PERFORMING ARTS OR THEATRE

Storytelling and Animation

Elements of a story

Characters

Characters are the participants who feature in a story. They drive the action and carry the ideas the author wants to share with the audience. Each character has a unique personality that either supports or opposes the author's message.

Stories generally organise characters by the function they play:

a) The protagonist is the central character. The story follows this character as they try to achieve an objective while facing obstacles that must be overcome. In many stories, the protagonist represents the good that sets out to defeat evil in society. Protagonists often have a confidant - a close friend or advisor in whom they share their fears, struggles and thoughts and from whom they seek advice or support.

b) The antagonist is the character or force that opposes the protagonist. The antagonist creates the obstacles the protagonist must overcome and in many stories represents the evil in society.

c) Minor characters form the background of a story. They play smaller roles in the story's development compared to the protagonist and antagonist and a story may have two or more of them depending on its length and scope.

d) Writers also present characters in different ways. A rounded character is shown in full, with strengths and flaws that may change depending on circumstances. A flat character is shown in only one dimension; we might meet such a character at their best, where only positive traits like kindness are shown or at their worst, where only a negative trait like greed is highlighted.

Setting

Setting is the place and time in which the events of a story take place. It tells the audience when and where the narrative happens and can be broken into three parts:

a) Physical setting - the geographical location of the story, for example, on a farm, in a village, at the market or in Mombasa.
b) Time period - the specific time of action, for example, at 8:00 a.m., on a Friday, during the Mau Mau period, in pre-colonial times or in the 21st century.
c) Cultural setting - the societal structures the story is set within, for example, a Christian setting, an Agikuyu setting or a Muslim setting.

Plot

Plot is the sequence of events that make up a complete story. Every action is caused by another action and affects what happens next - plot can be described as the cause and effect of action. There are three common types of plot:

- Linear plot - events unfold in chronological order, with a clear beginning, middle and end.
- Episodic plot - the story is made up of a series of loosely connected episodes, held together mainly by the main characters or a central theme.
- Complex plot - events do not follow a strict chronological order. The story may use flashbacks or flash-forwards to reveal information out of sequence.

Theme

Whenever a storyteller takes the stage, they do so with an intention. Theme is the main idea the story creator wishes to address - it can also be called the subject matter or the underlying message of the story. There are two universal themes that every story explores in some form: good versus evil. Stories break this down into specific issues such as love, selflessness, greed or corruption.

Techniques used in Storytelling

Use of Voice

Voice can be looked at from three perspectives. The author's voice reflects the writer's viewpoint on the message or idea in the story - their attitude can be seen in how they address issues such as corruption, health or leadership, for example through criticism using styles like satire or through showing a liking for characters who triumph in their struggles. The narrator's voice is the specific person who tells the story - for example, a child facing challenges in pursuit of an education, a citizen sharing the struggles of their country or a leader faced with tough choices. Through the choice of narrator, the audience may empathise with the character and become drawn into the story. The character's voice is how each character expresses themselves through speech and inner thought; in a good story, every character's voice should be unique enough to feel convincing as an individual.

- **Use of Body**

The body provides the non-verbal component of storytelling. Gestures, eye contact, stage movement and posture all contribute to strong communication that delivers the intended message

to the audience. When combined with voice, these elements help a performance achieve emotional intensity.

- **Use of Songs**

Songs are a powerful way to communicate emotion, strengthen a message and help the audience remember the story. They provide a break from the monotony of narration and can tell part of the story by revealing what is not directly said.

- **Audience Involvement**

Audience involvement turns storytelling from a passive experience into an active one. This can be achieved through participation in singing, asking questions and reacting to humorous parts of the story through laughter and clapping. This helps the audience retain and feel ownership of the story.

- **Props and Costumes**

Costumes are the attire worn by a character on stage, while props are the movable objects handled by performers. Both help communicate character and setting to the audience.

- **Storyline**

A storyline has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning introduces the audience to the characters, the main idea and the central conflict. The middle builds up the action and the end resolves the conflict.

Composing a 3 to 5 minute story addressing an issue in society

Composing a convincing 3 to 5 minute story that addresses a social issue means balancing a clear plot, a focused theme, audience impact and tight structure. The following steps will guide you.

Step 1: Choose a Particular Issue or Theme

Pick one clear topic to address. It is important to choose a pertinent and contemporary issue affecting society, such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, corruption, climate change or a health concern. Because your story is short - only 3 to 5 minutes - avoid trying to address too many issues at once.

Step 2: Structure the Story

A 3 to 5 minute story usually fits into three parts:

Introduction (about 1 minute) - hook the audience with a vivid scene or a relatable character.

Conflict (about 2 minutes) - show the challenge the main character needs to overcome, for example discrimination based on social class and build the disagreement or struggle towards a climax.

Resolution or Call to Action (about 1 to 2 minutes) - end with a message of hope, change or a challenge to the audience. It often works well to make the main character victorious.

Use Appealing Storytelling Techniques

Strengthen your story using techniques such as description (to paint mental pictures for the audience), humour (to create comic relief), imagery (to enrich language), suspense (to keep the

audience hooked) and symbolism (to let an object or idea carry several layers of meaning). A good story usually ends with a moral. Keep your sentences short and impactful throughout.

Perform a 3- to 5-minute story before an audience

A story is given life through performance. A good performance depends on a strong narrator – someone who is versatile, outgoing, bold and creative in their use of language, body and stage space.
The use of non-verbal cues is key to keeping the audience engaged throughout the narration. These include eye contact, dramatisation and the use of gestures. Costumes and props are also important additions to a good storytelling session, as they help depict character and setting clearly to the audience.
Audience involvement plays a major role in completing the narration process. The audience gives instant feedback through clapping, joining in with singing and chants and showing general appreciation of the story. A confident performer pays attention to this feedback and uses it to keep the audience engaged from beginning to end.

Realise storytelling as a means of communication

Storytelling is one of the oldest and most powerful ways that human beings have shared ideas, values and experiences with one another. A single story can inform, entertain, warn, teach a lesson and call its audience to action, often all at the same time.
The techniques you have learned in this section - voice, body, songs, audience involvement, props and costumes - all work together to connect the storyteller and the listener on an emotional level. This connection is what makes storytelling different from simply reading or hearing information; it invites the audience to feel something and to respond.
Stories also help communities preserve their culture, history and identity, passing knowledge and lessons from one generation to the next. When you compose and perform your own stories, you are taking part in this same tradition - using storytelling not just to entertain, but to communicate something meaningful about the world around you.

Verse

Elements of a Verse

When analysing or performing a verse, think beyond the words on the page. Identify who is speaking, what the verse communicates and where or in what situation the events occur.

- **Persona** refers to the voice or character speaking in the verse. The persona may be the poet, but it can also be an imagined character, an animal, an object or another person. Identifying the persona helps you understand the speaker's feelings, experiences and point of view.
- **Theme** is the central idea or message explored in the verse. Common themes include love, friendship, environmental conservation, courage, conflict, poverty, equality, responsibility and hope. A verse may contain more than one theme, but usually one idea stands out as the main message.
- **Setting** refers to the time, place and circumstances in which the verse occurs. The setting may be real or imaginary. It can influence the mood of the verse and help explain the behaviour of the persona.

Remember

When reading a verse, ask:

- **Persona:** Who is speaking?
- **Theme:** What important idea is being communicated?
- **Setting:** Where, when and under what circumstances does it happen?

A verse may also be presented as a solo or choral performance. In a solo performance, one person carries the entire verse, while a choral performance involves several performers who may speak together, alternate lines or respond to one another.

Language use in verse

Language in verse is carefully selected to create meaning, emotion, pictures and sound. The same message can feel completely different depending on the words chosen.

Structure of a verse

- A **word** is a basic unit of language.
- A **line** is a group of words arranged as one unit in a verse.
- A **stanza** is a group of lines forming a section of a verse.

Stanzas can help separate different ideas, stages of an event or changes in mood.

Important language devices

- **Metaphor** directly compares two unlike things without using *like* or *as*.
  Example: *The classroom was a beehive.*
  This suggests that the classroom was very busy and active.

- **Simile** compares two things using *like* or *as*.
  Example: *She ran like the wind.*
- **Personification** gives human qualities or actions to non-human things.
  Example: *The angry river swallowed the bridge.*
- **Imagery** creates a mental picture through sensory description. It may appeal to sight, sound, smell, taste or touch.
  Example: *The warm, golden sun spread across the quiet fields.*
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of similar initial consonant sounds in nearby words.
  Example: *Peter picked purple petals.*
- **Onomatopoeia** uses words that imitate or suggest actual sounds.
  Examples: *buzz, bang, splash, hiss.*
- **Ideophones** are expressive words that vividly represent a sound, action, movement, appearance or state. They are particularly important in many African languages and oral traditions.
- **Rhyme** occurs when words have similar ending sounds. It can make a verse memorable and enjoyable to perform.
- **Rhythm** is the pattern of beats and stresses created as words are spoken. It influences the movement and pace of a performance.
- **Repetition** involves deliberately repeating a word, phrase or line to emphasise an idea or make it memorable.
- **Diction** refers to the poet's choice of words. Words such as *whispered, shouted, stumbled* and *marched* communicate more than the basic actions *said, spoke, walked* or *went*.

How language affects meaning

A good learner should not only identify a device but also explain its effect.

For example:

> *The lonely tree stretched its arms towards the sky.*

The personification makes the tree seem human, while the phrase *lonely tree* creates a feeling of isolation.

Revision tip: When asked to identify a language device, use this pattern:

Device → Evidence → Effect

Example:
Personification → *"The river danced."* → makes the river seem lively and creates a vivid image.

Composing a verse about a social issue

A strong verse about a social issue should do more than mention a problem. It should make the audience think, feel or respond.

Possible issues include:

- Environmental pollution
- Bullying
- Child neglect
- Drug and substance abuse
- Gender inequality
- Poverty
- Road safety
- Discrimination
- School absenteeism
- Protection of wildlife
- Peace and conflict
- Responsible use of technology

When developing your verse, consider how the persona, theme, setting and language devices work together.

For example, speaking as a polluted river can make environmental pollution more personal:

> *I carried your boats yesterday,*
> *Today I carry your waste.*

The river becomes the persona, while the contrast between *boats* and *waste* communicates environmental change.

A social verse may develop through a clear progression:

Situation → Problem → Effects → Response or call to action

The ending is particularly important. A strong final line may leave the audience with a question, warning, challenge, hope or memorable statement.

Performing a verse before an audience

A successful performance combines understanding, voice, movement and emotional expression.

Performance choices to consider

- **Pace:** The speed at which the verse is delivered. A slower pace may suit sadness or reflection, while a faster pace can communicate excitement, urgency or anger.
- **Pauses:** Short periods of silence can give important words greater impact. A pause before a key statement can also create anticipation.
- **Pitch:** Changes in the highness or lowness of the voice can help communicate emotion and meaning.
- **Volume:** Speaking more loudly can emphasise an important idea, while a softer voice can create intimacy, suspense or sadness.
- **Tone:** The quality or manner of the voice should suit the persona and mood.
- **Facial expression:** The face should communicate emotions that support the meaning of the verse.
- **Gesture:** Hand and body movements can reinforce important words but should not become distracting.
- **Eye contact:** Looking at different members of the audience creates connection and confidence.
- **Posture:** An upright, balanced posture helps projection and creates stage confidence.

Matching delivery to meaning

Do not perform every line in exactly the same way. A verse may contain several emotional changes.

For example:

- A line expressing fear may be delivered softly and slowly.
- A line expressing anger may use stronger projection and firmer gestures.
- A line expressing hope may use a brighter tone and confident posture.
- A warning may require a deliberate pause before the final words.

The goal is not to use as many performance techniques as possible. Use each technique where it strengthens meaning.

Verse as a means of communication

Verse is a powerful form of communication because it combines words, sound, emotion, imagination and performance.

It can be used to:

- Inform people about an issue.
- Educate an audience about values or behaviour.
- Entertain through rhythm, imagery and performance.

- Persuade people to change their attitudes or actions.
- Express emotions such as joy, grief, anger or hope.
- Preserve culture through stories, values, beliefs and oral traditions.
- Create awareness about social and environmental concerns.
- Build unity by giving communities shared experiences and messages.

In oral traditions, verse can be remembered and passed from one generation to another. This makes it useful for preserving history, cultural knowledge, moral values and community identity.

Why performance matters

Written verse communicates through the page, but performed verse adds another dimension. The performer uses voice, facial expression, gesture, movement, rhythm and pauses to communicate meaning.

The audience is also part of the communication process. Their attention, reactions and responses can influence the energy of a performance.

Therefore, verse should be viewed not merely as an arrangement of beautiful words, but as a living form of communication that can inform, influence, unite and move people.

Play

Describe elements of a play

A play is a literary work meant to be performed on stage by actors before an audience. It tells a story mainly through dialogue, action, movement and stage directions rather than through long narration. Because it is performed, a play must be clear, lively and easy for both actors and the audience to follow.

Main elements of a play

- **Plot**. This is the sequence of events in the play, showing what happens from the beginning to the end. A plot usually has an introduction, a problem, rising action, a climax and a resolution.
- **Characters**. These are the people or sometimes animals in the play. The characters carry the action of the story and help reveal the message.
- **Setting**. This is the place and time where the play takes place. A play may happen in a home, school, village, hospital, market or office.

- **Dialogue**. These are the spoken words of the characters. Dialogue is the most important feature of a play because it helps the audience understand the story.
- **Conflict**. This is the problem or struggle that the characters face. It creates tension and keeps the audience interested.
- **Theme**. This is the central message or idea in the play. Examples include honesty, unity, corruption, peer pressure, drug abuse or environmental conservation.
- **Stage directions**. These are instructions written by the playwright to guide actors, such as where to stand, how to speak, when to enter or leave and what expression to show.
- **Props**. These are objects used during the performance, such as books, chairs, bottles, phones or bags.
- **Costumes**. These are the clothes worn by the actors to show the kind of character they are playing.
- **Sound and lighting**. These help create mood, show the time of day and make the performance realistic.

Why these elements matter

Each element has a role in making the play understandable and enjoyable. Without characters, there is no one to act the story. Without dialogue, the audience may not understand what is happening. Without conflict, the story may become dull. Without setting and stage directions, the performance may lack realism and order.

Key note

A play is not just a story written on paper. It is a story designed to be acted out, so every element must support performance.

Describe the format of a play script

A play script is written in a special format that tells actors what to say and do on stage. Unlike a short story or novel, a play script has less description and more direct speech. The layout is meant to help performers, directors and readers understand the action quickly.

Parts of a play script

- **Title**. This is the name of the play.
- **Name of the playwright**. This is the person who wrote the play.
- **List of characters**. This appears near the beginning and gives the names of the people in the play.
- **Setting**. This tells where and when the play takes place.

- **Acts**. These are the major divisions of a play. A long play may have several acts.
- **Scenes**. These are smaller parts within an act. A scene usually changes when the place, time or action changes.
- **Dialogue**. This is written under the character's name and shows what the character says.
- **Stage directions**. These are usually written in brackets or italics and guide movement, tone and actions.
- **End of scene or act**. This shows that a section is complete.

Simple script format example

Title: The Right Choice

Characters:
Amina
Brian
Teacher

Setting:
A classroom, morning time

Scene 1

(Teacher enters the classroom.)

TEACHER: Good morning, class.

STUDENTS: Good morning, Teacher.

AMINA: Teacher, Brian says he did not do his homework.

BRIAN: I was helping my mother at home.

TEACHER: That is good, but you must also take responsibility for your schoolwork.

Features of script writing

- Character names are usually written in capital letters or clearly marked.
- Each speaker starts on a new line.
- Stage directions are separated from dialogue.
- The words should be simple, clear and natural.
- The script should be easy to perform aloud.

Importance of format

The format helps the actors know who is speaking and what action to perform. It also helps the audience or readers follow the play without confusion. A neat format makes the script professional and easy to stage.

Create a one-act play addressing a societal issue

A one-act play is a short play that has only one main act. It is usually simple in structure, with a small number of characters, one main setting and one major problem. Because it is short, it is easy to perform in schools and community gatherings.

Purpose of a one-act play

A one-act play can be used to educate, warn, persuade or entertain. It is especially useful when addressing social issues because it delivers a message quickly and clearly. The play should focus on one central issue so that the audience can understand the lesson easily.

Common societal issues for one-act plays

- Drug and substance abuse.
- Peer pressure.
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Child labour.
- Corruption.
- Bullying.
- Truancy.
- Gender-based violence.
- Poor hygiene.
- Early marriage.
- Exam cheating.
- Environmental pollution.

Steps in writing a one-act play

a) Choose the issue: Pick one problem that affects individuals or the community.

b) Decide the message: Think about what you want the audience to learn. For example, “Drug abuse destroys the future.”

c) Create characters: Choose characters who can show different sides of the issue, such as a victim, a wrongdoer, a parent, a teacher or a friend.

d) Choose the setting: Use one place that suits the story, such as a school, home, street, clinic or market.

e) Build the plot: The story should have:

- Beginning. Introduce the characters and situation.
- Middle. Show the problem and the conflict.
- Climax. Reach the most serious point of the problem.
- Ending. Show the solution or lesson.

f) Write dialogue: Make the words natural and clear. Avoid very long speeches.

g) Include stage directions: Show how the actors should move, speak and behave.

Qualities of a good one-act play

- It is short but meaningful.
- It focuses on one main idea.
- It has a clear beginning, middle and ending.
- It has believable characters.
- It uses simple and powerful dialogue.
- It gives a clear lesson or moral.

Example of a societal issue play idea

Title: Say No to Peer Pressure
Issue: A learner is pressured by friends to skip school and join bad habits.
Message: Good friends help you make wise choices.

Sample one-act play

Title: Say No to Peer Pressure

Characters:
Maya - a student
Lucy - her friend
Mr. Otieno - teacher
Mother - Maya's mother

Setting: School compound and home

Scene 1

(Students are leaving school.)

LUCY: Maya, let us go to town. School is boring today.

MAYA: But we still have homework and an exam tomorrow.

LUCY: Come on, just one afternoon. No one will know.

MAYA: I am not sure. My mother expects me home early.

LUCY: You worry too much. Everyone is doing it.

(Mr. Otieno enters.)

MR. OTIENO: What are you doing here after school hours?

LUCY: We were just talking, sir.

MR. OTIENO: Maya, remember that your future depends on the choices you make today.

MAYA: Yes, sir. I will go home and study.

LUCY: Maybe I should also go home and read.

(Maya and Lucy leave.)

Scene 2

(Home scene)

MOTHER: Maya, you are home early. That is good.

MAYA: I was tempted to go out with Lucy, but I chose to come home and study.

MOTHER: I am proud of you. Real friends should lead you to success, not failure.

Act a role in a play performance

To act a role means to perform as a character in a play. Acting is more than saying lines. It involves understanding the character, showing emotions and using the body and voice effectively.

What an actor should do

- Read the script carefully.

- Understand the character's personality, feelings and purpose.
- Learn the lines well.
- Follow stage directions.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough.
- Use facial expressions and gestures.
- Move naturally on stage.
- Work well with other actors.
- Stay focused during the entire performance.

Important acting skills

- **Voice control -** The actor should vary tone, pitch and volume depending on the situation. For example, a sad character may speak softly, while an angry character may speak more sharply.
- **Facial expression –** The face should show the character's feelings, such as happiness, fear, anger, surprise or confusion.
- **Body movement -** Gestures, posture and walking style help the audience understand the role.
- **Confidence -** A confident actor performs without fear and helps the audience believe the character.
- **Memorisation -** Actors should know their lines well so they can perform smoothly and without too much hesitation.

Types of roles

- **Main role**. The most important character in the play.
- **Supporting role**. A character who helps develop the story.
- **Minor role**. A small role with few lines.
- **Antagonistic role**. A character who creates problems or opposes the main character.

Tips for successful performance

- Practise repeatedly.
- Listen to other actors.
- Do not speak too fast.
- Enter and exit the stage at the correct time.
- Use props correctly.
- Dress appropriately for the character.

Key note

A good performance should make the audience understand the message without the actor needing to explain everything.

Recognise play performance as a channel of addressing societal issues

Play performance is an important tool for addressing social problems because it speaks to people directly and interestingly. It is often more powerful than a lecture because it shows the problem in action.

How plays address issues

- They expose bad behaviour.
- They show the results of poor choices.
- They educate the public.
- They encourage discussion.
- They promote change in attitudes and behaviour.

Why performance is effective

- People remember stories more easily than plain facts.
- The audience sees the issue happen before them.
- Emotions make the message stronger.
- Different characters can show different viewpoints.
- The message can reach both learners and adults.

Plays can be performed in schools, churches, community gatherings and public events. They can teach moral lessons and bring awareness to real-life problems. They can also inspire people to find solutions together.

Kenyan Folk songs

Classifying folk songs in Kenyan communities

Folk songs are traditional songs passed from one generation to another in a community. They reflect the culture, beliefs, activities and values of the people who sing them. In Kenya, folk songs are classified in different ways depending on the purpose, occasion, style of singing and the community of origin.

a) **By occasion or purpose**

- **Naming songs**. Sung when a child is born or named. They welcome the baby into the family and community.
- **Worship songs**. Sung in religious settings to praise God, encourage believers and express faith.
- **Marriage songs**. Sung during weddings to celebrate the bride and groom and give advice to the couple.
- **Work songs**. Sung while people are farming, herding, cooking, building or doing other work. They motivate workers and make work easier.
- **Initiation songs**. Sung during circumcision and transition to adulthood. They teach values, bravery, discipline and community expectations.
- **Funeral songs**. Sung when people mourn the dead. They comfort the bereaved and help the community share grief.
- **Praise songs**. Sung to honour heroes, elders, leaders or people who have done something special.
- **Children's songs**. Sung to entertain children, teach morals and help with language development.
- **War songs**. Sung to encourage warriors, build courage and prepare people for defence or struggle.
- **Solo songs**. Sung by one person, sometimes with accompaniment.
- **Choral songs**. Sung by a group or chorus, often with response from the audience or other singers.

b) By community of origin

Different Kenyan communities have folk songs linked to their traditions and ceremonies. Examples include Luhya Isukuti songs, Kikuyu praise and initiation songs, Kamba Kilumi songs, Luo Dodo and Ohangla songs, Maasai Adumu songs, Mijikenda Kifudu songs, Turkana pastoral and war songs and Swahili taarab and wedding songs. These songs may differ in language, rhythm, dance style, instruments and performance occasion.

c) By function in society

- **Entertainment songs**. These amuse people during gatherings.
- **Instructional songs**. These teach morals, history or social expectations.
- **Ceremonial songs**. These are sung during special events like weddings, funerals or initiations.
- **Work songs**. These support physical tasks and improve teamwork.
- **Religious songs**. These express worship and spiritual beliefs.

Type the links provided below into a browser to watch videos and access and read a document related to naming songs

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https://www.scribd.com/document/995300354/DPTE-2-2-NOTES

Key note

When classifying folk songs, remember that one song may fit more than one group. For example, a marriage song may also be a praise song or an entertainment song.

Perform a folk song from a Kenyan community with appropriate techniques

Performing a folk song is not just singing the words. It involves using the voice, body, rhythm, expression and movement in a way that shows respect for the song's cultural origin. A good performance should be clear, lively, rhythmic and accurate.

Important performance techniques

a) Correct pronunciation

The words of the song should be pronounced clearly so that the audience can understand the message. If the song is in a local language, the singer should learn the correct words and sounds.

b) Proper breathing

Breathing should be controlled so the singer can complete lines smoothly without struggling. Good breathing helps maintain voice strength and stability.

c) Good posture

The singer should stand or sit upright with relaxed shoulders. This supports proper breathing and confident performance.

d) Clear voice projection

The voice should be strong enough to be heard by the audience without shouting. In group singing, voices should blend well.

e) Appropriate tempo

Tempo is the speed of the song. Some folk songs are fast, especially work songs or dance songs, while others are slow and calm, like lullabies or funeral songs.

f) Tone and expression

The singer should match the tone of the song to its meaning. A happy song should sound lively; a serious song should sound calm and respectful.

g) Facial expression

The face should show the feeling of the song. Smiling, seriousness, concern or joy should match the message of the song.

h) Body movement and dance

Many Kenyan folk songs are accompanied by clapping, stepping, swaying, stamping or traditional dance moves. These movements should match the rhythm and meaning of the song.

i) Use of instruments

Traditional instruments such as drums, rattles, shakers and wooden instruments may accompany the song, depending on the community and occasion.

j) Authenticity

The song should be performed in a way that respects the tradition of the community. This includes using the correct language, rhythm, style and gestures.

Type these links to access more content on folk song performance techniques

https://study.myfuture.co.ke/read/notes/performing/kenyan-folk-songs

https://www.scribd.com/document/995300354/DPTE-2-2-NOTES

Steps in performing a folk song

1. Choose a folk song from a Kenyan community.
2. Learn its words, meaning and origin.
3. Understand the occasion for which it is sung.
4. Practise pronunciation, timing and tune.
5. Add appropriate actions, dance or instruments.
6. Perform with confidence and cultural respect.
7. End the song properly, often with a final note, clap or gesture.

Example of performance guidance

If learners are performing a Luhya harvest song, they may:

- Sing in a strong group voice.
- Clap to the beat.
- Sway side to side.
- Smile if the song is joyful.
- Use drum accompaniment if available.

Appreciating folk song performance as a means of cultural preservation

Folk song performance helps preserve culture because it keeps traditions alive and passes them from older generations to younger ones. When learners sing folk songs, they learn the language, customs, values and history of the community.

How folk songs preserve culture

- They preserve language by using local words, expressions and proverbs.
- They preserve history by telling stories about events, leaders, heroes and past experiences.
- They preserve values such as respect, unity, hard work, honesty and courage.
- They preserve customs and traditions by showing how people celebrate births, marriages, initiations, harvests and funerals.
- They preserve identity by helping communities remember who they are and where they come from.

Why appreciation matters

Appreciation means respecting, enjoying and valuing the song and its cultural message. When learners appreciate folk songs, they do not just sing them for fun; they understand that these songs are part of their heritage. This helps prevent loss of culture in a time when modern music and media can easily replace traditional practices.

Visit this article: https://ijrss.org/index.php/ijrss/article/view/396

Ways to show appreciation

- Listen carefully to the meaning of the song.
- Respect the language and style of the community.
- Participate actively in singing and dancing.
- Avoid mocking traditional songs or costumes.
- Learn the background of the song before performing it.
- Share folk songs with others so they do not disappear.

Importance to learners and society

Folk song performance:

- builds pride in culture,
- promotes unity in communities,
- strengthens moral education,
- entertains people in a meaningful way,
- and connects young people to their roots

Kenyan Folk Dance

Folk dance is not only about movement. It is a living form of heritage that carries the memory of a people, their beliefs, their celebrations and their daily life. In Kenyan communities, dances are often used to mark important moments such as birth, marriage, harvest, initiation, healing and community gatherings. This means a dance is also a form of communication, because it sends messages without needing long speeches.

Folk dances are passed from elders to younger people through observation, imitation, practice and participation. Because of this, they help preserve identity from one generation to the next. When you perform folk dances, they are not just entertaining an audience; they are helping keep a cultural tradition alive.

Classifying folk dances

Folk dances can be studied in a more detailed way than simply naming a community. This helps you see that each dance has a social role and a cultural meaning.

1. **By social function**

- **Ceremonial dances**. These are performed during important rituals such as marriage, initiation, funerals and blessings.
- **Entertainment dances**. These are meant to amuse people during celebrations and social events.
- **Communal dances**. These bring people together and strengthen unity.
- **Didactic dances**. These teach a lesson, such as respect, honesty or hard work.
- **Warrior dances**. These express courage, readiness and discipline.

2**. By emotional tone**

- **Joyful dances**. These are lively and fast, often used during celebrations.
- **Solemn dances**. These are slower and may be used in mourning or rituals.

- **Energetic dances**. These depend on jumping, stamping and strong body movement.
- **Graceful dances**. These use flowing movement and controlled steps.

3. **By performers**

- **Youth dances**. Often strong, fast and energetic.
- **Women's dances**. Often graceful, rhythmic and expressive.
- **Men's dances**. May involve strength, jumping or warrior movements.
- **Mixed group dances**. Performed by both men and women.
- **Age-group dances**. Performed by specific age groups within a community.

4. **By accompaniment**

- **Drum-based dances**. The drum provides the main rhythm.
- **Clapping dances**. Hands provide rhythm and support.
- **Song-led dances**. The dance follows a sung chant or chorus.
- **Instrument-led dances**. Other traditional instruments guide the beat.

Performing a folk dance from a Kenyan community

When you perform a folk dance, they should understand that every movement may carry meaning. A stamp may signal strength, a circle may represent togetherness and a raised hand may show celebration, respect or praise depending on the community. A dance should therefore be performed with care, not copied randomly from videos without learning the cultural background.

You should also know that some dances are sacred or highly ceremonial. These should be approached respectfully and, where appropriate, guided by someone who knows the tradition well. This makes performance more authentic and helps you avoid misrepresentation.

What gives a performance cultural authenticity

- Using the correct language or chants.
- Wearing costumes linked to the community.
- Keeping the original rhythm where possible.
- Using movements that fit the occasion.
- Showing respect for cultural symbols and meanings.

Folk dance and social values

Folk dances are important because they naturally teach values. A dance performed by a group teaches cooperation, patience and listening. A dance that requires turn-taking teaches fairness

and order. A dance performed during a celebration teaches gratitude and joy. A dance linked to initiation may teach responsibility, maturity and respect.

Values you can build

- Respect for elders and tradition.
- Teamwork and cooperation.
- Discipline and patience.
- Confidence and self-expression.
- Pride in identity.
- Tolerance for other cultures.
- Appreciation of diversity.

Cultural appreciation through comparison

You can appreciate different cultures more deeply when you compare dances from various communities. For example, one dance may be very energetic and jumping-based, while another may be graceful and rhythmic. One community may use drums heavily, while another may rely more on singing and clapping. These differences should not be treated as better or worse; they should be seen as unique expressions of identity.

This comparison helps in understanding that Kenya's strength lies in its diversity. Every community contributes something valuable to the national culture. When you experience this variety through dance, you become more respectful and open-minded.

Analysis of Creative Arts and Sports

Analysing a folk song from a kenyan community

A Kenyan folk song is closely connected to the culture, history and experiences of a community. When analysing one, consider its **purpose, musical features, performance and cultural meaning**.

Key areas to analyse

Community and cultural background
Identify the Kenyan community associated with the song where this information is known. Consider what the song reveals about the community's way of life, values, beliefs or traditions.

Purpose of the song

A folk song may be used for:

- Work and cooperation
- Ceremonies and celebrations
- Initiation
- Marriage
- Welcoming visitors
- Mourning
- Worship or spiritual activities
- Teaching children
- Praising individuals or the community
- Passing on history and cultural knowledge

Text and message

Consider what the words communicate. Look for themes such as unity, courage, love, work, respect, responsibility, celebration or community identity.

Musical features

Listen for:

- **Rhythm** – the pattern of beats and movement.
- **Melody** – the arrangement of pitches.
- **Tempo** – how fast or slow the song is performed.
- **Dynamics** – changes in loudness and softness.
- **Repetition** – repeated words, phrases or musical patterns.
- **Call and response** – one singer or group calls and another responds.
- **Solo and chorus** – alternation between a lead singer and a group.
- **Instruments** – identify accompanying traditional instruments where present.

Performance features

Observe the singers' posture, movement, gestures, facial expressions, costumes and interaction with one another.

What makes an analysis strong?

Instead of writing:

> *The song has a good rhythm.*

Explain:

The repeated rhythmic pattern encourages participants to clap, sing and move together, creating a strong sense of unity.

Analysing a storytelling performance

Storytelling is an important form of oral communication. A storyteller does not simply tell events; they use **voice, movement, facial expression and language** to make the story engaging.

Elements to observe

Story content
Identify the:

- Characters
- Setting
- Plot or sequence of events
- Conflict or problem
- Climax
- Resolution
- Theme or lesson

Narrator's performance

Observe how the storyteller uses:

- Voice
- Pitch
- Volume
- Tone
- Pace
- Pauses
- Repetition
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Body movement
- Eye contact

The storyteller may change their voice to represent different characters.

For example, a storyteller might use a deep, slow voice for an old character and a lighter, faster voice for a young character.

Audience interaction

Traditional storytelling may involve the audience responding to the narrator through chants, questions, songs, laughter or repeated phrases. Analyse how these responses contribute to the performance.

Use of cultural elements

Look for proverbs, songs, idioms, traditional expressions, costumes, objects or references to community life.

Analyse the message

Ask:

- What lesson does the story communicate?
- How is the lesson revealed?
- Do the characters' actions support the message?
- Does the storyteller make the lesson memorable?

A strong analysis connects performance technique to effect.

For example:

> *The storyteller pauses before revealing the character's decision. This creates suspense and makes the audience eager to hear what happens next.*

Analysing a verse performance

When analysing a performed verse, examine both the written language and the performer's delivery.

Language and content

Look for:

- Persona
- Theme
- Setting
- Imagery
- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification
- Repetition
- Rhyme

- Rhythm
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia
- Ideophones
- Choice of words

Consider how these features contribute to the meaning of the verse.

Performance techniques

Observe the performer's:

Voice – Is the voice clear and audible? Does the performer vary pitch, tone and volume?

Pace – Is the verse rushed, slow or appropriately varied?

Pauses – Are pauses used to emphasise important ideas?

Facial expression – Does the expression communicate the emotions in the verse?

Gestures and movement – Do they support the words?

Eye contact – Does the performer connect with the audience?

Posture and stage presence – Does the performer appear confident and composed?

Emotional expression

A successful verse performance allows the audience to feel the emotions contained in the poem. Analyse whether the performer effectively communicates emotions such as anger, sadness, joy, fear, hope or determination.

For example:

> *The performer lowers the volume and slows the pace when describing loss, creating a reflective and sorrowful mood.*

This is stronger analysis than simply stating that *the performer was sad*.

Analysing a folk dance from a Kenyan community

A Kenyan folk dance reflects the identity and experiences of a community. Analysis should consider the relationship between movement, music, costume, performers and cultural purpose.







Movement

Observe:

- Footwork
- Body movements
- Hand movements
- Jumps
- Turns
- Bending
- Stamping

- Formation changes
- Repeated movement patterns

Consider whether movements are energetic, gentle, sharp, slow, fast or coordinated.

Formation and space

Look at how dancers arrange themselves. Common formations may include:

- Lines
- Circles
- Rows
- Pairs
- Groups
- Semi-circles

Analyse how dancers use space and move from one formation to another.

Music and rhythm

Observe the relationship between the dance and its musical accompaniment.

Consider:

- Tempo
- Rhythm
- Singing
- Drumming
- Clapping
- Traditional instruments
- Call and response

The movement should often correspond with the rhythm or changes in the music.

Costume and accessories

Analyse how costumes, ornaments or other accessories contribute to the performance. They may communicate community identity, occasion, age, role or cultural meaning.

Purpose and cultural significance

Ask why the dance is performed. It may be connected with:

- Celebrations

- Ceremonies
- Harvest
- Marriage
- Welcoming visitors
- Community history
- Religious or spiritual occasions
- Social gatherings

Group coordination

A strong dance performance requires performers to maintain timing, spacing, rhythm and coordinated movement.

For example:

> *The dancers maintain the same footwork while moving in a circle, demonstrating coordination and strengthening the communal character of the dance.*

Analysing a play performance

A play combines several art forms, including acting, speech, movement, costume, scenery, music and sound. Analysis should therefore consider how these elements work together to communicate the story.

Acting

Observe how performers portray their characters through:

- Voice
- Facial expression
- Gesture
- Movement
- Posture
- Interaction with other characters

Ask whether the actor's performance makes the character believable.

Plot and theme

Consider:

- What is the main conflict?
- How does the conflict develop?

- What is the climax?
- How is the conflict resolved?
- What themes are presented?
- What message does the play communicate?

Dialogue

Analyse how characters use spoken words to reveal:

- Personality
- Feelings
- Relationships
- Conflict
- Information about the story

Stage use

Observe how performers use:

- Space
- Entrances and exits
- Positioning
- Movement
- Levels
- Props

Effective stage movement should support the action rather than distract the audience.

Costume, makeup and props

Costumes can help the audience identify a character's age, occupation, social position, personality or role.

Props are objects used during a performance, such as books, chairs, tools or household items. Analyse whether they help make the setting and action believable.

Sound, music and lighting

Where used, analyse how these elements establish mood, atmosphere, location or emphasis.

For example, sudden dramatic sound may increase tension, while gentle music may accompany a reflective scene.

Audience response

Consider whether the performance:

- Held the audience's attention.
- Communicated its message clearly.
- Created appropriate emotions.
- Encouraged reflection.
- Entertained the audience.

A useful framework for analysing any performance

When faced with an unfamiliar folk song, story, verse, dance or play, use the **OBSERVE → IDENTIFY → EXPLAIN → EVALUATE** approach.

1. Observe - Pay close attention to what the performers are doing.

2. Identify - Name the artistic feature or technique being used.

3. Explain - Describe how the feature contributes to the performance.

4. Evaluate - Give a reasoned judgement about how effectively it communicates the intended message.

Example:

> *The dancers repeatedly stamp their feet in time with the drums. The repeated movement strengthens the rhythm and helps the performers maintain coordination, making the dance energetic and engaging.*

This approach helps you move from simply describing what you see to actually analysing why it matters.

Quick comparison

Performance	**Key features to analyse**
Folk song	Community, purpose, lyrics, melody, rhythm, tempo, instruments, call and response, performance

Storytelling	Characters, setting, plot, theme, narration, voice, gestures, facial expression, audience interaction
Verse	Persona, theme, setting, language devices, rhythm, voice, pace, pauses, emotion, eye contact
Folk dance	Movement, rhythm, formations, coordination, costume, music, cultural purpose
Play	Acting, plot, characters, dialogue, theme, stage use, costume, props, sound, music and audience response

Remember

When analysing, **do not merely list features**. Always connect a feature to its **purpose or effect**.

Weak: *The dancer uses stamping.*

Better: *The dancer uses repeated stamping in time with the drumbeat, strengthening the rhythm and creating an energetic performance.*

Weak: *The actor uses a loud voice.*

Better: *The actor raises their voice during the argument to communicate anger and make the conflict more intense.*

Weak: *The storyteller uses pauses.*

Better: *The storyteller pauses before revealing the outcome, creating suspense and keeping the audience attentive.*