

DECLARATION

**RESPONSE AND CRITICISM IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN
KENYA : THE CASE OF BARBARA KIMENYE.**

BY

JOAN AKOLEIT

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for
the Degree of Masters of Arts in Literature,
Kenyatta University.**

1990.

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criticism in*

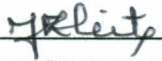


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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.


AKOLEIT, JOAN

DEDICATION

To my beloved ... Wandeka and Mrs. E. J. Wandeka, for their love, encouragement and financial support that have enabled me to pursue education to this level.

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

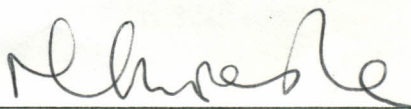

Mrs. NYAMBURA MPESHA

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ABSTRACT

This study on response and criticism in children's literature had one main purpose: to establish a critical framework for appraising children's adventure fiction in Kenya, using Barbara Kimenye, a prolific children's story writer in East Africa, as a reference point. Underlying the study were four basic theoretical assumptions: that children's literature should communicate important values to the child as well as benefit him aesthetically; that the best critic of a children's book is the child himself; that the best children's books are those in which form and content operate in harmony and lastly, that critical works enhance the quality of children's literature.

All the theoretical assumptions mentioned above were proven true by the data gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consisted of the use of structured and unstructured questionnaires/interviews, aimed at eliciting data on the child's response to Kimenye's books. Secondary sources consisted mainly of library research on critical works on children's literature aimed at gauging the relationship between criticism and the quality of children's books. The literature review clearly revealed that western children's literature has received the attention and interest from critics whose works have guided and inspired the writing of quality literature. This kind of literary interest is lacking in Africa in general and Kenya in particular where criticism has been haphazard and limited in offering clear guidance to authors and other patrons of children's literature. The primary data mentioned above were collected from five different Kenyan schools.

The major findings revealed by the data gathered show that Kenyan children like certain basic qualities in adventure stories. These children like:- plots that are full of action and thus able to sustain the child's interest; credible settings that enhance the story being narrated; characters that are naturally revealed through the unfolding drama in the story; a writing style that is fresh and challenging yet understandable and themes that are practical and applicable to the child's day to day life.

The findings enumerated above are relevant in understanding response and criticism in children's literature in Kenya for children from different regions have varied reading tastes depending on the issues that inform them as they grow up. The critical framework provided by the study is necessary in order that those who write and select adventure fiction for Kenyan children can do so confidently and intelligently. Furthermore, similar studies need to be carried out in order to accommodate changes in the growing child's reading taste.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Development of Children's Literature in Kenya

Children's literature in Kenya has to date had to accommodate three value systems. Odaga (1985) describes these three phases of the development of children's literature in Kenya as:- the pre-colonial (traditional), the colonial and the emergent (post-colonial) value systems. These three value systems have affected the nature of children's literature in Kenya in various ways.

Pre-colonial children's literature, otherwise referred to as oral literature is the oldest form of African literature, and in consequence, the oldest form of Kenyan children's literature. Oral literature as the name indicates existed long before writing came into being in Kenya (Finnegan 1970). Oral literature formed a part of the wider sphere of folklore. While folklore, on the one hand, encompassed the African (Kenya) people's whole way of life, oral literature on the other hand embraced genres such as narratives, songs proverbs riddles and tongue twisters. These were passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth. This literature embodied the mores of African (Kenyan) society, its beliefs and philosophies and formed the society's medium of instruction and entertainment. Children thus learnt to respect themselves and others through this literature. Performance played an important role in the narration of traditional stories as it enhanced the aesthetic effect of the delivery of these narratives and so made them more memorable and effective in moulding the young. Scheub (1977) examines the non-verbal elements in story telling in the African oral narrative. Scheub correctly asserts that the non-verbal elements (gestures and facial expressions) reveal the deeper meaning of a tale and enhance its overall messages through the dynamics of body and image.

Pre-colonial children's literature was not valued because of its social focus and performance quality alone but for its aesthetic character as well. This literature was artistic, for example, it employed poetic language which helped to capture and sustain the child's interest. The oral artist also made use of repetition, imagery, similes and other stylistic devices to enhance the aesthetic quality of the narrative. These stylistic devices did not only serve to make the moral of the story more memorable, but through the creative language employed, the child's enjoyment of the story was made more certain.

The pre-colonial oral literature gradually relinquished its prominent role as the medium of instruction for the young African children, its position being taken up by colonial literature. As a result, oral literature which had once been used to impart traditional educational values was relegated to second place as more people went for the more formal education offered by the coloniser. We define colonial literature, as literature written by the coloniser for the white man. Such literature sought to expose and explain the "primitiveness" and "savagery" of the black man. It served the express purpose of teaching the white society that Africans were no better than animals. Africans exposed to colonial literature would end up suffering from an inferiority complex because of the lies this literature perpetrated. Colonial children's literature obviously had a distorting effect on the psyche of the African child for it ignored the experience of the African and his world and denied him his human dignity. It gave rise to the psychological disease that Okot p'Bitek (1973) refers to as "apemanship". This disease caused the African people to hate themselves and thus strive to assimilate middle-class western values in order to become "civilised", and consequently "accepted" by the coloniser.

With independence in Kenya, colonial literature continued to co-exist with post-colonial literature but pressure against the former is continuing to mount. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981) and Okot p'Bitek (1973) are two examples of those calling for a strong cultural bias in literature for both adults and children. Within this period three categories of literature have been evident:- Firstly the colonial literature which, as we have already discussed, had a distorting effect on the African child's psyche. Secondly, literature that romanticised Africa, failing to evoke the genuine African "spirit". This literature was written for African children by non-Africans. Thirdly there was the literature that aimed at portraying a genuine African image. This literature was written by those Africans whose aim was to re-interpret and re-define African man from the African point of view, with the express purpose of re-asserting African pride and dignity (Odaga, 1978,44).

Thus we see an increased interest in vernacular children's story writing in Kenya from the 1950's to the 1960's, followed by children's literature written in English and Kiswahili from the 1960's to the present. Children's literature within this final period has exhibited more sensitivity to the child and the experiences that inform him. Children's literature written during the most recent period has tried to give the child the opportunity to be himself and to have the right to his feelings and thoughts by not imposing upon him adult ideas. This awareness of the child and his world has been largely caused by critical works relating directly or indirectly to the sphere of children's literature.

A study conducted by Ellen Kitonga (1984) for instance, revealed that children's literature in any language is rarely published, unless a market is guaranteed through adaptation of titles as class readers by the Kenya School Equipment Scheme (K.S.E.S.). This situation has been a basic barrier to the development of children's literature in Kenya. Another problem is that although publishing companies are now producing more local literature for Kenyan children (See first paragraph on "justification" p4.), few parents buy these books. The wealthy minority who are able to afford these books have children who are no longer active readers as their leisure time is taken up with other forms of entertainment. Among the middle class majority, reading for pleasure and general knowledge has become a low priority due to financial constraints. The buying of school texts in order to ensure the passing of examinations and security of a job is now the priority. Despite these problems, efforts by patrons of children's literature in Kenya are beginning to bear fruit. Children's literature is now beginning to get recognition as a unique discipline with as much need for critical focus, as adult literature. These efforts to improve the quality of children's literature will re-awaken the reading interest among children.

1.2. Statement of the problem

This study establishes a critical framework for considering children's adventure books in Kenya, from the point of view of general literary standards and from a careful study and analysis of children's responses to the books that they read. We have concentrated on fiction because it is the medium in which the adventure ingredient is mainly found. We adopt Cleanth Brook's (1964:9) definition in this study. He states:-

Fiction at its simplest is a story told in prose, a story which is assumed to be made up.

The major difference therefore between fiction and other literary genres is in the mechanics of presentation. The fiction writer provides his reader with carefully selected and controlled experiences, allowing the reader to participate in what may be called the writer's "vision".

Currently, as previously stated, children's literature is recognized as a section of literature in general. Critics have began to recognise children's literature, not as an imitation of adult literature, but as a field of study deserving as much critical attention as adult literature. Heins (1970:408) observes:

If children's literature is a part of all literature, then the criticism of children's literature becomes a part of the criticism of all literature. A children's book deserves to be probed as much as an adult book for general questions of diction,

structure, significance of detail, literary integrity ...

Hein's observation states part of the problem dealt with in this study. We have illustrated that there is a sense in which children's literature is a tool for shaping values as well as a carrier of aesthetic traits that give appreciation and enjoyment to the child reader.

A good children's book must, essentially, be a good book in its own right. In essence the good book must be capable of communicating important values about life and at the same time give enjoyment through the way it is conceived. More than this, it should be able to sustain the child's interest through a well told story whose various parts fit together into a single whole. In order to assess whether a book is good or not, there is a definite need for a critical focus on children's literature. In spite of this need for a critical focus on children's literature, there is a general lack of serious attention to the writing of children's books especially in Africa. Often we have tended to regard children's books haphazardly as watered down versions of adult books and have not yet developed a critical framework for considering them both as literature and as children's literature in Africa. It is because of this critical vacuum that good and bad books have passed unnoticed and we are in danger of being unable to shape our children's values and develop their response to literature through the books we write for them.

1.3. Justification

The writing and publishing of children's books in Kenya is a growing field, and criticism of this literature is necessary. Criticism will enable patrons of children's literature to safeguard the child from writers and publishers who may simply churn out books without catering for the needs of the child. In response to the realization that it is important to cater for the child's needs through literature, different publishers in Kenya have launched various series catering for these needs. Some of these publishing companies include: Oxford University Press, Heinemann, Longman and Phoenix (formerly East African Publishing House) who have launched their children's series aimed at catering for the needs of the child. Yet even such major publishers need a framework from which they can assess manuscripts for children's literature.

The building up of a critical framework for appraising children's adventure literature in Kenya is crucial because it will inspire the writer of children's literature to produce suitable reading material for Kenyan children as well as enable educational authorities and parents to select this suitable reading material with ease and confidence.

This study geared towards the establishment of such a critical framework, focuses mainly

on selected titles by Barbara Kimenye, a prolific children's fiction writer. We can claim that her works would be accessible to most children by virtue of their being prescribed class readers. This makes them appropriate tools of investigation in this study. Kimenye is one writer who, wittingly or unwittingly, attempts to use her fiction to shape values as well as inspire appreciation and enjoyment. Her work provides suitable material in relation to which we can shape this critical framework.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The role of the critic in children's literature is indispensable. To a great extent, children rely on adults for the books that they read. The adult patron of children's books must therefore assume the critic's role in order to give the child a suitable reading diet. The major aim of the critic of children's books is to select and prescribe books that are suitable for the child reader. In children's literature as in adult literature, "suitability" refers to the appropriateness of form and content in a work of art, to the target audience.

Lubbock (1957:40) correctly observes that in a good work of art, form and content are indistinguishable. In appraising Kimenye's work, we have concurred with Lubbock by giving equal importance to form and content. This is due to our belief that children's literature should communicate important values to the child as well as benefit him aesthetically. We realise that although the child reader rarely thinks about form as he reads (Fisher 1961:8), he will enjoy reading a well-written book better than that which has been poorly presented. The adult critic's assessment of any piece of literature is therefore not an absolute judgement of it but simply a reliable guideline of its value. Cass (1967) has suggested some practical points that have helped us to evaluate Kimenye's work in relation to the child reader. Cass' practical suggestions apply to critical criteria applicable to literature in a general sense.

In seeking to establish a critical framework for appraising children's literature in Kenya, we have studied the relationship between form and content in children's literature and have considered all those literary criteria applicable to literature in general. Such criteria include:- good plot, good narrative, good characterisation and good style among others. We are also aware that ideally, the best critic of a children's book is the child and that a child's response to a book is often an important indication of its value. Huck (1976) emphasizes the importance of examining the child's response in the assessment of a children's book. What we call response in children is their reaction to certain critical tenets like subject matter, plot, style, characterization and setting. These

are what have ultimately guided us in eliciting and interpreting children's responses. As critics of children's literature, we have been guided by these critical assumptions in looking for a suitable children's book. These same assumptions have guided our attempt to establish a critical framework for judging children's adventure books in Kenya.

1.5. Literature Review

In western children's literature, there is criticism on plays, drama and prose fiction. For reasons already discussed in our section on "Justification" (p.4), the critical literature on children's books is more copious outside Africa than in Africa. In the western world, the great stride made in this field has appeared to encourage the writing of better books for children and indeed proves the point this study makes - that critical writing on children's literature will improve the quality of children's books in Kenya.

Siks (1958), for example, focuses on drama as a channel for releasing children's natural creative tendencies. In her work, Siks succeeds in convincing the reader that drama is an art form for children and not just an activity for the writer. When children dramatise real life situations in their play time, they demonstrate that they like drama and secondly, they suggest the type of drama that appeals to them. However, Siks' work is a general discussion and does not shed much light on how the various children respond to this drama. Consequently, Siks does not provide any framework for enabling the adult to appraise other children's drama.

There have also been critical works based on general historical and biographical surveys that trace the development of children's literature within given periods. One of these works by Crouch (1962), offers a general survey of children's literature in Britain between 1900 and 1960. Crouch has tried to produce an analysis of children's choice of reading material. His work however, is of a very general nature and does not really offer a deep and detailed interpretation of children's response to the literature he explores.

Other critics have since concerned themselves with children's literature in general. Cass (1967) offers an illuminating work in the area of criticism of children's literature stressing the essentiality of criticism in all areas of children's literature and concluding that the adult must take the blame if the young child reads shoddy literature.

Kingston (1974) has delved further than Siks (1958), narrowing her scope of research to a specific sub-genre, tragedy. The question she raises which is important for critical writing in this field is whether children need tragedy in their stories as urgently as adults do. As Kingston argues,

tragedy helps adults to release pent-up emotions and may produce the same useful effect on children. Where other critics suggest that tragedy should not be introduced to the young, Kingston concludes that children do need tragedy and should therefore be exposed to it. Kingston goes even further to illustrate how tragedy can be used at the different levels of childhood thus providing a useful guideline for writers.

Ray (1970) undertakes to give special guidance on fiction for young children to librarians. Her work deals mainly with the kind of fiction liked by children between the ages 9-13 years. By examining a wide range of fiction for children such as science fiction, historical fiction and series fiction among others, Ray equips librarians with the knowledge they need in order to stock suitable books for children and to help the children select for themselves the most appropriate and enjoyable text.

There have also been works on specific crafts in children's literature, namely, writing, illustrating and editing of children's books. Colboy (1974) analyses what she considers to be good books for children. A good children's book in her view should have drama, vitality, warmth, vividness, possibly wit, humour and its own dignity. Colboy provides, a useful guideline not only for writers and illustrators but also for editors of children's books.

Bob Dixon (1977) has undertaken a critical work that focuses on fiction written for children. In this work, Dixon examines the ideas, attitudes and opinions conveyed by authors to children through novels and stories. He has gone further to analyze the way authors influence child readers, in illustrations, in comics, in short stories such as "Enid Blyton's adventures", and in novels such as Robinson Crusoe (1979), Dixon's (1977:xiv) contention is that:

Much of the material in children's books is anti-social, if not anti-human and is more likely to stunt and warp young people than help them to grow.

In this work Dixon convincingly argues his case through practical analysis of selected literature by different authors and thus confirms the importance of serious criticism of children's books before prescribing for them. Dixon's work provides necessary guidelines for those who select and buy books for children. This work is however only valid for patrons of western children's literature, suggesting the need for a similar study in African children's literature.

In manuals for writers of children's books there has also been considerable activity. In a manual edited by Sylvia Burack (1984) writers receive guidance from different specialist scholars. Although most of the contributors to Burack's manual address writers of adult books, there are a

few who discuss children's literature and lay down certain criteria essential in the writing of good children's books. One such critic is Charlotte Zolotov whose article "Writing for Children" gives significant insight into the nature of the child. She observes that everything that is true of distinctive writing for adults is also true of fine literature for children, but concludes that the major difference between the child and the adult is that the child lives on a more intense level than adults do. Children feel, cry, laugh, hate and love at a deeper level than adults. This is a dimension that stresses our need to understand children's feelings and interpret their responses critically, in order to enable us to write better books for them. Criticism outside Africa has not only adopted various approaches but has enabled critics to study children's literature to various depths.

In Africa, critical writing and commentary on children's literature has been meagre although there now seems to be a growing interest among literary scholars. Interest in children's literature as a special discipline began around the 1970's, and a few critics have responded to it with varying degrees of interest.

Okot p'Bitek (1973) argues on the necessity of maintaining a strong cultural bias in literature, stressing the need to use literature to enhance our understanding of our culture. Though p'Bitek's work is too general and broad to cover the Kenyan situation specifically, it is useful in that it illustrates the importance of portraying our culture honestly in the books we write for children.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in a paper written in 1973, reiterates the same point about culture that p'Bitek makes before him (Gachukia and Akivaga 1978). Wa Thiong'o adds a new dimension, for he recognises both the cultural and ideological potential of literature. He assesses the role played by literature in colonising Africans and concludes that literature plays an active role in the anti-colonial liberation process, by re-defining and re-interpreting the African's concept of himself and so re-establishing his humanity and dignity.

Micere Mugo (1973) in Gachukia and Akivaga (1978), likewise recognizes the cultural and ideological potential of the written word. In her paper, Mugo exposes the underlying racism in the works of Jahneinz Jahn, Daniel Defoe, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Rider Haggard among others, illustrating the necessity of criticism of such literary works from the African perspective. Mugo underscores the fact that a critical framework is crucial in order to appraise literature for children from the perspective of the Kenyan child.

Although the authors we have mentioned above deal with adult books, these same ideological influences can affect children's literature especially in cases where some adult books are abridged for children, for instance, Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1972) and Daniel

Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1979). The old woman Gagool in King Solomon's Mines and the man Friday in Robinson Crusoe are representative of the whiteman's view of Africans. Intellectually, the African is as backward as the man Friday was and thus dependent on the whiteman, (in this case represented by Robinson Crusoe), for enlightenment. Physically, the African is a horror to behold even as Gagool herself was. To the whiteman, the African is more animal than human. This view is narrow and distorted and merely serves the whiteman's colonising purpose which is to cause the African to despise himself and consequently worship the coloniser. To the coloniser, the African is primitive and barbaric. Africa and her people are in total darkness and therefore need the European to lead them to light and in consequence, civilization. These books are entertaining to the child reader and yet the ideologies they contain may be detrimental to the African child's self-concept. Criticism of such works is, undeniably, very essential. A critical framework for appraising such children's literature is therefore very necessary.

Other scholars have used general criticism of African literature as a stepping stone to carrying out specific research in the area of Kenyan children's literature. One such scholar is Asenath Odaga (1974) who gives a general description of literature for young people and for children. Odaga's dissertation is an important pioneer study of the state of children's literature in Kenya, but there is a lack of critical analysis of the oral and written literature she examines. As a result, Odaga gives little critical incentive to the Kenyan writer interested in writing for children.

Barbara Githiora (1979) takes a different stance from Odaga by analyzing the influence of literature on the young child's concept formation. Githiora recognizes the relationship between reading material and children's background noting that the better placed a child is in the socio-economic ladder, the more he will read. Githiora's work contributes to the criticism of children's literature by emphasizing the need to understand the background of the children who are the target readers in order to meet their needs. However, her work does not shed any light on what these needs might be.

Mwanzi (1982) carries out an actual analysis of selected children's prose fiction in Kenya. In this work, Mwanzi discusses the effect of three kinds of prose fiction, namely:- Eurocentric, Colonialist and Kenyan. Mwanzi discovers that the images found in children's prose fiction are deliberately used to create definite effects on the young readers, to persuade them to see the world from a certain angle. Some of the children she interviews for instance, see beauty only in western terms. In such a child's mind, a half caste is more beautiful than a black person because he is closer to white in colour. Mwanzi thus emphasizes the importance of a critical assessment of children's

literature before prescribing books for children. She poses a challenge to those who select books for children as well as to those who write for them. Mwanzi's work, however, only challenges patrons of children's literature on the need for critical assessment of the story books that children read. Her dissertation does not go further to explain how this critical assessment should be done. Our present study provides this critical literary tool necessary for appraising children's literature.

Four other critics worth mentioning in this connection are Alot (1982), Kareithi (1982), Kitonga (1984) and Jakoreyo (1986), whose articles, though small, contribute significantly to the field of children's literature in Kenya.

Alot (1982) presents the type of books that Kenyan children read and the implication of this kind of literary diet. Alot's article is a useful eye-opener as it creates interest among scholars for further investigation into what children are reading in Kenya. Although Alot's article exposes the deficiency in the literary diet of the Kenyan child, he does not offer guidelines on how to improve the situation. Kareithi in the same year tackles the misconception that writing for children is an easy task, illustrating that contrary to many people's thinking, writing for children is a skill that needs mastery. He further discusses what a children's author needs to know before writing for the child. Among his recommendations, he states that the children's author needs to understand the child's experiences and emotions, the child's community and his total world. Kareithi's article is enlightening because it sheds light on factors that influence children's reading interests. It also points out the pitfalls that many adult writers fall into when writing for children.

Kitonga (1984) exposes the staggering problems that affect the growth of children's literature in Kenya. Among the basic barriers she mentions the fact that children's literature in any language is rarely published unless a market is guaranteed by the Kenya School Equipment Scheme, the central book-buying organization for Kenya's primary schools. Although Kitonga's work reveals the hindrances affecting the development of children's literature in Kenya, it does not give guidance on how to judge the appropriateness of books already published. Kitonga mentions for instance, that "the small elite" indulge in Enid Blyton's "Famous Five Series," "Nancy Drew Mysteries" and "Hardy Boys Series" but her work does not give guidance on the suitability of such reading material to Kenyan children.

In another contribution, Jakoreyo (1986) offers a general review of story books read by Standard Three and Four pupils (ages 9 to 10) in Kenya primary schools. This review is however too general to offer much critical guidance to those wishing to appraise other literature for Kenyan children. Furthermore the work gives the adult assessment of the books reviewed but no mention

is made of the child's response to them. The child's response is a crucial component for any criticism of children's literature. Jakoreyo's work nonetheless, enables patrons of children's literature to assess the quality of the books that the Kenyan child reads and so take appropriate action to deal with any deficiency.

Naturally, criticism influences the selection and writing of children's books. This study is a contribution to criticism in children's literature. It narrows its focus to a critical interpretation of children's responses to fiction with a view to formulating a critical - theoretical framework for appraising children's literature in Kenya. This is a gap that stands unfilled despite all the studies conducted in the field of children's literature in Kenya. Some of these studies have elicited responses from children, for example Mwanzi (1982), some have reviewed the actual content of the books, for example Jakoreyo (1986), but none has so far done so with a view to interpreting the responses of the child to the book. Given the importance of criticism of children's books before prescribing them for the child, there is an urgent need for the critical literary tool we have proposed.

1.6. Methodology

Our research sample consisted of all the pupils in Standard Five to Eight (ages 9-16) within five schools:- Muthaiga Primary School, Kileleshwa Primary School, Mathare Primary School, Kibabii Girls Primary School, Kibabii Mixed Primary School. These schools were selected from the urban and rural areas. The pupils selected as respondents in this study fall within the age-groups that have appropriated Kimenye's books from the lower secondary level (Forms 1 and 2). The schools were selected because of the varied backgrounds within which they fall and we assumed environment would influence the child's response to what he reads.

The study was conducted in a normal classroom learning atmosphere. With the assistance of class teachers, the pupils were asked to select a title of their own choice from the eleven titles offered. During the first reading lesson, the researchers and pupils read a section of the book aloud in class. The researchers then asked the class questions related to the section we had read, to stimulate the pupil's interest. The pupils were then required to finish reading the rest of the book out of class.

During the second reading lesson, the pupils, with our assistance, discussed the story they had read in groups. These groups were made up of those pupils who had read similar titles. Each pupil was then asked to write a short paragraph summarising the story they had read. Such paragraphs, gave revealing evidence on the pupils' responses to the story depending on the incidents

the children highlighted. This procedure was repeated with a second text. The second text was read entirely by the pupils to ensure that our previous reading of the text studied did not influence their responses to the first text.

Where pupils proved to be fast readers, additional texts by Barbara Kimenye were given and informal interviews conducted to gauge their responses. Such pupils were also asked to write a composition describing an imaginary adventure. This gave us richer data to analyse.

After reading each selected text the pupils, with our help, filled in the questionnaire (Appendix 3) given. The questionnaire was mainly filled in by the Standard Seven and Eight pupils as the younger pupils in most cases could not handle the language of the questionnaire very well. We sought verbal answers from these younger pupils through interview questions we had simplified from the questionnaire (Appendix 4).

In the analysis of the data we gathered from the field, we first examined the aesthetic value of Kimenye's work and the child's response to it. We examined the relationship between content and form with the aim of finding out how the pupils had responded to the stories. We interpreted the child's response in terms of literary criteria such as plot, setting characterisation, style, format and theme. As we were analysing and formulating critical criteria in relation to general assumptions about form and content in fiction, those responses that led the pupils to make judgements and gave them insight into character were those that were considered to benefit them aesthetically. The child's response to the description of Alice Kibuka, in Moses and the Penpal for instance, was one of ridicule (see our page 63). The child was able to judge that Alice was a character who was ashamed of being black and thought bleaching her skin would make her more attractive. It is such insight into character that we consider to benefit the child aesthetically.

In analysing the children's responses to the social and moral value in Kimenye's work, we examined the themes discussed in the "Moses Series" with the aim of finding out whether our readers had responded positively or negatively to the social and moral message in these works. We also tried to find out how the children themselves would have solved some of the problems discussed in the stories they had read, in order to find out what type of social and moral values they expect from the books they read, and what happens if what the children read does not reaffirm what they know.

Since adult critical judgement is also helpful in assessing a book's worth, we conducted library research to enhance our investigation. We read books that discussed the various literary criteria used for assessing good literature in general. The information derived from library sources,

coupled with the field data we elicited from the children's responses, gave us sufficient evidence to draw our conclusions and make our recommendations.

1.7. Limitations of the study

In conducting this study we encountered certain limitations. Due to financial and time constraints we were only able to carry out our research in five schools. If children from all over the republic had been included in this study the results would have been richer. The present findings are however adequate for appraising adventure books for children in Kenya.

Only eight hundred children were interviewed in this study. This is a very small percentage of primary children in Standard 5-7 in Kenya. The methodology suggested could only adequately handle this number.

In undertaking this study we found that getting the co-operation of headteachers and teachers especially in the urban schools, was not very easy. The teachers in the rural schools were more enthusiastic about the study being conducted in their schools because they had no libraries. The headteachers in charge of schools with well stocked libraries feel that researchers take up the pupils' time. Due to the large amount of homework to be done, a reading research is viewed as an unaffordable luxury. Future researchers need to be armed with plenty of humility and patience. The pupils were however very enthusiastic and co-operative during the exercise.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. FORM AND STYLE IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: THE EXAMPLE OF BARBARA KIMENYE

2.1. Kimenye: a profile

Barbara Kimenye was born in the early 1930's in Uganda and is an only daughter in her family. Kimenye writes in English and has proved to be a professional and prolific children's story writer.

Kimenye has written and published nineteen children's books to date (See full list in Appendix 1). Initially, most of Kimenye's children's books were written for lower secondary school children but these have now been appropriated by upper primary school children, especially in Kenya. Her latest works are Moses and the Raffle (1986) and Moses and the School Farm (1987). Kimenye is currently working on another story in the "Moses Series" and also on several other manuscripts that will eventually be published as a series for girls.

Kimenye started writing for children in 1962. Her first book for children The Smugglers (1966), has enjoyed steady sales to date. Kimenye's interest in writing for the young found root in her love for children. She does not believe in presenting an ideal world to young children but rather in letting them read about, and enjoy, life as it really is. Kimenye is thus not a self-conscious martyr to technique. In her "Moses Series" for instance, enjoyment is the force behind her pen, not style. She certainly does not seek to preach acceptable social and moral ideals. Often in her work, the adult reader gets the feeling that Kimenye advocates for rebellion in the young, as this is more adventurous. This feeling is created mainly by the fact that Moses, the protagonist in the "Moses Series," narrates these adventures from his own point of view through Kimenye's use of the first person narrative technique. This technique focuses on the opinions and ideas of the narrator, a teenage school-boy, and is thus naive and "limited" as befits a child narrator.

Due to this "limited" vision, the reader is only confronted with Moses' point of view. Moses' idea of fun and adventure consists in making fun of adults and getting involved with dangerous criminals. His world is full of pranks and daring escapades. Kimenye has obviously sacrificed the propagation of socially acceptable ideals in order to entertain the child reader. Kimenye's work can therefore be misleading to young children. Such a series can best be used to instil a hunger for reading in children but once the child has acquired a love for reading, he should

be exposed to books that propagate acceptable social and moral values.

To date there are eleven entertaining titles in the "Moses Series". All these books bear a Ugandan backdrop because according to Kimenyé (See Appendix 2) they were initially written specifically for Ugandan children. As a matter of fact Kimenyé describes herself as "frightfully nationalistic". Ironically, her books, The Diamond Affair (1976) and The Scoop (1976) have both been set in Nairobi, Kenya. Kimenyé's "nationalistic" attitude, however, has not deterred the young children from other parts of the world from reading and enjoying her work. Kimenyé's books are, for instance, widely read among upper primary and lower secondary school children here in Kenya. Likewise, her works are popular among Danish children in Denmark, where some of her books have been translated, while others are still being translated to satisfy an ever enthusiastic audience. Kimenyé owes her popularity to the fact that she uses the adventure ingredient lavishly in her work and therefore is able to capture and sustain the interest of children who are curious by nature and thus, love adventure.

Adventure by itself would, however, not be enough to give Kimenyé the popularity she enjoys. In addition to the adventure ingredient, Kimenyé's work has a genuine tone that makes her work "real" to the child reader. This honesty in the presentation of her work arises from the fact that Kimenyé fashions much of her work on true incidents she has encountered in her life, or on real live people she knows. The Mukibi Educational Institute for the Sons of African Gentlemen is in actual life the Lubiri Boy's Secondary School in Uganda where her sons attended school, and many of the incidents she describes are derived from actual happenings in this school. Kimenyé's major characters are also modelled on real live persons. Moses is for instance her elder son and King Kong her younger son. (See Appendix 2). This explains why her characters do not go through dramatic changes. Unlike many fiction writers who will get rid of any unnecessary information in a story in order to prove a point, Kimenyé as already stated, does not write merely to teach a lesson or to prove a point, she portrays life and people as she sees them, peppered slightly with a little imagination of her own to make the story more exciting.

Apart from writing for children, Kimenyé is a free lance journalist and is currently based in London. As Kimenyé's work in the area of children's literature is so significant, she definitely deserves and needs the critic's attention. Especially more so because, although her books are widely read among children no one has yet analysed them critically. The analysis of Kimenyé's books is therefore a new field needing critical attention in order to enable patrons of children's literature to be better equipped in appraising, selecting and writing suitable books for young readers.

2.2. Form and Style in Children's Literature

The study of children's responses to books is an exciting development in the area of children's literature both in Africa and in the western world. Research in the area of children's responses to books has been necessitated by the realisation that for a long time, selection of children's literature has been guided solely by the adult's likes and dislikes. The superficial attention so far paid to whether or not a book is popular with children calls for this study.

In this chapter we carry out an analysis on form and style in Kimenye's works and examine how the Kenyan child responds to her efforts. We then analyse the child's responses in critical terms in order to discover the Kenyan child's literary taste and in so doing establish a critical framework for appraising Kenyan children's adventure stories.

The sub-titles we have used are largely artificial and are applied merely for the purpose of highlighting each particular critical tenet. Ideally, these tenets are woven together to make a good story and in consequence, a good children's story.

2.3. Plot

Much has been expounded about plot in literature. Once a writer has a story, plot becomes an indispensable part of his attempt to create fiction. Plotting is thus the author's effort to create meaningful relationships between episodes found in the raw data - the story. Aristotle, a renowned Greek scholar defined plot as "the imitation of an action" and also arrangement of incidents into three important facets - a beginning, a middle and an end, all of which should be unified into a single whole by the process of causality (Aristotle, 1965:45).

E. M. Forster (1927:60) makes a clarifying distinction between story and plot. Where a story answers the question - "What happens next?" plot answers the question - "Why did it happen?". Understanding the intricacies of plot demands intelligence and memory while the story demands curiosity.

Both critics put an emphasis on causal relationships between episodes. Plotting is therefore an indispensable exercise in writing a good story. Plotting gives the story a meaning and a definite purpose satisfying both human curiosity and human intelligence and memory. Children are basically interested in the story, that is, "What happens next". However, although "What happens next?" is their basic concern, it must be logical, for them to absorb how their hero solves the problem in question. Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1947:27) put this in other words:-

Children want heroes who have obstacles to overcome, conflicts to settle, difficult goals to win. It is the vigorous action in pursuit of these goals that keeps

young readers racing along from page to page to find out how the hero achieves his ends. But achieve he must in some way or other.

Indeed, children love action, but logical development to this action is a must. Plotting thus satisfies in children, the need for detective work and consequently the need to achieve, in a given task. In unveiling the various escapades of the notorious Ugandan school boy, Moses Kibaya, the reader is lured to participate in Moses' endless action, packed adventures which take place with a breathlessness that would leave any bored youngster envious of the excitement that Moses experiences. Yet the main attraction in Kimenye's adventures is that the hero achieves his goals in a logical and definite manner. The story thus makes sense to the young reader.

Kimenye's plots are fairly simple yet vigorous enough to keep the young child's attention captured to the very end of the story. Capitalising on the linear plot, Kimenye allows the fabric of her story to unwind before coming to a climax, followed by a swift conclusion. There is always a logical reason given at the beginning of the story that gives a lead to the unfolding events. Kimenye's stories follow this formula:

TABLE 1

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	RESULT
Reason for events in the story.	Story unwinds through various incidents.	Climax	Swift conclusion	STORY

An analysis of one of Kimenye's best plotted stories - Moses and the Kidnappers will help to clarify this point. The stage for this adventure is set thus (Kimenye 1968:1):-

THE DAY KING KONG and I were kidnapped started off like any other Saturday. The only difference was that straight after breakfast we were told by our deputy headmaster, Mr. Karanja, to accompany him to Tororo, the town nearest our school, to collect the school rations and have our hair cut.

Kimenye succeeds in revealing a lot of information to her reader in this brief introduction. She gives two reasons that explain why the narrator and King Kong were out of the safety of the school compound and similarly she divulges the information that the boys were kidnapped while in Tororo town. The young reader's curiosity is immediately awakened at the word "kidnapped" and this makes him eager to find out what happened next.

Kimenye not wanting to disappoint her young readers immediately starts explaining the

events that led to the kidnap and the aftermath. The “eagle-eyed” Mr. Karanja sends the boys off to get their hair cut while he joins a friend for coffee and it is in his absence that the boys are kidnapped. We notice that Kimenye cleverly gets rid of the adult guardian as he might otherwise have foiled the kidnappers’ plans. Once the kidnappers have their victims and are off to their hideout, they discover their mistake. At this stage the young readers hope the two school boys will be released and will return to the safety and security of people they know. Immediately they discover that instead of the Bengo Coffee Estate cashier, they have kidnapped two worthless schoolboys, Jimmy, one of the kidnappers decides to make the best of this failed kidnap attempt by selling the boys into a labour camp over the Congo border. The young readers are at this stage, gripped by anxiety and suspense. Once Jimmy has reached this decision, the boys are driven to his house, fed, and locked in a room. Later Ben enters this room to put the deputy headmaster’s bag away with the rest of the loot but as he leaves he “forgets” to lock the door with the key. The boys make their escape into the forest carrying the wrong bag with them. In the forest they get involved in yet another adventure, a fight with monkeys. The introduction of these monkeys helps to fill in the time excitingly while giving the thugs time to catch up with the boys. The thugs track down the boys and grab King Kong once again and just when the children are gripped with apprehension at what would happen to King Kong, the school search party appears on the scene bringing relief, both to the captured boy and his friend. Relief is also brought to the young readers wondering what would happen next.

The climax occurs when the monkey on the tree drops the bag which it had grabbed from the boy onto Jimmy’s head causing him to faint and be conveniently and safely arrested. In this dazed state, the dangerous thug, Jimmy cannot harm the boys or their teacher. Joshua on the other hand runs off before any one has time to notice and arrest him.

In conclusion Joshua, Ben and Matti, secretly bid Moses and King Kong goodbye and escape to Congo. The police inspector and Mr. Karanja discover that the two boys had hidden important information from the police and so allowed the three thugs to escape. These two adults make it clear to the boys that their misplaced loyalties made them accomplices to the thugs and they could thus be jailed like Jimmy. They spend the next few days in low spirits but when a postcard arrives from Matti, Joshua and Ben saying they were having a wonderful time in the Congo, the boys forget their troubles and begin to wish they had gone with them.

Kimenye’s story comes to a conclusion and the wish at the end of it is voiced by Moses (Kimenye 1968:48):-

“Yes, and don't I wish we had gone with them!”

The child definitely wishes to know what Matti, Joshua and Ben mean by “a wonderful time”. These are supposedly new adventures which the child would love to find out about. No wonder then that once a child has read one of Kimenye's adventures, they will very often ask for another. An oversimplified summary of other stories in this “Moses Series” follow the same format.

TITLE OF BOOK	INITIAL SITUATION	EVENTS RESULTING FROM INITIAL SITUATION	CONCLUSION
Moses and Andrew	Moses is ejected from his 6th school and is admitted to the 7th. Maabby (his school) is a school for the boys of African descent (AFISA G).	Moses is frustrated with his new school and is away three hours every day.	During the day, Maabby and King (Moses' teacher) are in a house in Makena. Moses and Ben (his house) talk with Mr. Kuziga. Moses decides to give the school a learning another chance.
Moses and Andrew	Moses finds a strange tree during his school holiday. He names the tree 'Mafided'.	Moses takes Mafided to school. Mafided's bark is used to be used in the school. Moses uses Mafided to make many things. Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school. Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school. Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school.	Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school. Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school. Mafided's bark is used to make a lot in the school.

TABLE 2

TITLE OF BOOK	INITIAL SITUATION	EVENTS RESULTING FROM INITIAL SITUATION	CLIMAX	CONCLUSION
Moses	Moses is expelled from his 6th school and is admitted to the 7th, Mukibi's Educational Institute for the Sons of African Gentlemen (M.E.I.S.A.G.)	Moses is dissatisfied with his new school and attempts to run away three times but these attempts fail.	During the third attempt to run away Moses and King Kong succeed in catching thieves at Mukibi's house and after an honest talk with Mr. Karanja, Moses decides to give the school and learning another chance.	Makumbi leaves school to take care of his wife and child, giving good advice to those left behind. "Education is very important: so make the most of your schooldays while you can."
Moses and Mildred	Moses finds a snake under a coffee tree during one school holiday. He names the snake, 'Mildred'.	Moses takes Mildred to school because he cannot bear to be parted from her. Moses uses Mildred to make money by charging the other boys a fee in order for them to look at her. One day Mildred strikes Magara, the school bully, causing him to scream in panic.	Magara, petrified, leaves the school.	Mildred returns to the bush.

<p>Moses in Trouble</p>	<p>Cheeky school boys send a parcel of cockroaches (picked from their meals) to the Minister of Education with their Headmaster's compliments.</p>	<p>The Headmaster (H/M) is furious at them because of their doing this. The cooks in the school go on strike demanding higher pay. The boys are made to cook their own meals. Each dorm makes disastrous but hilarious attempts at preparing these meals. Dorm 3 is involved with the police when they stumble upon and unknowingly serve stolen tinned foods found by the roadside near their school.</p>	<p>The cooks return on duty.</p>	<p>Life goes back to normal.</p>
<p>Moses in a Muddle</p>	<p>Mr. Bulega catches Moses and King Kong smoking behind the san and sends them to report to the H/M.</p>	<p>They accidentally overhear the H/M talking of the admission of a girl student to M.E.I.S.A.G. There is excitement and preparations among the boys after the news. They begin to bathe and tidy up in order to impress the girl. The girl Juli, arrives and immediately involves them in a fast paced spy catching, adventure.</p>	<p>The 'spies' turn out to be scouts practising their morse signals. The girl is whisked off the scene by her parents before she can cause any more trouble.</p>	<p>School life returns to normal and the boys set off to Kigali's hut in search of food.</p>

<p>Moses and the Ghost</p>	<p>Itchy Fingers announces that the school is haunted.</p>	<p>The 'haunting' takes place simultaneously with the circulation of the news that the school is to be sold. The boys make various attempts to catch the 'ghost'.</p>	<p>The 'ghost' is exposed. It turns out to be Joe, the wall-mender. Joe reveals the whole truth about the haunting.</p>	<p>Plans to sell the school are cancelled and Mukibi takes a holiday to recover from the 'haunting' shock.</p>
<p>Moses on the Move</p>	<p>King Kong and Moses are unable to go home for the school holiday.</p>	<p>They decide to go off to Tororo on their own with the intention of finding work and making some pocket money. Itchy Fingers and Rukia join them. They get involved in working for the dubious 'healer' Finito.</p>	<p>The four boys have a close encounter with the police. Mr. Karanja arrives to whisk them back to the safety of the school compound.</p>	<p>Mr. Karanja ensures the boys donate the money they earned from Finito to the Salvation Army. Each of the four boys is caned and made to work in the school shamba for the rest of the holiday but the exciting time they had makes up for their present pains.</p>
<p>Moses and the Penpal</p>	<p>King Kong stumbles across an old newspaper with names and addresses of penpals on it.</p>	<p>He decides to sell these names and addresses for a fee. This situation becomes big business when King Kong goes into partnership with Moses. Other students follow suit by reselling names and addresses they had bought from King Kong, at a profit.</p>	<p>Moses' penpal Alice Kibuka comes to M.E.I.S.A.G. in person. Moses panics and asks Kasali to impersonate him and entertain Alice.</p>	<p>Kasali quits school to marry Alice and to venture into the wine making business.</p>

Moses and the Camper	On a trip to Tororo to see a dentist, King Kong buys some fireworks.	The fireworks accidentally sets the school dorms on fire destroying a couple of them. The boys are made to put up in tents. In erecting these tents the boys discover stolen treasure and decide to keep these for themselves.	The thieves who had buried the treasure try to retrieve their property and it is discovered that Wakweya is part of the gang. Wakweya double crosses the gang and gets away with the loot.	The thieves are not caught. When King Kong wants to start another fireworks Moses quickly restrains him as he has had enough adventure for the time being.
Moses and the Raffle.	King Kong and Moses are badly in need of pocket money.	They decide to hold a raffle to raise funds. In the process they unknowingly accept a stolen car as a donation towards this raffle.	The Police intercept and recover the stolen vehicle.	The boys are given manual work as punishment for their part in the crime. The money used to purchase raffle tickets is returned to the owners. School returns to normal as King Kong is filled with the ambition to write a book " <u>My Life and Loves</u> ".
Moses and the School Farm	Mr. Wafula falls into an old pit latrine and the sight of him frightens Miss Mahinda into leaving the school.	The whole stretch of land behind these latrines is turned into a school farm and the boys are introduced to agriculture. They are not too pleased with the new curriculum and so try in all ways to make the whole venture a failure.	On the day of the Mothers' Union tea party the pigs eat a meal, into which some wine had accidentally been poured and get drunk. The piggery is extremely filthy when the Mother's Union party walks in to view it. This causes Mukibi great embarrassment and makes him angry at King Kong's 'negligence'.	The boys in charge of the piggery are put on manual duty as punishment. School closes for the holiday and King Kong loses his fervent love for pigs.

This table represents the basic pattern of each story in the “Moses Series” but Kimenye winds around this backbone various threads that help her make her stories more interesting. She employs literary devices like suspense and humour to give each story fullness and enhance enjoyment. This technique should not be viewed as “padding”. Padding suggests that existing episodes are too thin. In Kimenye’s case, existing episodes are complete as seen in Table 2 (p.20), but additional incidents and characters give more information about existing characters and situations and thus tighten the plot into a neat whole. To illustrate this point we shall analyse two stories in the “Moses Series”.

Example 1: Moses and Mildred

Although this story is basically about Moses and his pet snake, Mildred, Kimenye weaves into it the scene of Mr. Lutu and the boys getting drunk at the village bar. This scene has little to do with the snake but helps to boost Magara’s image as a school bully, so that when the snake bites him later in the story, no one is too disappointed.

There is also the scene where Moses and King Kong have to clear Dorm 3 after the rest of its occupants have had a party celebrating Rukia’s election as dorm prefect. This scene has been inserted into the story to help build the growing rage that Moses and King Kong have towards Rukia and his ally, Magara. No sooner have they cleared the dorm, and rushed through their supper than Miss Nagendo requests them to help her carry some crates into her room. They lose Mildred, the pet snake, in the process and have to trick Miss Nagendo into vacating her room in order to retrieve the snake from under her pillow. This earns them further caning from Mr. Karanja. Due to their helping Miss Nagendo, they miss prep and during this time Magara bullies the other boys into letting him copy their work. Itchy Fingers refuses to let him look at his exercise books and so earns a beating. Do these incidents merely serve to lengthen the story? Close examination reveals that this is not so. Each little incident serves in heightening the tension that already exists between Magara and the other boys. This tension culminates in the scene where Mildred strikes out at Magara and leaves him howling “like a mad dog” and “gibbering like an idiot” (p.59). These episodes are thus indispensable parts of the whole plot.

Example 2: Moses and the Penpal

In this story, Moses in need of a penpal, purchases a name and address from his friend King Kong. The penpal turns out to be a girl - Alice Kibuka. When Moses discovers her identity, he is thrown into a lot of panic and confusion. To get rid of Alice, Moses approaches Kasali, a new

character in the “Moses Series”, and requests Kasali to impersonate him and so entertain Alice in his stead. Kasali agrees to this arrangement. Later on in the story Kasali falls in love with Alice and decides to quit school in order to marry her, and also venture into large-scale wine-making business. Making wine is a favourite hobby of Kasali’s and nothing dampens his enthusiasm for this favourite pastime, not even the frequent failures of his wine making experiments.

As in the previous story, Example 1, Kasali has a major role to play in the whole set up. Not only does the wine-making equipment explode, wounding Moses among others, and so bringing Alice on the scene to visit her wounded penpal, but also his “personality plus” (body odour) created by constant drinking and accidental pouring of wine on his clothes causes the boys in Dorm 3 to make excessive use of a perfume, “Midnight on the Nile”, to counter his smell and as a result Mr. Karanja takes all the boys down to the river to take a bath and wash their clothes. The incident causes them to be the laughing stocks of the school. None of these incidents endears Kasali to the other boys.

In another incident, Kigali makes an unfortunate blunder. He rudely turns away Miss Owede (a school inspector) from the school gate, mistaking her for Alice Kibuka. This incident almost costs him his job. Not to mention that Alice later turns up at Kigali’s hut, gets drunk and blacks out on his bed and as a result, Mr. Karanja sacks him. It is Kasali who saves the situation, by claiming that Alice is his girlfriend and to everybody’s joy, Kigali is reinstated while the undesirable dorm-mate and the undesirable penpal make their exit to find a future and fortune together. These episodes intensify the feeling of relief everyone has when Kasali and Alice decide to remove themselves from the vicinity of M.E.I.S.A.G. The plot would not be as well-knit without them.

Kimenyé’s plots are thus organic in nature, that is, each incident is logically linked to another. All additional sub-plots are logically related to the main plot in linear fashion as they help to raise the main plot to a crescendo before coming to a climax and a swift denouement.

The majority of students questioned during the field research voiced their preference for short simple plots. Fourteen year old Night Kunyu of Kibabii Girls Boarding School likes short stories “because I can understand better and it’s easy to remember.” A fellow pupil from the same school - Helen Murakwa gave this reason, “because it is simple to remember and also you can be able to talk about it.” Jackline Wafula agreed with the two pupils above, stating that short stories would help her “to be a fast reader”.

All the views given above were voiced by rural children. Age did not seem to make a big difference to the length of story they preferred. All unanimously preferred a "short story" that was not complicated and could be narrated to other students. Due to the scarcity of story books in these rural areas, one can comprehend their need to "remember easily" and to "talk about it to others."

The urban children questioned were not so united in their responses. A few pupils preferred "long stories." On closer questioning, we discovered that these were exceptionally good readers and were already reading adult novels like Barbara Taylor Bradford's A Woman of Substance and Jeffrey Archer's, A Quiver of Arrows. One of these advanced readers, Carol Ngure, a fourteen year old, Standard Eight pupil, at Muthaiga Primary School, said she preferred long complicated stories "because it is more interesting and it kind of gives a lot of information about the character's life." Carol has obviously already advanced to that critical level where character fascinates her. The adult patron would need to identify such exceptional pupils so as to meet them at their point of need. Carol's need is quite different from her age-mate's, Jackline Wafula. Jackline is at a disadvantage economically. She also needs to boost her confidence in reading. Thus when Jackline says "short stories" will help her to "be a fast reader", she is probably simply voicing her need to achieve something that will make her excel in reading and develop confidence in herself. The teacher has to ensure this need is satisfied before Jackline can tackle longer and more complicated stories.

When these pupils talk of their preference for short stories they are referring to action-packed plots. Young children are rarely deterred from reading a book simply because of the number of pages involved. Therefore it is not really the length of the story but the way in which it is told that counts most. The nine year olds involved in the study were able to handle, with relative success, these books targeted for lower secondary pupils. This is because Kimenyé's plots are quite compact and involving for the young reader so that he rarely has enough time to worry about how many more pages are left. The major problem is probably that the story ends too soon, thus the need to read another title in the same series to satisfy the child's hunger for more adventure.

Although the plots in the "Moses Series" are predictable, the basic actions vary and each new character introduced brings into each story fresh appeal and a new turn to the kind of adventure the boys are involved in. It is for this reason that the "Moses Series" was avidly read by the pupils involved in the study. The fourteen year olds, however, voiced a desire for more intricate plots. Many of these pupils are already reading adult novels and we need to be aware of this development in order to offer them suitable books. Kimenyé's endings are also basically similar, although some endings like in Moses and the Kidnappers and Moses and the Camper come as a shock to the children

whose sense of justice is thwarted when the thieves get away from the hand of the law. The situation is worsened by the fact that instead of being remorseful for aiding the criminals in escaping from justice, Moses and King Kong wish they had gone with them. Children have an inborn desire for clear-cut rewards and retributions and when this desire is thwarted they are distressed, as they feel cheated.

In conclusion, Kenyan children like plots that are compact. This means that in appraising books for Kenyan children the patron of children's literature must look for books that are full of action, drama, suspense and mystery. This is because the Kenyan child, like most children likes to be wholly involved in what he reads through identification with a character in the story. This identification, takes place in the mind at the time of reading a particular book and later, through dramatisation as the child goes about his own games outside the classroom. For the younger child and the not too competent reader, the plot should be simple yet able to sustain the child's interest. The older and advanced readers prefer intricate plots where several sub-plots are interwoven into the main plot. The most important thing about both simple and advanced stories for the Kenyan child is that they must have logically developed plots so that the child does not get entangled and confused in reading them. Flashbacks in this case would merely confuse the child. Finally, the conclusion of the story should reaffirm the child's sense of justice in order for the child to derive maximum enjoyment of the story and retain the desire to read more books in the series.

Plots, as Kimenye has adequately demonstrated in her stories should be interesting, fresh and challenging in order to capture and sustain the attention of the Kenyan child. This means that the plot must tell a good story, but a good children's story is not loved for its plot alone. Aspects such as setting are also important.

2.4. Setting

Like plot, setting contributes enormously to the structure of a story. These two tenets comprise the basic framework of a piece of fiction. In a good children's story, the setting should affect the action, characters and theme. Huck (1967) concedes that setting is important in creating mood, authenticity and credibility. In literature authenticity is related to originality and credibility is related to plausibility. Setting can therefore contribute greatly to the style of an author. We might ask therefore, are Kimenye's settings conventional? Does she manipulate setting to enhance her style?

The treatment of setting in Kimenye's work enhances the universal acceptance of her stories. Perhaps, unconsciously, Kimenye's treatment of setting transcends geographical barriers. In this connection her spotlight is more on the action than on the place. Children reading her books will thus identify the school and are no longer concerned whether it is in Uganda or Kenya, because the pace of the story grasps their full attention. This fact contributes to Kimenye's "Moses Series" appealing to children from totally different regions and nationalities. Kimenye's treatment of setting allows the child to identify with the action that takes place in her work. Furthermore her choice of a boys' school, gives her work a credible tone and background that supports the action which occurs in the stories. Kimenye's success in appealing to a variety of children lies mainly in her magnifying the school, over and above the geographical setting. For this reason, it is possible to replace Uganda with Kenya and Tororo with Nakuru, without interfering with what happens in the story.

Children all over the world, love adventure and this is the basic ingredient in Kimenye's work, which even geographical setting cannot tamper with. Kimenye's "Moses Series" helps the Kenyan child to dream and to brighten an otherwise dull school life filled with endless school assignments and the ever increasing challenges of the school syllabus. An analysis of some of the incidents in Moses' life will help us understand the universal appeal of Kimenye's setting.

In the book Moses, these thoughts flow through the mind of the fifteen year old Ugandan schoolboy Moses, who has just been expelled from his sixth school (Kimenye 1968:1):-

They sent me back to Uncle Silasi's house, where I again met with the usual preaching mixed with abuse from his wife, Aunt Damali. Then I was banished to my bedroom while a family council hastily assembled to decide what next to do with me. It was pretty dull being there alone with only a silly bee trying to bore his way through the window pane for company. But at least I was able to stretch out on the bed and have a peaceful smoke. I would not have minded a glass of beer too, but there wasn't much hope of that in my uncle's house.

Nothing in this extract gives special significance to Uganda as a country. Rather, the focus is on the thoughts of a fifteen year old adolescent boy Moses, who has a record of six expulsions behind him, and his view of life and adults, as he lies on a bed in his uncle's house. His thoughts are typical of a boy of his age and in his situation anywhere in the world. The reaction of his guardians, though understandable to adult readers, (considering what the guardians have had to put up with in bringing Moses up) is seen from a different angle by Moses himself. In his role as the self-centred adolescent boy, Moses can only think of himself and his comfort. The inconveniences

he has caused these elderly guardians do not seem to bother him much. His attitude towards them is a bored acceptance of their usual “tantrums” over “nothing”. The fact that Moses is able to have a “peaceful smoke” in his uncle’s house may horrify the self-righteous reader, but to most children, such an action is considered daring and so merely serves to establish Moses as a hero in their eyes.

In Moses and the Kidnappers, (Kimenye 1968:2), we read:-

So there we were in the town, not feeling too happy (even though we had been allowed to wear our long trousers instead of the regulation school shorts) and writhing under Mr. Karanja’s frequent remarks about our “flowing locks” as he chose to call our hair. But gradually as we visited the post office and a shoemaker’s shop, we began to enjoy the change of scenery.

This second extract focuses on place but there is nothing typically Ugandan about this description except for the name of the Ugandan town, Tororo. Emphasis is placed on criminal activities in an urban town as seen through the eyes of a school boy. Even the four thugs, who come on the scene later; Jimmy, Ben, Matti and Joshua are typical urban thugs who can be located in any town in the world.

We conclude then that whether Kimenye is describing a boys’ dormitory or the running of a school farm, the mood that pervades her stories is one of pranks and mischief peculiar to most schools and most boys of Moses’ age and background. Her setting is clear and believable, and while her stories are mostly derived from a specific time and place, they represent the lives and imaginations of similar children caught up in the same situation. To Kimenye’s credit is the fact that her focus on action at a given time affects the mood of her stories, making them easily accepted among children. Her world is full of naughty schoolboys who get involved in all kinds of adventure, some more dangerous than others. However, hovering in the background is the visible presence of the disciplinarian and law-enforcer, the teacher and the police, who ensure that no dangerous situation gets out of hand.

While little learning seems to take place at M.E.I.S.A.G., the situation can be explained in two ways. Kimenye may have wanted to indicate the disadvantages of commercial learning institutions. Old Mukibi is too intent on making money to care about the quality of education in his school or the physical welfare of his students. Many of the students questioned grasped this fact and were able to mention various learning institutions which they felt suffered from a similar malady. In this case Kimenye successfully uses setting to make a social commentary. However, it is also possible that Kimenye merely wanted to present a make-belief school situation to the overworked school child to give him relief from the pressures of real life. Such is the case with

Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland where a fantasy world is presented to the child to enable him to escape into a relaxed dream world for a few hours. Whatever the case may be, Kimenye gives the child, the opportunity to criticise unscrupulous headmasters, as he identifies with Moses. Kimenye also allows the child a few hours in which to get away from his boredom and tensions.

For reasons already discussed, Kimenye's Ugandan backdrop does not deter the Kenyan children who read her work from enjoying themselves. The children are accorded an opportunity to be accomplices of Moses and to do the forbidden without fear of being found out and punished. A children's book that focuses on action has a good chance of being widely accepted and read even if it has been set within a specific geographical location.

In appraising books with suitable setting for Kenyan child readers, patrons of children's literature need not be deterred by geographical setting. Whatever the geographical setting may be, the adult critic should seek to assess whether it is one the child can identify with or not. If the story is set on the moon then the story must be presented as a fantasy so that the child reader can be appropriately involved in the fantasy. Credible setting should support the action. The adult critic needs to assess how the author has put the action within a certain time span. This must be fast-paced yet credible for the child reader.

Having discussed the framework that supports the story we embark on an examination of the various components that the writer of fiction uses to build his story. We begin by looking at characterisation.

2.5. Characterisation

Good characterisation contributes extensively to a good story. By "good" we mean that the character must be genuine. Huck (1967:9) contends that the credibility of characters will depend upon the author's ability to show their true natures, their strengths and their weaknesses. This is especially important in children's literature in order to impart to the child a balanced view of people's personalities. Most series, suffer the affliction of being choked with stereotypes. Enid Blyton's "Famous Five" adventure stories is a good example of a children's book series that leans heavily on stereotypes. Her characters hardly ever develop except at a superficial level brought about by the requirements of the plot. For instance, in Five Fall into Adventure (1968), it is the gypsy character Jo, who takes a bath and wears some clean clothes borrowed from George, in order to fit into the world of these Famous Five. Blyton's descriptions also tend to signify the "badness" of her characters. Characters like Jo's father are presented as ill-shaven to signify that they have

deviated from the values Blyton stands for.

While Kimenye's characters do not seem to develop as personalities, one cannot accuse her of stereotyping, for when examined carefully, her main characters do go through certain fleeting emotional changes. We shall discuss characterisation and its methods in terms of narrative point of view. Our discussion in this section will therefore involve, both the author's position in the story and the revelation of her character's attributes through various devices.

The ten to fourteen year olds we questioned, all stated they preferred to find out about characters for themselves rather than be given a direct statement about characteristics of the person in question. Janet Muthoni, a Standard Eight pupil at Muthaiga Primary School said:

I would like to find out about the character myself because if the author tells me I will immediately know about the character while I like being left in suspense.

Another Standard Eight pupil, Hesbon Ochieng, at Mathare Primary School said:-

I would like to find out for myself because the writer (sic) may cheat me.

And David Mwithiga, a Standard Seven pupil at Kileleshwa Primary School said:-

I prefer to find out about the character myself because it is easier to understand the story, and it is more interesting.

Although some of the respondents did not seem to understand this question initially (see Appendix 5), further discussion in the classroom revealed that the sample of responses given above were representative of what our interviewees felt. The responses uphold the fact that children dislike to be told about characters, they would rather the author revealed character. In revealing character, the many facets of the person in question emerge more realistically to the reader. Furthermore at an age when children place a high value on achievement, they would rather play detective and come up with their own assessment of character. This is the need Janet Muthoni voices when she says she likes "being left in suspense." Children feel that the author who tells them about character, insults their intelligence. Little wonder that Hesbon Ochieng' can frankly state "the writer (sic) may cheat me." Similarly, telling of character, rather than revealing character may quench enjoyment of the story for the child as he cannot actively participate in finding out about the person in question, a task that David Mwithiga, and his like, find "interesting." Good stories for the older child should aim at giving room for such mental exercises.

The younger children, especially those in Standard Five did not resent being told about character. This is understandable considering that the "Moses Series" was slightly beyond the reading ability of most of the children in these classes and especially those in the rural areas. In

response to the question on what their favourite type of story was, this age group (comprising mostly of nine year olds) listed the oral narrative as their favourite type of story. These young children are able to enjoy the oral narrative better because they are often more explicit and straightforward and therefore easier to understand. Another reason is that they still hear these stories, told by their elders and are thus familiar with them. In revealing character, Kimenye takes the part of the absent author. Never, at any stage in her work does she intrude in person to comment on a character or an action. Rather, she employs the use of the first person narrator - "I", who is Moses, her protagonist. This choice is apt for the self-centred adolescent narrator who feels that the world is against him, and unrelenting adults seem to thwart his every effort to make "something" of himself. Kimenye's "Moses Series" is thus a mixture of biography and fantasy modelled on the life of Moses. For this reason, the use of the first person narrator makes Moses the "lens" through which we view his world, as such his view is limited - we cannot know what Moses does not know. Similarly we are unable to know the author's feelings except where she satirises her characters. Kimenye has used a similar technique as that employed in Jonathan Swift's, Gulliver's Travels (1960) where Swift's own views are not revealed through the protagonist but through satire as seen in Gulliver's reactions to people and situations. For example, when the Lilliputian Emperor asks his men to inspect Gulliver's pockets and takes away his watch, Gulliver satirically comments (Swift 1960:30):-

The Emperor liked my watch very much. He told two officers to take it away.

Underlying this "innocent" comment is the revelation that the Emperor had no right to take Gulliver's watch. Here is a case of robbery without violence. This technique allows the child to identify with the protagonist comfortably, and thus participate in the incidents and situations he encounters. At the same time, the technique enables the adult reader to spy into, and laugh at, the fresh naivety of young child's world without fear of wounding the child reader's feelings.

Noting that Kimenye does not "tell" about character but rather "reveals" it, we may now discuss how these revelations are done. Kimenye reveals character through conversation. The reader is able to decipher a person's character from what he says about himself or what other people say about him. For instance in Moses and the Raffle, we encounter Moses strolling down a street in disappointment after an Indian proprietor refuses to donate towards their raffle. Moses reveals to us (Kimenye 1986:28):-

I was so deep in the depressing thoughts that I bumped smack into a weedy little man and nearly knocked him off his feet.

"Hey, look where you're going, son!" he said with a laugh.

“Hey, look where you’re going, son!” he said with a laugh.

“I’m sorry”, I said, “Did I hurt you?”

“No, but you could have knocked me under a bus.”

“I’m sorry”, I repeated.

In this conversation a different side to Moses’ character is revealed. No longer is he the seemingly disobedient boy, but a depressed and polite boy who is sorry for accidentally knocking this adult. Kimenye employs the same technique in several other titles in this series in order to bring forth a realistic picture of her characters. Moses is not a “baddy” but rather a human being, who is affected by people and circumstances around him as any normal person would be.

Other than conversation, Kimenye also reveals character through a person’s thought. This is one such example (Kimenye 1968:1-3):-

Having nothing better to occupy the time, my mind naturally wandered back over the nasty scene which had taken place in the headmaster’s office earlier that morning. From there I started to think about my past. I know that at the age of fifteen you are not supposed to have one, and yet I seemed to have very little else: I had no money of my own, no parents, no brothers or sisters. Yes, it was quite true to say that a past was all I could claim to have in this world. And what a past! Honestly, I could not help being rather impressed when I looked back on all the things I had done in only fifteen years of life...

In this extract we learn that, expulsions or no expulsions, Moses has no regrets. In fact he considers himself quite “something” since there were many boys in Uganda who had never been able to get themselves admitted into a single school. Kimenye clearly exposes Moses’ self-centredness. He is only concerned about himself and does not care about the agonies he is dragging his guardians through. The picture Kimenye paints of Moses is real. It would be amazing to find an adolescent in life, who does not think of himself before others. This is a natural stage in the growing process.

Another technique Kimenye uses quite effectively, is the revelation of character through action. Children love action. In each title in the “Moses Series”, the reader encounters Moses in various adventures; either he is trying to run away to America to become Africa’s reply to America’s Sidney Poitier, or he is tracking down “ghosts” haunting his school or even chasing after urban crooks and thieves. Whatever the episode, Moses’ daring and bravery are clearly illustrated. Moses is the kind of hero children love, the kind that is willing to attempt the impossible.

Having discussed how a character is revealed we now discuss how Kimenye develops character. Sound characterisation will reveal both growth and development although it would be

presumptuous to expect that all characters will develop sufficiently in a story. The scope of the story or basic intention of the author, may not give room for this. Whether this is the case or not, to be truly human, characters must grow and change before the reader's eyes. In keeping with life itself, the change should be "gradual and convincing rather than mercurial and unrealistic" (Huck 1967:10).

It is also possible in Kimenye's "Moses Series" to recognise character by name. These names are, in a majority of cases, ironical. The grand school name "Mukibi's Educational Institute for the Sons of African Gentlemen" is a far cry from the character of the school itself. Right from its introduction in the series, the reader is aware that the school is a total disaster. The many incidents that take place as the series unfolds confirm this impression. Apart from the broken gate, untidy hedge and gaudy signpost, Moses goes on to comment on other shabby aspects of the school that greet him the day he arrives as a new boy (Kimenye 1968:6):-

I cannot say there was anything unusually impressive about the institute itself. To me it looked the poorer, seedier type of junior secondary school, and I was certainly in a position to make the comparison. There was a collection of low, shabby buildings, most of them with thatched roofs, and a compound that no self-respecting cowherd would allow his beasts to graze in.

This description is a reflection of the characters of the pupils within the school. Very often in the course of reading the series the reader is left wondering where Mukibi could have found such meddlesome students. Some of the pupils behave like escaped convicts while others seem to have been released too soon from a mental asylum. Moses is not far from the truth, it seems, when he says Mukibi would admit the devil himself if he could afford the fees. (Kimenye 1967:13)

Some of the characters in M.E.I.S.A.G. include Holy Moses (Moses Kibaya), King Kong (Sebastian Mulutu) and Itchy Fingers (Lutara). Holy Moses is indeed far from holy, once the reader gets to know him. Moses seems to be the leader of most of the impudent incidents that occur at M.E.I.S.A.G. Ironically, he is the favourite of most young readers due to his daring nature. King Kong on the other hand is ironically nick-named after an ape. King Kong is a famous ape in a movie. The ape is able to accomplish great feats unaided. Why should he adopt this nick-name? Is this just another case of "apemanship" among the young? The name definitely gives King Kong borrowed pride and power. Often in these stories we see him thumping his chest challenging any of the other boys to a fight. This habit irritates his close friend Moses, who refers to it as "a bush baby act" on several occasions. Children resent pretentious behaviour and no wonder Moses cannot stand King Kong's affected antics. King Kong is truly pretentious as he cannot even act out anything for a long time. Sooner or later he resorts to his normal self. On one occasion when King

“I noticed that King Kong was no longer talking his pidgin English, and I looked at him with fresh interest.

The name King Kong and the behaviour accompanying it, is therefore, simply a mask that Sebastian Muluatu puts on when it suits him.

Itchy Fingers is the only other character besides Finito, the healer, whose name describes his character aptly. In keeping with his nick-name, Lutara has extremely itchy fingers. Itchy Fingers has the habit of picking other people's things but always willingly gives them back once the owners discover that the items are missing. Finito on the other hand signifies someone who is “finished” and if his trade is anything to go by, he is indeed “finished”. Finito cannot get very far in his “healing” trade if he continues to pick amateur actors like Moses to help him make money. From the moral perspective Finito is likewise, “finished”. As an adult his role should be to guide the young by setting a good example. The love of money has however, blinded him to this duty. He instead, corrupts the young by asking them to assist him in fooling other people with his “healing” powers.

Other characters in the series are only recognisable through the other devices mentioned earlier in our discussion. The reader is not able in Kimenye's work to recognise characters by face because different illustrators in her work may portray the same character differently. There are four different illustrators in Kimenye's “Moses Series” namely:- Rena Fennessy, Mara Onditi, Joseph Sanna and Henry Koske. These illustrators are guided by the information gained from the book in their portrayal of characters. Often the details given about people in this “Series” are rather sketchy thus each illustrator in the end comes up with an illustration that is different from the others depending on the information available. The child is thus not able to tell who Moses is simply by looking at a picture on the cover of a book as is the case in other series such as Enid Blyton's Famous Five Series. To ensure that her titles are easily recognised as centring around the Moses character, Kimenye has to repeatedly use the name “Moses” on every book cover in the series. In this way, Kimenye establishes the popularity of her “Moses Series” among children. Children who enjoy a book about Moses, will want to pick another title in the same series and the book titles makes this task easier for them.

In order to foster enjoyment and appreciation for a story, the children's author must know the age and psychological disposition of the target reader. In this regard, studies in physical, cognitive, language and personality development have contributed greatly to knowledge about children and so provided certain useful guideposts for writing and selecting books for them.

The fact that Moses is fifteen years old when the reader of Kimenye's work first meets him,

The fact that Moses is fifteen years old when the reader of Kimenye's work first meets him, is a pointer that illustrates Kimenye's basic concern. She is concerned with adolescent issues such as the need to be liberated from ever interfering adults; the need to be self-reliant, especially financially; and the need to be appreciated by the opposite sex. Kimenye explores these three areas to some depth in her "Moses Series", and consciously or unconsciously, creates adolescent characters and their perspective of the world they live in.

Right from the start we encounter adolescent boys who do not hold much respect or favour for the adults around them. Through Moses, our "lens", we view the teachers as dull, boring or irrational throughout this series of eleven books. The more daring of these adolescent boys decide to run away to America, a country which to them sounds more exciting and opportunity-filled than their own. However, the childish and petulant fantasies to run away to America fizzle out altogether as Moses and King Kong come to the realization that money is hard to come by and yet extremely necessary for any venture they plan to undertake. As this truth dawns on the boys, Kimenye lures the reader into the emotional world of their growing process. Feelings of confusion overtake these boys in typical adolescent fashion when they are brought in contact with the opposite sex. This awareness of themselves as men is clearly illustrated when the first girl student Juli, comes to M.E.I.S.A.G. (Kimenye, 1970) and when Moses discovers his much cherished penpal, A. Kibuka, is female (Kimenye, 1973). The boys' desire to impress the girls is in conflict with their determination to prove that they have their emotions in control. The adult reader cannot help being amused by the adolescent's attempts to impress the opposite sex and to play the role of the man in control, but for the child reader, the whole portrayal emphasizes how brave the person concerned is. Kimenye throws the spotlight especially on Rukia, the Dorm 3 prefect. There are several descriptions regarding his attempts to grow a beard by rubbing vaseline onto his bare chin in order to impress Clarissa his "fiancee". There is also King Kong with his never ending ambition to marry the famous singer Miriam Makeba. All these fantasies merely provide outlets for the adolescent boys to exert their "superiority" over the "weaker sex" and so satisfy their developing egos.

In tackling these issues Kimenye's main characters are real and alive and therefore although the changes they undergo are subtle, they are nonetheless credible. Due to the author's decision to use the first person narrative technique, Moses, her protagonist, has an advantage over the other characters. He sees more and so develops more than they do. This is the reason why Moses is so popular among the child readers even though they do not have his physical appearance. The same reason makes him memorable as a personality long after the actual incidents he was involved in have

is 'revealed' rather than 'told' in the majority of cases. The child reader has the interesting task of piecing the information together in order to sum up any one character in the series.

2.6. Style

Judgement on writing style largely depends on whether it is appropriate to the plot, setting, theme and characters in a story. The thrust of the story will dictate the style the author will adopt. Good writing will therefore display generally accepted standards for good writing as well as specific suitability to the story being told and audience being addressed. For this reason, we can safely assume that every author possesses an individual style that communicates his particular message. The degree of success in selecting the best style for a particular story and audience varies from author to author. Each writer therefore, has to gauge his own work to ensure the style suits the content. The appraisal of a work of art is however, not a guessing game. Lubbock (1957:40) says:-

The well-made book, is the book in which the subject and form coincide and are indistinguishable, the book in which the matter is all used up in the form, in which the form expresses the matter.

Lubbock presents the criteria for the ideal book. In good fiction, style must be in tune with the content. If this requirement is not met, the enjoyment of the story is marred. Lubbock's viewpoint is in agreement with Fisher's (1961:13) thesis that "the average child does not think, when he is reading a story, how good the style is or how well drawn the characters are, but he will get more pleasure reading a sincerely written book than one written by a superficial writer". Both Lubbock and Fisher are correct. The good children's fiction writer is one who is honest and genuine in what he says. He must be sincerely involved in the world of his book, by translating his experiences and once more reliving his own childhood. In essence his choice of form and content will be guided by his target audience.

At the lexical level, the children's writer needs to be aware of the child as an intelligent and rational being and at the same time a being with normal mental limitations at every cognitive level. Kareithi (1982) in a paper, "Writing for the Children" advises that in writing for children we must select those words which the child understands. It is Kareithi's contention that every word, no matter how simple, needs to be employed within the child's experience. This is particularly true among the younger children below the age of nine years. The Standard Five and Six pupils involved in this study complained that Kimenyé's language tended to be difficult. Using Kareithi's thesis mentioned above on the level of words, Kimenyé's language was mostly beyond the experiences of these young children. Kimenyé was not in fact targeting this audience but rather the older upper

of these young children. Kimenye was not in fact targeting this audience but rather the older upper primary and lower secondary school pupils. Yet it is possible to find a few young children reading and enjoying these same books without a hitch. Like their older colleagues, they infer meanings of new words and phrases from their use in the context of the story. Such children are few but need to be identified and helped to maintain and even improve their reading ability. The older children involved in the research exercise had less trouble with the vocabulary in these stories. It is to Kimenye's credit that her language though seemingly simple has been employed with a freshness that would challenge even the adolescent reader. This has been made possible through her use of various stylistic devices such as the way she has used conversation in her stories, humour, comedy, imagery and action among others.

Children yearn for challenge and the good author will satisfy this need by the way he presents his fiction to them. The sensitive and well informed author will be careful to avoid creating unhappiness, fear or a sense of failure by the way he writes. Where these feelings are dealt with, the children's author must ultimately end the story on a note of hope to avoid distressing the child unnecessarily. Those who select books for children must also be careful that they do not prescribe very difficult books for children before they are ready to read them.

However there must be some degree of challenge in terms of form and content. This challenge must be both exciting and imaginative for the group targeted by the author. In fiction this challenge comes through the use of varied stylistic devices like those already mentioned and which we shall now examine with special reference to the "Moses Series".

Ray (1970:117) says that apart from adventure, humour is perhaps the most essential ingredient in popular and successful children's fiction, since children generally expect to be amused in their recreational reading. Ray is right and we might add that even adults enjoy a good laugh. A children's author will often gain popularity and endear himself to his audience if he is able to make them laugh. Humour can thus be put to good use by the socially and morally conscious children's author.

Humour is however a very personal taste and what may cause one child to laugh uncontrollably may not even raise a titter from another. The good children's author will endeavour to sprinkle his text with a variety of humorous incidents in order to cater for his audience's varied tastes. Kimenye is one such author. Humour in Kimenye's "Moses Series", arises from conversation, situation, illustration and description.

In conversation humour capitalises on the child character making a fool of the adult. For

instance in Moses and the Raffle we hear the following conversation when Mr. Karanja and Mr. Wafula have taken twelve of the boys out for a wild-life walk (Kimenye 1986:9):-

We stopped beside a large anthill, while Mr. Karanja impressed upon us the part played by ants in keeping with the balance of the environment. 'Remember, boys,' he said solemnly, 'the most humble creature, the lowliest insect, has a positive role to play.'

He stopped preaching, however, after Itchy Fingers asked, 'What about mosquitoes?' and somebody else wanted to know, 'What about tsetse flies?'

We paused for reflection again as we were about to turn off the main road.

'Can anybody tell us why such a variety of birds and small mammals make their homes by the sides of busy roads and railway lines?' he asked.

'Hoping for a lift.' suggested one bright spark, who was quickly jumped on by Mr. Wafula for trying to be too clever. (Emphasis mine).

In this extract, the author is in league with the protagonist in making fun of the adult. This subtle conspiracy may not be apparent to the very young child reader but it is definitely apparent, to the older child and to the adult. The majority of respondents in the study were extremely amused because the boy in question was "making a fool of Mr. Wafula". This was revealed during the group discussions conducted in class. Moses' perception of the adult's artificiality and pompousness is so sharp that it amuses the reader when he is involved in the conspiracy of exposing this pretentiousness. Mr. Karanja is described as talking "solemnly", puffed up perhaps with his own feeling of importance. No wonder the pupils try to outdo him and deflate his ego by asking him about the environmental importance of mosquitoes and tsetse flies. These questions go unanswered, greatly satisfying the child reader who likes to have a good laugh at adult defeat. Then there is the other "bright spark" who gives a witty response, "Hoping for a lift". The Muthaiga Primary School respondents were greatly amused by this conversation and were able to identify both wit and sarcasm in this extract. Many knew what Moses meant by saying the "bright spark" was "trying to be too clever". There are several instances of this kind of humour in the "Moses Series" but we shall now proceed to our next item of discussion - situational humour.

Situational humour involving comedy is another of Kimenye's successful avenues of communication. This type of humour capitalises greatly on dramatic action. In Moses and the Ghost, the initial hunt for the ghost ends with the ghost grabbing the folds of his kanzu and sprinting in a "most unghostly fashion" away from his pursuers, so that the narrator is forced to comment

One thing I will say for that ghost, he could run like the wind when the spirit moved him.

Some of the older children were greatly amused at the irreverent humour in this section and the subtle allusion to the biblical Holy Spirit, but it is the end of this chase that created uproarious laughter in all the schools we visited. The ghost pursuers run full tilt into a thin gowned figure and fall upon him with shouts of triumph. The narrator ends this chapter thus (Kimenye 1971:22):-

Only after we had him prostrate on the ground did we realise it wasn't the ghost we had laid low. Glaring up at us in a blaze of fury lay our deputy headmaster, Mr. Karanja.

Humour is caused by the vivid and fast dramatic action of boys chasing after a ghost in the middle of the night when they ought to be in their beds fast asleep. King Kong's encounter with safari ants adds to the confusion when he springs up from the ground with an ear-piercing yell and is said "to do a wild war-dance across the main compound". All this noise and confusion causes Miss Namukasa to issue frightened screeches from her room which go unheeded and in the midst of all this chaos, they run slap-bang into the one who knows how to wield the cane - Mr. Karanja. The situation is one that would cause even the adult to laugh. The narrator ends with the deputy headmaster glaring up in a blaze of fury, allowing the child to anticipate all the horrors that would befall this group of pursuers.

Finally, descriptions in the "Moses Series" tend to be funny. They are even more amusing when backed up by illustrations that capture the mood of the description. In Moses in Trouble, such is the case. (See I11. 1 and 2 on our page 41). I11. 1: greatly adds flavour to the text below (Kimenye 1968:28):-

Everybody started shouting and waving pieces of pawpaw about for general inspection, and as things grew more heated, a large slice of the fruit sailed through the air and landed on the sleeve of my clean shirt. Too furious to think, I grabbed Mpanga's pawpaw and threw it with full force in the direction of my assailant, whoever he might be - and nearly died of horror as Miss Nagendo rushed forward and caught it smack in the face.

I11. 2: likewise complements the text and adds to the amusement, that after all the hard work these boys go through they do not taste the soup they suffered so dearly for. This extract concerns the group of boys from Dorm 3 who were assigned to peel the onions for the soup (Kimenye 1968:37):-

After the fifth onion passed through my hands, I noticed a burning

After the fifth onion passed through my hands, I noticed a burning sensation in my eyes. I tried to rub it away with my onion-stained fingers, and only produced large salty tears which flowed like a river. It was very uncomfortable, but at the same time I couldn't help being impressed by the amount of water the inside of my head could hold. I noticed, too, that my four companions were in more or less the same condition, and soon it was impossible for us to see what we were doing. To make matters worse our noses also started running, and then we were practically helpless.

'You people will have to hurry up!' King Kong called to us as he rushed past with a plateful of salt - we saw him as a blur through the curtain of our tears, and reached bravely for another onion.

.. It was only when Mutagubya, who was sitting next to me gave an extra loud gulp that Rukia came to see what was going on.

"Hello, now what's happening?"

Both I11. 1 and I11. 2 have attempted to capture the mood of the text by providing expressive visual detail thus adding to the humour in the text. Credit goes to Kimenyé for her expressive descriptions which enable those who illustrate her work to capture the mood of the text.

These few examples illustrate Kimenyé's use of humour. Her "Moses Series" is rich in humour and is thus a suitable recreational tool for the young.

ILLUSTRATION 1



Miss Nagendo rushed forward and caught it smack in the face.

ILLUSTRATION 2



"Hello, now what's happening?"

Besides humour, Kimenye makes ample use of action in her “Moses Series”. Good children’s fiction should have plenty of action in order to sustain the child’s interest. Action that develops logically ensures that the reader’s attention is gripped from beginning to end. This is even more so in young readers whose curious minds always want to know “what happens next”.

Action in Kimenye’s “Moses Series” is presented under the broad umbrella of adventure. Adventure is an important ingredient in books for children. This is because adventure embodies vitality, drama and suspense which are extremely essential in every children’s book. Adventure, not only makes the story more enjoyable for the child but also more memorable.

In order to ensure plenty of action, Kimenye has to take her characters out of the classroom. In the “Moses Series” the boys are always doing something else other than reading. In Moses and the Ghost one wonders if the boys did any learning at all because from beginning to end they are involved in trying to catch the “ghost” and they do not rest until the task is accomplished. In Moses in Trouble, the boys seem to spend the whole time trying to make a meal in the school kitchens or looking for food from Mukibi’s garden. On one such occasion, Dorm 3, decide to go “borrowing milk” from someone’s field. This is what comes of the whole venture (Kimenye 1970:56):-

We were still in the middle of the enclosure when a strange high-pitched whistle rent the air, accompanied by the barking of dogs. I immediately recognised the whistle as the usual cowherd’s call to his cattle, and what worried me was that it sounded dangerously near. What I never expected was the effect it had on the cattle.

From this point onwards every sentence is activated by some action, affecting all the human senses:-

Instantly they set up an absolute chorus of answering ‘moos’, and milled round us until we were dizzy and no longer sure where our way of escape lay. Also they closed in on us and we were hard pressed to keep on our feet and prevent ourselves from being trampled to death... and the only consolation we had... was the anxious faces of King Kong and Rukia, which we could just about distinguish, peering anxiously at us over the thorny barricade.

At the precise moment of two savage dogs making a mad rush into the enclosure, a cow butted Mutagubya with its horns, and he dropped the can of milk. Both of us, yelling with terror, ran for our lives... A terrible thud of hoofs announced that the cattle had followed us...

This type of action goes on and on until the child reader’s attention is totally absorbed and his senses bring the scene in front of him to life. It is these action packed episodes and sentences that make the pace of Kimenye’s stories so invigorating that the young reader cannot help but ‘accompany’

his hero in all his exciting adventures.

In Moses and the School Farm, the pace of the story is hastened by the variety of scenes in the story. The story begins with the boys trying to fish Mr. Wafula out of a pit latrine. On seeing Mr. Wafula in his filthy state after the rescue, Miss Mahinda thinks she has seen a ghost and leaves the school in fright. Her departure creates chaos and in order to cope with this confusion, one class is sent to work on the 'school farm' daily. From merely working on the farm, pig and chicken farming is introduced much to the annoyance of the boys. In the meantime the boys are also involved in making Gundi wine in their dormitories, the rest of the time they are in full flight, hotly pursued by a furious mother pig. While a few of the more daring boys start up a rumour about a fox being on the prowl to cover up their theft and subsequent roasting and eating of the school chickens. These incidents keep piling up until Kimenye decides to 'send' the boys home on holiday but not before an "almighty explosion" (Kimenye 1987:106) occurs blowing out the windows in Mr. Wafula's house.

Action is definitely a strong ingredient of Kimenye's style and one that young children cannot do without in their books. Good books for children are those that allow the child to participate in some form of adventure. When asked to fill out the questionnaire provided, stating what scene they would like to dramatise, the respondents involved in the study, selected scenes that were full of movement revealing their literary preferences. Action is therefore a must in good children's books.

Kimenye also challenges her readers in terms of the language she uses in her work. One way to gain access to children's minds is through the use of words that are important and significant to them. Language is an important social tool, and it can signify the relationship between various social groups. The language an author uses when writing for children can determine whether his work will be read by the children or not. Kimenye demonstrates an awareness of the issue of social groups in her work through her use of language.

When Moses speaks, most young children identify with him because they enjoy his kind of talk. In Moses in Trouble, Moses speaks of a time when they were "dying" of hunger (p. 17). This is just the type of exaggeration that most school going children enjoy. In Moses and the Camper, Moses is concerned about losing his "valuable" young life (p. 29). Once again young children are quick to catch on to this type of speech. After all Moses has done he is still concerned about his "valuable" young life. He definitely would not speak to the adults in the book in this manner, but his peers understand that he is indirectly referring to his many notorious escapades and

is simply being funny about how valuable his life is. His conversation with adults is characterised by more straight forward language signifying the gap between these two social groups. This is an instance of Moses conversing with an adult in the book Moses (Kimenye 1968:73):-

‘Just to satisfy my curiosity, would you care to tell me what you and Mulutu were running away from and to where?’

Uncomfortably, I replied, ‘We were going to America, Sir,’

‘... By the way are your passports in order, and have you enough money for your security bonds?’

I looked at him blankly. ‘Passports? Security bonds?’

In the presence of the adult Moses’ speech is formal but when talking to peers he is able to exercise much wit and sarcasm with his tongue. In addition to manipulating language to address the different social groups, Kimenye employs the use of imagery in order to come up with more challenging and imaginative language. Below are some examples of this type of language.

TABLE 3

BOOK TITLE	EXAMPLES OF IMAGINATIVE LANGUAGE
MOSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I saw Mr. Mukibi bearing down on me like a blood thirsty prey. (p. 9). - ... the rest stampeded like a herd of buffaloes towards the dining hall. (p. 36). - She turned on me like a snake (p. 57).
MOSES AND MILDRED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... he was the first down the path, running like a hare. (p. 32). - ... Others followed him like a flock of brainless goats ... (p. 32). - there was little I wanted to talk about with those worms in Standard V... (p. 33). - Mildred, by the way, was dangling round Kigali’s crinkly neck, like a bizarre sort of necklace. (p. 35).

MOSES IN
TROUBLE

- We stared like frightened rabbits at the tall, gaunt figure with hooded eyes, wrinkled sagging cheeks, and tight, cruel mouth... (p. 2).
- The old man was delighted at our astonishment. He wagged his head and cackled... (p. 3).
- Supper in fact presented itself as a lumpy, mud-coloured soup... (p. 6).
- The tea tasted like medicine. (p. 8).

MOSES AND THE
KIDNAPPERS

- I saw a car no bigger than a beetle... (p. 7).
- It was not a storm this time, but rather the soft drizzly stuff which clings like clammy hands to one's hair, skin, and clothing.
- Jimmy sank to the ground as if he had been pole-axed.

MOSES AND
THE GHOST

- When he got the message he was reduced to quivering jelly. (p. 28).
- Being the fools they are, they leaned inside the dorm and together let out a sound which I imagine they meant to be spine-chilling but reminded me of the wailings of an unhappy cow. Their mooing ended in strangled gasps. (p. 52).

Kimenye's work is richly loaded with these imaginative expressions and Moses' speech and thoughts get richer as one progresses through the "Series". In the seventh title Moses on the Move we see how true this development is (Kimenye 1972:5):-

While Kiwanuka was picking himself up and clearing the stars from his eyes, King Kong took on all comers... 'Now,' I demanded to know, 'What do we do for money? ... trust you to throw a spanner in the works...' 'The day I leave things to you is the day they'll cart me off to Butabika Mental Home'. With that I left him. Of course, the two of us were as thick as thieves again next day... (Emphasis mine).

But this still raises the question of whether the language development is portrayed by the character

or the author. The first person narrative technique excludes the author from the text and so we can safely conclude that this development takes place in the mind of the protagonist. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Moses' eyes grow increasingly sharper to what goes on around him. He is no longer simply a naive teenager through whose 'eyes' we see the adult world but an increasingly humorous, ironical and sarcastic commentator whose critical faculties towards other people's motives seem to be gaining expansion. In Moses and the Raffle, he talks of Rukia thus (Kimenye 1986:10):-

... His question made the girl look up from her work, and immediately he bared his teeth in what he fondly imagines to be a devil-may-care grin, and which he practices nightly in front of the mirror in the dorm, at the same time attempting to wiggle one eyebrow in imitation of James Bond. It's only my opinion of course, but whenever he pulls this face, he looks to me as though he has swallowed a frog...

Moses' innocence diminishes as his tongue develops a sharper and more caustic edge to it. His aversion for the scout mistress is clearly illustrated when he comments in Moses and the Camper (Kimenye 1973:21):-

That one, I might tell you, was the absolute end. Thanks to her, the rice was cooked to a mushy porridge, and the vegetable stew barely eatable.

In this way Moses gets the child reader to share his aversion especially more so because the scout mistress ruins the supper, an unforgivable deed in the child's eyes. This is because children love food and although adults love food too, young children tend to feel hunger more intensely than adults do. Children are also more sincere about their need than adults. In the same tone Mukibi becomes the "beloved headmaster", the perceptive reader catches on to Moses' real meaning, but younger children may miss the whole significance and sarcasm therein.

Language as employed in Kimenye's work is definitely full of colour and challenge for her readers and this is what good writing is all about. Kimenye's work can help to expand the child's creative faculty and language skills. Many of the compositions handed in by the field respondents showed that these children had directly assimilated some of Kimenye's images and similes into their writing or attempted to use similar expressions of their own. (See example of this in our Appendix 5). The issue of style is no doubt worth paying attention to when writing or selecting books for children as they tend to imitate, directly or indirectly what they read and enjoy in books. We now set out to discuss the seemingly insignificant yet extremely important aspect of format.

2.7. Format

The format of a book includes aspects such as its size, shape, design, print, quality of paper, binding and colour. These aspects are extremely crucial for the young readers who are largely influenced by the visual impression of a book. The way a book is presented may often determine whether the child will select and read a particular book or not.

Children are drawn to attractive book covers. This does not indicate however that book covers alone will cause a book to be popular. Although the covers on Kimenye's "Moses Series" are not very attractive, the content of her books makes up for this deficiency. The quality of the paper binding and covers is however very important when it comes to fiction for young children. Children need books that are strong and can last. Kimenye's books for instance are not very durable. Due to passing through many hands those that were used in the field suffered a lot of wear and tear. Popular books are more economical when presented in hardback rather than paperback. Since the "Moses Series" has proved to be widely read, the publishers should consider producing it in hardback for the younger readers. Publishers are however, not interested in long-lasting books, but rather books that bring in money.

The children from whom responses were sought did not show much concern about the size and shape of books basically because Kenyan children have mainly been exposed to the rectangular shaped book. The younger children, especially six to nine year olds did, nonetheless, complain about the print size in Kimenye's work stating that it was too close and too small. (See example of this overleaf). This age group needs bigger print which can be read easily and quickly allowing them to build confidence in their reading ability. Furthermore illustrations can be used to break the monotony of the page. In Martha the Millipede (Kimenye, 1978) a text for younger children, illustrations have been used to break down the monotony of the print. The child is thus able to read a page quite quickly and move on to the next. The big print and the illustrations enable the child to boost his confidence in reading. (See example of this on our page 49). Since the "Moses Series", has fallen into younger hands, the publishers should reconsider altering this print to suit this new readership.

CONTINUOUS SMALL PRINT

... room like a whirlwind, knocking plates out of hands where-ever he failed to empty them over somebody. In a matter of seconds the storeroom looked like the inside of a dustbin, and all of us, including King Kong himself, were either plastered or splashed with sweet potato, gravy and meat.

I was almost glad when a boy near the door suddenly yelled, 'Look's as if Karanja's on his way here!' The lamp was hurriedly blown out and we ran for our lives.

Very few people would believe our story of Dorm 2's greediness. Immediately after the fight they took the precaution of visiting the other dormitories, except of course our own, and telling everybody that we had been seen raiding the store and making off with as much as we could lay our hands on. This also gave them the excuse they needed for serving even smaller portions of food.

'King Kong and Holy Moses not only pinched stuff but they also spilled a lot all over the floor,' their tale went. 'The headmaster insists that we make do with what is left. Sorry, chaps, but we can't give you any more.'

Any fool would have realized that if old Mukibi had been told of anybody stealing from the storeroom, the boy in question would have been beaten within an inch of his life. But the rest of the school took everything Dorm 2 told them as gospel truth, and King Kong and I spent most of that day fighting to defend ourselves. Nor was anyone even slightly mollified when our portions of food were less than half of what everybody else received.

I can't describe how hungry we felt after a couple of days of this treatment. Life was miserable, with only a few boys in our own dormitory ever speaking to us, and our small amount of pocket money rapidly disappearing on bananas and bread bought from the village duka.

On the very last day of Dorm 2's kitchen career, we reached the end of our patience. Our pocket money was finished, and we were on the verge of starvation (King Kong seemed to be fading away before my eyes). The final blow came when we arrived slightly late for lunch, only to be told by a grinning Ssali that there was no food left.

'You had better find some then,' King Kong said, dangerously quietly.

'We can't give you what we haven't got,' Ssali replied, shrugging his shoulders and turning away. King Kong reached across the serving table, grabbed Ssali and spun him round.

'We want something to eat,' he said.

Ssali looked terrified as he struggled to free himself from King Kong's strong grip, but he cried,

'You and your friend can starve to death as far as we're concerned. I've told you there's nothing left!'



When she had finished answering all the questions and she had managed to get inside Mother Nature's big grass hut, Martha was feeling hot and uncomfortable.

Mother Nature was busy painting the wings of a butterfly. She looked at Martha and smiled very kindly.

‘What can I do for you, millipede?’ She asked.

Martha was suddenly very shy. She whispered, ‘Please, Mother Nature, I would very much like to have some shoes.’

Martha didn't know what to say. She stood there, hanging her head, with big tears in her eyes, and Mother Nature's helpers began to laugh.

‘Ha ha’ and ‘Tee hee!’ they laughed.

Mother Nature frowned at them and said, ‘Please be more polite to this millipede. After all, she has come a long way to ask for our help.’

Then she opened a notebook and asked Martha how many feet she had.

Martha wasn't very sure, so she said, ‘Oh, hundreds.’

Mother Nature carefully wrote this down. Then she wanted to know the size of Martha's feet and the kind of shoes she would like.

The question of illustrations revealed that the six to nine year olds had preference for coloured pictures. The ten to fifteen year olds did not care much for illustrations as long as a book told a good story. This difference in preference once again illustrates the gap between those who are in their basic reading stages and those who have already attained the love for reading. These age groups are, however, subject to change depending on the cognitive level of each individual child.

In conclusion, books for children should be regarded in totality. No book should be prescribed for its format alone. The content should be evaluated critically to determine whether it is suitable for the audience it is intended for. Both the form and content are equally important. This calls for an examination of the content of Kimenye's work.

... books that awaken in their own minds a sense of morality, but also that enable them to react in great human emotions, that give them the feeling of the great world of plants and things that they feel to be the expression of their own emotions in creation and in truth... books that will sustain their spirits as they grow, and inspiring ones which will give them the integrity to perpetuate their own faith in truth and justice.

Hazard's view encompasses all that a good children's book should be. It is not easy work writing a book that will have an impact on the children, one that will be purchased and not just shelved but read and enjoyed. It is the responsibility of the writer to be reading and both locally and globally.

In this chapter, we will examine the content of Kimenye's "Moses Series" and carry out the response of the Kenyan child to the series and read it as a whole. Carelessly or unconsciously, Kimenye does perpetuate a certain moral and value system, and it is this vision that we seek to analyse. To date there are eleven titles in this "Moses Series". (See full list - Appendix 1)

The book *Moses* deals mainly with school life and the relationship between both school and discipline. The protagonist, Moses, is introduced to the reader through a very revealing introduction (Kimenye 1968:1)-

I HAD JUST been expelled from my sixth school.

From this single sentence, the child reader is able to make a value judgement about the character of a rebellious boy. To this "achieved" a record of six exams, which he had passed with extremely disconcerting results and must be worth reading about. The title of the book is repeated and fixed on Moses, Kimenye is able to set the story plot.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. THEMATIC CONCERNS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

3.1. Theme

Theme, at its simplest level of meaning, refers to "the central core of a story" (Arbuthnot and Sutherland 1947:28). It is, however not always possible to sum up the theme of a story in a single neat sentence. Thematic unity, nonetheless, is essential in every kind of story.

In children's books, theme often reflects developmental values that are inherent in the process of growing up. These values encompass childhood needs such as security, belonging, love, freedom from fear, physical well-being, change and achievement among others. One critic had the following to say concerning theme in good books for children (Hazard 1944:42), these should be:-

... books that awaken in them not maudlin sentimentality, but sensibility; that enable them to share in great human emotions; that give them respect for universal life - that of animals, of plants; that teach them not to despise everything that is mysterious in creation and in man... books that set in action truths worthy of lasting forever, and inspiring ones whole inner life... books that have the integrity to perpetuate their own faith in truth and justice.

Hazard's view encompasses all that a good children's book should do. It ought to be a book worth writing; a book that will have an impact on the child reader. Essentially, fiction for children need not just entertain but must also help the children in the process of growing up, by moulding them both socially and morally.

In this chapter, we will examine the content of Kimenye's "Moses Series" and assess the response of the Kenyan child to the social and moral message therein. Consciously or unconsciously, Kimenye does perpetuate a certain moral and social vision, and it is this vision that we seek to analyse. To date there are eleven titles in this "Moses Series". (See full list - Appendix I).

The book Moses deals mainly with school life and the relationship between behaviour and discipline. The protagonist, Moses, is introduced to the reader through a very revealing statement (Kimenye 1968:1):-

I HAD JUST been expelled from my sixth school.

From this single sentence the child reader is able to make a value judgement - that Moses must be a rebellious boy. To have "achieved" a record of six expulsions must mean that Moses is an extremely disobedient boy and must be worth reading about. With the child's attention captured and fixed on Moses, Kimenye is able to let her story proceed.

In keeping with his character, Moses shows great dislike for his seventh school, Mukibi's Education Institute for the Son's of African Gentlemen (M.E.I.S.A.G.), and for the headmaster, Mr. Mukibi. As a result of this dislike, he teams up with King Kong and plans to escape from all this boredom to go to America and to a more exciting life. This situation addresses the problem of truancy among school children. Very often, young children will choose not to go to school in order to do something else which they feel is more exciting, for instance playing marbles on the road. Kimenye's stand on this issue is however very clear. Through Makumbi, who has recently been expelled from school and is probably experiencing the hardships of fending for himself and his "new" family, Kimenye makes this value statement, which is the gist of the whole book (Kimenye 1968:80):-

"... make the most of your school days while you can. Education is the most precious thing you can have, only you don't always realise it until as in my own case, it is too late.

Kimenye sees education as a very valuable tool in life especially if one is ambitious and wants to be comfortably placed on the social ladder. The book's basic concern is pertinent, not only for the secondary pupils it was intended for, but also for the primary audience who have appropriated it. Moses addresses the issues of teenage pregnancies, early marriages and school drop-outs. These are common problems in primary schools in Kenya today and they definitely need to be addressed by the morally and socially conscious author of children's literature.

The field respondents disapproved of teenage pregnancies and early marriages. The female respondents, especially in the urban schools, were particularly concerned by the lack of romance in Makumbi's unplanned for marriage to Alphonsi's mother. The respondents unanimously consented that dropping out of school would be a tragic thing for them. Their responses concerning what lesson they had learnt from the story leant heavily towards being upright pupils. Although all the pupils agreed on the issue of moral uprightness and condemned hypocrisy, theft, boastfulness and dishonesty, there was a glaring difference between the rural and urban respondents when it came to the issue of attitude to teachers. (See children's responses in Appendix 5) the rural children readily condemned disrespect for teachers but the urban children were thoroughly amused by some of the descriptions about certain teachers in the books they had read. For instance, Mr. Lutu is at one stage described as "blinking like a baby owl" (Moses p. 20) and Mr. Mukibi is repeatedly described as "an old vulture"

This nick-naming of teachers is peculiar to school children and especially those in urban centres. It therefore does not prick their conscience, yet many of the rural pupils did not find this

humorous but disrespectful. These differences in response point to the social and moral gap that exists between the urban and rural children.

Urban pressures have caused many people today to drink alcohol excessively in order to 'forget' their problems. This drinking inevitably leads to drunkenness and as a result fingers are always pointing accusingly at drunken, irresponsible and badly dressed teachers. The media capitalises on the smallest crimes made by teachers. Thus, although Makumbi's advice on the importance of education is valid, some of those who impart this education have lost credibility in the eyes of the child. It takes rare individuals like Mr. Karanja to keep the pupils in line, by finding out what their problems are, through personal interaction, that help them to recognise their worth in society.

Moses and Mildred tackles the issue of the typical school bully in the person of Magara.

Magara is socially and morally a failure as his life record shows (Kimenyé 1967: 12-13):-

Magara has done everything. He has been in the hands of the police more times than he cares to remember. For instance, he once forged a cheque of his father's for I don't know how many thousand shillings, and spent all the money long before he was discovered. Then when he was at another school, there was some business about a battery disappearing from the engine of the headmaster's car. Oh, the stories about Magara are endless ... though most of what he does is hushed up. His family are wealthy and important enough to be able to pull strings, and this keeps him out of really serious trouble.

The respondents voiced an aversion for Magara as a character and those of his kind. The six to nine year olds were especially glad that Magara was bitten by the snake, Mildred. This satisfied their sense of rough justice. After all, Magara had only been at M.E.I.S.A.G. for a short while but had managed to take the bed that rightfully belonged to Moses, causing a fight. He had also encouraged those boys who went to the village bar, to drink themselves silly, not to mention that he also managed to get Mr. Lutu dead drunk. As if this was not enough Magara later bullied the other boys into letting him copy their homework. The climax comes about when he twists Moses' arm and when King Kong attempts to find out why Magara did this, Mildred strikes out and bites Magara's hand. Mildred acts as though she knows that bullies should be disciplined. Like most bullies his cowardly nature is exposed by this incident when he begins to gibber like an idiot (Kimenyé 1967:59).

Kimenyé also addresses the issue of misuse of wealth and position in society. The field respondents agreed that this was an evil they knew about and which should be done away with if society is to thrive. More than this, it would make the schools better places to be in as those who take drugs and prove to be notorious would not be condoned.

Childhood pranks are the child's favourite pastime. In Moses in Trouble, a school joke gets out of proportion and earns the pupils the headmaster's anger and punishment. The whole problem begins this way (Kimenye 1968:1).

THE TROUBLE REALLY started when a lot of us got together and tried to make life a bit more interesting at Mukibi's Educational Institute for the Sons of African Gentlemen. We collected all the cockroaches we found in the school meals, and sent them, with our headmaster's compliments by registered post to the Minister of Education.

In a bid to make life at school more interesting these teenage boys get more than they had bargained for. During the class discussions we conducted, many of the respondents were particularly amused by the incidents in this book perhaps because it pokes fun at their cooking skills. More than this the book exposes in a humorous way, a common problem in some boarding schools in Kenya - poorly prepared food. Some of the respondents argued that the boys were justified in posting the cockroaches to the Minister of Education since Mukibi did not seem to be interested in their welfare. After discussing the Mukibi boys' various hazardous attempts to prepare their own meals, however, all respondents agreed it was important to know how to cook for oneself.

Kimenye also deals with the problem of greed and selfishness in this title. In an attempt to survive in this difficult situation of having to prepare meals from meagre food supplies, the boys at M.E.I.S.A.G. are forced to focus on self first. The Dorm 2 cooks for instance are one night caught unawares, by King Kong and Moses, gorging themselves with sweet potatoes and large chunks of meat. This happens hours after everyone else had already had their supper. In anger King Kong descends on them declaring (Kimenye 1968:12):-

“No wonder the rest of us get hardly enough to eat!” ...You people have hoarded the best of the food for yourselves!”

Asked how they would feel if someone treated them the way Dorm 2 had treated the rest of their school mates, many of the respondents stated they would be very hurt indeed. Thirteen year old Salome Waihumbu of Kibabii Primary School, was of the opinion that one must find ways to survive in a harsh environment. Her attitude has been affected by her upbringing. Salome's parents are both in business and this is probably the reason why she has a very clinical attitude towards togetherness. Children do not just pick up social and moral values from what they read. The home environment contributes tremendously to the child's impressions of mankind and his position and duty in the world.

Kimenye's fourth adventure entitled - Moses and the Kidnappers has a heavy urban backdrop and deals with the evil of thuggery in urban centres. During a trip to Tororo town to have

a hair cut, Moses and King Kong are kidnapped as they wait for Mr. Karanja, their teacher, outside a bank. Kimenyé paints a typical urban scene in this book. In their scheming to steal money from the Bengo Coffee Estate cashier, these urban thugs show how dehumanising greed for money can be. The love for money is so degrading that when the kidnappers discover they have kidnapped the wrong people, their leader Jimmy, has no qualms about selling the two innocent schoolboys into a labour camp across the Congo border.

Those who read this title were quick to point out that these thugs were no better than Mukibi, whose love for money blinded him to the evils he condoned in his school. As long as Mukibi had school fees coming in, he paid no attention to the welfare of the boys who were put in his care. Likewise, as long as Jimmy could make the best of this ‘unprofitable’ kidnap, he did not care about what happened to the two young boys.

In our bid to find out whether the Mathare Primary School respondents had seen anyone do anything evil for money, the feedback was overwhelming. Among the responses given were that people murder, prostitute and sell their own children for money, and although they admitted this was wrong, the older pupils, eleven to fifteen year olds, were of the opinion that many people do these things in order to survive.

Moses in a Muddle is the only title in the “Moses Series” that has a female character in the limelight. In this title, Juli Sekabanja, a young girl from a wealthy family is admitted to M.E.I.S.A.G. Her admission into the school brings to the surface two important issues. First, is the theme of emotional development and secondly the problem of the weaker sex. Both issues are closely interrelated.

Juli’s introduction in the “Series” is symbolic in that it is an introduction of women into the male realm - M.E.I.S.A.G. The introduction is timely because it is at this age that young men and young women begin to be aware of their attraction for one another. Little wonder the boys at M.E.I.S.A.G. are at such pains to impress the newcomer. We need to ask ourselves, why Moses is in a muddle. Is it just a muddle in terms of the adventures he is involved in or is this muddle more deeply embedded in him than we imagine? The classroom discussions on this text with the Standards Seven and Eight pupils revealed that they were aware of both levels of confusion in Moses’ life. This was evident both from their verbal responses and from the self-conscious giggling that took place.

In this title, Kimenyé paints the female as a meddler and thus propagates the idea of the ‘good for nothing woman’. In fact throughout her work, her attitude to females is worth noting.

We shall examine the topic later in this chapter.

Juli comes to M.E.I.S.A.G. and the boys are flung into confusion. Everyone is determined to look his best in order to impress her and perhaps win her attention. We see petty jealousies creeping in between characters when Juli pays too much attention to one person. Children tend to be jealous of their friends and so they are able to identify with these feelings exhibited by the characters in the book. Kimenye causes these jealousies to seem so ridiculous that the child reader is challenged to behave differently.

We notice, however, that although it is Juli who is first aware of the 'spies', she is not able to track them down without help from the boys. Is Kimenye being too subjective in her depiction of the female? To some extent her female characters seem rather brainless and irrational. What impression does the young reader acquire from this book? Not surprisingly, the respondents did not find anything amiss. It was quite normal for Juli to seek help from the boys in dealing with these 'dangerous' people. Society has already moulded these pupils to think in this manner, and to accept the fact that females are the "weaker" sex. However, since Kimenye's books were essentially aimed at a male audience, the picture she creates of the male and female role in life is understandable. Depicting the female in this way satisfies the young boys' sense of superiority over the helpless female. Yet if such series were to be the only reading diet for such boys, there would be permanent damage to their personality development as their ego might bloat to unmanageable proportions. The female reader likewise needs other books that satisfy her sense of achievement and give her confidence and dignity in her role as a girl in society. The patron of children's literature needs to ensure, that the child does not get hooked on to one series for too long as this could interfere with their mental and emotional development process. Caution should be exercised especially in cases where the series does not satisfy acceptable social and literary standards.

Moses and the Ghost addresses the subject of unscrupulous business people. In order to buy off M.E.I.S.A.G. at a cheap price, the two proposed buyers assign a "ghost" to haunt the school. The whole haunting business ends up being a thoroughly enjoyable adventure for the boys in the school. This title was enjoyed by the older pupils especially those between the ages eleven to fifteen, but the younger readers found the subject of ghosts rather frightening.

Some of these pupils rejected the book simply because of its title and the illustration on the cover. Those who select books for children would do well to consider these aspects of books when they make choices for their readers. For younger readers tend to get more deeply engrossed in what they read, living out their fears, pains and joys with the characters in the book. The horrors of ghosts

and haunting are thus more real to them than they would be for the older reader. It is therefore important to select books that deal with more enjoyable aspects of growing up for the younger readers and then let the older children choose whether to read horror stories or not. These older children are able to separate what is real in the books they read from what is mere fantasy or imaginary and so are able to appreciate delicious fear in stories. Most of the male respondents in the urban schools we visited, listed James Hardley Chase as one of their favourite authors. The second most popular author was Nick Carter. These two authors both specialise in cheap thrillers which are not very suitable reading material for school going children. Among the most common subjects their novels deal with are; murder, theft and sex. The hero is usually the one who gets away with both theft and murder and also who keeps many women partners. The pupils admitted that their parents do not buy them these books but they get them from older brothers and sisters and also from friends. If adult patrons encourage their children to read more wholesome books, this situation can perhaps be remedied, but firstly, authors of children's fiction have to write more exciting and challenging works and secondly parents and schools have to be encouraged to realise the importance of buying books for children. It is to Kimenye's credit that her plot does not allow these unscrupulous crooks in Moses and the Ghost to succeed in their crafty scheme. They are discovered and reprimanded for their dirty intentions. This ending allows the child to affirm his sense of right and wrong.

Schoolboys are usually in need of pocket money and this makes the problems Moses and his friends experience in Moses on the Move something they can understand. Unlike in previous stories in the "Moses Series" where Moses is so naive that he even imagines he can go to America without any money, in this story, Moses and his friends get wiser. They decide to get jobs that will earn them some pocket money. Already this teaches the child that he must not be too dependent on parents but must try to earn his own pocket money. How the boys decide to earn this money, is another matter. When the school closes for the holiday, the notorious protagonist discovers that his guardians have had an overdose of his pranks for a while and cannot accommodate him again, so soon after his previous visit. His friend King Kong likewise is not able to go home. With Itchy Fingers and Rukia they make a foursome. The boys are casually employed by Finito, a fake healer, and for a handsome salary of twenty shillings per boy, they agree to be Finito's allies by pretending that they have physical defects which Finito will 'cure' during his next 'healing' session. The situation nearly gets out of hand when King Kong, with his eyes fixed dreamily on one of the girls posing as Finito's "angels", forgets to get 'healed' and confusion breaks out among the audience who suddenly realise they are being fooled by the group on stage.

Mr. Karanja saves the day when he tracks the boys down in a night club and whisks them back to the safety of the school compound. In accordance with justice wrong must be punished. The boys are made to spend the rest of their holiday working on the school farm and the money they earned from 'working' for Finito is turned over to the Salvation Army. Once again Kimenye succeeds in leaving her readers with a sound moral base to anchor on. Some respondents, in the discussion of this story, felt that Finito should have been heavily punished since he is the one who had involved the boys in his 'crooked' business. These pupils felt that the boys were merely misled. It is usually easier to blame the other person for whatever evils befall us. Young readers may miss the point that the four boys were as guilty as Finito was, simply by accepting to be his accomplices. It is important for this reason, to find out what the child's response to a book is in order to clarify misunderstandings or to explain a point that may have escaped the child's attention. In this case, the pupils were right in feeling that Finito should also have been punished for his part in the crime but from the stylistic point of view any shift of attention to Finito, an adult, would have reduced the readers' attention to the boys. To avoid preaching to the reader about good conduct in children, Kimenye lets her reader's attention dwell on the consequences that follow the four boys' actions. The field respondents however understood the lesson of the story, and stated that good children should go home during holidays and should not loiter in urban centres. The lesson is very relevant for school children today as they are bound to get caught up in the same situation as Moses and his friends were, if they spend time in urban centres with people they do not know very well. Crooks, like Finito, often get away with their crimes leaving their victims to suffer.

Young people like to have penpals with whom they communicate regularly. The book, Moses and the Penpal addresses this adolescent hobby and humorously explores the adventures that could result from it. In this story, Moses writes to his penpal A. Kibuka not realising that the 'A' stands for Alice. He is struck with horror when she shows up at M.E.I.S.A.G. in search of him.

The story examines the typical boyish fear of meeting a girl at an intimate level. Moses is so nervous about this meeting that he asks Kasali to impersonate him. What does this do for the child reader? The child reader is made to laugh at Moses' nervousness and so realise how unfounded his own fear of girls is. This exercise makes the child more sure and confident in himself. He becomes more emotionally stable than he would otherwise be if he did not face up to his own fears. Asked whether they were afraid of girls, the boys responded in the negative summing up Moses as a coward. Even if they were not all telling the truth, this book at least leaves them with the determination to be brave and assertive. The pupils also felt that Kasali and Alice deserved each

other because neither of them was interested in learning. Kasali spent his time in school making wine and Alice had sneaked out of school to visit a male penpal. This they felt was bad behaviour and therefore it was necessary to get rid of Alice. Kimenyé makes the same point by causing the two to pair up and get out of the way. Their presence at M.E.I.S.A.G. only seems to cause one problem after another. These problems seem to signify that Kasali and Alice Kibuka do not fit in this society and must be removed.

Young children in Kenyan primary schools have a popular phrase among themselves and this is - "finding's keepings". The story in Moses and the Camper brings out the fallacy of this commonly accepted belief. Kimenyé calls a spade by its name in this book, and not a big spoon. When some of the dormitories at M.E.I.S.A.G. accidentally burn down, the boys are forced to put up in tents. As always, Moses and some of his friends accidentally stumble across some hidden treasure which they attempt to hide for themselves. The situation blows up when those who stole this treasure in the first place begin to hound them. What point does Kimenyé make in this title? The respondents stated that they had learnt that stolen money should be given back to the owner or handed over to the police. The book thus instils a sense of honesty in the young reader, a point Kimenyé has made before. In Moses and the Kidnappers (Kimenyé 1968:34), King Kong states:-

Use your head. How can we? For us to spend this money would make us as bad as Jimmy and his friends. It would mean that we were thieves too. There's only one thing to do and that is to hand it over to the police.

The moral message is clear. Those who handle stolen property are as bad as the thieves. The child reader is therefore encouraged to behave as society expects him to. We realise however that once poor habits are formed it is rather difficult to reshape them. Such lessons on behaviour in society are therefore more beneficial to the child if taught in early childhood rather than in secondary school, the level for which this "Series" was intended.

Moses and the Raffle deals with issues already discussed in other titles, such as the involvement of schoolboys with unscrupulous crooks. The major theme however is the naivety of the schoolboy and how people can take advantage of him. In an attempt to raise money for himself and his friends, Moses ends up accepting, unknowingly, a stolen Mercedes Benz from Nick, a car thief, as a donation towards the raffle. Later the police come on the scene and the car is returned to the owner while the thieves are arrested.

A number of the respondents said they would never accept a Mercedes Benz from a stranger, as they would not know what to do with it. Those pupils in Standards Five and Six said they had learnt that strangers can be bad people. Although Kimenyé's Mercedes Benz seems a rather

extravagant idea, it puts the message across loudly enough for even the younger readers to grasp. Strangers in urban centres often lure naive youngsters with sweets and other glittering presents. Kimenye's point is that there are dangers inherent in accepting these presents as one does not know where the stranger will lead them.

Amongst the older respondents answers varied between the rural children and the urban children. Where the rural children felt that it was wrong to accept gifts from strangers as they could poison or bewitch the receiver, the urban children mostly commented on the problem of getting entangled with sugar daddies and sugar mummies or being kidnapped by some strange beneficiaries. The differences in the responses are caused by the fact that these two groups of respondents are influenced by completely different environments. The children in the rural areas are influenced by the fears of people around them; the fear of malicious neighbours harming them. In the urban centres the major problems are those of socio-economic exploitation of the young by common 'thieves'. This illustrates the fact that child readers will often understand a book according to the environmental influences that affect them directly. The good children's writer need not hammer at the lesson in his ending of the story, as it could hinder the child's own application of the teaching to his own situation.

The last title in this "Moses Series" Moses and the School Farm introduces the issue of unity in purpose in order to achieve success. When farming is introduced at 'Mukibi's Educational Institute for the Son's of African Gentlemen' no one is too enthusiastic about it with the result that the enterprise gradually deteriorates before it dies out completely. During the classroom discussions on this title many views were given for the failure of the school farm. Among the reasons given were; laziness, lack of interest, rebellion, disobedience and Mukibi's greed for money. None of the respondents we questioned, however, showed much concern for the fact that the school farm had failed. This reflects the attitude of society today toward manual work. Even with the crucial problem of unemployment, the child is still taught that classroom instruction is the gateway to the white collar jobs in society. The present school syllabus is trying to eradicate this false thinking but it will be quite a while before this fallacy is seen for what it is. Both the rural and urban respondents felt that the failure of the school farm was justified because Mukibi simply wanted free labour from the pupils in his school. The incident reveals that children are able to tell when adults are exploiting them and they hate to be used in this way especially by those who do not have the child's welfare at heart. Children thus enjoy reading books that give them victory over such exploiters.

What we have discussed so far are the major thematic concerns of each title in the “Moses Series”. Our treatment is rather artificial as it gives the impression that each title stands separate from the rest, yet underlying the whole series are certain pertinent themes that are worth noting because they subtly but powerfully influence the young readers who read Kimenye’s work. These themes include the depiction of women and adults.

Kimenye’s depiction of the female character deserves discussion because it comes up in all the titles in the “Moses Series”. Secondly, it is, in a sense, unusual for a female author to depict women in the manner that she does. Kimenye has firmly adhered to the old-fashioned cultural view of the woman in all her work. What impression does she give to the child by depicting women in this manner?

Makumbi’s wife in the book Moses, sets the pace for Kimenye’s female characters when she unceremoniously dumps her baby on Moses and goes off without a backward glance as though her baby’s fate did not matter to her. When we first meet her she behaves like an irrational tigress. This is Moses’ first impression of her (Kimenye 1968:29):-

There across the road, directly opposite me, was something in flowing white draperies - and it suddenly began floating towards me. I have often read of cold sweats, but that was my first experience of one. Icy trickles made their way down my forehead, my neck, chest and down my back. My feet were rooted to the spot, and my throat went so dry that I wasn’t able to utter even a single squawk of fear. I was still petrified when the thing materialised into a flesh and blood woman, ...

This extract is enough to make very young readers recoil in fear. Kimenye is however not simply exerting her descriptive prowess to its utmost, she is imparting to her audience a value that she repeatedly harps on. This is her view of woman and it is a view that she is at great pains to share with her target audience.

In Moses and Mildred, Magara’s mother, as though wholly blind to her son’s faults, comes to take her son away from M.E.I.S.A.G. in a screaming rage. Her short-sightedness to her son’s short-comings is made even more appalling by the knowledge that Magara should in truth be behind bars considering his ‘criminal’ record. Magara’s mother being a woman does not realise this.

In the next title in the “Moses Series”. - Moses in Trouble (Kimenye 1968:19) the author has Rukia commenting:-

“Oh, do let’s stop arguing about it like a lot of old women”.

The impression created is that arguments are a weakness peculiar to women, and being men they

need not argue over petty issues. Perhaps what they need to do is discuss matters like men should.

Moses in a Muddle introduces another horror in the shape of a female. Kigali the old watchman, like a soothsayer begins to prophesy all the terrible things they could expect once the new female student, Juli Sekabanja is admitted to M.E.I.S.A.G. He keeps intoning to the boys (Kimenye 1970:5):-

‘Believe me, women are mean!’

As the story unfolds, Kigali’s prediction is proven true. It has to be, since Kimenye herself wields the pen. It is amazing to note how calm this school becomes once Juli departs for England. These boys, who no other respectable school will admit are like lambs in comparison to Juli. Is Kimenye biased in her depiction of Juli or the female for that matter? Must Juli be kicking boys around to prove that she is a vicious creature? Must she lead these already notorious boys on a wild goose chase for ‘spies’ in the middle of the night just to prove that women are meddlers in other people’s affairs? Kimenye seems to lump it on rather heavily.

Moses on the Move exposes King Kong and Itchy Fingers “giggling as helplessly as two silly girls”. (p. 20). Already there are two girls working in league with the fake healer Finito and this makes the girls as unworthy as Finito is. The portrayal of Finito's “angels” is not improved by the way they keep on “screeching” at Moses and his friends after the encounter with the police.

As if this is not enough damage to their personality already, Kimenye makes them sit on the laps of young schoolboys in a night club. The reader is left wondering what else might have happened if Mr. Karanja had not shown up just then, to take Moses and his friends back to school. The two girls show no sign of having any sense of responsibility throughout the story. They are painted as “happy-go-lucky” characters with no thought whatsoever for the future. Kimenye does this with an attitude that seems to suggest that nothing better can be expected from them as women anyway. In Moses and the Penpal, Kasali has this to say on realising that Moses’ Penpal, A. Kibuka’ is female (Kimenye 1973:27):-

‘Women are nothing but a burden’.

Kigali a little later mistakenly reprimands the school inspector, Miss Owede on the same subject (Kimenye 1973:46)-

‘Women these days don’t know the meaning of modesty... chasing young boys indeed...’

When A. Kibuka (Alice) finally makes her grand appearance at M.E.I.S.A.G. in search of Moses, Kasali says (Kimenye 1973:60)-

‘I can’t say I was impressed. She looked like a sack of mealies tied in the

middle and she must be as tall as Mr. Karanja!’

A little while later in Kigali’s hut, Moses confirms this horror (Kimenye 1973:64):-

‘She was a mess. In all my imaginings I had never dreamed up anything so awful. Her hair was straightened with grease and stuck up in spikes. Her face had been done with that skin bleaching stuff, I could tell because it was a ghastly yellow colour while what we could see of the rest of her was black like everybody else...’

Miss Wasongo rounds up this sordid female portrait in Moses and the Camper. She is depicted as interfering, bossy and flirtatious. In the end the deputy headmaster is driven to rudely put her in her place. He sends her packing because the campers have decided they can do very well without her help.

Some of the criticism Kimenye levels at the female is justified. In the rural schools, the pupils response to our question on whether they considered Alice attractive was prolonged laughter and emphatic ‘No’s!’ ‘hapana!’ and ‘ai!’ (eh!) confirmed further by the vigorous shaking of heads. In the urban schools, there was laughter too and many of the male pupils confirmed the city was littered with many ‘Alice’s’. The truth of this observance is unquestionable. The female pupils did not seem very comfortable probably because they have relatives who fit this description but whom they cannot laugh at out of a sense of loyalty.

However, we are aware of the strong influence literature can wield in a child’s life. Jacobs (1976:54) correctly notes:-

Literature and social learning reinforce each other. The child turns to books for facts...

Children tend to internalise concepts that they encounter in books. Jacobs like many other literary critics is aware of this truth. Those who write books for children and those who select these books need to be aware of this too, so that they can be careful to give growing children a balanced literary diet. If we are intent on giving children facts then we need to complement the reading of Kimenye’s work in our schools and homes with other works that depict worthy females. Granted that the “Moses Series” was intended for a male audience, books meant for a female readership might help to remedy the situation. One problem that rears its head in this area is that, whereas girls will gladly read books with male heroes, rarely will the older boys tolerate books with heroines. The younger boys, however do read books with heroines without serious qualms if the story is good. The adult patron of children’s literature needs to be well informed of these tendencies in order to adequately cater to the needs of the child. If Kimenye’s work is the child’s only reading material, it may cause the male pupils to grow up with little respect for women, while the female pupils will grow up with a sense of inferiority and worthlessness. Thus although children may sometimes enjoy reading

certain titles a great deal, they may not necessarily adopt sound moral and social principles. Aunt Damali in Moses, would in our opinion be a good role model for the child readers, because she agrees to look after a boy as mischievous as Moses. Kimenye however does not give us this satisfaction and we are only allowed to see her from Moses' perspective - as a hysterical, nervous and emotional female. The child reader no doubt needs to have exposure to a variety of authors to ensure that his development as a human being is total and not a denial of what he already knows to be true. This brings our discussion to the depiction of the adult in Kimenye's work.

Many writers of fiction for young children tend to get rid of the adult early in the book in order to allow the child heroes to run the show (Haviland 1974, Cass 1967). The most popular device is to send the adults off on a journey, a technique that Blyton, a prolific western children's story writer, often employs. This is a technique that young readers appreciate as is evidenced by the following response from Varcity Wangui, a Standard Eight pupil at Muthaiga Primary School, who after reading Moses and the Raffle stated:

She (author) should have left the boys to solve the problem without the help of the police men.

Varcity Wangui was commenting on Kimenye's ending to this story about Moses and the car thieves. The need for competence is no doubt a strong motivating factor in human behaviour. The child cannot be well adjusted or happy unless he achieves this competence in one area or another. Stories provide a platform for the child to achieve this sense of satisfaction in self. Varcity Wangui, probably identified herself with the children in this story and felt cheated of the chance to solve the problem without help from adults. This calls for an understanding of the specific child's needs by the patrons of children's literature and especially by those who write fiction for the young. Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1947:12) surmise that achieving competence may become the compensation for rejection by peers and a step towards acceptance of others. For most young readers, the admired and emulated heroes are always the doers. The author who writes for the readily adventurous child, must permit such a child's hero to undertake the daring within acceptable limits.

To get rid of her adults Kimenye makes 'fools' of them. Kimenye allows the adults to remain on the scene but she pokes fun at them and causes them to be ridiculed by her young readers. For instance if her teachers are not getting drunk and falling into ditches and pit latrines like Mr. Lutu (Moses) and Mr. Wafula (Moses and the School Farm) then they are droning away at boring history lessons like Mr. Bulega (Moses and the School Farm). The following description of the adults around the protagonist in Moses, is typical of the behaviour of most of Kimenye's adults (Kimenye 1968:4):-

Uncle Silasi, who came running in as soon as Aunt Damali's yells echoed through the house, behaved as though I had deliberately tried to set his whole homestead alight. The fuss he made! Throwing water everywhere, flinging my blanket through the window... And all because a cigarette had accidentally dropped from my unconscious fingers! Nor did his servants help matters. They seemed to go mad. They twittered like birds and dashed up and down while Aunt Damali continued screaming. The other members of the family, ... stood around clucking like disapproving hens... Simply by being there they encouraged Uncle Silasi to give way to his bad temper and whack me across the head.

Kimenyé paints the culprit as one who has been wronged by unreasonable adults. Little wonder, the young readers so quickly forget that this same Moses has just been expelled from his sixth school and is not even meant to be smoking at his age. Moses is a survivor in the colloquial sense of the word. He reminds one of the hare in African oral narratives. It is perhaps this cunning quality he possesses that endears him to the child reader and makes him get away with so much crime before their very eyes.

The problem with Kimenyé's technique of ridiculing the adult is that it leaves the child with no ideal model to emulate. The deputy headmaster, Mr. Karanja is the only upright adult but even his image is marred by the fact that he is always caning the boys for doing wrong. This leaves the young readers with only one more option - the police.

Kimenyé's tool for maintaining law and order in her fiction and in the society at large is the police. Whenever the adventures the young boys at M.E.I.S.A.G. are involved in seem to be getting too dangerous for the young children to handle on their own, the police are brought in by the author to re-establish law and order, mete out justice, and in a more technical sense to bring the plot to a conclusion. This device seems to strengthen the respect and trust that children have for the police. A few disappointments were voiced, however, in the effectiveness of the police in some of these stories. Janet Muthoni, a Standard Eight Pupil at Muthaiga Primary school had this to say about Moses and the Kidnappers:-

Well, at the end, when the kidnappers were caught, three ran away. This really disappointed me. The author could have made all the kidnappers to be caught.

Children believe in exacting their pound of flesh. Those who do wrong must be punished and those who do good, rewarded. These children feel cheated when wrong doers, perform a good act that does not really portray a change in behaviour, (bringing back the deputy headmaster's brief case) and then escape the law. In such cases their sense of justice is thwarted by the author.

Kimenye's depiction of the adult figure is thus not very satisfactorily handled. The child reader is, in the final analysis, left with no role model to try to imitate. Both the adult and child characters live in a world that seems full of mischief. The social and moral vision given to the child is minimal in comparison with the mischief. Kimenye has no doubt sacrificed the portrayal of socially and morally accepted values in the 'Moses Series' in order to satisfy the child's hunger for adventure. Nevertheless, her work does provide some limited social and moral direction for the reader as already discussed.

In this chapter, we have viewed literature as a tool for shaping values. We have seen the child as a sensible, responsive being with the ability to accept or reject the ideas he receives from an author. Yet we have also identified instances when certain concepts have escaped his developing mind, thus calling for assistance in the form of adult critical judgement. It is in this perspective that we embark on the last discussion of our present chapter.

Our discussion on the thematic concerns in Kimenye's work has largely revealed her more positive traits. We venture beyond this thematic sphere with a view to examining her flaws in manner of presentation of her work as this ultimately affects the reception of her message by the child reader.

There is for instance, a noticeable lack of consistency in character presentation in Kimenye's work. Moses is always there because he is the narrator of these stories. Three other characters are treated with varying degrees of interest from one title to the other. These are Rukia, Itchy Fingers and King Kong. Most series maintain identical characterisation as this serves as the trademark for that particular series. Enid Blyton is one such series writer who retains her Five Find Outers from one title to the next. This enables the child to identify more closely with these characters and so choose a fixed pattern of behaviour as the characters in the books do. It also means that if the characters do not develop, the child may likewise be slow in his development into maturity for as long as he continues to feed on that particular undernourished fiction series. For this reason, when Kimenye keeps throwing in new characters in every title of her "Moses Series", (characters who vanish as soon as the adventure is over), the child reader is not very sure about what to expect from her. This is good in the sense that it keeps her audience in anticipation but bad because the child is not able to identify that closely with a particular group of characters and so mature as they do. In the "Moses Series" for example, Moses and his three friends are always so 'busy' trying to accept the newcomers in their midst that little emphasis is placed on their development as characters. This

weakens the presentation of her ideas as it does not present the child with a constant focus a thing that young readers need if they are to grasp an author's purpose for writing his story.

Likewise although there is development of language in her work and supposedly therefore of character in *Moses*, there is little proof of this in *Moses*' personality. The *Moses* the reader encounters at the beginning of the "Series" is the same *Moses* at the end of it. What does Kimenye suggest by this? Children may end up accepting and responding to her message in as light a manner as she treats her characters. For although punishment is meted out for their offences, the next title in the "Series" rarely portrays any change of behaviour.

Moses and its 'sequel' *Moses and Mildred* are illustrative of this flaw. In *Moses*, Mr. Karanja has a really good talk with *Moses* and the reader is convinced that *Moses* will become more responsible in the future, especially as he has been challenged to prove his worth by helping Mr. Karanja start the drama club (p. 73). Sadly, this is the last we hear of *Moses* trying to be constructive and useful. In the very next title *Moses and Mildred* we encounter *Moses* going about the school compound with a pet snake under his shirt. Kimenye, maintains this nonchalant tempo in *Moses*' attitude to the end of the 'Moses Series'.

In our study in the various schools, *Moses* was the favourite character amongst all the respondents. With this in mind, what has Kimenye taught the children through *Moses*? If we are honest, there has been very little instruction. Perhaps *Moses*' only worthy contribution is that he enables the child reader to take life easily and not worry. Otherwise the child lacks a consistent model character to look up to.

These flaws affect the impact of Kimenye's message. What is very worrying to the adult critic, is that the young readers do not react to these flaws. Not being aware of these shortcomings makes children more susceptible to accepting unrealistic concepts about themselves and their relationship to others in society. Adult critical judgement is no doubt of great benefit in the area of children's literature as it complements, and rectifies where necessary, the child's own assessment of fiction.

Kimenye nonetheless deserves credit for work well done, and although we have mentioned the drawbacks in her "Moses Series" and consequent danger of reading them for prolonged periods, her work does encourage children to read more books and this tends to outweigh the disadvantages. The patron of children's literature who includes in her stock only titles from those stories which maintain a reasonably high literary standard throughout and who encourages children to move on to something else at the right psychological moment, will be using series as tools for her job in an intelligent and rewarding way' (Ray 1970: 146).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In our endeavour to establish a critical framework for appraising children's literature in Kenya, results have proved that it is essential for the adult patron of children's literature to be aware of this information in order to adequately meet the needs of his readers. This is because universal standards for appraising literature are not enough by themselves. Each society remoulds universal standards to fit its own needs and requirements. Plot, characterisation, setting and other literary tenets discussed in this study, provide guidelines for the remoulding of these universal standards.

Plot must be fast and engrossing, with a swift conclusion at the end of the story. Like most children, the Kenyan child does not enjoy stories that drag on as they expound moral lessons at the expense of enjoyment, (See children's responses to question 19 in Appendix 5). The Kenyan child expects to enjoy himself even as he learns. Plots that capture the child's attention at the very beginning and rivet him to the unfolding drama through suspense, tension and drama are most favoured. However, tension and suspense need to be equally balanced with wit, comedy and humour which provide relief. Books that are bathed in a sense of gloom, horror and failure should be avoided as they do not give the child a very positive outlook to life. If tragedy is included in children's fiction, it ought to be alleviated at the end by a happy episode. Finally as revealed by the analysis of the child's responses, and consequent discussion on plot in this thesis, the Kenyan child reader tends towards plots that give him the role of detective in the unfolding of the story. Plots that reveal challenges and give the child a sense of victorious achievement are thus most suitable for the Kenyan readership.

The Kenyan child is not very particular about the setting as long as the story deals with issues of childhood and the setting is believable. The popularity of Kimenye's story books among the children we interviewed is proof of this fact. As previously discussed, the children's fiction writer should be well informed of the child's development process and its accompanying preoccupations and needs in order to adequately address childhood problems and issues. The author's focus ought therefore to be on the time in the life of the developing child rather than on his place, in a given locality.

Characters that are revealed through incidents and situations are greatly favoured by Kenyan children. The six to nine year olds, (see Appendix 5) do not mind stereotypes but the older

age group detest this technique in their fiction. Our discussion on characterisation has revealed that these children dislike being misled by adult writers (see responses to question 17 in appendix 5). Furthermore some of them are already reading novels that are meant for adults and so they feel insulted when patrons of children's literature continue to treat them like minors simply because they are in primary school. Future authors would do well to satisfy this craving for challenges, by writing more intricately woven fiction for this emerging audience.

Our discussion on style has revealed that for Kenyan children, telling a story genuinely and honestly is tantamount to good literary style. Fiction that does not sound contrived or insincere, no matter how simply written will be well received by the Kenyan audience. The children also appreciate stylistic devices such as idioms, imagery and similes among others as they tend to mould their own writing styles on what they read in fiction. High literary standards cannot be compromised in children's fiction, for this reason. Equal weight must be given to the story and the way it is told as both form and content are complementary aspects of good literature and in consequence of good children's literature.

Thematic concerns in children's literature must be relevant to the child reader and moreover must have an impact on the life of the child since he is still in the process of growing up. Fiction for young children must therefore combine the work of shaping values in the child with satisfying his hunger for enjoyment and appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of the work. Those writing for Kenyan children or intending to write for them need to be aware of issues facing the Kenyan child in school and at home and address them directly. This will enable the Kenyan child to identify more easily with those characters who share similar problems and experiences with him. The result of this is that, the writer will be able to give such a child more specific guidance with regard to the social and moral behaviour expected of him by the Kenyan society.

Kenyan children are not fussy about the format of their books. This fact was revealed during the informal discussions held with the field respondents. However, common sense requires that books for children be well designed and well illustrated, particularly for the six to nine year olds. Older readers do not care much for illustrations if the story is well told. Once again, the adult patron must determine the cognitive level of his pupils in order to give them a book that will suit them. The book should however be firmly bound as popular titles get torn up quickly as they travel from one set of eager hands to the next.

These findings reveal that the framework for appraising children's literature in Kenya that has been established is only partial. A complete framework would have required that we study all

the sub-genres in children's fiction but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

In this thesis, we have been able to provide a critical framework for appraising children's literature in Kenya. The framework has been derived from analysing Barbara Kimenye's adventure fiction for children. Although only one sub-genre of children's fiction has been studied, the framework can adequately analyse other sub-genres of children's stories. We have provided this framework by analysing several aspects of form, style and theme in children's literature. Wherever possible our statements have been accompanied by qualifying references from the child in the field and from adult critical judgement. This thesis has illustrated, through the analysis of the child's response, that the young critic is just as demanding, if not more so, as the adult critic, and Kimenye has attempted to satisfy the voracious appetite of her child reader both stylistically and thematically.

In this thesis, we have tried to illustrate that the author does not preach. Rather she presents life as it would be through the eyes of the child. Kimenye does not even attempt to portray the ideal life, but life as it really is, with all its muddles, frustrations and victories. Her style and themes prove her devotion to her audience. She has a rare sensibility that is able to expose the child's cognitive conceit without wounding his feelings. At the same time, Kimenye is able to depict adults who seem clumsy and confused yet making it clear that this view of the adult is only prominent because the child protagonist is our lens and his vision is far from complete. We have mentioned the dangers inherent in this technique and how the problem can be remedied through adult critical judgement.

This work illustrates Kimenye's deliberate attempt to give the child short, repetitive plots that progressively build up his confidence in reading and help him to have some degree of value judgements. At the same time she has illustrated that life's complexities still exist and the wrongdoers may sometimes go unpunished (*Moses and the Kidnappers*, p. 48) and the do-gooders unrewarded (*Moses and the School Farm*, p. 109). We have also examined how Kimenye's choice of setting has contributed much to the general mood of her work and its authenticity and credibility. Kimenye's choice of setting has helped to emphasize the universal character of the child irrespective of his geographical placing.

The characters in Kimenye's work ring true because of their multi-faceted representations; through speech, situation and action. Kimenye exposes humorously the childish aspects of her characters' thinking and reasoning allowing her child reader the pleasure of feeling superior. Her characters' rate of development in this "Moses Series" is almost true to life as a result of its subtlety.

It is extremely slow, almost insignificant. Kimenye clearly illustrates that the process of growing up is long and there is no need to deceive her audience by spectacular behavioral changes simply because she is writing a story. This does not however excuse her failure to give her readers a hero they can emulate.

In writing these stories, Kimenye's linguistic choices show a desire on her part to communicate both by way of entertaining and educating. Thus her language is both humorous and challenging to the child's linguistic experience as evidenced by the deliberate progression in language usage in her work through ever increasing difficulty in vocabulary and figures of speech like imagery, similes and idioms.

In the section on format, we have stated that the African child, especially in Kenya, has not been widely exposed to various book formats and so does not exhibit a particular preference in this area, other than what he is used to, the rectangular shaped book. However, we have suggested that common sense is very crucial in producing books for children. Books for children should be produced with a view to making them both interesting and durable, especially because most parents have lost the book-buying habit and the few that children have are shared out between many interested readers.

Our decision to elicit the responses of the child reader on the books he reads, (in this case Barbara Kimenye's "Moses Series") was prompted by the realisation that some critics of children's literature showed a total disregard for the target audience's preferences. Yet, the child's criticisms towards what he reads is very important and greatly enhances the adult's critical judgement.

In eliciting these responses from children in the field and interpreting them in critical terms, we have contributed in part, to a thematical and critical framework that critics of children's literature can use to aid them in their writing and selection of suitable books for Kenyan children.

This thesis establishes that the evaluation of children's books should not adopt a casual critical approach and neither should it rigidly adhere to the standards set for adult literature. The best in children's literature is that which meets the interest of the child reader as well as criteria set for literature in general. It is therefore beneficial that the adult patron of children's literature consistently shares good literature with the child in order to increase his sense of form and style and ultimately his critical judgement.

Suggestions for Further Research

The child's response towards a book is often affected by time, situation and place and so these results are only appropriate for a certain period of time. As the environment within which children grow up changes, so also will some of their reading needs and interests. Similar studies in this area can therefore be carried out from time to time in order to update this present framework.

Our study has based its results on solicited responses but the unsolicited responses of children to books, as revealed in their artwork, writing and plays can yield interesting results. Furthermore, the framework provided can be used to appraise mainly fiction for children. Studies into other genres of children's literature such as:- drama, poetry and song and sub-genres of fiction are still open to future researchers. It is my hope that future scholars will explore these possibilities.

This work has critically analysed one of the best read East African authors of children's fiction and thus provided a critical framework for appraising children's fiction in Kenya. The study also opens up avenues for future researchers especially in other genres of children's literature.

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London: Heinemann

The Short Story

Oxford: Clarendon Press

Children's Literature

Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Co.

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Moses.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and Mildred.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses in Trouble.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and The Kidnappers.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses in a Muddle.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and the Ghost.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses on the Move.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and the Penpal.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and the Camper.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and the Raffle.

Nairobi: O.U.P.

Moses and the School Farm.

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APPENDIX 1

CHILDREN'S STORY BOOKS BY BARBARA KIMENYE

- Kimenye, Barbara (1966). The Smugglers.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1967). Moses and Mildred.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1968). Moses.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1968). Moses in Trouble
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1968). Moses and the Kidnappers.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1970). Moses in a Muddle.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1970). The Winged Adventure.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1971). Moses and the Ghost.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1972). Moses on the Move.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1972). Paulo's Strange Adventure.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1973). Moses and the Penpal.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1973). Moses and the Camper.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1974). The Runaways.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1976). Sarah and the Boy.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1976). The Diamond Affair.
London: Nelson.
- (1976). The Scoop.
London: Nelson.
- (1978). Martha the Millipede.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1986). Moses and the Raffle.
Nairobi: O.U.P.
- (1987). Moses and the School Farm.
Nairobi: O.U.P.

APPENDIX 2

The following is an interview we carried out at Heinemann Offices, Brick Court, Westlands on 23rd July, 1990.

- Interviewer: Mrs. Kimenye, when exactly did you begin writing for children?
- Kimenye: I began writing for children in 1962.
- Interviewer: What kind of literature did you write then?
- Kimenye: Well, I wrote little stories for my own sons to read and enjoy themselves before it occurred to me to write for a wider audience.
- Interviewer: What audience did you then set out to write for?
- Kimenye: I wrote my stories mainly for lower secondary school pupils.
- Interviewer: You say, mainly did you write for any other audience?
- Kimenye: Oh Yes! The two titles Sarah and the Boy and Martha the Millipede were targeted at primary school children.
- Interviewer: Mrs. Kimenye, why do you write for children?
- Kimenye: Well, I guess it's because I enjoy writing for the young more than for any other reason. Financially, I get a mere pittance of the proceeds my writing brings. If this was my motivation, I would have ceased writing years ago.
- Interviewer: What is your aim in writing for children?
- Kimenye: Basically, I write so that the child can read and enjoy himself. I do not believe in presenting an ideal world to the child. The child needs to see life as it really is, with all its complexities and perplexities.
- Interviewer: Does this mean you do not consciously propagate certain morals or philosophies?
- Kimenye: I present life as it is.
- Interviewer: Mrs. Kimenye, when one reads your work the incidents are very vivid. Why is this so?
- Kimenye: Well, I guess it's because I derive most of my incidents from real life experiences. The school described in the Moses Series for instance, is a real school in Uganda, the Lubiri Boys' Secondary School, and of course, I modelled my two major characters on my two sons. Moses is my elder son and King Kong the younger. Obviously I've added a little imagination of my own to the incidents and situations described.
- Interviewer: Why the heavy Ugandan setting? Did you write for a specific audience?
- Kimenye: I am frightfully nationalistic and my writing was meant specifically for

Ugandan children but as you'll realise my works are now read by children far and wide. Kenyan children read and enjoy my books and so do those in Denmark. Currently my works are being translated into Danish so that the children in Denmark can read and enjoy these adventure stories.

- Interviewer: What else do you do, apart from writing children's literature?
- Kimenye: Currently I'm in London working as a freelance journalist.
- Interviewer: Thank you, Mrs. Kimenye, I do hope we'll be reading more of your work in the near future.
- Kimenye: Oh! Yes! I have some manuscripts awaiting publication, and I will be launching a girl's series soon. Thank you.

Mother's Profession: _____

Father's Profession: _____

Put a Circle Round the Appropriate Answer:

- Do your parents buy you story books?
 - Yes
 - No
- How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - Never
- How often do you read story books?
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - Never
- Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - Radio
 - Television set
 - Video
- Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - Yes
 - No
- How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
 - Never

APPENDIX 3
QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Class: _____

Age: _____

Name of School: _____

Mother's Profession: _____

Father's Profession: _____

Put a Circle Round the Appropriate Answer:

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- A. Yes
- B. No

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- A. Occasionally
- B. Frequently
- C. Never

3. How often do you read story books?

- A. Occasionally
- B. Frequently
- C. Never

4. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- A. Radio
- B. Television set
- C. Video

5. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- A. Yes
- B. No

6. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- A. Occasionally
- B. Frequently
- C. Never

7. Who tells you these narratives? (Give a reason for your answer)
- A. Grandparents
 B. Parent
 C. Teacher
 D. Any other (please specify) _____

Give Short Answers to the Following Questions:

Write down the title of the story you have just read.

8. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

9. What have you learnt from this story? (Do you like a story whose incidents are in chronological order or one with flashbacks? Why?)

10. How can you apply what you have learnt to your own life? (Do you like a story whose incidents are in chronological order or one with flashbacks? Why?)

11. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you? (Give a reason for your answer).

12. In what other way could the author have concluded the story?

13. Which character did you like most in the book? (Give a reason for your answer).
-
-
14. Which character did you like/not like (Give a reason for your answer).
-
-
15. Do you prefer to have an author describe a character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself? Why?
-
-
16. Do you like a story that covers a short period or a long period? Why?
-
-
17. Do you like a story whose incidents are in chronological order or one with flash backs? Why?
-
-
18. Do you like stories written in continuous prose only or those that include dialogue? Why?
-
-
19. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures?
-
-
20. If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like. Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.
-
-

21. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

22. Which is your favourite type of story? Why?

23. What kind of books do you read outside school? (Give some titles).

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 4

SIMPLIFIED QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____ Name of School: _____

Class: _____ Mother's Work: _____

Age: _____ Father's Work: _____

1. Do your parents buy you any books?
2. How often do they buy you books?
3. Do you read story books? When?
4. Which of the following electronic equipment do you have at home?
a) radio b) television c) video
5. Do you listen to oral stories? How often?
6. Who tells you these stories?
7. Did you enjoy the story you read?
8. What did the story teach you?
9. Did you like the ending of the story?
10. Which character did you like most in the book? Why?
11. Do you like short stories or long stories?
12. Do you like stories that have conversation?
13. Do you like stories with pictures.
14. What type of pictures do you like?
15. What kind of stories do you like to read?
16. Is there anything you did not like in the story you read?
17. If you were to act out this story whom would you want to be? What part of the story would you choose to act out?

Weekly

Monthly

Yearly

Any other (please specify) _____

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLES OF THE FIELD DATA

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: CAROL WAMBUI NGURE

Age: 14 YEARS

Name of School: MUTHAIGA

Mother's Profession: PERSONNEL OFFICER

Father's Profession: BUSINESSMAN

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
d. Never
e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
 b. Television set
c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
d. Yearly
e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
- b. Teacher
- c. Radio
- d. Aunts/Uncles
- e. Grandparents.

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses by Barbara Kimenye. Moses and Mildred.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

The story was about poor Moses who was sent out of six schools and was sent to his uncle. His uncle still took him at school and he still didn't obey school rules.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

Rudeness and dishonesty can lead one to be sent out of school and have a lot of trouble in life.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

Yes I do, because it explains well to students that they should avoid bad habits.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

I must be obedient and obey my elders.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson the story?

I agree.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

It is satisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

It is well explained and sentences have been easily written.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

I am satisfied and I don't think there is any other way to solve the problem.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

How Moses and King Kong fought. They were sent to hospital and still continued smoking.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

Moses deciding to bring women in the dorm. Because it was a great shame.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would like to find out about the character myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because I want to test myself if I have understood the story well.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

A story that covers a short time. Because I can understand better and it's easy to remember.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

Those that include dialogue. Because it is easy to summarise.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

I like those with pictures. The story that is well written and interesting.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

The part that King Kong and Moses decided to escape to America. Because it was very interesting that their plan was very well known.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

It is Moses by Barbara Kimenye. It has idioms and also new words.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

How they have explained from the start till the end. (sic).

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain?

QUESTIONNAIRE

No there isn't.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Name of School: _____

Mother's Profession: _____

Father's Profession: _____

A. Put a circle around the correct answer e.g. a, b, c, etc.

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
 b. No

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
 b. Monthly
 c. Daily
 d. Yearly
 e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
 b. Television set
 c. Video

4. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
 b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
 d. Yearly
 e. Any other (please specify) _____

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
 b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
 d. Yearly
 e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
 b. Teacher
 c. Radio
 d. Aunts/Uncles
 e. Grandparents

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: VARCITY WANGUI

Age: 13 YEARS

Name of School: MUTHAIGA PRIMARY

Mother's Profession: WELFARE OFFICER

Father's Profession: LECTURER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c-

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
d. Never
e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
b. Television set
c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
 b. Weekly
c. Monthly
d. Yearly
e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
b. Teacher
 c. Radio
d. Aunts/Uncles
e. Grandparents.

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses The Camper.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

Moses and King Kong set the school on fire accidentally. They had to camp at the riverbank. As they were erecting the tent, they found buried treasure. Wakweya who was a "holy joe" was just pretending. He is the one who had stolen the treasure and buried it with his friends.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

All that glitters is not gold.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

Yes. When you discover anything strange, do not hide it. Reveal it to the elders, before it is too late.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

Immediately I learn about something strange, I should report the matter to the elders.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson the story?

I agreed.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

The ending is unsatisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because they should have written what happened to Wakweya in the end.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

He should have left the boys to solve the mystery without the help of the policemen.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

Itchy Fingers because he was a quick thinker.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

Wakweya. He was a great pretender at the same time boring.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would rather find out about the character myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

The story would appear boring.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers. A short time (days, hours).

It is more interesting to read a book in days or hours.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

Those that include dialogue. Because they are more interesting.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

The stories without pictures.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

Holy Moses. The major part is too terrifying for me.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

Adventure and romance - Sweet Dreams, Nancy Drew and Harlequins. You can learn a lot from them.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I liked their togetherness and their lust for adventure.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

I liked the story in general.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: JANET MUTHONI STD. 8.

Age: 14 YEARS OLD

Name of School: MUTHAIGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mother's Profession: SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Father's Profession: LECTURER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Never
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - a. Radio
 - b. Television set
 - c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)
 - a. Friends
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Radio
 - d. Aunts/Uncles
 - e. Grandparents

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read?

Moses and the Kidnappers.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

The story was about when Moses and King Kong were kidnapped. They were kidnapped by four men called Matti, Ben, Joshua and Jimmy.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

The lesson that I have learned is that kidnappers are always there when children are alone, so children should not walk around in town without a bigger authority.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

I agree with the lesson in the story because if children are with bigger authority they cannot be kidnapped.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

It applies to me that I should be with a grown up if I want to go somewhere like towns.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

I agree.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

It was satisfactory for me.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

The boys were not harmed by the kidnappers

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

Well at the end when the kidnappers were caught three ran away. This really disappointed me. The author could have made all the kidnappers to be caught.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

I like King Kong because he was very strong and helpful in every way. But

what I liked about him best is that he managed to go into the most dangerous parts with no problem.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

I did not like Jimmy. He was the one who planned for kidnapping Moses and King Kong. And also stole money.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe a character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would rather prefer the author.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because when the author described in the story how somebody like King Kong was I understood better.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

I would prefer a long time like months and years. Because I would understand the story and also after one year I would read another one.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

I like those that include dialogue because that is how you understand it knowing that it comes from them. It is also interesting and funnier than those with prose.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures. If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like. Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

I like the stories without pictures.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

King Kong because he had the most dangerous parts that he could manage.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

My favourite type of story is solving mysteries and going into adventures. Because I like investigating things that have happened like a murder, theft etc. Nancy Drews.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read.

I liked most when the baboon had the money up in the tree and then dropped it on Jimmy's head.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.
I liked everything except for the way Jimmy was using rude words to his other employees of the kidnapping plan.

Name: ROSEMARY KIIHU

Age: 19 YEARS

Name of School: MICHAKA S.S

Mother's Profession: TEACHER

Father's Profession: ENGINEER

A. Put a circle around the correct answer e.g. a - b - c

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

a. Yes

b. No

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

a. Weekly

b. Monthly

c. Yearly

d. Never

e. Any other (please specify)

Any time we visit a Book Shop and they have stories.

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

a. Radio

b. Television set

c. None

4. Do you visit the cinema often?

a. Yes

b. No

5. Any other (please specify)

Whenever I'm bored and there's someone to tell the story.

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

a. Friends

b. Teacher

c. Radio

d. Aunts/Uncles

e. Grandparents

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: ROSEMARY KIHU

Age: 13 YEARS

Name of School: MUTHAIGA

Mother's Profession: TEACHER

Father's Profession: ENGINEER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
d. Never
e. Any other (please specify)

Any time we visit a Book Shop and they have money.

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
 b. Television set
c. Video.

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
b. No.

5. Any other (please specify)

Whenever I'm bored and there's someone to tell the story.

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
b. Teacher
c. Radio
d. Aunts/Uncles
e. Grandparents

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses The Camper.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

A fire whose source was King Kong (Sebastian Mulu) who was trying his firework. They discovered treasure and keep it to themselves. Sinister motions begin happening and finally one of them is kidnapped. The result is a thief who pretended to be a "holy joe" and the treasure give to the rightful owners (sic).

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

Don't judge a book by the cover.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

Yes. I do agree as the teachers did frust Wakweya too much. And one should not handle stolen property whatever the source.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

Time and again everyone comes across stolen property. You should not be tempted.

11. If your answer to question 9 is "NO" explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

I agreed with lesson.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

It was nice but it should have gone on for some time. I really hoped King Kong would do something drastic with his fireworks.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

This would have made life at Mukibi's more interesting.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

King Kong and Holy Moses should have caught the rascal without the police's help.

15. Which characters did you like most in the book? and Why?

I like King Kong most because he has outrageous ideas.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

I like all characters they are unique in their own way.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I'd rather find out about the character myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

It is much more interesting to discover slowly by slowly.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

Days and hours are better because they cover the story in more detail.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

Dialogue is much better as it gets one in the adventurous mood and as if one is actually hearing the characters talk.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

Pictures do not play any part in the story and I could do without them.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

ItchyFingers. His talent of pinching things fascinates me.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

Adventure and romance twined together. For Example Jeffery Archer with Kane and Abel and Barbara T. Bradford with, A Woman of Substance and Act of Will.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I liked their companionship; their togetherness through thick and thin. Their daredevilness and their lust for adventure.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

I loved the story in general but the sleeping quarters gave me the creeps.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: KUNYU NIGHT

Age: 14 YEARS

Name of School: KIBABII GIRLS PRIMARY

Mother's Profession: HOUSE WIFE

Father's Profession: FARMER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
d. Never
e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
b. Television set
c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
d. Yearly
e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
 b. Teacher
c. Radio
 d. Aunts/Uncles
e. Grandparents.

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

It was about Moses going to a new school where he met many other children. He did not like the school so he and a friend decided to run away in the end they did not make it.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

I have learnt that most of the time when one does wrong he is punished.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

No

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

It does not apply to my own life.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson the story?

I disagree because it is not fair for someone to keep on being punished when he does wrong. He should be asked first why he did it. And besides, every one makes mistakes!

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

The ending is satisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because in the end Moses and his friends settle down in the school and are happy.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

He could have sent Moses to a better school.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and why?

Moses. Because he is adventurous and is always getting into trouble even though he doesn't mean to. This makes the book interesting.

16. Which character did you not like and why? *story? Please explain.*

I did not like Mr. Mukibi because he was mean, unjust and all he liked was money and he enjoyed beating up pupils.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would like to find out about the character myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because if the author describes him, I would immediately know about the character while I like being left in suspense.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

I like a story that covers a long time mostly years. Because it is more interesting and it kind of gives a lot of information about the characters life.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

Those that include dialogue. If it is continuous prose, it tends to get boring because there isn't conversation.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

Without pictures.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

I would like to act as Moses. He's an interesting character and it would be fun to imitate him.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

I like horror novels like: Haunting Devil, Time to Die etc. I like them because they are scaring and really lead you cringing to your friends.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I liked their idea of travelling to America. They were so ambitious yet they did not have any money.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

No, I liked the story. QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: JASST WAPULA
 Age: 14 YEARS
 Name of School: EDWARD LUTHELIYI PRIMARY
 Mother's Profession: HOUSEWIFE
 Father's Profession: AN AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

Circle the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
 b. No

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
 b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
 d. Never
 e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
 b. Television set
 c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
 b. No

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
 b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
 d. Yearly
 e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)

- a. Friends
 b. Teacher
 c. Radio
 d. Aunts/Uncles
 e. Grandparents

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: JANET WAFULA
 Age: 14 YEARS
 Name of School: KIBABII GIRLS PRIMARY
 Mother's Profession: A NURSE
 Father's Profession: AN AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.
2. How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Never
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____
3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - a. Radio
 - b. Television set
 - c. Video
4. Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.
5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____
6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)
 - a. Friends
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Radio
 - d. Aunts/Uncles
 - e. Grandparents

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses the Camper.

Moses and the school farm.

Moses and Mildred.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

The story was about Moses the camper and Moses and Mildred.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

If you are at the school, you must be polite, and do not cheat and follow what your elders tell you.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

No, because if I agree it I would change my manners and become bad or follow his manners.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

Be kind at school and walk with good friends.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

Because Moses was not kind and he likes cheating.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

It was satisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because I understand the story clearly.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

By writing simple words.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

I liked the way Moses meets Mildred and started friendship. Because they loved each other.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

The way Mr. Wafula failed in the bush and the way Moses and King Kong went to the bar because Mr. Wafula by mistake he could break his leg or hand (sic).

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would prefer to have the author to describe a character for me.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because author knows how to write and he can help me in spellings of words.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

A short time days. Because in a short time days I could not forget it so much.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue?

Those written in continuous because they can make me not to forget the story. (sic)

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

I like stories with pictures that are coloured.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

Moses and Mildred because they had used simple English which I can understand.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

Moses and Mildred. Because they have used simple English which I can understand.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I like most that the story is good like Moses and Mildred because it teaches me about making friendship.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

I did not like some story books because I did not understand some words.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **WAIHUMBU SALOME**

Age: **13 YEARS OLD**

Name of School: **KIBABII PRIMARY BOARDING SCHOOL**

Mother's Profession: **BUSINESS WOMAN**

Father's Profession: **BUSINESS MAN**

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Never.
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - a. Radio
 - b. Television set
 - c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.
 - a. Friends
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Radio
 - d. Aunts, uncles and grandparents.

- B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses the Camper.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

- (i) How they found a heap of bracelets, necklaces rings and six cameras in smart brown leather cases.
 (ii) The story is about how King Kong and Moses set the school on fire.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

Great wit drives away wisdom.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

I agree with this story I have read because it teaches me to be like a young cub.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

I would never be as King Kong who spotted the fireworks.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

I agree with the lesson in the book.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

It is unsatisfactory to me.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because it is rewritten in difficult situation.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

The author explained nicely and I the reader I felt the story was interesting and understandable.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

Rukia. Where Rukia suddenly yelled and told the others to fetch the Deputy Head. I like him because he respected and helped the Deputy.

16. Which character did you not like and why? *Please explain.*

I don't like to be dishonest.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe a character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I prefer to have an author describing the character.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

He or she is the one who wrote the story and can describe the character better than myself describing a character.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

The best is the one that covers a short time because it can help you remember the story from the beginning.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

I prefer that include dialogue. If you became tired at a particular dialogue, you can continue from where you stopped using the dialogue.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

I prefer the coloured one because it attracts your eyes and the story becomes very interesting.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

That evening where there was no campfire. Because straight after supper they were able to start putting the work together, within of course, the exception of King Kong's watches an Clarissa's engagement ring.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

Moses the Camper.
Because it was having good ideas and have words which can be read and feel so good

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

A place where Wakweya was said to be hard working in class, and most of the teachers set him up as an example to the rest. And he didn't smoke.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

I didn't like the place where Kigali's old face was the picture of amazement as Rukia sprang out of bed and hugged him.

Name: WAPULA JACKLINE
 Age: 14 YEARS OLD
 Name of School: KIBABII GIRLS PRIMARY BOARDING SCHOOL
 Mother's Profession: A TEACHER
 Father's Profession: A TEACHER

A. Write down the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
 b. No

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
 b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
 d. Never
 e. Any other (please specify) After three months

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
 b. Television set
 c. Video
 d. None of these

- e. Yes
 b. No

4. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
 b. Weekly
 c. Monthly
 d. Yearly
 e. Any other (please specify)

The last term of the year.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: WAFULA JACKLINE

Age: 14 YEARS OLD

Name of School: KIBABII GIRLS PRIMARY BOARDING SCHOOL

Mother's Profession: A TEACHER

Father's Profession: A TEACHER

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Yes
b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?

- a. Weekly
b. Monthly
 c. Yearly
d. Never
e. Any other (please specify) After three months

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?

- a. Radio
b. Television set
c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Yes
b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?

- a. Daily
b. Weekly
c. Monthly
d. Yearly
e. Any other (please specify)

The last term of the year.

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)
- a. Friends
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Radio
 - d. Aunts,
 - e. Grandparents, uncle.

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses and Mildred, Moses the Camper, Moses in Trouble Moses, Moses and the School Garden, Moses and the Ghost, Moses and the Kidnapper(sic).

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

1. The story was about a boy who was known by the name Moses Kibaya and Sebastian Muluu.
2. They seemed to be notorious boys because of their behaviour and they also used to sneak out of the school compound.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

Being stubborn can lead into many problem which can ruin your life and as a student or pupils you must agree and follow the school rules and follow them up properly.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story?

Yes, I agree with the lesson because it gives me knowledge on how to be have in the school and respect my teachers.

10. How does this lesson apply to your life?

Because it teaches me two naughty boys who suffered very much and on my own opinion it teaches me lots of things.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

My answer was not NO because I agree with it very much because it taught me a very good lesson.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

The ending of the story was satisfactory and even I didn't want it to get finished. It was really interesting that even I read through it three times repeatedly.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because it briefly told me that Moses reached at a certain place and stopped his behaviour.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

He or she could have solved the problem by beating the boy whenever one or both did a mistake in order to control their manners.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? Any why?

I liked the character in which Sebastian Muluu who was nicknamed King Kong was feeding the baby who was known as Alfonsi because they showed that we must help those people who doesn't know to help themselves.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

The way Moses used to sneak out of the school compound and that could not help him in his studies. Also he liked the matter of fighting like the first day of arriving at school he fought with King Kong.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe a character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would like the author to describe a narrative for me.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because I can not sometime know how the actor did the character and the behaviour he had done.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answer.

Me I like the story that covers a day or hours because it can help me to be a fast reader.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

I like the stories which are written continuously because they deal with someone and also deal with his or her behaviour which can make you know more about him.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like? Coloured, black and white either if the story is well written.

I like stories with pictures colored

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

I would like to act as Mr. Karanja who was the deputy headmaster. Because his part didn't show any misunderstanding or any evil doing.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

I like the story book written on Moses and Mildred, and that one written on Moses and Camper because the language is easy to read and the way the writer simply explains uses an easy language.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I liked the part which Moses looked after Mildred which was a pet snake.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

I didn't like that book of Moses the Raffle simple because the language used was very hard.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **HELLEN MURAKWA**

Age: **14 YEARS**

Name of School: **KIBABII GIRLS BOARDING**

Mother's Profession: **S.D.A.**

Father's Profession: **TEACHER**

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.
2. How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Never
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____
3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - a. Radio
 - b. Television set.
 - c. Video
4. Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly.
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____
6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)
 - a. Friends
 - b. Teacher
 - c. Radio
 - d. Aunts/Uncles
 - e. Grandparents

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

The story was about Rukia Dorm 3 prefect.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

I have learnt that their school was called Mukibi's Educational Institute for the Sons of African Gentlemen.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

Yes I agree because it teaches us that you should learn is when you will stay well or also you will be robbing (sic).

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

It teaches that work hard so that you may live a happy life in future.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson the story?

Me, I agree with it. (sic)

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

Satisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

Because there are some words which you can understand and others not.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

By explaining for us the problem in the story so that we can help him to solve it.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

I liked the way Rukia the Dorm 3 prefect behaved because the teacher liked him that he was having good manners hardworking boy(sic).

16. Which character did you not like and why?

They way of taking Kigali and Waragi. Because they make them not to think properly (sic).

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

Yes, I would like to find it myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because myself it is simple than the author because the author has high standard of English.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers. Short time day.

Short time day. Because it is simple to remember and also you can be able to talk about it.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

I like those that include dialogue. Because it's better and can be able to remember them than those in continuous prose.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like: Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

I like stories with pictures which are coloured Black and White and well written.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

I would like to act the part that the mad boy who pushed two bulky bundles. Because King Kong was the picture of guilt.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

My favourite story is short, well understood good idiom and low standard English.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

I like really how Rukia was behaving and how good manners he was having(sic).

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

Yes. The story book was having high standard English so I was not understanding it.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: HESBON OCHIENG'

Age: 14 YEARS OLD

Name of School: MATHARE OLD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mother's Profession: TAILOR

Father's Profession: TAILOR

A. Put a circle round the correct answer e.g. a - b - c -

1. Do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

2. How often do your parents buy you story books?
 - a. Weekly
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Yearly
 - d. Never
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

3. Which of these equipment do you have at home?
 - a. Radio
 - b. Television set
 - c. Video

4. Do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No.

5. How often do you listen to oral narratives?
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Any other (please specify) _____

6. Which of these is the main source of your oral narratives? (If you have more than one source circle all the answers that apply to your case.)
 - a. Friends.
 - b. Teacher
 - c. **Radio**

B. Give short answers to the following questions. Write down the title of the story you have just read.

Moses and the Raffle.

7. What was the story about? (Do not use more than five sentences).

The things Moses and King Kong were doing to other friends.

8. What lesson have you learnt from the story?

To behave well in the school and at home. I should not take drugs or alcohol anywhere I am.

9. Do you agree with the lesson in the story? (Explain why you agree).

Because everyone should behave well as a school child. Not to abuse others.

10. How does this lesson apply to your own life?

They apply to me not because badly as how Moses and King Kong behaved.

11. If your answer to question 9 is 'NO' explain why you disagree with the lesson in the story?

I agreed.

12. Is the ending of the story satisfactory or unsatisfactory for you?

Satisfactory.

13. Why? Give a brief explanation to your answer in question 12.

The guilty are punished.

14. In what other ways could the author have solved the problem?

By arresting Moses and his friends.

15. Which character did you like most in the book? and Why?

Mr. Karanja. Because he was honest.

16. Which character did you not like and why?

Moses. He was disobedient, because he was smoking cigarettes in the school compound.

17. Do you prefer to have an author describe a character for you or would you rather find out about the character yourself?

I would like to find out for myself.

18. Give a reason for your answer to question 17.

Because I will now know it without anyone telling me. And I will be sure that he or she is like this or that.

19. Do you like a story that covers a short time (days, hours) or a long time (months, years). Give a reason for your answers.

A long one. Because I will know how he or she was.

20. What kind of stories do you like? Those written in continuous prose or those that include dialogue? Give a reason for your answer.

The one with dialogue. Because I will hear what they were saying or talking about.

21. Do you like stories with pictures or without pictures? If you like pictures, state what type of pictures you like. Coloured, Black and White, Either if the story is well written.

With pictures. Coloured pictures.

22. If you were asked to act out one part of this story, which part would you like to act out? Why?

Mr. Karanja. Because he was honest.

23. Which is your favourite type of story? Briefly explain why?

A story about animal characters.

24. What did you like most about the story you have just read?

How King Kong was badly in need of money.

25. Is there anything you did not like about the story? Please explain.

How Moses was behaving.

NOTE: These questionnaires have been reproduced without any alteration.