. A playwright is a writer who composes plays for performance.
2. Missionary education influenced the emergence of African playwrights by providing literacy and platforms for drama.
3. Early African playwrights drew inspiration from biblical stories, local folklore, and everyday experiences.
4. Characterisation is the creation and development of characters in a play.
5. Early playwrights contributed by introducing structured narratives, dialogue, and social commentary into African theatre.

Part 3.2

1. Professional theatre is organised drama performed by trained actors for paying audiences.
2. Ogunde's background as a teacher and choirmaster influenced his theatre by blending music, religion, and storytelling.
3. Ogunde professionalised African theatre by introducing ticketed performances, travelling troupes, and structured rehearsals.
4. Nationalism is the advocacy for political independence and cultural identity, a central theme in Ogunde's plays.
5. Ogunde innovated by blending Yoruba traditions with modern stagecraft and using theatre for social commentary.



Part 3.3

1. Indigenous traditions are cultural practices and expressions rooted in local communities.
2. Duro Ladipo's Yoruba upbringing influenced his theatre by grounding his plays in myths, rituals, and festivals.
3. Ladipo incorporated Yoruba drumming, chanting, and dance into his plays.
4. Myths are traditional stories that explain cultural beliefs or natural phenomena.
5. Heroism, expressed through courage and sacrifice, was a recurring theme in Ladipo's plays.

Part 3.4

1. Regional contributions are the distinct influences of different geographical areas on theatre.
2. Efua Sutherland established the Ghana Drama Studio and promoted children's theatre and community drama.
3. In East Africa, Swahili storytelling and dance were prominent in colonial-era theatre.
4. Collective impact is the combined effect of multiple individuals or groups working towards a shared goal.
5. Regional contributions enriched African theatre by showcasing diverse traditions such as Yoruba, Akan, Swahili, and Islamic practices.

Part 3.5

1. Legacy is the enduring impact or influence of past achievements.
2. Colonial-era pioneers influenced postcolonial theatre by inspiring themes of nationalism, cultural pride, and identity.
3. Continuities are elements that remain consistent over time, such as indigenous traditions and storytelling.
4. Transformations are significant changes, such as adopting modern stagecraft and international collaborations.
5. The pioneers contributed to educational significance by ensuring their plays are studied in schools and universities, inspiring research and curriculum development.



References and Attributions 3

Course Content References

- THA 201 Course Outline: African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Era (institutional course document).
- General cultural and historical context adapted from open educational resources (OERs) on African theatre and colonial studies.

Illustrations

- Plate 3.1: Emergence of African playwrights in colonial Africa

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing an early African playwright presenting a script to actors in a colonial-era African school or church.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “early African playwright colonial era OER image”.

- Figure 3.1: Key contributions of early African playwrights

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing key contributions of early African playwrights: structured narratives, dialogue, characterisation, social commentary, cultural preservation.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “contributions of early African playwrights OER diagram”.

- Plate 3.2: Hubert Ogunde directing a theatre performance

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing Hubert Ogunde in colonial-era Nigeria directing actors on stage.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “Hubert Ogunde Nigerian theatre pioneer OER image”.

- Figure 3.2: Ogunde’s contributions to professional theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing Ogunde’s contributions to professional theatre: ticketed performances, travelling troupes, structured rehearsals, social commentary.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “Ogunde contributions professional African theatre OER diagram”.

- Box 3.2: Selected plays by Hubert Ogunde



Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “Hubert Ogunde selected plays OER list”.

- Plate 3.3: Duro Ladipo performing in a Yoruba-inspired play

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing Duro Ladipo performing in a Yoruba traditional costume on stage.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “Duro Ladipo Yoruba theatre OER image”.

- Figure 3.3: Yoruba traditions in Ladipo’s plays

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing Yoruba traditions in Duro Ladipo’s plays: myths, drumming, chanting, dance, rituals.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “Yoruba traditions Duro Ladipo plays OER diagram”.

- Box 3.3: Selected plays by Duro Ladipo

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “Duro Ladipo selected plays OER list”.

- Plate 3.4: Efua Sutherland directing a rehearsal at the Ghana Drama Studio

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing Efua Sutherland directing actors at the Ghana Drama Studio in Ghana.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “Efua Sutherland Ghana Drama Studio OER image”.

- Figure 3.4: Regional variations in colonial-era African theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing regional variations in colonial-era African theatre: Yoruba/Akan, Swahili, Islamic traditions.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “regional variations African theatre colonial era OER diagram”.

- Box 3.4: Regional pioneers and their contributions

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “African theatre pioneers regional contributions OER list”.



- Plate 3.5: Postcolonial theatre troupe influenced by colonial-era pioneers

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image showing a postcolonial African theatre troupe performing a play inspired by colonial-era pioneers.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “postcolonial African theatre troupe OER image”.

- Figure 3.5: Continuities and transformations in African drama

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing continuities and transformations in African drama: indigenous traditions, music, storytelling vs. modern stagecraft, new themes, collaborations.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “continuities and transformations African drama OER diagram”.

- Box 3.5: Cultural and educational significance of colonial-era pioneers

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “educational significance African theatre pioneers OER list”.

Referencing Style

All references and attributions have been presented in a simplified institutional style, consistent with APA principles for clarity and learner accessibility. Each illustration is either suggested as AI-generated with prompts provided, or linked to potential OER sources for open access learning materials.



Series 4: Colonial Institutions and Their Influence on African Drama

4.1 Missionary Schools And The Promotion Of Religious Drama

- Role of missionary education in shaping African theatre
- Use of biblical stories and moral lessons in school drama
- Influence on literacy and structured performance

4.2 Colonial Administration And Theatre Regulation

- Policies of colonial governments towards African drama
- Censorship and restrictions on performance content
- Encouragement of theatre as a tool for social control

4.3 Media And Popular Entertainment Under Colonial Rule

- Influence of print media and radio on African theatre
- Emergence of popular entertainment forms linked to colonial institutions
- Interaction between traditional performance and colonial media

4.4 Cultural Centres And The Institutionalisation Of Theatre

- Establishment of drama studios and cultural centres
- Role of institutions in training and promoting African playwrights
- Case studies of notable centres (e.g., Ghana Drama Studio)

4.5 Lasting Impact Of Colonial Institutions On African Drama

- Positive and negative legacies of colonial institutions
- Continuities in educational and cultural frameworks
- Influence on postcolonial theatre movements

Introduction



In the last Series, we examined the pioneers of African drama and theatre in the colonial period, focusing on how individuals such as Hubert Ogunde and Duro Ladipo shaped the foundations of modern African theatre. Building on that, this Series turns our attention to the colonial institutions that influenced the growth and direction of African drama. These institutions, ranging from schools and administrative bodies to media and cultural centres, played a decisive role in shaping the content, form, and accessibility of theatre during the colonial era. Understanding their impact helps us appreciate both the constraints and opportunities that defined African drama at the time.

The aim of this Series is to explore how colonial institutions influenced African drama and theatre, highlighting their contributions, limitations, and lasting legacies. By the end of this Series, you will be able to critically assess the role of these institutions in shaping African cultural expression during and after colonial rule.

We shall commence this Series by examining missionary schools and their promotion of religious drama. Next, we will consider the colonial administration and its regulation of theatre, including censorship and control. Following that, we will explore the influence of media and popular entertainment under colonial rule. Moving on, we will study the establishment of cultural centres and their role in institutionalising theatre. Finally, we will wrap up by analysing the lasting impact of colonial institutions on African drama, considering both positive and negative legacies.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- SLO 4.1 explain the role of missionary schools in promoting religious drama and shaping early African theatre,
- SLO 4.2 analyse how colonial administrations regulated theatre through policies, censorship, and social control,
- SLO 4.3 evaluate the influence of colonial-era media and popular entertainment on African drama,
- SLO 4.4 describe the contributions of cultural centres and drama studios to the institutionalisation of theatre, and
- SLO 4.5 assess the lasting impact of colonial institutions on African drama and their influence on postcolonial theatre movements.

4.1 Missionary Schools And The Promotion Of Religious Drama

Missionary schools played a central role in shaping the early development of African drama during the colonial period. They introduced structured performances that combined biblical narratives with moral lessons, thereby influencing both the content and form of African theatre. Religious drama, defined as plays or performances based on biblical stories and Christian teachings, became a common feature in these schools. This type of drama not only reinforced religious instruction but also provided learners with opportunities to practise literacy, memorisation, and public speaking.

Fill in the blank: Religious drama refers to plays or performances based on _____ stories and Christian teachings.



4.1.1 Role of missionary education in shaping African theatre

Missionary schools provided platforms for drama by encouraging students to perform plays during church services, school events, and community gatherings. These performances were often designed to teach moral values and reinforce Christian doctrine. By doing so, missionary education helped to formalise drama as an educational tool and introduced African learners to structured theatrical practices.

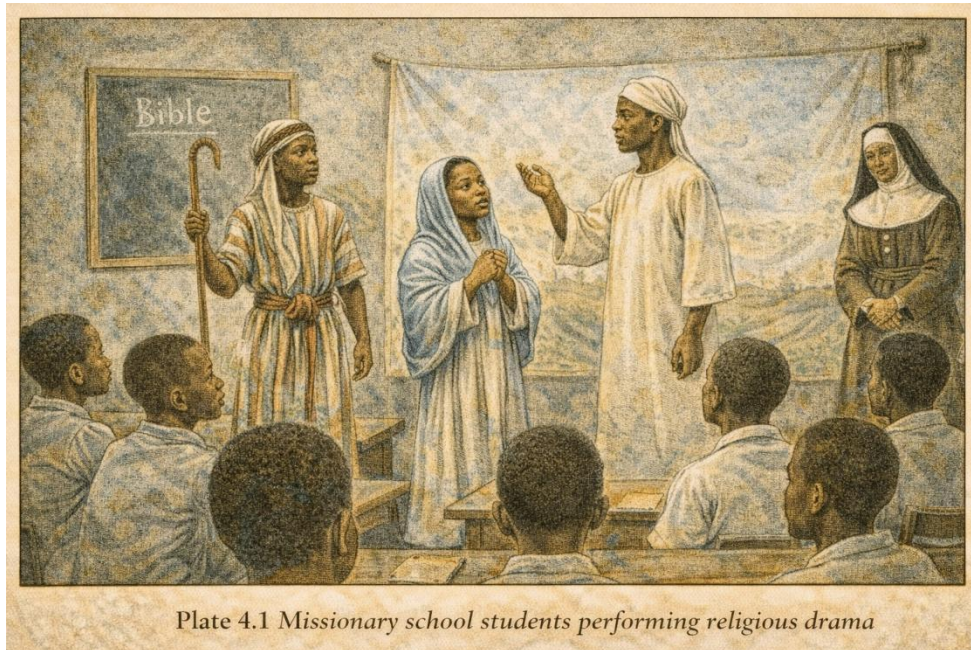


Plate 4.1 Missionary school students performing religious drama

Plate 4.1 Missionary school students performing religious drama

Fill in the blank: Missionary schools used drama to teach moral values and reinforce _____ doctrine.

4.1.2 Use of biblical stories and moral lessons in school drama

Biblical stories such as the parables of Jesus or Old Testament narratives were frequently adapted into plays. These stories were chosen because they were familiar to learners and could easily be linked to moral lessons. Moral lessons, defined as teachings that guide behaviour and decision-making, were embedded in these performances to encourage discipline, obedience, and faith. This approach made drama a tool for both entertainment and religious instruction.



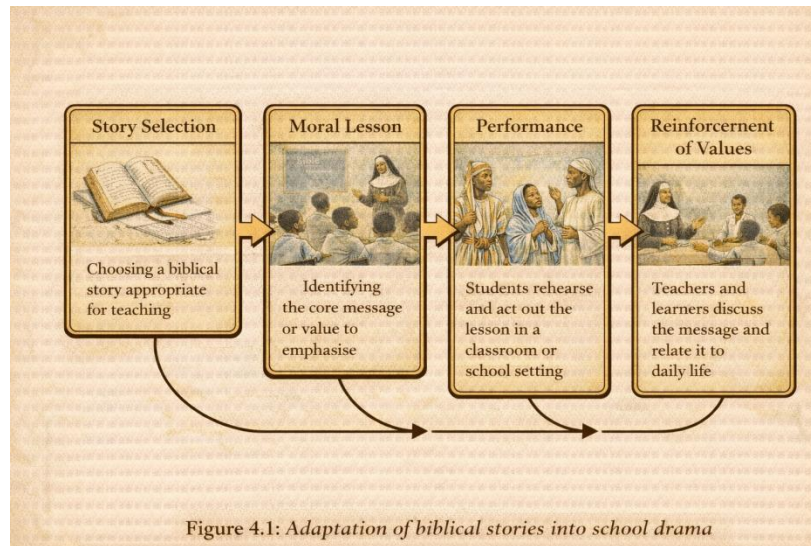
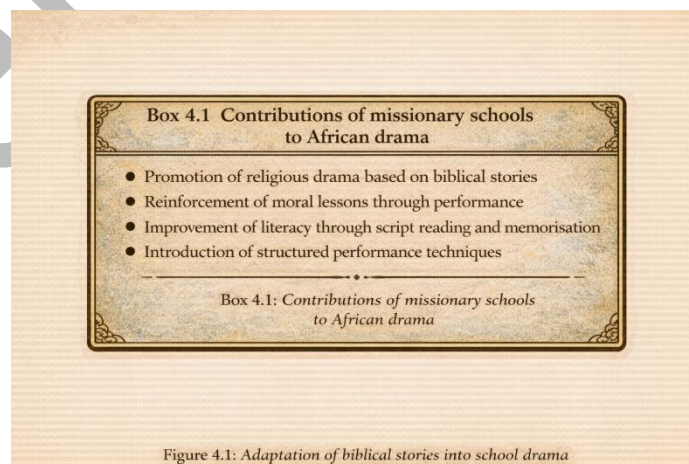


Figure 4.1 Adaptation of biblical stories into school drama

Fill in the blank: Moral lessons are teachings that guide _____ and decision-making.

4.1.3 Influence on literacy and structured performance

Missionary schools used drama as a way to improve literacy, since students had to read, memorise, and recite scripts. This practice encouraged fluency in English and other colonial languages, while also introducing learners to structured performance techniques such as rehearsals, stage discipline, and audience engagement. Structured performance, defined as drama organised with rehearsals, scripts, and clear roles, marked a departure from purely spontaneous traditional performances.



Box 4.1 Contributions of missionary schools to African drama



Fill in the blank: Structured performance refers to drama organised with rehearsals, _____, and clear roles.

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Define religious drama in the context of missionary schools.
2. Explain how missionary education shaped African theatre.
3. State one biblical story commonly adapted into school drama.
4. Define moral lessons and explain their role in religious drama.
5. Describe how missionary schools contributed to literacy and structured performance.

4.2 Colonial Administration And Theatre Regulation

Colonial administrations had a profound influence on African drama, often shaping what could be performed and how it was received by audiences. Their involvement ranged from direct censorship to the use of theatre as a tool for social control. Theatre regulation, defined as the policies and rules imposed by authorities to control dramatic performances, restricted the freedom of playwrights and performers while also creating frameworks that formalised theatre in colonial societies.

Fill in the blank: Theatre regulation refers to the policies and rules imposed by _____ to control dramatic performances.

4.2.1 Policies of colonial governments towards African drama

Colonial governments viewed African drama with suspicion, particularly when it addressed themes of resistance or nationalism. As a result, they introduced policies that limited the scope of performances. Plays were often required to be approved before staging, and performances that criticised colonial rule were banned. These policies reflected the administration's desire to maintain authority and prevent theatre from becoming a platform for political dissent.





Plate 4.2 Colonial officials reviewing African drama scripts

Fill in the blank: Colonial governments often required plays to be _____ before staging.

4.2.2 Censorship and restrictions on performance content

Censorship, defined as the suppression or control of content deemed inappropriate or threatening by authorities, was a common practice in colonial theatre regulation. Performances that included political criticism, nationalist themes, or depictions of colonial injustice were censored or banned. This limited the creative freedom of playwrights but also encouraged them to use allegory, symbolism, and subtle storytelling to convey their messages without direct confrontation.

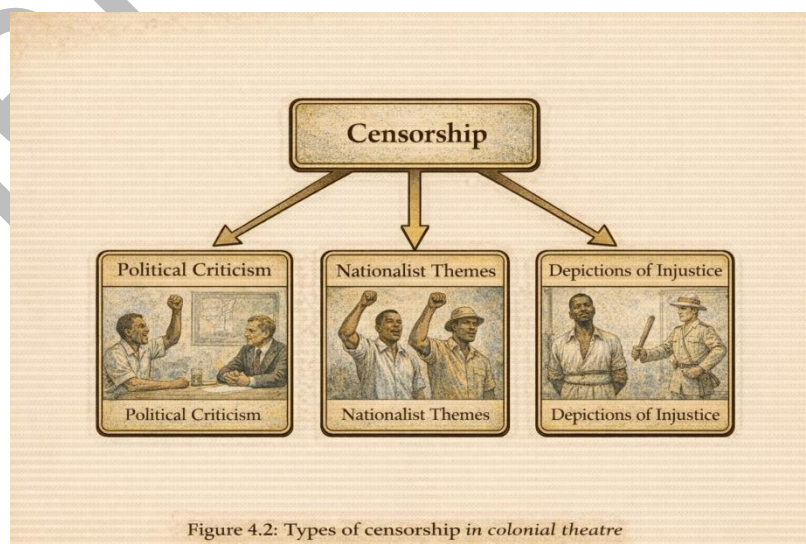
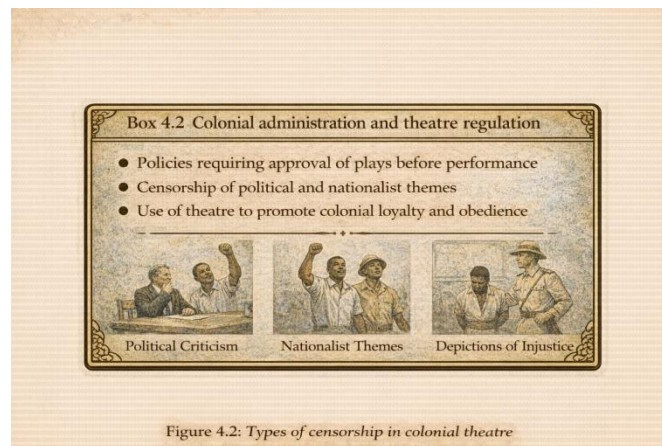


Figure 4.2 Types of censorship in colonial theatre

Fill in the blank: Censorship refers to the suppression or control of _____ deemed inappropriate or threatening by authorities.

4.2.3 Theatre as a tool for social control

Colonial administrations also used theatre to promote loyalty and obedience. Plays were sometimes commissioned to celebrate colonial achievements or reinforce social hierarchies. Social control, defined as the use of institutions and practices to regulate behaviour and maintain authority, was exercised through theatre by shaping public opinion and discouraging resistance. While restrictive, this use of theatre also demonstrated its power as a medium of influence.



Box 4.2 Colonial administration and theatre regulation

Fill in the blank: Social control refers to the use of institutions and practices to regulate _____ and maintain authority.

Pilot questions 4.2

1. Define theatre regulation in the context of colonial administrations.
2. Explain one policy colonial governments introduced to control African drama.
3. Define censorship and give one example of its application in colonial theatre.
4. Describe how colonial administrations used theatre as a tool for social control.
5. State one way playwrights responded to censorship in their works.



4.3 Media And Popular Entertainment Under Colonial Rule

Colonial-era media and popular entertainment had a significant influence on African drama. Print media, radio, and imported entertainment forms shaped how theatre was produced, performed, and consumed. Media, defined as channels of communication such as newspapers, radio, and magazines, provided platforms for promoting plays and spreading colonial narratives. At the same time, popular entertainment, defined as widely accessible forms of leisure such as music, dance, and travelling shows, interacted with traditional performance to create hybrid forms of drama.

Fill in the blank: Media refers to channels of communication such as _____, radio, and magazines.

4.3.1 Influence of print media and radio on African theatre

Print media and radio were powerful tools during the colonial period. Newspapers often advertised plays, reviewed performances, and promoted colonial-approved drama. Radio broadcasts introduced new audiences to theatrical content, sometimes in the form of dramatised readings or musical performances. These platforms expanded the reach of African drama but also reinforced colonial ideologies by controlling which plays were publicised.

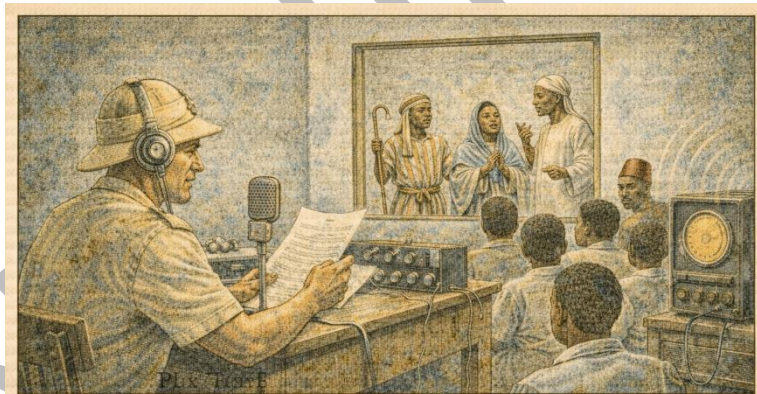


Plate 4.3 Radio broadcast of African drama in the colonial period

Plate 4.3 Radio broadcast of African drama in the colonial period

Plate 4.3 Radio broadcast of African drama in the colonial period

Fill in the blank: Newspapers often advertised plays, reviewed performances, and promoted _____-approved drama.



4.3.2 Emergence of popular entertainment forms linked to colonial institutions

Colonial institutions encouraged entertainment forms such as music halls, cinema, and travelling shows. These became popular among urban audiences and influenced African theatre by introducing new styles of performance. Cinema, defined as the art of motion pictures shown to audiences, competed with live theatre but also inspired playwrights to experiment with visual storytelling. Popular entertainment created opportunities for African performers to reach wider audiences, though often within colonial frameworks.

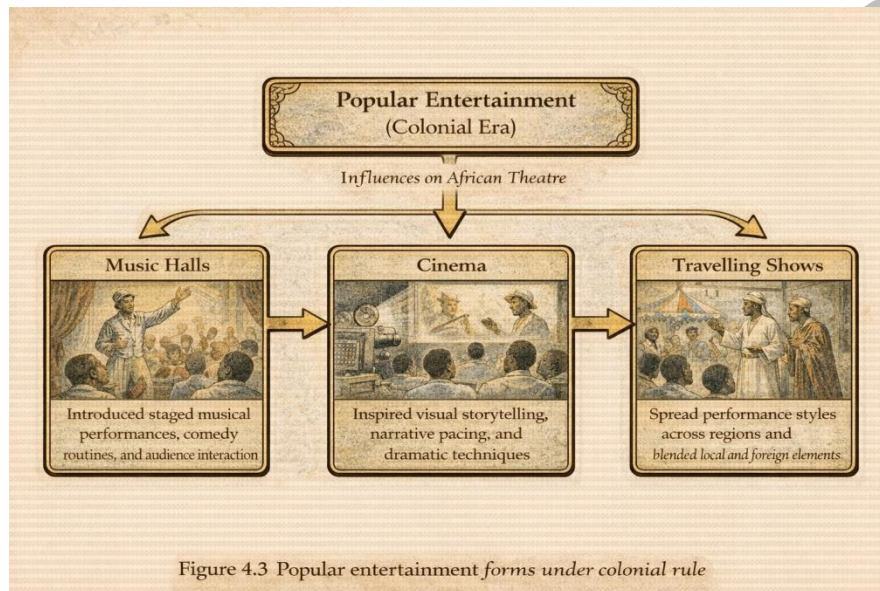


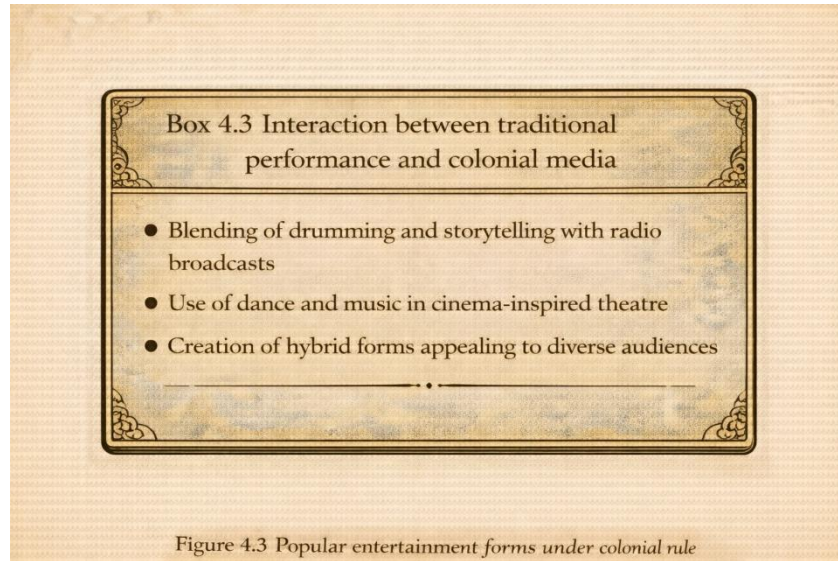
Figure 4.3 Popular entertainment forms under colonial rule

Fill in the blank: Cinema is the art of _____ pictures shown to audiences.

4.3.3 Interaction between traditional performance and colonial media

Traditional African performance styles such as drumming, storytelling, and dance often blended with colonial media and entertainment. This interaction produced hybrid forms of drama that appealed to both African and colonial audiences. Hybrid forms, defined as cultural products that combine elements from different traditions, allowed African theatre to remain relevant while adapting to new influences. These interactions demonstrated the resilience of African culture in the face of colonial dominance.





Box 4.3 Interaction between traditional performance and colonial media

Fill in the blank: Hybrid forms are cultural products that combine elements from different _____.

Pilot questions 4.3

1. Define media in the context of colonial-era African theatre.
2. Explain one way print media or radio influenced African drama.
3. Define cinema and describe its impact on African theatre.
4. State one example of interaction between traditional performance and colonial media.
5. Define hybrid forms and explain their significance in colonial-era drama.

4.4 Cultural Centres And The Institutionalisation Of Theatre

Cultural centres established during the colonial period played a vital role in formalising African drama. These institutions provided spaces for rehearsals, performances, and training, thereby supporting the growth of theatre as both an educational and cultural practice. Institutionalisation of theatre, defined as the process of organising and supporting drama through formal structures such as centres and studios, ensured that African theatre gained recognition and sustainability within colonial societies.



Fill in the blank: Institutionalisation of theatre refers to the process of organising and supporting drama through formal _____.

4.4.1 Establishment of drama studios and cultural centres

Colonial governments and missionary organisations often set up cultural centres and drama studios to promote artistic activities. These centres provided facilities for staging plays, hosting workshops, and nurturing talent. They also served as platforms for experimenting with new forms of drama that blended indigenous traditions with colonial influences.

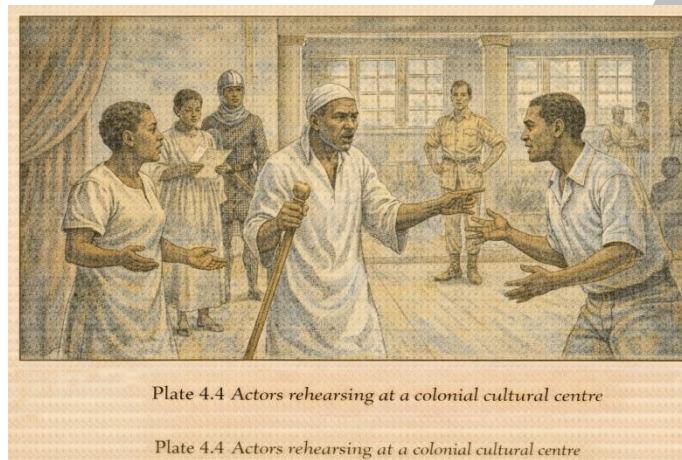


Plate 4.4 Actors rehearsing at a colonial cultural centre

Fill in the blank: Cultural centres provided facilities for staging plays, hosting workshops, and nurturing _____.

4.4.2 Role of institutions in training and promoting African playwrights

Cultural centres offered training opportunities for aspiring playwrights and performers. Workshops and rehearsals helped them develop skills in scriptwriting, acting, and stage management. Playwright training, defined as the structured guidance given to writers to improve their dramatic works, was a key contribution of these institutions. By promoting African playwrights, cultural centres ensured that indigenous voices were represented in theatre despite colonial dominance.



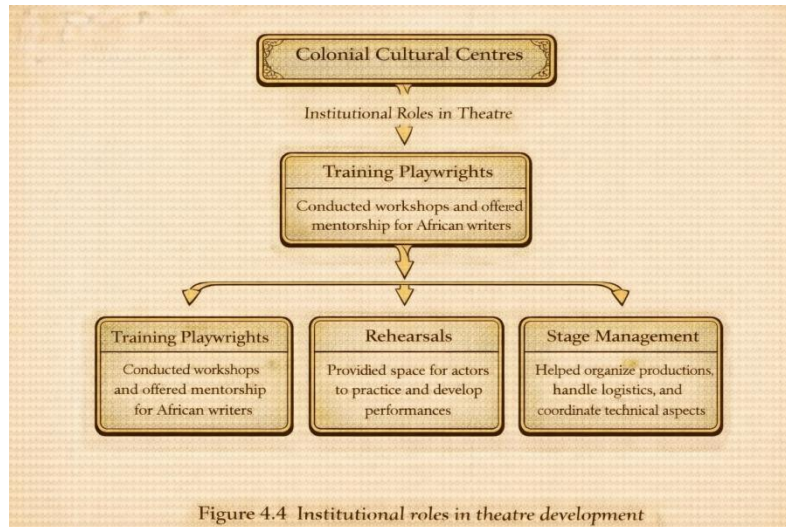


Figure 4.4 Institutional roles in theatre development

Fill in the blank: Playwright training refers to the structured guidance given to writers to improve their _____ works.

4.4.3 Case studies of notable centres

One of the most notable centres was the Ghana Drama Studio, established by Efua Sutherland in 1960. It became a hub for experimental theatre and community drama, providing a model for other African countries. Similar centres emerged in Nigeria and East Africa, each contributing to the institutionalisation of theatre by offering spaces for performance and cultural exchange. These case studies highlight how colonial-era institutions laid the groundwork for postcolonial theatre movements.



Box 4.4

Notable cultural centres in Africa

Notable cultural centres in colonial Africa

-  Ghana Drama Studio (Efua Sutherland, 1960)
-  Nigerian cultural centres supporting community drama
-  East African centres blending of traditional and modern theatre

Box 4.4 Notable cultural centres in colonial Africa

OER

Box 4.4 Notable cultural centres in colonial Africa

Fill in the blank: The Ghana Drama Studio was established by _____ Sutherland in 1960.

Pilot questions 4.4

1. Define institutionalisation of theatre in the colonial context.
2. Explain one role of cultural centres in promoting African drama.
3. Define playwright training and state its importance.
4. Name one notable cultural centre and its founder.
5. Describe how cultural centres contributed to postcolonial theatre movements.

4.5 Lasting Impact Of Colonial Institutions On African Drama

Colonial institutions left behind legacies that continue to shape African drama today. Their influence can be seen in both the positive contributions, such as literacy and structured performance, and the negative effects, such as censorship and cultural



dominance. Lasting impact, defined as the enduring effects of past actions or structures on present practices, is evident in how African theatre evolved during the postcolonial period.

Fill in the blank: Lasting impact refers to the enduring effects of past _____ or structures on present practices.

4.5.1 Positive and negative legacies of colonial institutions

Colonial institutions contributed positively by introducing literacy, structured performance, and cultural centres that nurtured talent. However, they also imposed restrictions through censorship and promoted colonial ideologies that limited creative freedom. These dual legacies created both opportunities and challenges for African playwrights and performers.

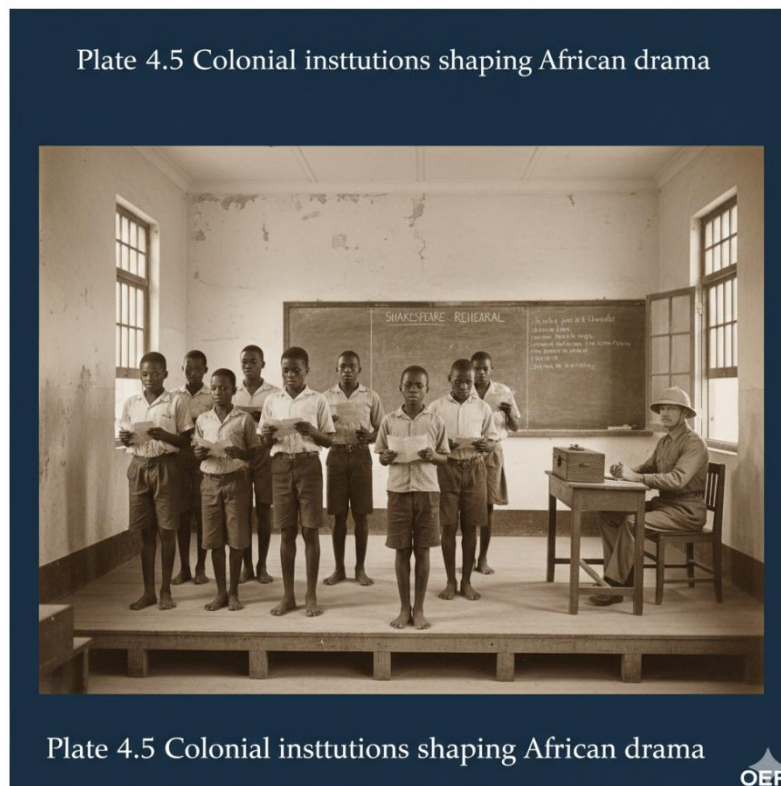


Plate 4.5 Colonial institutions shaping African drama

Fill in the blank: Colonial institutions contributed positively by introducing literacy and structured performance but negatively through _____.



4.5.2 Continuities in educational and cultural frameworks

Certain practices introduced by colonial institutions, such as script-based drama and rehearsals, have continued into postcolonial theatre. Continuities, defined as elements that remain consistent over time, ensured that African drama retained structured approaches to performance. These frameworks also influenced how theatre was taught in schools and universities, embedding drama into formal education systems.



OER

Figure 4.5 Continuities in African drama from colonial institutions

Fill in the blank: Continuities refer to elements that remain _____ over time.

4.5.3 Influence on postcolonial theatre movements

Colonial institutions shaped postcolonial theatre by providing structures that playwrights and performers could adapt. While many resisted colonial ideologies, they retained useful frameworks such as cultural centres, literacy-based drama, and institutional training. Postcolonial theatre movements, defined as dramatic practices emerging after independence that reflect African identity and resistance, were influenced by these colonial legacies. This demonstrates how African theatre transformed colonial structures into tools for cultural pride and political activism.



Box 4.5 Influence of colonial institutions on postcolonial theatre



Retention of cultural centres and drama studios



Integration of literacy-based drama into education



Adaptation of institutional training for African identity



Transformation of colonial frameworks into tools for activism

Box 4.5 Influence of colonial institutions on postcolonial theatre

OER

Box 4.5 Influence of colonial institutions on postcolonial theatre

Fill in the blank: Postcolonial theatre movements are dramatic practices emerging after independence that reflect African _____ and resistance.

Pilot questions 4.5

1. Define lasting impact in the context of colonial institutions and African drama.
2. State one positive and one negative legacy of colonial institutions.
3. Define continuities and give one example in African drama.
4. Explain how colonial institutions influenced postcolonial theatre movements.
5. Describe one way African playwrights transformed colonial frameworks into tools for activism.



Series Summary

This Series has examined the influence of colonial institutions on African drama, highlighting how schools, administrations, media, and cultural centres shaped the development of theatre during the colonial period. Its purpose was to show both the opportunities and constraints created by these institutions, and how their legacies continue to affect African drama today. By engaging with this content, you have gained insight into the ways colonial structures formalised performance, restricted creative freedom, and yet provided frameworks that could be adapted in postcolonial contexts.

We began by exploring missionary schools and their promotion of religious drama, then moved on to the policies and censorship imposed by colonial administrations. Following that, we considered the role of media and popular entertainment in shaping theatre, before examining cultural centres and their contribution to institutionalising drama. Finally, we analysed the lasting impact of these institutions on postcolonial theatre movements. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to explain the role of missionary schools, analyse colonial regulation, evaluate the influence of media, describe the contributions of cultural centres, and assess the enduring impact of colonial institutions on African drama.

Glossary of Terms

- **Censorship:** The suppression or control of content deemed inappropriate or threatening by authorities, often used by colonial administrations to restrict plays with political or nationalist themes.
- **Cinema:** The art of motion pictures shown to audiences, which influenced African theatre by introducing visual storytelling and competing with live performance.
- **Continuities:** Elements that remain consistent over time, such as script-based drama, rehearsals, and theatre in education, carried forward from colonial institutions into postcolonial theatre.
- **Hybrid forms:** Cultural products that combine elements from different traditions, such as blending African drumming and storytelling with colonial media like radio or cinema.
- **Institutionalisation of theatre:** The process of organising and supporting drama through formal structures such as cultural centres and drama studios.
- **Lasting impact:** The enduring effects of past actions or structures on present practices, seen in how colonial institutions shaped postcolonial African drama.
- **Media:** Channels of communication such as newspapers, radio, and magazines, which promoted plays and influenced public opinion during the colonial era.
- **Moral lessons:** Teachings that guide behaviour and decision-making, often embedded in religious drama performed in missionary schools.
- **Playwright training:** Structured guidance given to writers to improve their dramatic works, provided by cultural centres and institutions.



- Popular entertainment: Widely accessible forms of leisure such as music halls, cinema, and travelling shows, which interacted with traditional African performance during colonial times.
- Postcolonial theatre movements: Dramatic practices emerging after independence that reflect African identity and resistance, influenced by colonial legacies.
- Religious drama: Plays or performances based on biblical stories and Christian teachings, promoted in missionary schools to reinforce moral and religious instruction.
- Social control: The use of institutions and practices to regulate behaviour and maintain authority, often exercised by colonial administrations through theatre.
- Structured performance: Drama organised with rehearsals, scripts, and clear roles, introduced in missionary schools as a departure from spontaneous traditional performances.
- Theatre regulation: Policies and rules imposed by colonial authorities to control dramatic performances, including censorship and approval requirements.



Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. Religious drama refers to plays or performances based on _____ stories and Christian teachings. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
 - a) Folktale
 - b) Biblical
 - c) Mythical
 - d) Historical
2. Colonial governments often required plays to be _____ before staging. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
 - a) Printed
 - b) Approved
 - c) Translated
 - d) Advertised
3. Cinema is the art of _____ pictures shown to audiences. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
 - a) Still
 - b) Motion
 - c) Painted
 - d) Silent
4. The Ghana Drama Studio was established by _____ Sutherland in 1960. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
 - a) Efua
 - b) Hubert
 - c) Duro
 - d) Ibrahim
5. Continuities refer to elements that remain _____ over time. (Linked to SLO 4.5)



- a) Hidden
- b) Consistent
- c) Variable
- d) Temporary

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define religious drama in the context of missionary schools. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
7. Explain one policy colonial governments introduced to regulate African drama. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
8. State one way print media or radio influenced African theatre. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
9. Define playwright training and explain its importance. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
10. State one positive and one negative legacy of colonial institutions on African drama. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the role of missionary schools in promoting religious drama and shaping African theatre. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
12. Evaluate how colonial administrations regulated theatre and the impact of censorship on African playwrights. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
13. Assess the influence of colonial-era media and popular entertainment on African drama. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
14. Describe the contributions of cultural centres and drama studios to the institutionalisation of theatre. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
15. Discuss the lasting impact of colonial institutions on African drama and their influence on postcolonial theatre movements. (Linked to SLO 4.5)



Answers to Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. b) Biblical
2. b) Approved
3. b) Motion
4. a) Efua
5. b) Consistent

Short-Answer Questions

6. Religious drama is drama based on biblical stories and Christian teachings, promoted in missionary schools to reinforce moral and religious instruction.
7. Colonial governments required plays to be approved before performance and banned those with nationalist or critical themes.
8. Print media advertised plays and reviewed performances, while radio broadcasts introduced new audiences to dramatised content.
9. Playwright training is structured guidance given to writers to improve their dramatic works, ensuring indigenous voices were represented.
10. Positive legacy: literacy and structured performance. Negative legacy: censorship and restriction of creative freedom.

Long-Answer Questions

11. Basic response: Missionary schools promoted religious drama based on biblical stories, reinforcing moral lessons and literacy.

Value-added response: They also introduced structured performance techniques such as rehearsals and script reading, laying the foundation for formal theatre practices in Africa.



12. Basic response: Colonial administrations regulated theatre through censorship and approval policies that restricted nationalist themes.

Value-added response: Playwrights responded creatively by using allegory and symbolism to bypass censorship, showing resilience and innovation in African drama.

13. Basic response: Media such as newspapers and radio expanded the reach of African drama and promoted colonial-approved plays.

Value-added response: Popular entertainment like cinema and travelling shows blended with traditional performance, creating hybrid forms that appealed to diverse audiences.

14. Basic response: Cultural centres and drama studios provided spaces for rehearsals, training, and performances, supporting playwrights and actors.

Value-added response: Institutions like the Ghana Drama Studio became hubs for experimental theatre and community drama, influencing postcolonial theatre movements across Africa.

15. Basic response: Colonial institutions left lasting impacts such as literacy-based drama and structured performance, alongside censorship.

Value-added response: These legacies shaped postcolonial theatre movements by providing frameworks that were transformed into tools for activism, cultural pride, and identity.

Answers to Pilot Questions 4

Part 4.1

1. Religious drama is drama based on biblical stories and Christian teachings, promoted in missionary schools.
2. Missionary education shaped African theatre by using drama to teach moral values and reinforce Christian doctrine.
3. One biblical story commonly adapted into school drama is the parables of Jesus.
4. Moral lessons are teachings that guide behaviour and decision-making, embedded in religious drama to encourage discipline and faith.
5. Missionary schools contributed to literacy and structured performance by requiring students to read, memorise, and rehearse scripts.

Part 4.2



1. Theatre regulation refers to the policies and rules imposed by colonial authorities to control dramatic performances.
2. Colonial governments introduced policies requiring plays to be approved before staging.
3. Censorship is the suppression or control of content deemed inappropriate or threatening by authorities, such as banning nationalist themes.
4. Colonial administrations used theatre as a tool for social control by promoting loyalty and obedience.
5. Playwrights responded to censorship by using allegory and symbolism to convey messages indirectly.

Part 4.3

1. Media refers to channels of communication such as newspapers, radio, and magazines.
2. Print media advertised plays and reviewed performances, while radio broadcasts introduced new audiences to drama.
3. Cinema is the art of motion pictures shown to audiences, which influenced African theatre by inspiring visual storytelling.
4. Traditional performance interacted with colonial media through blending drumming, storytelling, and dance with radio and cinema.
5. Hybrid forms are cultural products that combine elements from different traditions, making theatre appealing to diverse audiences.

Part 4.4

1. Institutionalisation of theatre is the process of organising and supporting drama through formal structures such as cultural centres.
2. Cultural centres promoted African drama by providing facilities for rehearsals, performances, and workshops.
3. Playwright training is structured guidance given to writers to improve their dramatic works, ensuring indigenous voices were represented.
4. One notable cultural centre is the Ghana Drama Studio, established by Efua Sutherland in 1960.
5. Cultural centres contributed to postcolonial theatre movements by offering spaces for experimentation and cultural exchange.

Part 4.5

1. Lasting impact refers to the enduring effects of past actions or structures on present practices.



2. One positive legacy of colonial institutions is literacy-based drama; one negative legacy is censorship.
3. Continuities are elements that remain consistent over time, such as script-based drama and rehearsals.
4. Colonial institutions influenced postcolonial theatre movements by providing frameworks that playwrights adapted for African identity.
5. African playwrights transformed colonial frameworks into tools for activism and cultural pride.



References and Attributions 4

Course Content References

- THA 201 Course Outline: African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Era (institutional course document).
- General cultural and historical context adapted from open educational resources (OERs) on African theatre, colonial education, and cultural institutions.

Illustrations

- Plate 4.1: Missionary school students performing religious drama

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of African students in a colonial-era missionary school performing a biblical play.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “missionary school religious drama colonial Africa OER image”.

- Figure 4.1: Adaptation of biblical stories into school drama

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing the process of adapting biblical stories into school drama: story selection, moral lesson, performance, reinforcement of values.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “biblical stories adapted into school drama OER diagram”.

- Box 4.1: Contributions of missionary schools to African drama

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “missionary schools contributions African drama OER list”.

- Plate 4.2: Colonial officials reviewing African drama scripts

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of colonial officials in Africa reviewing a play script before performance.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial government censorship African drama OER image”.

- Figure 4.2: Types of censorship in colonial theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing types of censorship in colonial theatre: political criticism, nationalist themes, depictions of injustice.” Platform: AI illustration tool.



Suggested OER search string: “censorship colonial African theatre OER diagram”.

- Box 4.2: Colonial administration and theatre regulation

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial administration theatre regulation African drama OER list”.

- Plate 4.3: Radio broadcast of African drama in the colonial period

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of a colonial-era radio station broadcasting an African play to audiences.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial Africa radio broadcast theatre OER image”.

- Figure 4.3: Popular entertainment forms under colonial rule

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing popular entertainment forms under colonial rule: music halls, cinema, travelling shows, and their influence on African theatre.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial Africa popular entertainment theatre OER diagram”.

- Box 4.3: Interaction between traditional performance and colonial media

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “interaction traditional performance colonial media African theatre OER list”.

- Plate 4.4: Actors rehearsing at a colonial cultural centre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of actors rehearsing a play at a colonial-era cultural centre in Africa.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial cultural centre African drama OER image”.

- Figure 4.4: Institutional roles in theatre development

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing institutional roles in theatre: training playwrights, rehearsals, stage management, promoting indigenous voices.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “institutional role African theatre colonial centres OER diagram”.

- Box 4.4: Notable cultural centres in colonial Africa



Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “Ghana Drama Studio Efua Sutherland colonial African theatre OER list”.

- Plate 4.5: Colonial institutions shaping African drama

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of African students rehearsing a play in a colonial-era classroom, symbolising both literacy and restriction.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “colonial institutions African drama legacy OER image”.

- Figure 4.5: Continuities in African drama from colonial institutions

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing continuities in African drama from colonial institutions: script-based drama, rehearsals, theatre in education.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “continuities colonial institutions African drama OER diagram”.

- Box 4.5: Influence of colonial institutions on postcolonial theatre

Attribution: Institutional compilation. Titles adapted from OER sources.

Suggested OER search string: “postcolonial theatre colonial institutions African drama OER list”.



Series 5: Anti-Colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa

5.1 Drama as a Tool of Anti-Colonial Resistance

- 5.1.1 **Theatre as protest** and political expression
- 5.1.2 Performance as mobilisation and consciousness-raising

5.2 Themes and Concerns in Anti-Colonial African Drama

- 5.2.1 Nationalism, identity, and cultural revival
- 5.2.2 Critique of colonial power and oppression

5.3 Key Playwrights and Practitioners of Anti-Colonial Theatre

- 5.3.1 **Early anti-colonial dramatists and performance groups**
- 5.3.2 Theatre practitioners and popular resistance performances

5.4 Performance Strategies and Aesthetic Choices

- 5.4.1 Use of **symbolism, satire**, and allegory
- 5.4.2 Language choice and audience engagement

INTRODUCTION

As colonial domination intensified across Africa, theatre became an important medium through which Africans expressed **resistance**, dissent, and political awareness. Drama and performance provided a platform for challenging colonial authority, critiquing social injustice, and asserting African identity. Through plays, performances, and popular theatre forms, artists communicated messages that were often restricted in formal political spaces.

The aim of this Series is to examine the role of drama and theatre as instruments of anti-colonial **resistance** in Africa. It focuses on how playwrights and performers used theatre to mobilise



communities, raise political consciousness, and promote nationalist ideals during the colonial period.

We shall commence this Series by examining drama as a tool of anti-colonial **resistance** and political expression. Next, we will explore the dominant themes and concerns reflected in anti-colonial African drama. Following that, attention will be given to key playwrights and theatre practitioners who contributed to **resistance** movements. Finally, we will analyse the performance strategies and aesthetic choices employed to reach and engage diverse audiences.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 5.1 explain how drama and theatre were used as tools of anti-colonial **resistance** in Africa,

SLO 5.2 analyse major themes and concerns expressed in anti-colonial African drama,

SLO 5.3 identify key playwrights and theatre practitioners associated with anti-colonial movements, and

SLO 5.4 evaluate performance strategies and aesthetic choices used to engage and mobilise colonial audiences.

5.1 Drama as a Tool of Anti-Colonial Resistance

5.1.1 Theatre as protest and political expression

During the colonial period, theatre served as a powerful medium for political expression and protest. **Anti-colonial drama** refers to dramatic works and performances that directly or indirectly opposed colonial rule and its associated injustices. Playwrights and performers used theatre to expose exploitation, racial discrimination, and cultural marginalisation.



In many cases, anti-colonial messages were communicated through coded language, **symbolism**, and allegory to avoid censorship by colonial authorities. Performances often criticised colonial policies while appearing, on the surface, to be traditional stories or moral tales.

Fill in the blank: Anti-colonial drama often used _____ and allegory to communicate **resistance**.

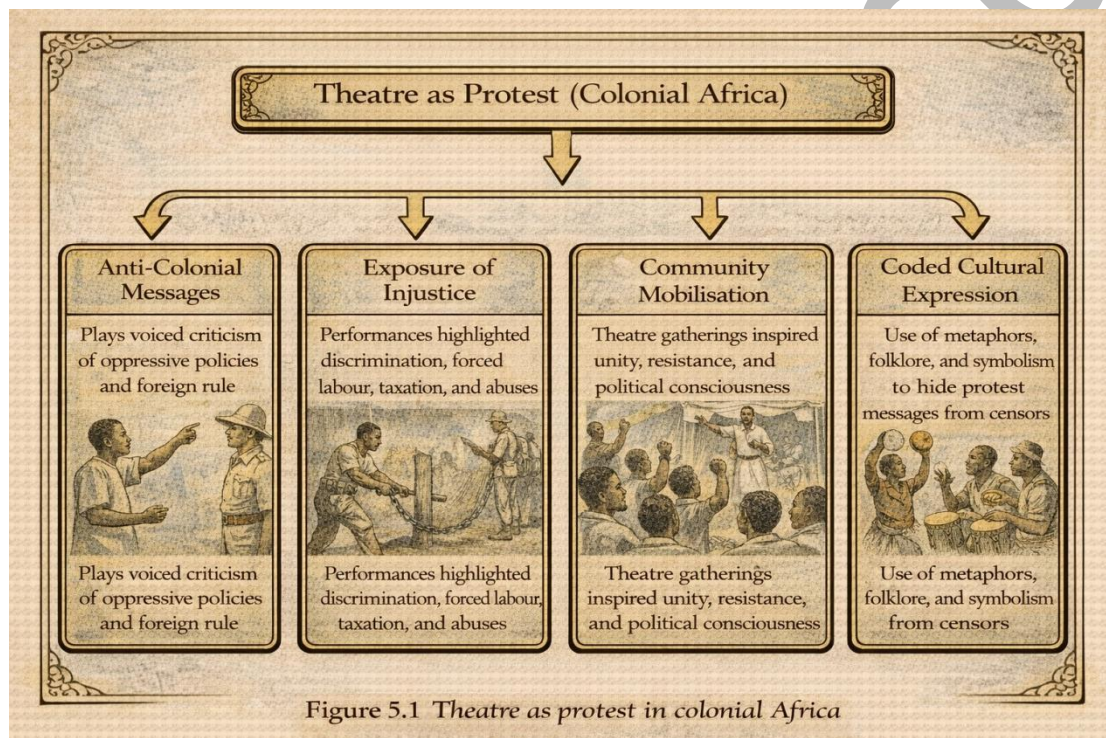


Figure 5.1 Theatre as protest in colonial Africa Sample AI prompt:

5.1.2 Performance as mobilisation and consciousness-raising

Beyond protest, theatre was used to mobilise communities and raise political consciousness. Performances addressed issues such as forced labour, taxation, land alienation, and racial inequality. By presenting these issues in familiar cultural forms, theatre made complex political ideas accessible to ordinary people.



Community-based performances encouraged collective reflection and discussion, helping audiences recognise shared experiences of oppression and the possibility of **resistance**.

Fill in the blank: Anti-colonial theatre helped raise political _____ among colonial subjects.

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. Which of the following best describes anti-colonial drama?

- A. Drama that supports colonial administration
- B. Drama that entertains without political meaning
- C. Drama that challenges colonial rule and injustice
- D. Drama performed only in royal courts

2. Why did playwrights often use **symbolism** and allegory in anti-colonial drama?

- A. To make performances confusing
- B. To avoid colonial censorship
- C. To imitate European theatre
- D. To remove political meaning

3. Anti-colonial performances often addressed issues such as:

- A. Fashion and lifestyle
- B. Forced labour and land alienation
- C. Sports competitions
- D. Trade exhibitions

4. Theatre helped mobilise communities by:

- A. Isolating audiences
- B. Encouraging political apathy
- C. Promoting collective awareness and discussion
- D. Discouraging participation



5.2 Themes and Concerns in Anti-Colonial African Drama

5.2.1 Nationalism, identity, and cultural revival

A major theme in anti-colonial African drama was nationalism. Playwrights used theatre to celebrate African history, culture, and identity, countering colonial narratives that portrayed Africa as inferior. Performances often emphasised pride in indigenous traditions and the need for self-determination.

The revival of traditional music, dance, and storytelling within drama symbolised **cultural resistance** and reaffirmed African identity.

Fill in the blank: Anti-colonial drama promoted _____ and cultural pride.

5.2.2 Critique of colonial power and oppression

Anti-colonial drama also provided a sharp critique of colonial power structures. Colonial administrators, missionaries, and collaborators were often portrayed as oppressive, hypocritical, or morally corrupt. Through **satire** and irony, dramatists exposed the contradictions of colonial rule.

These critiques encouraged audiences to question colonial authority and recognise systems of exploitation.

Fill in the blank: **Satire** was commonly used to _____ colonial authority.

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. Which theme was central to anti-colonial African drama?

- A. Consumerism
- B. Nationalism and identity
- C. Industrial development
- D. Entertainment alone



2. Cultural revival in anti-colonial drama mainly involved:

- A. Rejecting African traditions
- B. Adopting European customs
- C. Reasserting indigenous culture
- D. Avoiding music and dance

3. How were colonial officials often portrayed in anti-colonial drama?

- A. As heroic leaders
- B. As neutral observers
- C. As oppressive or hypocritical figures
- D. As mythological beings

4. **Satire** in anti-colonial drama was used to:

- A. Praise colonial rule
- B. Entertain without meaning
- C. Criticise colonial power
- D. Eliminate political content

5.3 Key Playwrights and Practitioners of Anti-Colonial Theatre

5.3.1 Early anti-colonial dramatists and performance groups

Several African playwrights and theatre groups used drama to articulate **resistance** during the colonial period. Their works often blended political messages with cultural expression. These dramatists laid the foundation for post-colonial African theatre and literature.

Their performances reached both urban and rural audiences, contributing to nationalist movements across the continent.

Fill in the blank: Early anti-colonial dramatists contributed to _____ movements.



5.3.2 Theatre practitioners and popular **resistance** performances

In addition to written plays, popular theatre forms such as street theatre, community drama, and travelling performances played a vital role in **resistance**. These performances were accessible, flexible, and responsive to local concerns.

By performing in public spaces, theatre practitioners bypassed elite institutions and directly engaged ordinary people.

Fill in the blank: Popular **resistance** performances often took place in _____ spaces.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. Anti-colonial playwrights primarily aimed to:
 - A. Entertain colonial officials
 - B. Promote nationalist ideas
 - C. Avoid political issues
 - D. Copy European drama
2. Popular theatre forms were effective because they were:
 - A. Restricted to elite audiences
 - B. Performed only in theatres
 - C. Accessible and community-based
 - D. Written in complex language
3. **Travelling theatre** groups helped **resistance** by:
 - A. Limiting audience reach
 - B. Performing only for officials
 - C. Spreading ideas across regions
 - D. Avoiding political themes
4. Anti-colonial theatre practitioners often performed in:



- A. Private residences
- B. Government offices
- C. Public and communal spaces
- D. Foreign embassies

5.4 Performance Strategies and Aesthetic Choices

5.4.1 Use of **symbolism**, **satire**, and allegory

Anti-colonial theatre relied heavily on **symbolism**, **satire**, and allegory to communicate **resistance** messages. Symbolic characters and plots allowed dramatists to critique colonialism without direct confrontation.

Satirical performances mocked colonial authority and exposed injustice through humour and exaggeration.

Fill in the blank: **Symbolism** allowed dramatists to communicate _____ messages safely.

5.4.2 Language choice and audience engagement

Language choice was crucial in anti-colonial theatre. Performances in indigenous languages reached local audiences more effectively, while those in European languages sometimes targeted educated elites.

By choosing appropriate language and performance style, dramatists maximised audience engagement and political impact.

Fill in the blank: The use of indigenous languages increased audience _____.

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. Why was **symbolism** important in anti-colonial theatre?



- A. It removed political meaning
- B. It helped avoid censorship
- C. It promoted colonial values
- D. It discouraged audiences

2. **Satire** in anti-colonial drama was mainly used to:

- A. Praise colonial officials
- B. Entertain children only
- C. Criticise injustice humorously
- D. Avoid serious topics

3. Performing in indigenous languages helped dramatists to:

- A. Limit audience reach
- B. Engage local communities
- C. Imitate European theatre
- D. Avoid cultural identity

4. Audience engagement was increased through:

- A. Complex foreign language
- B. Use of unfamiliar symbols
- C. Relevant language and performance style
- D. Strict censorship



Series Summary

This Series has examined anti-colonial drama and theatre as powerful instruments of **resistance** during the colonial period in Africa. It highlighted how drama moved beyond entertainment to become a medium for protest, political education, and collective mobilisation. By exploring theatre as a form of political expression, the Series showed how playwrights and performers challenged colonial injustice, censorship, and exploitation through **symbolism**, **satire**, and allegory.

The Series further analysed the major themes and concerns that shaped anti-colonial African drama, including nationalism, cultural revival, identity formation, and critique of colonial authority. Attention was also given to key playwrights, theatre practitioners, and popular performance groups who used both written drama and community-based theatre to spread resistance ideas across urban and rural spaces. In addition, the Series examined performance strategies such as language choice, audience engagement, and aesthetic decisions that enabled theatre to reach diverse audiences effectively.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to explain how drama functioned as a tool of anti-colonial resistance, analyse key themes expressed in anti-colonial African drama, identify influential practitioners and performance forms, and evaluate the effectiveness of theatrical strategies used to mobilise and engage colonial audiences. These competencies directly reflect the Series Learning Outcomes and prepare you for further study of post-colonial African drama and theatre.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Allegory: A narrative or dramatic technique in which characters, events, and actions symbolically represent broader political, social, or moral ideas, often used to disguise resistance messages under colonial censorship.



Anti-colonial drama: Dramatic works and performances that challenge colonial rule, expose injustice, and promote resistance, nationalism, and self-determination.

Audience engagement: The strategies used in performance to involve, educate, and emotionally connect audiences to dramatic content and political messages.

Censorship: The control or suppression of artistic expression by colonial authorities to prevent criticism of colonial rule or the spread of resistance ideas.

Cultural revival: The deliberate reassertion and celebration of indigenous African traditions, values, languages, and performance forms in response to colonial domination.

Nationalism: A political and cultural ideology that emphasises national consciousness, self-rule, and pride in indigenous identity, often expressed through anti-colonial drama.

Political theatre: Theatre that consciously addresses political issues, power relations, and social injustice with the aim of influencing public opinion or promoting change.

Popular theatre: Community-based and accessible theatre forms, including street theatre and travelling performances, designed to reach wide audiences outside formal theatre spaces.

Resistance: Collective actions, expressions, or strategies aimed at opposing colonial authority, exploitation, and cultural domination.

Satire: The use of humour, irony, or exaggeration to criticise colonial officials, institutions, or practices while engaging audiences.

Symbolism: The use of objects, characters, or actions to represent deeper meanings beyond their literal sense, commonly employed to communicate resistance indirectly.

Theatre as protest: The use of dramatic performance as a means of expressing dissent, challenging authority, and mobilising communities against colonial oppression.

Travelling theatre: Mobile theatre performances that move from one community to another, spreading political awareness and resistance ideas across regions.



Concept Check Questions 5

Objective (multiple-choice) questions

1. Anti-colonial drama primarily sought to:

- A. Support colonial authority
- B. Challenge colonial oppression
- C. Avoid political issues
- D. Promote entertainment only

2. **Symbolism** and allegory were used mainly to:

- A. Confuse audiences
- B. Avoid censorship
- C. Remove political meaning
- D. Promote colonial culture

3. Which theme commonly appeared in anti-colonial African drama?

- A. Consumerism
- B. Nationalism
- C. Industrialisation
- D. Tourism

4. Popular theatre forms were effective because they were:

- A. Elite-focused
- B. Restricted
- C. Community-based
- D. Foreign-controlled

Short-Answer Questions

5. Explain how theatre mobilised communities during the colonial period.
6. Identify and discuss two common themes in anti-colonial African drama.
7. Explain how anti-colonial theatre promoted African cultural identity.
8. Evaluate how performance strategies enhanced audience engagement.

Long-Answer Questions



1. Analyse how theatre functioned as a tool of anti-colonial resistance.
2. Evaluate the importance of nationalism and cultural revival in anti-colonial African drama.
3. Assess the contribution of anti-colonial playwrights and theatre practitioners to resistance movements.
4. Examine the effectiveness of performance strategies and language choices in engaging colonial audiences.

Answers to Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C

Short-Answer Questions

5. Theatre mobilised communities by presenting shared experiences of oppression through familiar cultural forms and encouraging collective awareness.
6. Common themes include nationalism, cultural revival, identity, and resistance to colonial oppression.
7. Anti-colonial theatre promoted African identity by celebrating indigenous traditions and challenging colonial narratives.
8. Performance strategies such as symbolism, satire, indigenous language use, and community-based staging enhanced engagement.

Long-Answer Questions

9. Basic response: Theatre functioned as a tool of resistance by exposing colonial injustice and promoting political awareness.

Value-added response: It mobilised communities, preserved African identity, and strengthened nationalist movements.

10. Basic response: Nationalism and cultural revival countered colonial narratives of inferiority.

Value-added response: They affirmed African identity and inspired collective resistance across Africa.



11. Basic response: Playwrights used drama to spread resistance ideas and mobilise audiences.

Value-added response: Their work laid the foundation for post-colonial African theatre through political commitment and artistic innovation.

12. Basic response: Performance strategies determined audience access and understanding.

Value-added response: Use of indigenous languages and symbolism increased effectiveness while avoiding censorship.

Answers to Pilot Questions 5

Part 5.1

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. C

Part 5.2

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C

Part 5.3

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C

Part 5.4

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. C



References and Attributions

Course Content References

- THA 201 Course Outline: African Drama and Theatre in the Colonial Era (institutional course document).
- General cultural and historical context adapted from open educational resources (OERs) on African theatre, colonial **resistance**, and cultural identity.

Illustrations

- Figure 5.1: **Theatre as protest** in colonial Africa

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a diagram illustrating how theatre functioned as a form of protest and political expression during colonial rule in Africa.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “anti-colonial African theatre protest diagram OER.”

- Plate 5.1: Performance as mobilisation and consciousness-raising

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of African community theatre during colonial rule, showing mobilisation and collective awareness.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “anti-colonial African theatre mobilisation OER image.”

- Figure 5.2: Themes of nationalism and cultural revival in anti-colonial drama

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing themes of nationalism, identity, and cultural revival in anti-colonial African drama.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “nationalism cultural revival anti-colonial African drama OER diagram.”

- Plate 5.2: Critique of colonial power through **satire**

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of an African stage performance using **satire** to critique colonial officials.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “**satire** colonial officials African drama OER image.”

- Figure 5.3: Early anti-colonial dramatists and performance groups

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a diagram showing contributions of early anti-colonial dramatists and performance groups to nationalist movements.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “early anti-colonial dramatists African theatre OER diagram.”



- Plate 5.3: Popular **resistance** performances in public spaces

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of African street theatre during colonial rule, performed in public spaces.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “popular **resistance** performances colonial Africa OER image.”

- Figure 5.4: Performance strategies in anti-colonial theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Create a labelled diagram showing performance strategies in anti-colonial theatre: **symbolism**, **satire**, allegory, language choice, audience engagement.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “performance strategies anti-colonial African theatre OER diagram.”

- Plate 5.4: Indigenous language use in anti-colonial theatre

Attribution: Suggested as AI-generated. Prompt: “Generate an image of African performers using indigenous languages in anti-colonial theatre to engage audiences.” Platform: AI illustration tool.

Suggested OER search string: “indigenous language anti-colonial African theatre OER image.”

