**Form Five literature in English**

**Cameroongy of Poetry**

**2) Theme of African Culture, Superstition, Man and the Ancestors and Myth.**

**“Abiku” by Wole Soyinka(Nigerian)**

**Detailed Account**

In this poem, the poet manifests his commitment to the culture of his people specifically to the misery of mother’s caused by wicked children who are born to die and be born again over and over. The poem opens with Abiku in an arrogant or boastful nature making a mockery observation of the rituals made by humans to chain him with Bangles to prevent him from dying and returning. He watches with laughter the unfruitful effort to hold down his limbs in the planting of yams and teases the living with their practice of branding or making marks on the dead spirit child before burial so as to be recognized again upon return . The pouring of libations only sends the child toward the underworld from where the came. Though Abiku looks like a child, he is really ageless and stands apart in being hostile or indifferent bro human efforts.

In the concluding stanzas, the poet gives many different ways through which Abiku manifests his heartlessness and torture of the living. When it’s night, bsucks sucks dry the oil that is supposed to keep the lamps burning, frightens mothers by transforming into a snake coiled at the doorstep. He goes on to remind his mother that the last time he died, he died when he had grown to a mature age for the mother to be proud. After dying, Abiku then returns into the mother’s womb which he found unpleasant due to it excessive warmth and comfort

The Abiku ends by assuring them that over the last grave where the spider webs are still spread out, the buried Abiku is already preparing another grave even in the silence of the mother’s womb.

**Words and Expressions defined**

1. **Abiku(in Yoruba) -----------------** spirit child or child born-to-die
2. **Cloying------------------** unpleasant or unwelcomed
3. **Puke-----------------** vomit like a child
4. **Brand me-------------------**  make marks on me or make signs on me.
5. **Sprout in amulets---------------** germinate or start to grow in protective charms.
6. **In vain-----------------** without success or fruitless

**Subject matter**

The poem centres on the spirit child ( Abiku) and the helplessness of parents of such a child

**Poet's Attitude**

The poet's attitude is one of condemnation or total disapproval of the actions of the spirit child. His attitude vis also one of sympathy as he sympathises with parents of such a child as Abiku is born to die and to be born again.

**Devices**

1. **Rhetorical question “** must I were for goats and cowries for palm oil and sprinkled Ash?**”** This shows the poet's arrogance which provokes the anger of readers and increases the miseries of the mother
2. **Symbolism:** Abiku is an child who likes darkness which symbolises evil. This explains why he maintains darkness bas seen in **“night and Abiku sucks the oil from the lamps”**
3. **Irony “**when you pour libations, each finger points me near the way I came………” and **“**I where I crept, the warmth was cloying**”** These show the wickedness of Abiku and the helplessness of the parent.
4. **Paradox “**The ripest fruit was saddest**”** This is paradoxical in that the poet uses the metaphor of the ripe fruit which vis mature and ready to be harvested but bit also strangely causes sadness. This draws the attention of the reader to see the misery caused by Abiku

**Some reasons to like this poem.**

1. The poem has a common and familiar subjet matter which focuses on African beliefs
2. It has a realistic picture of the traditional African Society and beliefs of the people
3. It makes use of imagistic expressions or aspects of local colour which affirm subject matter.