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Rethinking the Canon: A Postcolonial Critique of Traditional English Literature Curricula in Nigeria

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Abstract

The canon of English literature, long upheld as the foundation of literary studies, has increasingly come under scrutiny in postcolonial societies, particularly in contexts such as Nigeria where English serves as both a colonial inheritance and an educational instrument. This paper interrogates the continued dominance of Eurocentric literary traditions in Nigerian secondary and higher education. Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial theoretical frameworks, principally drawing on the works of Edward Said, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, and Homi Bhabha. It critiques the exclusionary tendencies of traditional English literary canons and their impact on cultural identity, epistemic independence, and pedagogical relevance. The study situates its argument within the broader discourse of decolonizing knowledge, language, and culture in African education. Through a synthesis of theoretical reflections and empirical analyses of Nigerian literature curricula, the paper argues for the reconfiguration of English literary studies to reflect local realities, plural epistemologies, and global inclusivity. It concludes by proposing strategies for integrating indigenous, African, and world literatures into a more dialogic and inclusive canon that affirms Nigeria's postcolonial identity and intellectual autonomy.

Keywords: *Rethinking, Canon, African Literature, Postcolonial Critique, Curricula, Nigeria*

Introduction

The study of English literature in Nigeria has long been embedded within the intellectual legacy of British colonial education system. The early colonial curriculum, designed primarily to promote British cultural hegemony, privileged texts by authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Austen as the epitome of literary excellence. This legacy has continued, albeit subtly, within many Nigerian universities and secondary schools where the study of English literature still revolves around canonical British works (Adebayo, 2010; Emenyonu, 2013).

Consequently, the canon operates not only as an aesthetic standard but also as a political and ideological instrument that shapes how Nigerian students perceive culture, history, identity, and banned the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction in schools.

This situation portrays Nigeria as a country that rates other's culture above hers. However, as postcolonial scholars have observed, this inherited canon is far from neutral. Rather, it functions as a mechanism of epistemic control and cultural subordination (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2007; Said, 1993). The assumption that literary greatness resides primarily in the works of English or Western authors marginalizes the literary expressions of other cultures, particularly African ones. This imbalance perpetuates what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) terms "the colonization of the mind," wherein students internalize Eurocentric values and aesthetic standards at the expense of their indigenous cultural consciousness.

In Nigeria, the contradictions of this inherited curriculum are profound. While English remains the official language and medium of instruction, it simultaneously embodies colonial history and postcolonial anxiety. Nigerian literature in English as represented by writers such as Achebe, Soyinka, Okara, Adichie, Yerima, and others has established its legitimacy globally, yet its presence in the academic canon remains relatively marginal to that of British literature. This paradox raises critical questions: What does it mean to teach "English literature" in a postcolonial nation? Whose culture and values does the curriculum validate? And how can the English literature curriculum be reimagined to reflect Nigeria's sociocultural and intellectual realities? This study approaches these questions through a postcolonial and poststructuralist lens, emphasizing the need to "deconstruct" the ideological underpinnings of the English canon. It contends that traditional canons must be interrogated not only for their aesthetic claims but also for their role in shaping cultural hierarchies. The paper further argues that rethinking the canon in Nigeria involves dismantling inherited assumptions about literary value and authority, while re-centering local and global voices in dialogue.

In essence, the objectives of this research are tripartite:

1. To examine how the traditional English canon functions ideologically within Nigerian literary education.

2. To analyze the implications of maintaining Eurocentric curricula for postcolonial identity and intellectual development.

3. To propose pathways toward a decolonized and inclusive literary curriculum that bridges English and African epistemologies. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing discourse on decolonizing education in Africa, aligning with the broader global movement that calls for epistemic justice and curricular pluralism (Mbembe, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in postcolonial theory, complemented by poststructuralist literary theory. Both frameworks offer tools for interrogating power, language, and representation in the construction of literary canons and educational systems.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory, as articulated by scholars like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, examines how colonialism continues to influence cultural production, identity, and knowledge systems even after political independence. Said's Orientalism (1978) laid the groundwork for understanding how Western representations of the "Other" serve to maintain cultural dominance. By portraying colonized peoples as inferior, exotic, or primitive, the West legitimized its cultural authority; a logic that extends to literary education. Within Nigerian universities and secondary education, the

prioritization of British literary texts over African ones mirrors this dynamic: English culture is represented as the universal norm, while African experience is rendered secondary or supplementary (Said, 1993).

(Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's, 1986) "Decolonising the Mind" further develops this critique by emphasizing the centrality of language in cultural domination. For Ngũgĩ, the teaching of literature in the colonial language enacts psychological and epistemic alienation. Language, as a vessel of culture, shapes perception and worldviews; therefore, privileging English literature within African education is not a neutral academic choice but a political act that reinforces dependency on colonial epistemologies. In the Nigerian and West African contexts, this manifests in the enduring reverence for the British canon and the marginalization of indigenous voices in curriculum design and assessment. Little wonder why Shakespearean's books still dominate Literature curriculum and Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (SSCE). One begins to imagine if there are no better novels or brains in Africa.

(Bhabha's, 1994) notions of hybridity and the third space are equally pertinent. Bhabha argues that postcolonial cultures exist in a hybrid state; neither wholly colonial nor purely indigenous. This hybridity, rather than being a weakness, can be a site of resistance and creativity. For Nigerian literary education, this means that the goal should not necessarily be to abolish English literature but to rearticulate it in dialogue with African traditions, thereby producing a dynamic, intercultural curriculum. (Spivak's, 1988) concept of the "subaltern" also resonates here. Spivak questions whether marginalized voices particularly those of women and colonized subjects can truly "speak" within dominant structures of knowledge. The persistence of traditional English canons, largely composed of male, white, British authors, effectively silences the subaltern literary voices of African societies. A postcolonial rethinking of the canon, therefore, requires creating space for those excluded voices within Nigerian literary education. It is therefore pertinent to note that postcolonial theory provides this study with critical tools for exposing the power relations embedded in literary canons and for envisioning alternative, more inclusive frameworks of literary value and pedagogy.

Poststructuralist Theory

Poststructuralism complements postcolonialism by problematizing the notion of fixed meaning, stable identity, and objective knowledge. Thinkers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes argue that language, power, and discourse are interlinked systems through which knowledge is constructed. (Derrida, 1976) concept of deconstruction is particularly relevant: it involves interrogating binary oppositions such as "English/African," "civilized/primitive," or "canonical/ non-canonical" that structure cultural hierarchies. By deconstructing these oppositions, we expose the ideological assumptions that sustain the canon's authority. (Foucault, 1980) idea of power/knowledge further illuminates how educational institutions operate as sites of discursive control. The curriculum, as a repository of "legitimate" knowledge, functions to discipline thought and reproduce dominant ideologies. In Nigeria, the teaching of traditional English literature perpetuates colonial epistemic hierarchies, even when the content is detached from its colonial origins. Hence, to rethink the canon is to challenge not only literary selection but also the institutional practices that maintain epistemic inequality. (Barthes, 1968) declaration of "the death of the author" also bears significance for canon formation. If meaning resides not in the author's authority but in the reader's interpretation, then literary value cannot be restricted to a closed canon defined by Western academia. This democratizes literary interpretation and opens the curriculum to diverse voices, including African and postcolonial perspectives.

Together, postcolonialism and poststructuralism provide a multidimensional lens through which to critique the English canon in Nigeria. Postcolonialism exposes the historical and political roots of canonical dominance, while poststructuralism destabilizes the epistemic foundations that sustain it. This integration allows for a nuanced critique that goes beyond simple substitution (e.g., replacing British texts with African ones) and instead calls for a redefinition of what constitutes literary value, pedagogy, and cultural identity. In this sense, rethinking the canon is not a rejection of English literature per se, but reclamation of intellectual agency. It involves recognizing that the canon is not universal but constructed, that curricula are not neutral but political, and that decolonizing English studies requires both resistance to colonial epistemologies and openness to plural literary traditions.

Conceptual Framework

To fully grasp the postcolonial critique of the English literature curriculum in Nigeria, it is essential to clarify the key concepts that underpin this research: the canon, postcolonialism, decolonization of knowledge, English literature curriculum, and cultural representation. These terms are not static; they are dynamic, historically contingent, and ideologically loaded. Understanding them helps reveal the deeper cultural and political assumptions embedded within literary education in Nigeria.

The Concept of the Literary Canon

The term canon originates from the Greek kanon, meaning "rule" or "standard." In literary studies, the canon refers to a collection of texts deemed exemplary, authoritative, and representative of cultural and aesthetic excellence (Guillory, 1993). Traditionally, the English literary canon has included authors such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and T. S. Eliot. These authors and their works have been considered models of literary artistry and moral instruction, forming the foundation of English literary education globally. However, the canon is far from neutral. It is a cultural construction shaped by social power relations, class interests, and ideological agendas (Eagleton, 1983). The process of canon formation involves exclusion as much as inclusion: by elevating certain texts as "great literature," others particularly those written by women, colonized peoples, or writers outside the Western world are marginalized or ignored. This exclusionary process perpetuates Eurocentric worldviews and reinforces the cultural dominance of the West.

In the Nigerian context, the English canon was institutionalized through colonial education policies. The British colonial government used literature as a civilizing tool, aimed at producing subjects who would emulate English moral and cultural ideals. As noted by (Obafemi, 2014), the colonial classroom became a site of cultural indoctrination where African students encountered English culture as the universal model of civilization. This legacy continues to shape Nigerian literature curricula today, where students often study Shakespeare or Chaucer without a comparable engagement with African literary traditions. Thus, rethinking the canon in Nigeria is not merely an academic exercise it is a political and cultural imperative. It involves questioning who defines "greatness" in literature, whose voices are privileged, and how literary education can better reflect Nigeria's postcolonial realities.

Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism refers to the intellectual and cultural movement that analyzes and responds to the enduring effects of colonialism on former colonies. It is both a historical condition and a critical methodology. Theoretically, it explores how colonial power structures continue to influence identity, language, and knowledge even after formal independence (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2002). In literary studies, post-

colonialism challenges Eurocentric notions of literature and aesthetics. It asserts that colonialism not only exploited material resources but also colonized minds through education and cultural domination. Postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha argue that Western culture constructed the "Other" as inferior, thereby legitimizing colonial rule. Nigerian scholars like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Niyi Osundare have similarly emphasized the need to reclaim African voices and cultural values in literary production and education.

In the context of English literary studies in Nigeria, post-colonialism provides a framework for examining how inherited curricula perpetuate colonial ideologies. As observed by (Adebayo, 2019), teaching the English canon without critical contextualization risks reinforcing the idea that Western literature embodies universal human experience, while African literature is a mere regional expression. Postcolonial pedagogy, therefore, seeks to "write back" to the empire challenging, reinterpreting, and revising canonical narratives to make space for indigenous perspectives.

Decolonization of Knowledge

The concept of decolonization of knowledge extends the political project of decolonization into the intellectual and epistemological domain. Scholar such as (Ngũgĩ, 1986), argues that colonialism created hierarchies of knowledge that privileged European thought as universal and rational while dismissing non-Western epistemologies as primitive or emotional. Decolonizing knowledge entails dismantling these hierarchies and recognizing the legitimacy of multiple ways of knowing. In Nigerian education, this means re-evaluating what is taught, how it is taught, and why certain forms of knowledge are valued over others. The dominance of English literature in the curriculum exemplifies this epistemic imbalance. For instance, a university syllabus that devotes extensive attention to the English Romantic poets but marginalizes Yoruba oral poetry or Igbo folktales perpetuates the colonial notion that African expressive forms are culturally inferior or educationally irrelevant. Decolonizing literary studies, therefore, involves both epistemic resistance and curricular reform. It calls for integrating African literatures, oral traditions, and linguistic diversity into the curriculum not as appendages to English studies but as equally valid sources of intellectual inquiry and aesthetic pleasure. As asserted by (Osundare, 2002), "the literature of a people must mirror their dreams, their doubts, their language, and their land."

The English Literature Curriculum in Nigeria

The English literature curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools and universities largely reflects colonial continuity. Although African literature has gained some recognition, the structure and emphasis of literary education still prioritize the English canon. Study by (Adeyemi, 2016) shows that most Nigerian universities organize their English departments around traditional British literary periods such as the Renaissance, Romantic, and Victorian eras while African and postcolonial literatures are often treated as elective or supplementary. This imbalance not only distorts cultural representation but also limits students' engagement with local realities. For many Nigerian students, studying English literature feels detached from their lived experience. As noted by (Afolayan, 2018), the lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum can lead to alienation, reducing literature's potential as a tool for critical reflection and national development.

Moreover, the continued privileging of English literature perpetuates linguistic hierarchies. English remains the language of prestige and academic success, while indigenous languages are marginalized. This linguistic dominance reinforces the colonial mindset that associates progress and intellect with Englishness.

Hence, any genuine attempt to rethink the canon must also address the politics of language in Nigerian education.

Cultural Representation and Identity

Cultural representation refers to how identities, values, and histories are portrayed in texts and curricula. In colonial and postcolonial education systems, representation is a site of struggle: whose stories are told, how they are told, and who gets to tell them. Traditional English canons have historically represented Africans through stereotypes depicting them as primitive, emotional, or uncivilized (Said, 1978; Achebe, 1977). When such texts are taught uncritically in Nigerian classrooms, they risk internalizing inferiority complexes and distorting cultural self-perception. By contrast, integrating African literary voices into the curriculum affirms cultural identity and historical agency. Works by Achebe, Soyinka, Okri, Adichie, and others articulate Nigerian experiences of colonialism, modernity, and globalization in ways that empower students to view themselves as active participants in world culture, not passive recipients of Western civilization. Thus, representation is not a peripheral issue; it is central to the politics of curriculum design.

Review of Related and Empirical Studies

Globally, the debate over the literary canon intensified during the late 20th century, particularly in Western academia. Scholars such as (Bloom, 1994) defended the traditional canon, arguing that it represents timeless aesthetic values and universal human experiences. Bloom asserts that literature transcends politics and that works by authors like Shakespeare and Dante possess intrinsic greatness. However, postcolonial and feminist critics have challenged this Universalist claim. (Guillory, 1993) contends that canon formation is inseparable from cultural power: what counts as "great literature" is determined by institutions that privilege specific class, gender, and racial identities. Similarly, (Said, 1993) criticizes the canon as an ideological apparatus that perpetuates Western dominance under the guise of aesthetic neutrality. In the United States and Britain, movements to diversify the literary curriculum gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s. Universities began to incorporate multicultural and postcolonial literatures, emphasizing the voices of marginalized writers from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean (Brydon, 2000). Nevertheless, debates persist over how to balance inclusivity with academic rigor. The "canon wars" in Western universities mirror, in many ways, the curricular tensions in postcolonial contexts like Nigeria.

Within Africa, the question of decolonizing the curriculum has been a recurring intellectual concern. (Ngũgĩ, 1986) was among the first to call for the abolition of English literature departments in African universities, proposing their replacement with "Departments of African Literature and Languages." His argument was that African students should study their own literary heritage as the foundation of cultural and intellectual development. While this position has been debated, it underscored the urgency of reclaiming education from colonial influence. In Nigeria, numerous scholars have echoed this call. (Achebe, 1975) argued that African writers must reclaim the power of narrative from colonial misrepresentations. He described the role of the African writer as one who "teaches his people that their past was not one long night of savagery." (Soyinka, 1976) similarly stressed that education should cultivate cultural confidence rather than imitation.

Empirical studies reveal a persistent gap between policy rhetoric and curricular practice. (Adebayo, 2010) found that despite the inclusion of African literature in university syllabi, it often occupies a marginal position compared to British texts. Similarly, (Alabi, 2018) observed that most Nigerian secondary school students are more familiar with Shakespearean plays than with the works of Nigerian dramatists like Femi

Osofisan or Ahmed Yerima. Furthermore, studies by (Ogunyemi, 2015) and (Emenyonu, 2013) emphasize that the persistence of colonial curricula reflects broader structural issues, including lack of funding, dependence on imported textbooks, and limited academic autonomy. Consequently, even well-intentioned reforms often fail to achieve substantial decolonization.

Several empirical investigations have examined how Nigerian students and teachers perceive the English literature curriculum. In a survey conducted by (Adeyemi, 2016), 70% of lecturers in selected Nigerian universities agreed that the curriculum remains "largely colonial in orientation." Students reported difficulty relating to many of the prescribed British texts, citing cultural and linguistic disconnection. (Afolayan, 2017) found that when African texts were introduced into the syllabus, students demonstrated greater engagement, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. This suggests that curricular relevance directly affects pedagogical effectiveness. Similarly, in a comparative study, (Afolayan, 2018) observed that students exposed to African literature alongside English classics developed a more understanding of global literary traditions and postcolonial identity. (Pieterse and Parekh, 2019) note that diversified curricula foster intercultural competence, empathy, and intellectual pluralism. Conversely, a monocultural canon narrows students' horizons and reinforces cultural hierarchies.

Despite extensive discourse on postcolonialism and education, few studies have provided comprehensive analyses of how postcolonial theory can be practically applied to the redesign of English literature curricula in Nigeria. Existing research often critiques the canon but stops short of offering concrete frameworks for curricular transformation. Additionally, while there is considerable theoretical engagement with postcolonialism, there is limited empirical research examining the actual impact of canon revision on student identity, performance, and worldview. This gap highlights the need for a sustained, interdisciplinary approach that connects postcolonial literary theory with educational practice. The present study seeks to bridge this divide by combining theoretical critique with practical implications for curriculum reform. Thus, this study argues that the traditional English literary canon, as it operates within Nigerian education, perpetuates a colonial ideology that privileges Western cultural dominance and undermines Nigeria's postcolonial identity and intellectual autonomy. Despite decades of political independence, Nigeria's literary curriculum still reproduces the epistemic assumptions of the British colonial project. The study therefore posits that the English canon should be rethought, recontextualized, and restructured through a postcolonial lens that foregrounds indigenous epistemologies, plural cultural narratives, and transnational inclusivity.

At the center of this argument lies the recognition that literary canons are not universal but constructed. The authority of Shakespeare, Milton, and other British writers in Nigerian classrooms was historically imposed through colonial education policies designed to create loyal intermediaries rather than independent thinkers (Fafunwa, 1974). The continuation of such curricula in the postcolonial era inadvertently sustains intellectual dependency, reinforcing the notion that Western literature embodies the pinnacle of human creativity. Therefore, the argument of this research is not that English literature should be discarded, but that it should be repositioned within a pluralistic and dialogic framework. English literature, when taught critically, can serve as a tool for cultural comparison and reflection rather than domination. What is problematic is not the inclusion of British texts but their uncritical centrality in the Nigerian curriculum. The goal is to achieve a balance where Nigerian students engage with English literature as one among many world literatures, interpreting it through their own cultural and historical perspectives.

This argument aligns with the broader intellectual movement toward curricular decolonization in Africa, which seeks to dismantle inherited hierarchies of knowledge production (Mbembe, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In the Nigerian context, this means interrogating the ways in which literary education has been used to define what counts as knowledge, what qualifies as "literature," and who gets to be represented in the curriculum. The study therefore calls for a redefinition of literary value grounded in Nigeria's historical experience, linguistic diversity, and aesthetic traditions.

Implications of the Study

The implications of rethinking the canon are far-reaching, encompassing educational, cultural, linguistic, and political dimensions. The following subsections discuss the broader impact of this study for Nigerian education, scholarship, and society. One of the most immediate implications concerns teaching and learning practices. Literature classrooms in Nigeria often operate under Eurocentric pedagogical models that prioritize textual memorization and examination performance over critical interpretation. By rethinking the canon, teachers are encouraged to adopt decolonial pedagogies that foreground dialogue, contextual analysis, and cultural relevance. Instead of discarding English canonical texts, educators can reframe them within comparative contexts. For instance, teaching Shakespeare's Othello alongside Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel allows students to explore themes of power, identity, and representation across cultures. Such juxtapositions encourage students to see English literature as part of a global conversation rather than a superior tradition. Beyond the university, rethinking the canon has profound implications for national identity and cultural sovereignty. Education is a key site where nations define themselves; the stories a society tells about itself shape its collective consciousness. When students encounter their own histories, myths, and heroes in literature, they develop a stronger sense of belonging and self-worth. This cultural confidence counters the inferiority complex instilled by colonial education. Integrating literatures from Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups like Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Tiv, Efik, etc. can foster mutual understanding and unity. A plural literary canon encourages recognition of cultural diversity as a national strength rather than a source of division.

Conclusion

The analysis of the traditional English literature curriculum in Nigeria through a postcolonial lens reveals a paradox that lies at the heart of Nigerian education. Despite decades of independence, the country's educational system particularly; its English and literary studies continues to operate under the epistemological shadow of colonialism. The persistence of the British literary canon as the dominant framework for literary education reflects deeper ideological structures that privilege Western culture as the universal standard of intellectual and aesthetic excellence. This study has argued that such structures are not neutral or timeless; they are products of specific historical relations of power that must be critically examined and deconstructed.

A central premise of this study is that the literary canon is neither fixed nor value-free. Rather, it is a construct shaped by political, cultural, and institutional forces that determine which texts are taught, how they are interpreted, and what values they transmit. In the context of Nigeria, this canon was imported during the colonial period as part of the broader project of cultural domination. British colonial education, as several scholars (Fafunwa, 1974; Mazrui, 1986; Achebe, 1975) have demonstrated, was designed to produce intermediaries who would internalize Western values and act as cultural agents of empire. Literature played a crucial role in this process, serving as a vehicle for moral instruction, linguistic discipline, and imperial ideology.

The study contends that to rethink the canon is to rethink education itself. The decolonization of the curriculum is not simply about replacing British authors with African ones, but about transforming the epistemic assumptions that underlie what counts as "knowledge" and "literature." It requires a critical re-evaluation of pedagogy, content, and institutional priorities. A truly postcolonial curriculum should empower Nigerian students to read both local and global texts through their own historical and cultural experiences, encouraging them to participate actively in the global literary conversation rather than passively consuming it.

The postcolonial critique therefore offers not destruction but reconstruction a movement toward intellectual pluralism. This study proposes a dialogic model of literary education that values intercultural exchange over cultural hierarchy, critical reflexivity over imitation, and contextual interpretation over Universalist abstraction. English literature should be studied as one tradition among many, not as the ultimate repository of civilization. Nigerian and other African literatures, in turn, should occupy a central place in the curriculum as legitimate sources of knowledge, beauty, and critical insight. The argument advanced here situates Nigeria within the broader global debate about decolonizing knowledge. Across universities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, scholars are questioning the colonial epistemologies that continue to shape curricula. Nigeria, with its complex colonial history and rich literary tradition, is uniquely positioned to lead this intellectual transformation. However, such leadership requires sustained institutional will, policy reform, and pedagogical innovation.

In conclusion, the study reaffirms that rethinking the canon is both an academic and moral necessity. To perpetuate an uncritical adherence to the traditional English canon is to perpetuate a colonial worldview that denies the intellectual sovereignty of postcolonial societies. The way forward is not rejection but renewal of a reimagining of literary education that honors Nigeria's multiplicity, encourages critical engagement, and fosters cultural confidence in the global age.

Recommendations

The findings of this study call for comprehensive reform at multiple levels curriculum development, teacher education, policy design, and scholarly research. The following recommendations are proposed:

1. English literature curricula at both secondary and tertiary levels should include a balanced representation of African, Caribbean, Asian, and other world literatures alongside traditional English texts. This pluralistic approach will foster cross-cultural understanding and decenter Eurocentric narratives.
2. Nigerian oral traditions; folktales, myths, praise poetry, and proverbs should be systematically incorporated into literature courses. Such integration will help preserve indigenous knowledge and promote linguistic diversity. Therefore, the Federal Ministry of Education should formulate policies that mandate inclusive curricula across educational levels. These policies should be grounded in Nigeria's cultural and linguistic realities.
3. Rather than eliminating canonical authors like Shakespeare, Milton, or Dickens, teachers should frame their works within historical and ideological contexts, highlighting their colonial legacies and contemporary relevance. Comparative readings between English and African texts can encourage critical reflection. Therefore, curriculum designers should prioritize themes that resonate

with Nigerian realities such as identity, cultural hybridity, social justice, and nation-building, thus linking literature to students' lived experiences.

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