

DISCLAIMER: This illustrative document is to serve as a guide and nothing more, nothing less. All model essays answered in this guide are no where related to any examinations whatsoever. It will be sheer coincidence should any of the answered model questions appear in your examinations. This is to say that, in addition to your studies, use this document as means to an end. **GOOD LUCK.**

**COLLEGES OF EDUCATION
FOUR-YEAR BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (B.ED)
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**COURSE CODE: EBS 363
COURSE TITLE: GENDER AND WRITING**

SECTION B

Answer two questions from this section. All questions carry equal marks

1. Examine two tools of female liberation, citing and evidencing appropriate instances from Charlotte Bronte`s *Jane Eyre* and Ba`s *So Long A letter*
2. Gender stereotyping is prevalent in Mariama Ba`s *So Long A Letter*. With at least three references and instances from the text, discuss the notion of gender stereotyping.
3. Drawing instances from Achebe`s *Things Fall Apart*, discuss the structure of the Umuofian society that made it patriarchal.
4. Discuss Charlotte Bronte`s *Jane Eyre* as a feminist work of art.

ILLUSTRATIVE WAYS OF TACKLING QUESTIONS

For the purpose of illustrations, questions 1 and 2 will be discussed extensively by way of considering how to answer such questions, how to develop points and cite instances, tackling its introduction, main body and finally its conclusion. A distinction will be drawn between how to tackle a **Single Text Type Essay** and a **Comparative Essay**. Its is my hope that after going through this guide you will be able to write and analyse texts as easily as possible. Let us get started.

QUESTION 1

- **Examine two tools of female liberation, citing and evidencing appropriate instances from Charlotte Bronte`s *Jane Eyre* and Ba`s *So Long A letter***

This question falls under the comparative essay type. Comparative essays

draw analysis from **TWO** or **more texts or analytical and contextual backgrounds**. This is to say that your references, paraphrases, and instances are taken from two or books. In relation to the question, these two books are *Jane Eyre* and *So Long A Letter*. Lets us examine how to tackle the various parts of the question.

A. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of comparative essays should be **simple and straight to the point**. Due to the fact that you are drawing your analysis from two books it is **not** advisable to give a brief synopsis(short summary) of the two books. Usually the **TERM** around which the question centres is defined and built upon. In relation to this question, the TERM around which the question or essay revolves is **"female liberation"**. This definition is then built upon, making sure the names of the two authors and the names of the texts or books in question are included in your introduction. Bear in mind that the **TENSE** of your essay should, most preferably, be analysed in the **PRESENT TENSE** as is a norm in literary analysis. The past tense can be employed but that would be at your own risk as some lecturers recognize only the present tense and may mark you down. In this regard, let us consider how the introduction of this question would be in relation to these vital points. It is italicised below.

*The notion of female liberation has received immense global attention and recognition. It **denotes** an attempt by women to free themselves from the ills and cruel dictations of society in relation to the wrong perception of its people, culture and to a large extent its religion. As a means of creating awareness , several authors **are instituting** this notion in their writings. Two of such prolific writers **are** Charlotte Bronte and Mariama Ba, authors of *Jane Eyre* and *So Long A Letter* respectively. This essay discusses two tools of female liberation in the aforementioned texts.*


B. MAIN BODY

Two tools of female liberation are to be discussed with **REFERENCES** and **INSTANCES** from the text. Two of such tools are;

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Economic independence
- ❖ Personal traits including bravery, intelligence and optimism

For the purposes of this essay two of these points will be developed. It must be noted that in referencing instances and quotations by some characters to buttress your explanations, paraphrasing their speeches and diction is mostly recommended if the actual words of the speaker cannot be completely recalled. In using the direct quoting method, ellipses can be employed when the speech is a long one. Be sure to include the name of the

speaker/character of the speech. The direct quoting method is employed when you are sure of the speaker's speech. As is the norm, the **PRESENT TENSE** should be used in developing such points. Devote a paragraph to a point. It is recommended to **go straight** to the point and avoid excessive **irrelevant jargon and vocabulary**. As you are tackling two essays and developing your points against a time period of two hours, be sure to be as succinct as possible. Forego the excessive of conjunctions especially **"AND"** as it makes your expressions quite hollow and vaguely bulky. Your analysis should be an objective one. Do not chip in **your opinions or directives**. For example;

.....**in my opinion, I think** one tool of female liberation in **Jane Eyre** and **so long** a letter **was** education. **Because** education **made** Aissatou **to live** her marriage..... 

This instance above will be marked down in the sense that the personal opinions of the writer have been included. The writer is literally beating about the bush. Again **never** begin a sentence with the conjunction **"because"** due to the fact that conjunctions are meant to link two ideas not initiate them. Make it a habit to always **punctuate** your sentences well. **Capitalisation** of author and the initial letters of the text is also very crucial. Never mix tenses as in the instance above. Let us look at an ideal development of the point "education" italicised below

*Through a series of observations and thorough juxtapositions, it is seen that education is the most telling factor of female liberation in both texts. Education serves as means of consciousness raising and an eye opener. It gives women many exit points to escape the ill dictations of society. In **So Long A letter**, The character Aissatou exemplifies this liberation through the invent of education. Her difficult but well thought exit from her marriage can be attributed to her knowledge of the dire consequences of polygamy on her personal freedom and marital bonding. Through this consciousness, she is able to forego personal affections like pity and love, which could have kept her in the fiery brace of polygamous marriage. Her immense success leaves her friend, Ramatoulaye remarking that "...books saved you. Having become your refuge, they sustained you." In **Jane Eyre**, education is a saviour and an agent of conscientisation which leads to independence. For Jane, education has always been a saviour. Maltreated at the Reeds home, Jane spends her time reading which gives her the peace of mind she yearns for, the knowledge she desires and the joy she never receives while living with the Reeds. Educations enlightens Jane and other female characters on the importance of self worth and self reliance. It is through this enlightenment that she strives to attain independence through teaching and other jobs like her position of governess. This enlightenment informs her decisions to leave Mr. Rochester and reject St. John Rivers on account that their actions prey on her personal happiness and self worth. Through education other female characters like Diana and Mary*

Rivers also achieve self actualization and fulfilment, working as governesses.

Let us now consider how the second point should ideally be developed. It is also italicised below

*Another telling factor that informs female liberation in both texts is economic independence. In Mariama Ba's **So Long A Letter**, economic self reliance pushes women to pursue their desires and goals in life. Due to her economic independence, Ramatoulaye is able to fend for herself and her nine children when she is left in solitude after her husband marries Binetou. She strives to educate all her children through her own financial means. As a result of this firm financial ground, she is able to assert herself against polygamy and patriarchy at large through the firm and bold rejection of the despicable Tamsir, brother of Modou Fall. Aissatou also greatly exemplifies this factor. Through her strive for economic independence as an interpreter, she is able to cater for her four sons single-handedly and even comes to the rescue of her friend Ramatoulaye by buying her a car to assist her find complete self reliance and comfort. Foil to these two characters is Binetou whose success and finances are tied to her husband Modou Fall. When he dies, Binetou becomes a liability to her family as she is neither properly educated nor engaged in any meaningful trade of her own. Considering Charlotte Bronte's **Jane Eyre**, Jane's main motive is to achieve the self fulfilment she desires, one encompassing being loved, personal freedom and self actualisation. In pursuant of these, Jane strives for economic independence so that her successes, self worth and personal decisions are not tied to any individual who may use these as bait to decide for her. In lieu of this, she becomes a teacher, and a governess at Mr. Rochester's mansion, tutoring Adele. One means of stamping her economic independence is her refusal to accept monetary tokens and rewards from individuals no matter how close they are to her. One of such instances is her rejection of Mr Rochester's monetary gift to her when she was paying a visit to Mrs Reed at Gateshead. She rather refuses to accept it as a gift but takes this money as her remuneration, something she has worked hard for. While at the Rivers abode, she demands employment to be able fend for herself and not become a burden on them. She gladly accepts the post of teacher to keep her busy and self reliable. As a result of this economic independence, she boldly rejects St. John Rivers' proposal on account that he did not love her and that she did not want her freedom-being it economic, social, or religious be tied to any man.*

C. CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should sum up the main points in the body of your text. It should be as brief as possible and straight to the point. Avoid the tautology "**finally in conclusion**" making sure you don't include your opinions such as the illustration below.

*.....finally in conclusion, the explanation given above with enough references from the texts **best** examines two tools of women liberation.*



NB: You are not in the position to determine whether your explanations are the **BEST**. Let us consider an ideal conclusion italicised below

*.....To conclude, the points, education and economic independence examined intricately above with appropriate references and instances from both texts are two tools of female liberation in Charlotte Bronte`s **Jane Eyre** and Mariama Ba`s **So Long A Letter**...*

QUESTION 2

- `Gender stereotyping is prevalent in Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter*. With at least three references and instances from the text, discuss the notion of gender stereotyping.

This question falls under the single text essay type. Single text type essays draw analysis from one text or analytical and contextual background. This is to say that your references, paraphrases, and instances are taken from only one book. In relation to the question, this single text is ***So Long A Letter***. Lets us examine how to tackle the various parts of the question.

INTRODUCTION

Analysing single text essays are quite simple and easy. In this case, a single text or novel is put into perspective and dissected accordingly. The introduction of such essays require a brief synopsis of the plot of the text in question, taking into consideration **the name of the author**, the **title and setting of the text**, and the introduction of at least one major character, preferably the protagonist. The **motive** of writing the essay then follows immediately. Be careful to note that the **initials** of the author`s name are capitalised. This is same for the title of the text. The **PRESENT TENSE** is recommended in your analysis. Let us consider an ideal introduction for question two. The important elements are underlined.

So Long A Letter, an epistolary novel written by Mariama Ba, brings to the fore, the plight of women in the patriarchal Islamic society of Dakar, Senegal. The novel follows the story of two childhood friends, Ramatoulaye and Aissatou whose paths diverge in adulthood when their marriages take a different unpleasant turn. Their respective husbands resort to polygamy as is the norm of their culture and society. Highly educated and governed by principles, these two women strive to free themselves from the ill consequences of the icy hands of polygamy. The novel presents numerous stereotypical characters as dictated by their communities. This essay focuses on discussing three instances of gender stereotyping in the text.

MAIN BODY

Three instances of gender stereotyping are to be discussed with appropriate references from the text. The main points to be developed are

- ❖ Men as polygamists and adulterers
- ❖ Women as submissive and obedient
- ❖ Young girls as home wreckers
- ❖ Difficult in-laws.

For the purposes of this essay three of these points will be developed. It must be noted that in referencing instances and quotations by some characters to buttress your explanations, **paraphrasing** their speeches and diction is mostly recommended if the actual words of the speaker cannot be completely recalled. In using the direct quoting method, ellipses(...) can be employed when the speech is a long one. Be sure to include **the name of the speaker/character** of the speech. The direct quoting method is employed when you are sure of the speaker's speech. As is the norm, the **PRESENT TENSE** should be used in developing such points. Devote a paragraph to a point. It is recommended to go straight to the point and avoid excessive irrelevant jargon and vocabulary. As you are tackling two essays developing your points against a time period of two hours, be sure to be as succinct as possible. Forego the excessive use of conjunctions especially **"AND"** it makes your expressions quite hollow and vaguely bulky. Your analysis should be an objective one. **Do not chip in your opinions** or directives as already discussed. Let us now focus our attention on developing these three points. The point by point analysis are italicised below

*Gender stereotyping refers to the representation of males and females with certain preconceived roles or traits. It further denotes the practice of assigning specific roles to the various sexes by society. As is evident, **So Long A Letter** takes its root from the Senegalese culture with a blend of Islamic practices which have ascribed various roles for men and women alike. As a result, such stereotypes are very prevalent in the text. One of the many instances of gender stereotyping in the novel is the portrayal of men as adulterers and polygamists. Most of the marriages Mariama Ba presents in her novel are polygamous, usually initiated and perpetuated by men, backed by society. It is the requisite of only men. From the text, Modou, Tamsir and Mawdo practice polygyny without any societal frowns. Women on the other hand, are to remain faithful to their partners without choice. As a result of the recognition given to men to practise polygyny, they carry it out with impunity, without considering its dire consequences on their first wives. Aware of its negative consequences, of most of the educated women in the text, Aissatou and Ramatoulaye, strive to free themselves from the fiery braces of polygamy. In this regard Ramatoulaye remarks after being told to accept Binetou as co wife that "I was irritated. He was asking me to understand.....I could not be an ally to polygamic instincts". Men pass for adulterers due to the fact that most of these second wives are married on the mere basis of satisfying their sexual*

urge and not based on actual true love as in the case of Modou`s marriage to Binetou and Mawdo`s marriage to Young Nabou.

Another instance of gender stereotyping, worth discussing in the text is the portrayal of women as submissive and obedient to authority, usually male authority, without questioning. Binetou and Young Nabou exhibit this conventional subservience and submissiveness. They conform to instructions directing them to engage in polygamy without resentment and questioning. Ramatoulaye also remains completely silent without questioning after the news of her husband's marriage to Binetou suffices. Though affected, society does not permit her to question such decisions. Women who go contrary to this obedience and are able to speak against this daunting authority are socially ostracised. Aissatou and to a large extent, Ramatoulaye tend to rise against the societal conventions of female submissiveness and obedience through Aissatou`s firm rejection of polygamy and Ramatoulaye`s piercing speech against Tamsir`s proposal.

To continue, another instance of gender stereotyping worth discussing in the text is the portrayal of young women as home wreckers. It is a well known fact that the marriages of Ramatoulaye and Modou Fall, Aissatou and Mawdo Ba are fruitful unions based on true love and mutual trust, strengthened and crowned by childbearing. All is perfect until the introduction of Binetou in Ramatoulaye`s marriage and Young Nabou into the Aissatou`s marriage with Mawdo Ba. The once perfect union disintegrates abysmally as a result of the fresh blood and near perfect young bodies these two ladies bring forward, leaving the first wives questioning themselves and their self worth. As a result of Binetou`s intrusion, Ramatoulaye has to fend for herself and her twelve children in addition to their proper upbringing. Aissatou is not spared as she has to leave her marriage with no property except her four children who she must look after within her own means. It is also noticed that the strong bond between Jacqueline and Samba Diack loosens as a result of Samba Diack`s pursuit of young ladies. This leaves Jacqueline depressed, leading to her nervous breakdown

CONCLUSION

*The points discussed above with relevant instances from the text indicates the prevalence of gender stereotyping in Mariama Ba`s **So Long A Letter**.*

QUESTION 3

- **Drawing instances from Achebe`s Things Fall Apart, discuss the structure**

of the Umuofian society that made it patriarchal.

Now that we have dissected how to answer both comparative and single text essays, let us jump straight to answering the third question. It is italicised below.

INTRODUCTION

*Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart** tells the story of the changing nature of a fictional African village-Umuofia, as seen through the life of one of its most prominent men, Okonkwo, the novel's protagonist who holds on to his culture till his suicidal death. Throughout the story, we see the village before and after its contact with European settlers and the effect this has on the people and their culture. In writing this novel, Achebe created not just a classic work of literature but also a landmark representation of the destructive consequences of European colonialism. Before the contact with the white, the Umuofian culture exhibited some traces of patriarchy and this forms the basis for writing this essay.*

MAIN BODY

Patriarchy denotes a social system in which males dominate in all sects of power including government, business, and even in social circumstances like marriage. Putting the culture of Umuofia in perspective we realize that this definition is true considering its structure. One element of the structure of Umuofia that makes it patriarchal is the power of government and decision making which is the requisite of men. Titles which delineate how powerful a person's influence is in decision making and importance is only taken by men and as such they deliberate and take decisions on behalf of the entire clan without considering the addition of women. It is believed that men without titles are considered women and thus, cannot take part in decision making. This is the reason Okonkwo despises his father Unoka and insults Osugo, calling him a woman.

Another patriarchal element of the Umuofian society is the portrayal of women as the weaker sex compared to men. This assertion is evident in the side-lining of women during wars with other villages and duties which demand vigour and tact. Again, certain farm practices and duties are reserved for men because they are physically demanding and again requires that one is tactful. An instance is the portrayal of Yam as the "king of crops" and consequently a man's crop. Women who are considered physically feeble are to cultivate coco-yams, beans, and cassava. Even Umuofia's most patronised form of entertainment, their wrestling, is reserved for men and boys alike, with women serving as spectators.

A third element worth discussing in relation to the patriarchal nature of the Umuofian society is the cultural and societal rights given to men to practise polygamy and have total dominance over their wives. It is observed that men like Okonkwo and Nwakibie marry three and nine wives respectively with total control over all the affairs of their wives. They have the right to reprimand and scold them, beat them without questioning unless probably, this beating goes against one of their established customs like the Week of Peace. Such control demands that their wives remain submissive and subservient without questioning the decisions of their husbands and any woman who goes contrary to this norm is given the beating of her dear life. This assertion is true when Ekwefi, Okonkwo's second wife is nearly shot to death after calling his husband a poor hunter through her remark "guns that never short". It is quite interesting to note that no woman in the entire text marries two husbands, an indication that polygamy is indeed the requisite of men.

CONCLUSION

*In conclusion, the elements thoroughly discussed above with appropriate instances from the text are sure indications of the patriarchal nature of the Umuofian society in Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart**.*

QUESTION 4

- Discuss Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* as a feminist work of art.

INTRODUCTION

*Charlotte Bronte's **Jane Eyre** follows the story of Jane, a seemingly plain and simple orphan as she battles through life's struggles of the Victorian Era. Jane has many obstacles in her life-her cruel and abusive Aunt Reed, the grim conditions at Lowood school, her love for Rochester and her encounter with the ever despicable St. John Rivers. However, Jane overcomes these obstacles through her determination, sharp wit, and courage. The novel ends with Jane married to Rochester with children of their own. In her quest to overcome these obstacles, she resorts to some principles which qualify the novel as the feminist novel. This essay discusses the text a feminist work of art.*

MAIN BODY

*A feminist is a person whose beliefs and behaviour are based on feminism (belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes). **Jane Eyre** is clearly a critique of assumptions about both gender and social class. It contains a strong feminist stance; it speaks to deep, timeless human urges and fears, using the principles of literature to chart the mind's recesses. Thus, **Jane Eyre** is an epitome of femininity - a young independent individual steadfast in her morals and has strong Christian virtues, dominant, assertive and **principled**. That itself is no small feat.*

Firstly, Jane Eyre is a young woman who faces hardships with great

determination. Raised by Mrs. Reed, a cruel aunt, she is sent to *Lowood*, a bleak charity school run by the tyrannical Mr. Brocklehurst, where she endures a lonely and sad life. Jane suffers through the cruel treatment of Lowood because her aunt wants to punish her for her rebelliousness, she suffers heartbreak for her attempt to marry her beloved Rochester, and suffers an estrangement from St. John Rivers when she chooses to uphold her belief that marriages should be for love and not for convenience. Despite the pain her choices bring her, she manages to maintain her independence in the face of these overwhelming powers over her. And despite the "happy" *ending* when she is reunited with Mr. Rochester, it is not love but courage that defines her character.

Secondly, Jane Eyre is an independent individual. She completes her schooling, and spends two years teaching, as well. After Miss Temple marries, Jane realizes that she has a great desire to leave Lowood, to see more of the world, and to better her living position. She becomes a governess- a plain and hard-working governess. She believes that "Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers..." She takes her own economic independence in her own hands without resorting to any male assistance. She is very dedicated and committed to her work and works assiduously to accomplish her economic self reliance, breaking the Victorian conventions that women`s finances are tied to their husbands.

Again, the novel qualifies for a literary work of art due to the undisputed fact that Jane defies the marital conventions of the Victorian era which postulated that women cannot look for their grooms, disregarding the notion of true love. She ventures to find true love in face of diverse adversities including social class difference between Mr Rochester and herself. She boldly rejects unions which in her point of view will only emotionally traumatize her and make her dependent. As such, she strongly rejects St. John Rivers`s missionary bride proposal and goes into union the Blind Rochester, whom to her, she finds the satisfaction her heart yearns for.

CONCLUSION

These points discussed intricately with appropriate references from the novel are sure evidences that pass the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte as a literary work of art.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE

The questions discussed above can also take different forms and styles. Let us consider these forms bearing in mind that they are the same or similar questions and can analysed just as those analysed above.

QUESTION 1

Examine two tools of female liberation, citing and evidencing appropriate instances from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Ba's *So Long A letter*.

OR

With reference to Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, examine the factors that promote gender emancipation globally.

QUESTION 2

Gender stereotyping is prevalent in Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter*. With at least three references and instances from the text, discuss the notion of gender stereotyping.

OR

Defend the notion that Gender stereotyping is evident in Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter*

QUESTION 3

Drawing instances from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, discuss the structure of the Umuofian society that made it patriarchal.

OR

Discuss the extent to which the fictional setting of Umuofia is patriarchal.

OR

'In patriarchal societies, women are underprivileged'. With reference to *Things Fall Apart*, show how true this statement is.

OR

Explain the term *masculinity* and show how it is represented in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

QUESTION 4

Discuss Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* as a feminist work of art.

OR

Show how through Jane, Bronte expresses her strong feminist ideas/ideologies.

OR

Examine the view that in *Jane Eyre*, Bronte reacts against the conventions or patriarchal assumptions of her Victorian society.

OR

`Jane is a metaphor for feminism`. Discuss this assertion, taking appropriate references from the text.

GOOD LUCK