



## UNIT OVERVIEW

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# ‘Home Before Naming’: Naming Practices and Yoruba Characterization in Femi Osofisan’s Selected Dramatic Texts

### FOCUS

This unit seeks to expose University students (HE) to the imbricate significance of *Abiku*, circumstantial, panegyric and deity names in the works of Femi Osofisan, a Nigerian literary icon unravelling their functions and forms, origins, and pluralities. The data comprised names from Osofisan’s three dramatic texts, namely *Midnight Hotel* (2003), *Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark* (2006) and *Who’s Afraid of Solarin?* (2007). The texts selected are imbued with ornate cultural and onomastic constituents. The secondary sources included books, theses, journals and instructional materials (i.e. films) on names in African and European popular cultures. As espoused by Wole Soyinka, “naming is a creative process in fiction and drama which often owes its significance to lived, believed, or conditioned reality” (6). When names are “taken out of the context of social reality, they revert into an atomistic state until the writer gives them meaning by providing a new context - the literary” (Izevbaye 164). Therefore, African literary artists inspired by the Yoruba African philosophy adopt their names from concepts like *Orí* (the predestined head), *Orúkọ Àmútòrunwá* (heavenly names) and *Oríkì* (eulogy of the inner head that is, the seat of psychological and spiritual traits including choice, willpower, and luck) [Ojebode and Ayodabo, 2021]. As theoretical anchorage, Izevbaye’s (1981) naming contexts, literary and socio-cultural, were used to critique the names as indexical of Nigeria’s social realities. *UbD* model (understanding by design), which integrates *assessment* into the design and delivery of teaching, was adopted for the six modules spanning seven weeks. *UbD*, a backward design, affords the instructor to access University students’ practical knowledge about names before designing curriculum units, performance assessments, and classroom

instructions. At the end of the pedagogical sessions, the University students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of these objectives: examine names as an intrinsic aspect of Yoruba culture, philosophies and worldview; discuss literary and socio-cultural contexts as a tool for criticism of names in Osofisan's texts; analyze names in connection to their significance within social realities (i.e., *Àbíkú* concept, *Ifá* corpus, political issues, orature) and the conditions that engender them; and relate the names to the characters' personalities and roles in the texts. Beyond establishing the playwright's disposition for characterization, demystification and social criticism of Nigeria's postcolonial condition, this unit also functions as a history-preserving tool for the transitory Nigerian naming tradition.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF UNIT

- Unit Objective 1: Students will examine the Yoruba names as an intrinsic aspect of Yoruba culture, philosophies and worldview.
- Unit Objective 2: Students will discuss literary and socio-cultural contexts as a tool for criticism of names in Osofisan's texts.
- Unit Objective 3: Students will analyze the significance of the names to social realities (i.e., *Àbíkú* concept, *Ifá* corpus, political issues, orature) and the conditions that engender them.
- Unit Objective 4: Students will relate the names to the characters' personalities and roles in the texts.
- Unit Objective 5: Students will highlight the characters' names as a history-preserving resource for the transitory Nigerian naming tradition substantiated in social realities.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Are Yoruba names an intrinsic aspect of Yoruba culture, philosophies and worldview?
- Can literary and socio-cultural contexts serve as a tool for criticizing names in Osofisan's texts?
- What is the significance of names to social realities (i.e., *Àbíkú* concept, *Ifá* corpus, political issues, orature) and which conditions engender them?
- Do the names relate to characters' personalities and roles in the texts?



# UNIT STORYLINE

This overview for the Unit provides a snapshot of objectives and themes.

LESSON	GUIDING QUESTION(S) & LEARNING OBJECTIVES	SUMMARY
1.	<p>Can students relate to naming (christening) ceremonies in African, American, Asian cultures and European popular cultures (i.e. Jon Favreau’s <i>Lion King</i>, Michael Hirst’s <i>Vikings</i>, David Benioff and Daniel Weiss’ <i>Game of Thrones</i>, Muhammad Ali Vs Ernie Terrel boxing contest, William Shakespeare’s (1968) <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, and christening ceremonies in Nigeria, Ghana, Brazil, India?)</p> <p>Can students observe shared characteristics in naming rituals among the cultures?</p> <p>Can students highlight significant name-givers, elements and activities during the naming ceremony?</p> <p>Students will explain the significance of naming (christening) ceremonies in African and European popular cultures.</p> <p>Students will identify shared characteristics in naming rituals among the cultures.</p> <p>Students will highlight significant name-givers, elements and activities during a naming ceremony.</p>	<p>The session commences with students listening to the introductory lecture on the naming phenomenon from a global perspective.</p> <p>The students watch short clips and read short texts to reflect on the complexity of naming (cultural and religious diversity, identity crisis, name-calling).</p> <p>The students are encouraged to pen their names and pronounce them formally in a dignified manner to appreciate each other’s culture, identity and religious backgrounds).</p> <p>The students break into six groups and select representatives to present their names, highlight cultural origins and perceived meanings.</p> <p>During the second phase of the session, students watch short clips on naming (christening) ceremonies and rituals from West Africa, South America, and Asia.</p> <p>They reflect on the clips highlighting significant name-givers, elements and activities during naming ceremonies.</p> <p>Students watch popular culture (short clips and animations), relating the names to their famous scenes and characters.</p> <p>The session concludes with homework for students to research unknown names and their significance with appropriate support from their parents and relatives.</p>

<p>2.</p>	<p>Can students identify Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria as one of the three predominant ethnic groups and trace Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria?  Can students explain the cultural and philosophical consequence of names among the Yoruba?  Can students highlight different categories of names among the Yoruba?  Students can identify Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria as one of the three predominant ethnic groups and trace Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria.  Students can explain the cultural and philosophical consequences of names among the Yoruba.  Students can highlight different categories of names among the Yoruba.</p>	<p>The students locate Nigeria and the Yoruba states on the maps of West Africa and Nigeria using Google Earth.  They highlight the predominant ethnic and religious groups and languages of Nigeria.  The students listen to lectures and take notes on the history of the Yoruba and the global reception of their culture and religion, especially in connection to Transatlantic slavery and migration.  The students participate in folksongs, myths and philosophies about the Yoruba naming phenomenon and naming categories.  The students are encouraged to read and complete Femi Osofisan’s selected texts.  The session concludes as students take homework and guiding questions on Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark’s ‘Abiku’ for insight into the Yoruba and Ijaw philosophy on spirit children.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Can students share their perspectives on the Àbíkú phenomenon?  Can students relate Àbíkú names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?  Can students identify Àbíkú names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?  Students can share their perspectives on the Àbíkú phenomenon.  Students can relate Àbíkú names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts.  Students can identify Àbíkú names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.</p>	<p>The students provide feedback to the homework, discussions and a review of answers to the guiding questions on Soyinka and JP Clark’s ‘Abiku’.  The students listen to the poem recitation and reflect on salient aspects of the Abiku phenomenon, myths and philosophies portrayed by the Nigerian poets.  To prepare the class to criticize Abiku names in the selected texts, students watch Tunde Kelani’s (2018) <i>Yeepa</i>, an adaptation of Osofisan’s <i>Who’s Afraid of Tai Solarin</i> (1975/2001).  The students do a free write of the lessons for the day, building on the previous discussion.  The students pronounce the Yoruba names and select representatives to read excerpts and elucidate Abiku names in the selected texts.  The students take homework on the functions and implications of panegyrics in the Yoruba culture.</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>Can students share their perspectives on circumstantial names?  Can students relate circumstantial names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?  Can students identify circumstantial names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?  Students can share their perspectives on the circumstantial names.  Students can relate circumstantial names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts.  Students can identify circumstantial names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.</p>	<p>The students answer the guiding questions on the forms, functions and significance of circumstantial names among the Yoruba.  The students listen to lectures and take notes.  To prepare the class to criticize circumstantial names in the selected texts, students watch Tunde Kelani’s (2018) <i>Yeepa</i>, an adaptation of Osofisan’s <i>Who’s Afraid of Tai Solarin</i> (1975/2001).  The students do a free write of the lessons for the day, building on the previous discussion.  The students pronounce the Yoruba names and select representatives to read excerpts and elucidate circumstantial names in the selected texts.  The students take homework on the functions and implications of circumstantial names in the Yoruba culture.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Can students share their perspectives on panegyric names?  Can students relate panegyric names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?  Can students identify panegyric names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?  Students can share their perspectives on the panegyric names.  Students can relate panegyric names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts.  Students can identify panegyric names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.</p>	<p>The students discuss their perspectives on Yoruba panegyrics.  The students listen to lectures and take notes.  To prepare the class to criticize panegyric names in the selected texts, students watch Tunde Kelani’s (2018) <i>Yeepa</i>, an adaptation of Osofisan’s <i>Who’s Afraid of Tai Solarin</i> (1975/2001).  The students do a free write of the lessons for the day, building on the previous discussion.  The students pronounce the Yoruba names and select representatives to read excerpts and elucidate panegyric names in the selected texts.  The students take homework on the functions and implications of circumstantial names in the Yoruba culture.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Can students share their perspectives on deity names?  Can students relate deity names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?  Can students identify circumstantial names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?  Students can share their perspectives on the circumstantial names.</p>	<p>The students discuss their perspectives on deities and share religious affiliations.  The students listen to lectures and take notes.  To prepare the class to criticize deity names in the selected texts, students watch Tunde Kelani’s (2018) <i>Yeepa</i>, an adaptation of Osofisan’s <i>Who’s Afraid of Tai Solarin</i> (1975/2001).</p>

Students can relate circumstantial names to Nigeria's socio-cultural and literary contexts.  
Students can identify circumstantial names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works.

The students watch short clips of Ryan Coogler's (2018) Black Panther and Osun-Osogbo festival.  
The students do a free write of the lessons for the day, building on the previous discussion.  
The students pronounce the Yoruba names and select representatives to read excerpts and elucidate panegyric names in the selected texts.  
The students take a general assessment to test their knowledge of the unit.



# VOCABULARY

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[Àbíkú phenomenon, Character Naming, Christening Ceremony, Circumstantial Names, Deity, Femi Osofisan, Literary Onomastics, Nigerian Drama, Panegyrics.]

*Àbíkú* in the indigenous Yorùbá culture is a child (male/female) that often experiences a recurrent cycle of birth, death and rebirth to reunite with companions in the spiritual realm at a specific time.

Character naming is the designation of *dramatis personae* in a text through their roles, traits and names given their significance within literary and sociocultural contexts.

Christening Ceremony is an intercultural practice as parents issue a name/s to their newborn. A name is an intricate aspect of African culture, religion, and history. Specifically, the indigenous Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria gives a premium to naming as a social 'DNA' to unearth a name bearer's ancestry, occupation, education, birth, aura, and religious background. The name-givers utilize a name to reflect their aspirations, expectations, and prospects for a newborn.

Circumstantial names reflect the hopes, fear, aspirations, and wishes of biological parents/relatives of a newborn. Thus, the indigenous Yorùbá note a mother's birth condition, mode, and circumstances and the child's position before issuing such names.

Deity is a god, goddess, or divinity. The indigenous Yoruba associate some names with religion, ancestry and occupation of the name-bearers.

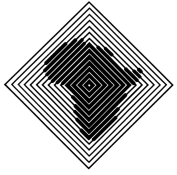
Femi Osofisan is a celebrated Nigerian literary icon and emeritus professor of literature with more than fifty dramatic texts, several critical essays, four novels, and five poetry collections. His plays, predominantly social commentaries on Nigeria's economy and politics, are read, acted and directed globally across Africa, North America and Europe.

Literary onomastics is a branch of onomastics (the study of origin and science of names) and framework for literary interpretation and application of theories to characters' names in literary texts to unravel an author's ideology in fictive and social contexts. It is crucial to the narrative construction and its reception among readers.

Nigerian drama is a genre of literature produced by Nigerian playwrights and could be read, acted and directed as stage/soap opera/cinematic films.

Panegyrics (*Oríki*) are permanent epithets taken by individuals, given to them by relatives, and often accompanied by drumming. Among the indigenous Yoruba, individuals may have a single or a corpus of praise names so that when chanted, they sound like freestyle poetry.





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# LESSON 1:

## GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students relate naming (christening) ceremonies in African and European cultures?
- Can students observe shared characteristics in naming rituals among the cultures?
- Can students highlight significant name-givers, elements and activities during the naming ceremony?

## Learning objectives:

- Students will explain the significance of naming (christening) ceremonies in African, South American and Asian, and European popular cultures.
- Students will identify shared characteristics in naming rituals among the cultures.
- Students will highlight significant name-givers, elements and activities during a naming ceremony.

## Time Period:

Number of days: 2

## Instructional Procedures:

Lesson opening/activator:

[Watch short clips and read articles about the significance of names; ask students ice-breaking questions]. [Divide the class into six groups; ask students to write out their full names, origins and meanings; and identify features of naming practices in the cultures.]

Given my students' multicultural, racial, identity and religious backgrounds, I will introduce the Yoruba characters' names in Femi Osofisan's works by reflecting on topical issues on the complexity of naming in popular culture from different global perspectives. As a means of identification in society, a name also engenders discourses on ethnicity, race, identity, and characterization in fiction and non-fiction. Most importantly, the classic and thought-provoking question of "What's in a name?" posed by Juliet intended for her lover, Romeo from a rival family, in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1598) is symbolic of the sociocultural and literary import of names to social identities and, in extension, characters' roles and traits in the selected texts.

Likewise, the historic boxing contest between Muhammad Ali and Ernie Terrel on 6 February 1967 for the WBA and WBC Heavyweight Championship consolidates Herwess' attitude to indigenous/religious names as a relic of history and race, highlighting the legendary boxer's activist stance against colonial hegemony and his promotion of black identity within the sporting space. Ali, formerly Cassius X and Cassius Clay, an iconic African-American boxer and

adherent of Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad, separatist leaders of the Nation of Islam (NOI), publicly displays his utter contempt for his inherited slave identity by taunting his wounded opponent to affirm his African Islamic identity, asking, “What’s my name?” during the eight-round.

Reflecting on Tasbeeh Herwess’ (2015) “The Names They Gave Me,” a memoir by an Arab American author, exposes readers to the lived experiences and prevalent identity crisis among immigrants and minority groups, especially regarding the bias, stereotyping and distortions of her indigenous name by native English speakers. Most importantly, the personal account underscores the value of indigenous names in constructing or disrupting ethnic and religious diversity, self-esteem, dignity, and personal and social identities in developed countries.

Thus, naming as a tool for interdisciplinary studies requires a distinct mode of analysis to interpret and unearth a name-giver’s underlined rationale. The role of literary artists as name-givers becomes necessary to mirror human experiences within society. As espoused by Herwess and Alli, names could reveal, predict and be harnessed to convey social concerns, especially within the American socio-political context. Therefore, naming in this sense can be considered “an embedded social agenda” (Soyinka 7).

In the meantime, the Learning for Justice’s (2019) “What’s in a Name?” exposed University students to the adverse effect of distortions and mispronunciations of unfamiliar and non-English names in educational settings, which could impede inclusivity, cultural diversity and social identities, especially those belonging to minority groups. I will promote a conducive atmosphere for open dialogues and constructive criticisms about names to achieve this objective. Second, I will encourage an inclusive and respectful manner in discussing each student’s name and their significance. Third, I will redirect the students’ focus to the peculiarity of names in different cultures and reflect on effective strategies in pronouncing each other’s names in a formal and dignifying manner.

In this regard, the five ice-breaking questions would provide a basis for class presentations and discussions on individual names:

Who named you, and why were you given your name?

What hopes and aspirations do your name hold for people who named you?

Is your name accessible for your colleagues and university staff members to pronounce?

What could you and your friends say or do if you witness someone being teased because of their names?

If you have a complex name that is difficult to pronounce, what can you do to assist others in learning it?

[I would break the class into six groups and encourage each person to pen their names, highlight pronunciations, identify and classify names with similar cultural origins and note perceived meanings as given by their parents or grandparents for the general knowledge of the class.]

### Step-by-step procedures:

Next, we would continue the session by watching YouTube clips (“links below under Materials”) on naming (christening) ceremonies in West Africa (Nigeria and Ghana), Southern America (Brazil) and Asia (India). Subsequently, I will ask students: ‘What is your perception of a naming ceremony?’

I expect the selected popular culture (films) to propel students as they relate to their famous scenes and characters. For instance, in Disney’s (2019) *The Lion King*, Rafiki the Baboon and the priest christens Simba, the Prince and legendary cub publicly in the presence of Mufasa and Sarabi, Simba’s parents (pride of lions) and the entire animal kingdom. He concludes the naming rituals as he marks Simba’s forehead with a reddish symbol from a cracked coconut. In *Vikings*, students would gain insight into the naming traditions among the barbaric Scandinavians and the consequence of their names and identities within society. Remarkably, the characters’ names distinguish the ruling class and commoners.

Likewise, in *Game of Thrones*, there is an annual commemoration of birth names for characters’ assessment of their ages in the seven kingdoms of Westeros, a predominant political entity. After watching the clips, I would ask the ice-breaking question: “Are names significant and do they have unequivocal significance within the contexts of their usage in the films”? I can assess if students have improved their understanding of the first learning objective from the responses. Fundamentally, names in the films designate characters’ royalty and leadership roles. By now, students should be able to identify name-givers, elements and activities during a naming ceremony in fictive and non-fictive contexts as stated in the second and third learning objectives.

Soyinka (2016) affirms that naming ceremony among the indigenous Yoruba is often extravagant with feasting, lineage recitals, and even ancestral masquerades. Also, apart from parents, extended family relatives, sometimes an entire community, act as participants in the naming rituals and suggest names for the newborn. After that, the names are constantly and directly or indirectly applied to the name-bearer until they bond with its essence. Thus, Yoruba maxims like *Orúkọ ọmọ níí ro ní* denotes that a child’s name propels their destiny. Izevbaye (1981) sociocultural and literary naming contexts function as a construct to explore the significance of characters’ names in Femi Osofisan’s selected texts. Essentially, Osofisan manipulates characters’ names and encode them with salient traits to evoke the desired destiny.

### Lesson closing:

Literature is a platform for multidisciplinary discourses, a mirror of human experiences. Therefore, a study of names in a literary text will also include historical, political, psychological, cultural, social and geographical discourses. By answering the highlighted question, What’s in a name? This unit has exposed students to varied functions of a name as a tool for promoting or discouraging cultural diversity, religion, social inclusion, harmony and social action. As indicated in Tasbeeh Herwess and Muhammad Alli’s lived experiences, misidentification of names or name-calling is an outcome of individual and social responses to history, politics, race and identity in different epochs.

Nonetheless, both accounts reveal that name-calling is a means of exerting power and provoking specific reactions in the name-bearer/s. Thus, students are encouraged to appreciate a name positively given its socio-cultural and religious value. Most importantly, through class presentations and discussions on individual names, students can answer the five overarching questions highlighted in Learning for Justice's (2019) "What's in a Name?." Students become aware of the peculiarity and significance of their names to boost their confidence and self-esteem in their culture, identity, race and religion. They can identify their name-givers, whether parents or relatives and share the underlying rationale for their names. Also, students can freely share personal challenges associated with pronouncing their names and draw valuable insights that could foster name usage in educational settings in developed countries. Also, by watching short clips on different naming (christening) ceremonies, students establish a name that exceeds identity tags and an intrinsic aspect of society. Essentially, this unit seeks to perpetuate the transitory indigenous Yoruba naming tradition in Femi Osofisan's selected texts, indirectly motivating students' rediscovery of their peculiar names and identities. However, intrinsic and extrinsic factors could deter students, especially when there is a history of detachment from their indigenous roots, immigration and name changes. By exposing students to christening (naming) ceremonies in selected cultures and contexts, they have gained insight into the fundamental practice of naming within society and could transfer the knowledge to literary context. I will give general homework to students to ask about the origins and meanings of their names from parents and grandparents.

#### Formative Assessment:

The first 30 minutes was tailored towards stimulating the students' interest in naming by exploring the complexity of identity and name-calling in different popular cultural resources (film and text) to underscore the significance of identity, culture and religious diversity. By watching the short clip from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1598), students are motivated to reflect on the classical question 'What's in a name?' Also, examining the historic boxing contest between Muhammad Ali and Ernie Terrel on 6 February 1967 reveals that naming is interdisciplinary and could trigger positive and negative responses in the name-bearer, especially where it borders on an individual's cultural and religious identity. Likewise, Tasbeeh Herwess' (2019) 'The Names They Gave Me' prompts the class to reconsider their names, identity and race, especially for migrants and those belonging to minority groups in developed countries. Specifically, by reading the Arab-American memoir, students are encouraged to appreciate each other's names correctly in the light of their respective culture, identity and religious backgrounds.

Furthermore, by sharing the Learning for Justice's (2019) "What's in a Name?" students are exposed to the practical aspect of naming, especially the adverse effects of distortions and mispronunciation of unfamiliar Non-English names. The article aims to promote inclusion, cultural diversity and social identities. Fundamentally, students become aware of the crisis of identity, race, and color and are encouraged to pronounce each other's names formally and respectfully. Students are motivated to perform the first-class activity, writing, pronouncing and grouping their names into similar cultural backgrounds and highlighting their social

implications. Meanwhile, to address the issue of historical-personal suffering, students were asked to undertake research into their names, origins and meanings and seek parents and relatives' assistance appropriately.

As a complement, the second phase of the session includes watching short clips on naming (christening) ceremonies in West Africa, Southern America and Asia, and different popular cultures (animations and films). Thus, students become aware of naming as an intercultural practice as parents and name-givers issue newborns' names. They gained insight into naming practices and rituals in different communities. In Africa, a name is an intricate component of the people's culture, religion, history, and they reflect the aspirations, expectations and prospects of the name-givers for the newborns. Specifically, among the Yoruba in Southwestern Nigeria, a name is like a social 'DNA' to unearth a bearer's ancestry, occupation, education, birth aura and religious background (Odebode, 2013). At the end of this lesson, students would have achieved the lesson objectives be able to explain the significance of naming (christening) ceremonies in African, South American and Asian, and European popular cultures, identify shared characteristics in naming rituals among the cultures and highlight significant name-givers, elements and activities during a naming ceremony. Also, by exploring the fundamental practice of naming in different cultures and contexts, students would be prepared for the next lesson, which includes identifying Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria as one of the three predominant ethnic groups and tracing Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria, explaining the cultural and philosophical consequences of names among the Yoruba and highlighting different categories of names among the Yoruba.

## Materials needed:

[Araba Ifayemi Elebuibon- Naming ceremony, meaning and interpretation- Isomoloruko. - YouTube](#)

[King Joffrey's Name Day Tournament \[HD\] - YouTube](#)

[Naming ceremony in Brazil - People dressed in Nigerian outfits - YouTube](#)

[Simba's Son Birth Scene || The Lion King \(2019\) || Flick Talkie - YouTube](#)

[The only time Muhammad Ali was angry | What's my name? - YouTube](#)

[TRADITIONAL NAMING CEREMONY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS IN GHANA !\[\]\(0b5e7e25e8775f7e7e80906ada4f0021\_img.jpg\) - YouTube](#)

[Vikings - Ragnar gives Bjorn his name Ironside \(2x9\) \[Full HD\] - YouTube](#)

['What's In A Name?' Spoken by Juliet, William Shakespeare's \(1968\) Romeo and Juliet. Act 2 Scene 2.](#)

<https://youtu.be/30LupDzYp4s>

[Yoruba Naming Ceremony - YouTube](#)



## LESSON 2:

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### GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students identify Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria as one of the three predominant ethnic groups and trace Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria?
- Can students explain the cultural and philosophical consequence of names among the Yoruba?
- Can students highlight different categories of names among the Yoruba?

### Learning objectives:

- Students can identify Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria as one of the three predominant ethnic groups and trace Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria.
- Students can explain the cultural and philosophical consequences of names among the Yoruba.
- Students can highlight different categories of names among the Yoruba.

### Time Period:

Number of days: 1

### Instructional Procedures:

**Lesson opening/activator:** [Locate Nigeria and Yoruba states on the maps of Africa and Nigeria; ask students some questions; ask students to highlight predominant cultural groups, religions and languages in Nigeria.]

We begin the class by identifying the three principal ethnic groups and asking students to relate their knowledge of the three Nigerian cultures. The Yoruba is among the three predominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. The remaining are Igbo and Hausa. The Yoruba are located across six states in Southwestern Nigeria, namely Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and the Kwara States. The ethnic group have vast influence in West Africa and African diasporic communities like Ketu and Sabe in the Republic of Benin and the Togo Republic, Brazil, Cuba and the Americas where *Orixá* (African deities) in Lucumí, Candomblé, Santería, Oyotunji are commemorated. The global reception of the Yoruba culture and religion is due to the Transatlantic passage and mass migration. The former is informed by the Old Oyo Empire's economic and military campaigns under the auspice of the *Alaafin* of Oyo, its paramount ruler (See Ojebode, 2019a and Ojebode, 2019c). The ethnic group is generally renowned for warfare arts and educational pedigree. Meanwhile, Ile-Ife is perceived as the cradle town of the Yoruba race and Oduduwa as their progenitor.

### Step-by-step procedures:

From exploring Google Earth for Africa, students can locate Nigeria in the southeast of West Africa, bordering the Bight of Benin and Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria shares borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The country has an estimated population of 192 million people (United Nations, 2017), making it the most populous black country in Africa and seventh globally. The capital city is Abuja, while Lagos is the country's principal port, commercial hub and largest cosmopolitan southwestern State. The spoken languages in the country are English (official), Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Nigeria has over 250 different ethnolinguistic groups. The country's primary religions are Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The indigenous Yorùbá perceive names “as sacred, as a historical anchorage, a password into a man/woman’s alpha, his/her essence, and life” (Dasylyva 34). They have confidence in the Ifá oracle and therefore consult before deciding on the specific name. Also, as indicated in the discussed Ifá corpus, the Yorùbá believe in the unbroken link between the realms of the living, the unborn and the ancestors. Thus, before the arrival of a newborn, it would have rehearsed and got itself thoroughly equipped for the task. By implication, a name has enormous consequences on a child’s prospects in the physical and metaphysical realms.

Beyond identification tags, Yorùbá names serve aesthetic, historical, religious and socio-cultural purposes. The Yoruba naming system comprises of *Orúkọ Àmútòrunwá*, heavenly or predestined names such as *Táiwò* (firstborn in a set of twins), *Kèhíndé* (second born in a set of twins), *Ìdòwú* (a child born after a set of twins). Likewise, *Àjàyí* (a male child born with face downward), *Òjójó* (a male child born with an umbilical cord tied around the neck) and *Àiná* as opposite in females, *Dàda* (a male child born with dreadlocks) are named after children with unique birth conditions and circumstances. Also, *Orúkọ àbísọ* (personal names) like *Adéplá* (The wealth in the crown), *Oyèbùnmi* (The child was dotted alongside a titular office), *Adekuñlé* (The crown fills the house) as names indicating royalty, and *Àbáyòmí* (I would have been a mockery), *Ọmọlara* (a child is a relative), *Káyòde* (The child has brought loads of joy) and *Díẹkọlá* (Wealth is not inconsequential) indicating parents’ aspiration/reflection. Also, Inagije (nicknames) like *Àgòrò* (the tall one), if short, *Akúruyẹjọ* (short and good at dancing), *Eyínafẹ* (the delightful teeth) and *idi ileke* (beaded buttocks). Also, *Oríkì* (panegyrics/totems) like *Ìşọlá* (Bringer of wealth), *Àlàde* (One who survives to arrive/return), *Àbẹní* (We begged to have (this one)), *Atinukẹ* (One cherished from the womb), *Àwẹró* (One bathed and covered with wrappers), *Atinúkẹ* (Pampered/Petted from the Womb) and *Abím̀bòla* (a child born into wealth and ease). In issuing real names, the Yoruba consider circumstances surrounding the birth of a child, the description of birth, and the ancestral lineage of the father or mother. Thus, the Yoruba maxim *Òrò ilé, ibú ilé, làá wò ká tóó sọmọ lórúkọ* denoting family rituals and traditions are considered first in a household before naming a child. However, nicknames are based on assessing a person’s behavior and physiognomy.

*Orí* is a Yorùbá deity and also principal among other body parts; it is more profound than a physical head. It is believed to be house to individual destiny (predestined choices from heaven), either positive or negative in life. Notwithstanding, there are sacrifices to mediate an unfortunate head. *Orí* is significant to a bearer’s name (*Orúkọ*), a generic term for



labelling. Meanwhile, panegyric (*Oríkì*) either for individual or town describes the ancestry of a name bearer; it also exposes a bearer's worth, wealth and wit, either brave or spineless, wealthy or poor, hardworking or lazy, humble or proud, generous or stingy, and any other trait(s). The predestined head is the stage that prompts the literary artist to create individual and social identities, exemplified in "role performance" in a literary context, but "destiny" in the context of social reality (Izevbaye 169). The role names appear as titles, epithets and role descriptions in a literary text.

Furthermore, the *Ifá* corpus, *Ogbè Ìyónú*, and *Ogbè Ògúndá* detail how human beings pick their predestined heads. *Ọbàtálá Ọba t'óriṣà* or *Àjàlá Alámò* refers to the same person, and he is given the power to create eyes, mouth, nose and all twenty-one parts in the human body. Meanwhile, *Olódumarè* is the supreme deity that breathes the breath of life into immaterial entities for essence. After that, the spiritual entity decides which parents through whom it/they would be born before proceeding to the earth.

An excerpt from the *Ogbè Ìyónú* says:

*Èbìtì ègbà'kè ni yè'dí pèèrè*, The oracle chronicles the account of

*Adífá fún Òriṣànkú, ọmọ Ògún, Òriṣànkú, son of Ògún,*

*Adífá fún Orílemèrè, ọmọ Ìja (Osoosi), Orílemèrè, the son of Ìja*

*Adífá fún Afùwàpé, ọmọ Ọrúnmilà and Afùwàpé, the son of Ọrúnmilà.*

The *Ifá* corpus recounts the sojourn of three friends, namely *Òriṣànkú*, *Orílemèrè* and *Afùwàpé* to pick their heads before arriving earth. As the myth unfolds, neither of the first two friends except for *Afùwàpé*, the third friend obliges his father to inquire on his behalf the task ahead from the *Ifá* oracle. His father tells him to take *Ègbà* (palm frond), *Ìdi iyò* (cruse of salt) and *Èyẹ 'lẹ* (pigeon) before setting out. The account indicates it can be deduced that *Afùwàpé's* hard work and excellence during his stay in heaven combined with consultation from the *Ifá* oracle culminate in his success on earth. Thus, from a Yorùbá cultural standpoint, every individual has been pre-ordained with a specific 'role;' however, non-compliance with factors that influence success may lead to forfeiture of fortune.

### Lesson closing:

The Yoruba is a predominant ethnic group that spreads across six states in the West of Nigeria, namely Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Kwara. They have offshoots in Ketu and Sabe in the Republic of Benin and parts of the Togo Republic, Afro-Cuba, Americas and Brazil. The diasporic societies is an outcome of the Transatlantic slavery and political influence of the Old Oyo Empire under the paramount ruler, the Alaafin of Oyo. The indigenous Yorùbá perceive a name to have significant consequences on a newborn's prospect. Thus, they consult the *Ifá* oracle before selecting a specific name. On the third day after childbirth, Yorùbá practice *Èṣèntayé/Ìfẹṣètẹpón* to examine the child's spiritual essence, whether as the grandfather or grandmother's form. They also engage in these divination rites to gain insight into the profession, taboos, and instructions associated with the newborn's survival. Yoruba naming system can be categorized into *Orúkọ àbísọ* (personal names), *Inagije* (nicknames), *Orúkọ Àmútòrunwá* (circumstantial names) and *Oríkì* (panegyrics/totems). In preparation for the subsequent session on one of the Yoruba naming categories, I would ask students to read and review Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark's "Abiku" for insight into the philosophy around spirit children among Nigeria's Yoruba Southwest and Ijaw South-southern communities and



prepare for class discussions. To guide the reading of the poems, I will ask the students to answer the following questions:

Do you have any prior knowledge about Abiku children?

What is your take on Abiku myth and philosophies in the Yoruba and Ijaw culture as portrayed in Soyinka and Clark's poems?

What are the similar features in the portraits of Abiku in the selected poems?

Can you identify rituals and ceremonial rites to prevent an Abiku spirit from departing the physical realm?

Can you draw a connection between the overarching theme of birth, death and rebirth of an Abiku and Nigeria's cyclic politics?

At the end of this lesson, I will ask students to free-write the lessons for the day, building on the previous discussions. Also, I will encourage students to complete the selected texts before the next class.

### Formative Assessment:

By the end of this lesson, students can locate Yoruba states in Nigeria, West Africa using Google Earth. They can explain the cultural and philosophical consequence of names among the Yoruba and also highlight different categories of names among the Yoruba. The homework and the guiding questions will prepare students to discuss the first Yoruba naming category, Abiku names and the subsequent analysis of characters' names in Femi Osofisan's selected texts.

## Materials needed:

Clark, John Pepper. "Àbíkú." In Nwoga, Donatus (ed.), *West African Verse*. Great Britain: Longman, 1967. [Poetry: Abiku by J. P. Clark — The Book Banque](#)

Eathar Abdunassir. "Map of Africa." Retrieved 08 December 2021 from <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/640918590690453431/>. Accessed 08 December 2021.

Drewal, John, John Pemberton and Rowland Abiodun. "Map of Yorubaland." *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*; ed. Allen Wardwell. Centre for African Art: New York, 1989, p. 12.

McCabe, Douglas. "Histories of Errancy: Oral Yoruba "Àbíkú" Texts and Soyinka's "Abiku." *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 33, no. 1, 2002, pp. 45-74.

Odebode, Idowu and Adenike Onadipe. "Politeness Phenomenon in Àbíkú Names among the Yorùbá Nigerians: A Pragmatic Study." *Cross-Cultural Communication*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2011, pp. 127-132. [Politeness Phenomenon in Abiku Names Among the Yoruba Africans: A Pragmatic Study | Odebode | Cross-Cultural Communication](#)

Odebode, Idowu. A Morpho-pragmatic Study of Selected Anglicized Abiku Names on Facebook. In *Existentialism, Literature and the Humanities in Africa: Essays in Honour of Professor Benedict Mobayode Ibitokun*. Chijioke Uwasomba, Adedayo Mosobalaje and Oluwole Coker (Eds). Gottigen, Germany, Cuvillier Verlag, 2013, pp. 338-350.

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[http://snsbi.org.uk/pdf/SNSBI\\_2021-04-10\\_Ojebode\\_and\\_Odebode\\_Titbits\\_on\\_onomastics\\_among\\_the\\_Yoruba\\_Africans.pdf/](http://snsbi.org.uk/pdf/SNSBI_2021-04-10_Ojebode_and_Odebode_Titbits_on_onomastics_among_the_Yoruba_Africans.pdf/). Accessed 08 December, 2021.

Osofisan, Femi. *Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark*. Ibadan: Kraft, 2006.

---. *Midnight Hotel*. Lagos: Concept Publications, 2003.

---. *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* Ibadan: University Press, 2007.

Soyinka, Wole. "Àbíkú." In Nwoga, Donatus (ed.), *West African Verse*. Great Britain: Longman, 1967. [www.poemhunter.com](http://www.poemhunter.com)



## LESSON 3:

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### GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students share their perspectives on the Àbíkú phenomenon?
- Can students relate Àbíkú names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?
- Can students identify Àbíkú names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?

### Learning objectives:

- Students can share their perspectives on the Àbíkú phenomenon.
- Students can relate Àbíkú names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts.
- Students can identify Àbíkú names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works. ...

### Time Period:

Number of days: 1

### Instructional Procedures:

#### Lesson opening/activator:

I will seek feedback from students on the homework about the Àbíkú names by discussing answers to the given guiding questions. I anticipate responses based on students’ engagement with online reviews on Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark’s ‘Abiku.’

In the indigenous Yorùbá culture, *Àbíkú* is a child (male/female) with recurrent death to reunite with their companions at a fixed time in the spiritual realm. Most importantly, an *Àbíkú* child is “predestined to a continual cycle of birth, death and rebirth” (Akinnaso 55). There are instances where a child is critically indisposed before departing the earthly realm. But once the parents consult *Ifá*, they receive drastic measures to disconnect the child’s bond with their spirit companions for longevity. In the poem, “Abiku,” Soyinka envisions a mischievous *Àbíkú* child, while Clark, on the other hand, graphically projects a persona (relative) of an *Àbíkú* child entreating its stay. Nonetheless, both Nigerian poets complement the preventive rites. For instance, parents lacerate bodies of perceived *Àbíkú* children after discovering their statuses (Clark 61, Soyinka, 1967: 62-63). Soyinka highlights,

I am Àbíkú, calling for the first  
And the repeated time.  
Must I weep for goats and cowries  
For palm oil and the sprinkled ash?  
So, when the snail is burnt in its shell

Whet the heated fragment, brand me... (lines 3-4, 5-6, 9-10, Soyinka, 1967: 62)

In the above lines, an *Àbíké* child scorns and thwarts different attempts to force his staying alive. He defies magical bangles, sacrifices of goats, cowries, palm oil, sprinkled ash and lacerations from snail shells. Consequently, the parents brand the spirit child using a burnt snail shell to identify him during subsequent re-emergence. Traditionally, one of the “ways of forcing an *Àbíké* to stay and grow like a normal child” is through discomfiting exposure (Clark 185).

In contrast to Soyinka, JP Clark depicts an *Àbíké* who defies attempts to stay. Thus, the poet urges the deviant spirit child to stay alive for the mother to enjoy rest. The indigenous Yoruba believe that *Àbíké* spirits “belong to a group of demons that reside in the woods around Iroko trees” (Odebode and Atunde 126; Moruwawon 209). Consequently, JP Clark corroborates the baobab tree as the meeting spot for *Àbíké* spirits. The poet implores the persona in the following lines:

Coming and going these several seasons,  
Do stay out on the baobab tree,  
Follow where you please your kindred spirits,  
...No longer then bestride the threshold,  
But step in, and stay  
For her body is tired,

Tired, her milk going sour... (lines 1-3, 15, 23-25, Clark 61)

Abraham expatiates on Badejo’s statement as he shares radical measures to prevent the death of an *Àbíké* child. He posits:

The corpse of a dead *Àbíké* child is maltreated, and wounds and blows believed in making permanent scars are inflicted. Sometimes, the body is hacked up and, in every case, must be thrown into the “bush,” the idea is to make the *Àbíké*-spirit suffer and become incapable of entering a human body (7).

Meanwhile, parents of *Àbíké* children issue bizarre and derogatory names as preventive rites. In the Yoruba culture, the children are given names like *Máìlò* (do not leave), *Máìmó* (do not depart anymore), *Dúrójayé* (wait to enjoy life), *Dúrósinmí* (wait to bury me), *Ìgbékòyí* (the forest rejects this child), *Kalèjayé* (settle to enjoy life), *Kòsókò* (no more hoes/for burial), *Kúmúyì* (death has a hold on this one), *Ikúmápàyí* (do not die). These *Àbíké* names are meant to ‘expose,’ ‘thwart the plans,’ ‘appease,’ or ‘provoke’ the spirit children in keeping alive. Generally, the Yoruba believe that when *Àbíké* children hear such names, they pity their parents.

#### Step-by-step procedures:

To prepare the class to criticize names in Osofisan’s texts, we will watch 30 minutes of the English-subtitled Tunde Kelani’s (2018) “*Yéèpà*” from the filmmaker’s YouTube channel. The comedy is an adaptation of Osofisan’s *Who’s Afraid of Tai Solarin* (1975/2007). Two hours nineteen minutes, and nineteen seconds film graphically illustrates some characters’ traits as a social commentary on the murky corruption and disintegration in Nigeria’s economy and socio-politics. I intend to complement the session with scholarly materials, discuss concepts and encourage students to do further readings. Also, I will guide students in pronouncing the

Yoruba names and highlighting and reading excerpts from Osofisan's selected texts to elucidate the literary naming context. After that, I will ask students to free-write their connections between the earlier discussed Yoruba philosophy of *Àbíkú* and characters' names in the selected texts. After that, I will nominate each class member to read and discuss excerpts from the texts. Odebode (2013) notes that *Àbíkú* names originally face-threatening (acts) or provocative to the name-bearers have become anglicized/branded using various morphological processes like clipping and blending. He explains that a common trend is inscribing Abiku names on customized shirts and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. For instance, Babatunde (father reincarnates) is clipped as either Babs or Teddy. Likewise, Ikusaanu (death has mercy) is anglicized as Kusan. Soji (wake up or reincarnate) is alphabetized as SOJ (Ess Oo Jay). In the same vein, Ajitoni (s/he wakes up today) becomes Jiton. Others include Kilanko (What are we celebrating?)= Kilar Yetunde (mother reincarnates) = Yetty.

Nonetheless, Femi Osofisan turns *Àbíkú* names into literary aesthetics in *FML* and *WAS*. We have *Dúrójayé* denoting "Stay and enjoy life" in *FML*, *Àbèní Máiḷo* "(We plead with her) (not to depart)" and *Fúnsó*, "He was given to me for safekeeping" respectively in *WAS*. In *FML*, *Dúrójayé* is also a surname for a couple. Sina *Dúrójayé*, when treated as a single name, denotes "Make way to enjoy life" and his wife, *Bímḃó* (shortened form of *Abímḃólá*) *Dúrójayé* "She is born into wealth, Stay to enjoy life." The playwright demystifies the *Àbíkú* myth in the characters' surname, favouring their bourgeois status and carefree personalities. The cordial relationship of the couple with the *Láoyès* exposes their economic status. *Láoyè* desires that *Tinúkè*, his wife, lessen her surveillance on him to flirt with other women like Sina and Sunny. He reports to the latter: *Tinúkè* polices me about nowadays, and it's not just possible to enjoy life the way you and Sina are doing. I mean she's just too jealous, too possessive (*FML* 85). Meanwhile, *Bímḃó*, Sina's wife, vows to *Tinúkè* avenge her husband's extra-marital affair with any man, including an "imbecile" (*FML* 43). She says, "After all, I am still young, pretty..." (*FML* 42). Within the context of this statement, Sunny is the one referred to as 'imbecile.' On hearing her outburst, Sunny readily offers the housewives his address: "Sunny, that's my name! Here's my card. No.19, Lugard Street" (*FML* 43). In this respect, the playwright affirms the two female characters as typifying 'political prostitutes.' So, 'being delayed to enjoy life' attached to the couple's name indicates that they are both self-indulgent personalities.

Interestingly, *Àbèní Máiḷo* and *Fúnsó* in *WAS* are also portrayed as a caricature of corrupt politicians in Nigeria. Their designations within the text play out in their names. The former is the Price Control Officer and the latter, Councillor for Education and Works. As *Àbíkú* name(s), *Àbèní* implies "She Who is Begged to Stay/ She Whom We Begged to Have." *Máiḷo* also indicates, "You stay or Do not go yet." This character, therefore, possesses the attributes of being over-pampered to wait and have (money). *Fúnsó* alternatively means "I am given to watch over", and *Kaokudi* denotes "bring money."

*Àbèní* promises *Ayòkànmí*, the Chief Magistrate, that she would give him "the first choice over any goods seized this month from hoarders" (*WAS* 16). On the other hand, *Fúnsó*, who should watch over the education fund, embezzles the fund of the ward. He thus lives up to his name but, as an irony. *Kaokudi* exclaims: "It's the man you went and put in charge of education.

God pity our children. They call him ‘Force is Force’ (WAS 2). From a literary context, the instances support the dreaded and ruthless nature of *Àbíké* children always attempting to impoverish or make their family miserable, as indicated by Soyinka (1967), Clark (1967) and Okri (1991). Therefore, *Fúnsó* and *Máìlò* have both fulfilled an aspect of their character traits wasting public resources.

#### Lesson closing:

In closing, the analysis of the *Àbíké* names reveals Osofisan’s satirical intent, criticizing the looting of public funds, political instability, and social stratification fostered by Nigeria’s political elites. Given that *Àbíké* children are ruthless and attempt to impoverish or put their families in misery, thus the characters fulfill a salient trait by mismanaging public funds and exhibiting a wanton lifestyle. From this lesson, students have been exposed to the significance of Yoruba names as a tool to parody socio-political and economic crises in Nigeria and the complementarity between the socio-cultural and literary context of naming. Given the subsequent class, I will ask students to read about the functions and implications of panegyrics in the Yoruba culture.

#### Formative Assessment:

Students can conceptualize an *Àbíké* child as predestined to a continual birth, death, and rebirth cycle. They can share their perspectives on the *Àbíké* phenomenon, relate *Àbíké* names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts and identify *Àbíké* names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.

### Materials needed:

Kelani, Tunde. “Yeepa – Full Comedy Film Play.” Retrieved 24 January 2018 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm\\_IsCXrCMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm_IsCXrCMQ). Accessed 08 December, 2021.



## LESSON 4:

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### GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students share their perspectives on panegyric names?
- Can students relate panegyric names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts?
- Can students identify panegyric names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works?

### Learning objectives:

- Students can share their perspectives on the panegyric names.
- Students can relate panegyric names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts.
- Students can identify panegyric names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.

### Time Period:

Number of days: 1

### Instructional Procedures:

#### Lesson opening/activator:

I will commence the class by asking the students, “What are panegyrics within the Yoruba culture?” What are their functions among the Yoruba?” and “Can you cite examples of panegyric names?” I will ask students to share their reactions each time someone appreciates their services.

Ruth Finnegan (1970) conceptualizes panegyrics in Nigeria, West Africa, as permanent titles held by individuals, given to them by friends or drummers. She opines further that “some individuals have several of these names, so that a “collection of them, recited together, resembles a loosely-constructed poem (also called *Oríki*) about the person praised (Finnegan 112). They could also be praise songs and birth poems used as a prayer, thanksgiving, celebration, and prophecy. Panegyrics mediates the meaning and significance of the new human’s name and evoke the infant’s ancestors’ mighty deeds, character, and praise names. Perhaps most importantly, it is an optimistic attempt to project (and define) the child’s future personality and life prospects (Kwame 97). Akinyemi establishes that Yorùbá playwrights often adopt *oríki àbísò*, descriptive praise names that “suggest endearment, or what Orié refers to as ‘femininity’ and ‘aesthetics when naming their female characters” (135). Akinyemi further adds *pé* (to be complete), *sà* (to select carefully), and *wẹ̀* (to bathe). For instance, the verbs *mọ̀* (to know) and *pé* (to be complete) in the female name *Àmọ̀pé* or the verbs *rìn* (walk) and *pé* (to be complete) in the female name *Àrìnpé* imply that the individuals so named are

endowed with unique virtues of (knowledge and wholeness) respectively that make them exceptional and, therefore, naturally loved and desired (7).

### Step-by-step procedures:

To prepare the class to criticize panegyric names in Osofisan's texts, we will watch 30 minutes of Tunde Kelani's "Yéèpà" from the filmmaker's YouTube channel. Also, I will guide students in pronouncing the Yoruba names and highlighting and reading excerpts from Osofisan's selected texts to elucidate the literary naming context. After that, I will ask students to free-write their connections between the earlier discussed Yoruba panegyrics and characters' names in the selected texts. After that, I will nominate each class member to read and discuss excerpts from the texts.

Osofisan deploys *Àwẹ̀ró* as a name for a female parliamentarian in *MH*. Her name combines "the verbs *wẹ̀* (to bathe) and *ró* to stand out gorgeously" to portray her unique beauty (Akinyemi 7). The character's name suggests that she is an influential parliamentarian who has risen to affluence and power through feminine manipulation and corruption in her political ambition. Her sexual tryst with Pastor Sùúrù and Jimoh, the hotel manager's description of her charming physique, validates her name's significance. In this regard, Jimoh teases Pastor Sùúrù:

We have one cosy little corner, where the beautiful madam will be very warm...Let me congratulate you sir, you've brought a really good catch! One of the prettiest I've seen in all my long career here (*MH* 27).

Also, *Àbẹ̀ni Máìlọ̀* (*Àbíkú* name), expected to be nurtured and cherished, is among the corrupt government officials in Osofisan's *WAS*. *Àwẹ̀ró*, the only female parliamentarian in Osofisan's *MH*, whose name implies someone bathed and clean, meant to be a standout among fellow parliamentarians, however, lowers her dignity and virtue by inviting Pastor Sùúrù, a supposed 'cleric' to a hotel before she can approve his contract. *Atínúkẹ̀* in *FML*, on the other hand, is a wife to a wealthy man, but she is naïve and susceptible to deceptions from her promiscuous husband.

Akinyemi believes that female names are issued to "distinctively balance male counterparts, in that, males' names are meant to express heroic, brave, or strong feelings" (Akinyemi 6). For instance, in *WAS*, the name *Ìşòlá* foregrounds the character as being materialistic. Meanwhile, *Àlàdé* may have three implications. First, *Aláde*, the character 'owns a crown' owing to his role as Chief Magistrate or *Àlàde*, "One who survives to arrive" in that, he struggles to get to his post or become rich (money gained from corruption). *Àlàdé* can also mean the 'the immaculate one has arrived.'

In the text, Chief Gbónmíaiyélobíòjò in a soliloquy describes the strains of leadership, in this case, the stress of devising schemes to delay Solarin's visit. He turns instantaneously to *Àlàdé*, "Ah Gbónmíaiyélobíòjò, uneasy lies the head! (Turning to his Chief Magistrate) [*WAS* 14]. However, the character does not complete the adage, "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." His action after that confirms *Aláde*'s name as 'the owner of the crown' in that his role is to dictate the law of the land. He says to him, "Ayo, as for you, I think you ought to



spend more time in the court, if only as a hobby” (WAS 14-15). Also, the first meaning is confirmed by Àlàdé, who explains to Fáwọ̀mi how he got the post of a councillor, “Ah, I deserved the promotion, sir, and I won’t take anyone disputing it. I have paid my dues regularly to the secret cult since I was an apprentice lawyer” (WAS 19). In addition, he is coaxed by fellow councillors to brace up and lead the team to ‘Solarin,’ being the Magistrate, “Please go! Brave the Rubicon! Deliver the first blow! Show you’re a hero” (WAS 68).

#### Lesson closing:

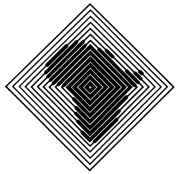
In conclusion, the analysis of the panegyric names in Osofisan’s selected texts indicates that they are ironic intended for emphasis by contradicting the characters’ overt traits and predispositions. In this regard, the playwright’s choice of Àwẹ̀ró in *MH*, Atinúkẹ́ in *FML* and Àbẹ̀ní in *WAS* negates the notion of care, but sex implicitly underlining their names. The feminine panegyric names further corroborate Osofisan’s feminist inclination and opposition against patriarchal subjugation in Nigeria, underscoring themes of extra-marital affairs and betrayal in *MH* and *FML*. Meanwhile, the masculine panegyric names are deployed to convey the idea of recklessness, materialism and looting perpetrated by Nigerian politicians ironic of the Yorùbá cultural naming conventions. From this lesson, students have been exposed to the significance of panegyrics in the Yoruba culture, their functions within Nigeria’s literary and sociocultural context, and their consequences to creating characters’ names and roles in Osofisan’s selected texts. Given the subsequent class, I will ask students to read about the functions and implications of circumstantial names within the Yoruba culture.

#### Formative Assessment:

Students can conceptualize Yoruba panegyric names as praise or titular names given to males and females among the indigenous Yoruba. They can share their perspectives on the panegyric names, relate them to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts and identify panegyric names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.

#### Materials needed:

Kelani, Tunde. “Yeepa – Full Comedy Film Play.” Retrieved 24 January 2018 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm\\_IsCXrCMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm_IsCXrCMQ). Accessed 08 December, 2021.



## LESSON 5:

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### GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students share their perspectives on circumstantial names?
- Can students relate circumstantial names to Nigeria's socio-cultural and literary contexts?
- Can students identify circumstantial names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works?

### Learning objectives:

- Students can share their perspectives on the circumstantial names.
- Students can identify circumstantial names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works.
- Students can identify circumstantial names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works,

### Time Period:

Number of days: 1

### Instructional Procedures:

#### Lesson opening/activator:

To undertake the session, I will ask the students to share memorable moments that individually impacted their lives. I anticipate their sharing of pleasant or unpleasant events like birthday parties, the death of a family member, how they met their first friend and their first-day experience in the university.

Likewise, I will explain that Yoruba circumstantial names reflect parents' or grandparents' aspirations, hopes and descriptions of peculiar events, especially a mother's delivery experience or child's birth conditions. Circumstantial names echo "the hopes, fear, aspirations, and wishes of the biological parents of the child and those of the extended family members such as grandparents" (Olatunji 68). Consequently, the indigenous Yorùbá observes an expectant mother's conditions, situations, and circumstances and the nature of the child's birth before giving such names (Ilesanmi 108-119). From the preceding, I will guide students to open excerpts in the texts that feature circumstantial names and nominate a class member to read and discuss the connection to the earlier explained Yoruba sociocultural philosophy.

### Step-by-step procedures:

To prepare the class to criticize panegyric names in Osofisan's texts, we will watch 30 minutes of Tunde Kelani's "Yéèpà" from the filmmaker's YouTube channel. Also, I will guide students in pronouncing the Yoruba names and highlighting and reading excerpts from Osofisan's selected texts to elucidate the literary naming context. After that, I will ask students to free-write their connections between the earlier discussed Yoruba circumstantial names and characters in the selected texts. After that, I will nominate each class member to read and discuss excerpts from the texts.

In *MH*, we have "Abíòsè," a child that is born on Sunday, the first day of the week. In the text, she seems to be the most senior daughter of Alátìṣe, and she leads her two sisters into sexual escapades with military men. Meanwhile, Dàda as a middle name for Chief James Dàda Gbónmiaiyélòbìòjò is used to describe a child that is 'born with dreadlocks' and who, many times, exhibits a weak nature in the face of confrontation. In the Yorùbá oral account, Dàda is an elder brother to Sango, a deity, a warrior in his lifetime and fourth monarch of Òyó. Dàda, also known as *Àjàkà/Àjùwòṅ*, is said to have had curly hairs. There is a proverb in Yorùbá land that describes his trait: "Dàda kòlèjà, ṣùgbón ó ní àbúrò tí ó gbójú" (Dàda cannot fight but has a daring younger brother) (Ogunmola 65).

On this premise, the name reveals the Chairman as a spineless, timid and fearful coward who is intimidated by Solarin's imminent visit due to his corruption. He consults *Ifágbèmi*, an *Ifá* priest, to help him delay the Commissioner's arrival, so that true to his surname *Gbónmiaiyélòbìòjò*, he can hoard the government funds at his disposal.

"Bódúnrìn," in *WAS*, is a child that is born during a festive period. The first item in Dr Bódúnrìn Àlàdé-Martins' name is symbolic; he is a man that aligns with seasons, and the political season of the play is corruption. He plays along with the system, despite his educational pedigree. Sunny in *FML* is a nickname for Sunday. It is a name given to children born on Sundays. However, the name's significance to his role in the text is more of showing a personality with wild illusions and fiddler for women (*FML* 43, 89).

The Yorùbá believe in reincarnation. A deceased relative (grandfather or grandmother) may return as a reincarnated child to preserve and maintain his life in that family. A newborn baby in the family is given such name as "Babátúndé", that is, 'Father Has Returned' (Moruwawon 210). When a female child is born after the death of an aged female member of a family, they use "Ìyábòdé" (Mother Has Returned), a name that coincidentally appears in the plot of *FML*. Láoyè describes Ìyábò's unprecedented return to his life:

"An affair of fifteen years ago, and there she suddenly appears, threatening to kill herself in my parlour if I don't renew with her" (*FML* 66). Láoyè's soliloquy captures the theme of death and reincarnation, which has been demystified by Osofisan in the character of Ìyábò, who has arrived to fulfil her demands as a whore, not a reincarnate.

### Lesson closing:

In closing, circumstantial names or names brought from heaven (*Orúkọ Àmútòrunwá*) like Bose (a child born on Sunday) in *MH* and Dàda (a child born with dreadlocks), Fún só (I was given the child to look after) and Bódúnrìn (a child born during an annual festival) in *WAS* and Ìyábò (a female child born immediately after the death of a mother/grandmother) in *FML*

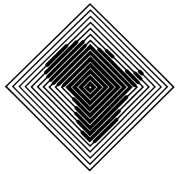
exemplify the Yorùbá concept of predestination/reincarnation. Suggestively, Osofisan exploits the concept to create individual and social identities underlining ‘role performance’ in literary context and ‘destiny’ in social reality (Izevbaye 169). From this lesson, students have been exposed to the significance of circumstantial names in the Yoruba culture, their functions within Nigeria’s literary and sociocultural context, and their consequences to creating characters’ names and roles in Osofisan’s selected texts. Given the subsequent class, I will ask students to read about the functions and implications of deity names within the Yoruba culture.

#### Formative Assessment:

Students can explain Yoruba circumstantial names as an expression of parents’ or grandparents’ aspirations, hopes and descriptions of peculiar events, especially a mother’s delivery experience or child’s birth conditions. They can share their perspectives on the circumstantial names, relate circumstantial names to Nigeria’s socio-cultural and literary contexts and identify circumstantial names and characters’ roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan’s works.

#### Materials needed:

Kelani, Tunde. “Yeepa – Full Comedy Film Play.” Retrieved 24 January 2018 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm\\_IsCXrCMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm_IsCXrCMQ). Accessed 08 December, 2021.



## LESSON 6:

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### GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- Can students share their perspectives on deity names?
- Can students relate deity names to Nigeria's socio-cultural and literary contexts?
- Can students identify deity names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works?

### Learning objectives:

- Students can share their perspectives on deity names.
- Students can relate deity names to Nigeria's socio-cultural and literary contexts.
- Students can identify deity names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works.

### Time Period:

Number of days: 1

### Instructional Procedures:

#### Lesson opening/activator:

I will ask students to share any religious affiliations or knowledge of deities with the class. Have you been involved in any religious activities before? Do the religious activities involve the veneration of deities, rituals and votive elements? Can you share your experience with the class?.

Suggestively, students without religious affiliations can relate to the three main global religions Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Notably, the indigenous Yoruba associate their children's names with ancestral deities. Traditionally, the ethnic group believe in different deities (polytheism). For instance, Ogun (god of iron and pantheon for hunters/blacksmiths/transporters), Sango (god of thunder and lightning), Esu (trickster deity and deputy to the Supreme deity), Ifa (god of divination and wisdom), Osun (river goddess), Osanyin (god of medicinal plants) and Obatala (the arch divinity). Therefore, Yoruba issue names like Ifawole (the divination oracle comes home), Ogunwale (the iron god comes home), Sangowale (the thunder god comes home), Osunwale (the river goddess comes home), Ojebode (The Masquerade/ancestral spirit has returned), Osunfuke (The Osun goddess gave me (the child) to nurture), Esugbemi (The Yoruba trickster spirit has helped me).

Nonetheless, the influence of Western religion and modernity has made such traditional names extinct significantly. Hence, Yoruba elites with deity names readily detach and

substitute the names with Olu (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ), Ayo (Joy), Oluwa/Olorun (God/Yoruba supreme deity). Therefore, names like Oluwale (the Lord Jesus comes home), Olusola (the lord Jesus enriches me), Ayokunle (Joy has filled the home) and Olorunfemi (God loves me). On the other hand, other Yoruba link their names to the Islamic religion. Therefore, the naming trend of such name bearers is the Yorubanised Arabic versions. For instance, Muslim adherents could bear names like Lamidi (El Hammed), Buremo (Ibraheem) and Lasisi (Abdul Azeez).

### Step-by-step procedures:

To prepare the class to criticize names in Osofisan's texts, we will watch the remaining 22 minutes of Tunde Kelani's "Yéèpà" from the filmmaker's YouTube channel. Also, I intend to complement with short clips of the Osun-Osogbo festival in Southwestern Nigeria and Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* on YouTube to underscore religious practices/beliefs in deities in African and diasporic societies. Subsequently, I will guide students in pronouncing the Yoruba names and highlighting and reading excerpts from Osofisan's selected texts to elucidate the literary naming context. I will ask students to free-write their connections between the earlier discussed Yoruba deity names and characters in the selected texts. After that, I will nominate each class member to read and discuss excerpts from the texts

In Osofisan's *WAS*, Bàbá Fáwomi (*Ifá Has Drowned*) takes his deity name and profession from his association with the *Ifá* oracle, being a herbalist. *Ifá* is the process of divination or consulting *Ọ̀rúnmilá* 'the god of divination or father of 'divination.' In Yorùbá culture, the god/and his diviners are known for their wisdom, truth, integrity, and purity. This is why clients subscribe to the dictates of the oracle certified as being authentic. They say, *Ifá kii s' èké*, that is, 'the oracle does not lie.' *Ifá* does not speak falsely. It responds only to consultation. The complete rendering of the statement is:

*Ọ̀pèlẹ̀ ọ̀ sèké oni kini o gbọ ohun tí Ifá ní wí*, The divination is false when the diviner is compromised,

*Ohun ti a bá d'fá fún ni Ifá máa ní sọ fún èyà̀n*, The oracle only reports what it is being consulted for,

*Ifá kii s'èké, Ifá kii purọ* *Ifá* is not false, *Ifá* does not lie

The above corpora imply that a herbalist may be false, but the Oracle is not biased. Bàbá Fáwomi, being a herbalist, is meant to uphold the integrity of his profession, but he is reckless and perverse like other characters. He has thus drowned/dragged the Oracle (truth) in water/mud. His action while requesting for libation captures this 'drowning,' "It's outrageous! Outrageous! *Ifá* is supposed to see and talk clearly on a dry throat!" (*WAS* 17). As the story unfolds, he is given a bottle of gin by Polycap, but unknown to him, it has antiseptic inside. Gbónmiaiyélòbíòjò exclaims, "Poison? Let me see the bottle...Ah Polycap, this is deicide! You have killed a god in my parlour!" (*WAS* 22).

He has neutralized the justice, and diluted messages of truth meant to come from a true *Ifá* priest. As revealed in the play, he demands sacrifices, gifts, libation and exorbitant prices and preys on the fear and foolishness of other characters when they consult him for divination on whether Solarin, the Public Complaints Commissioner, would come or not. He demands from them, "five cows...ten goats...sixteen fowls...seven bales of white cloth...strong-limbed, home-raised chickens!" (*WAS* 21).

In the same vein, Pastor Nebuchadnezzar Ifágbè mí (*Ifá* saves me) in *WAS*, is a syncretist, if not a hypocrite. He finds rest, comfort and solace in relying on the herbalist to cover his tracks/evil acts. It means, like most of the other characters, the Pastor who is supposed to be a shepherd of God's people and a guide to the society through the application of God's word is a wolf in sheep's skin. This is true of his depiction in the play as a pretender, an oppressive, inconsistent and perverse pastor. A pastor is supposed to be a 'holy man of God,' but Nebuchadnezzar is 'a dictatorial/power-drunk individual', and Ifágbè mí relies on a diviner for salvation. The chairman reads the remarks of Ìṣòlá about the Pastor from a diary thus: The Pastor is a sure candidate of hell. There's still an unresolved case of missing church funds, for which I understand the Pastor wears a number of charms round his waist.... (*WAS* 83).

#### Lesson closing:

In conclusion, characters' names are controlling symbolic assets at a writer's disposal to reinforce culture, religion, politics, history and artistic ideologies. They also represent efficient tools for socio-political commentaries, especially the gamut of corruption in Nigeria's sectors. Therefore, Osofisan conveys the socio-political realities in Nigeria, underscoring literature as a mirror of society through characters' names. In *MH* and *WAS*, the playwright portrays some religious leaders in Nigeria as sycophants, charlatans, and hypocrites. He condemns them as having failed in their duties as the conscience of the society and as deceiving the public.

#### Formative Assessment:

Students can highlight Yoruba deity names as names revealing religious affiliations and occupations among the indigenous Yoruba. They can share their perspectives on the deity names, relate them to Nigeria's socio-cultural and literary contexts and identify deity names and characters' roles and personalities in Femi Osofisan's works.

### Materials needed:

Kelani, Tunde. "Yeepa – Full Comedy Film Play." Retrieved 24 January, 2018 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm\\_IsCXrCMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm_IsCXrCMQ). Accessed 08 December, 2021.

[OSUN OSOGBO FESTIVAL 2021 - YouTube](#)

[Black Panther \(2018\) - YouTube](#)

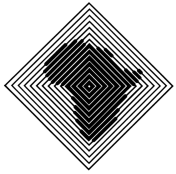


# ASSESSMENT

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How accurate is the Yoruba maxim “family rituals and traditions are considered first in a household before naming a child”? Critically expatiate by demonstrating your knowledge of either *Abiku*, circumstantial, panegyric or deity names in Femi Osofisan’s *Midnight Hotel* (2003), *Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark* (2006) or *Who’s Afraid of Solarin?* (2007) through a careful criticism of characters’ names in the selected works. Discuss your answer with relevant examples using any teaching resources to underscore the connection between the socio-cultural and literary naming contexts.





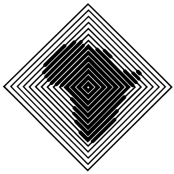
# DIFFERENTIATION

## FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

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The unit has been simplified to accommodate diverse learners, especially non-Yoruba, to grasp the topics thoroughly. It builds up through an extensive translation of Yoruba names and concepts into the English language, class activities, ice-breaking questions, discussions and homework.

The unit also adopts several audio-visuais, particularly pop culture, as teaching resources to stimulate young learners' interest in the Yoruba naming concept and appeal to multicultural students by illustrating the significance of christening ceremonies in different cultures and contexts.



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