

ALT 403: Modern European Literature

Unit Description

In this unit, we shall read and analyse selected plays, poems, novels and short stories from Europe. Although one of the tests of great literature is its universality, all fictional works have local flavour. Modern European literature is literature that has a European flavour. “Modern” can go as far back as the history of Western thought, which starts with the Greeks (\approx 500BC). Indeed, everything after the Roman Empire (and the advent of Christianity) is considered “modern”. Modern European Literature is a voluminous entity. For this unit, therefore, we shall take the name Alfred Nobel as a convenient starting point. The Nobel Prize in Literature was first awarded in 1901. We shall then take a closer look at some writers of the twentieth century, and sample the fictional works of some of the European Nobel laureates in greater detail.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ❖ Know which countries make up the continent of Europe and understand the historical background of each.
- ❖ Understand how modern European literature has developed from the philosophical and intellectual movements of earlier periods.
- ❖ Demonstrate knowledge of the key European literary figures of the twentieth century and familiarity with some of their creative pieces.
- ❖ Express an informed opinion and appreciation of modern European literature.
- ❖ Undertake critical evaluation of selected European texts in the historical, social, economic, cultural, political and theoretical contexts in which they took shape.
- ❖ Understand the influence of European literature on written African literature.

References

- ✓ Camus, Albert. *The Outsider*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977. First Published in 1946 as *L'etranger*.
- ✓ Hardy, Thomas. “Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?” A Poem.
- ✓ Kafka, Franz. “The Metamorphosis.” *In Metamorphosis and other Stories*. Minerva Press, 1949. Originally published in 1916 as “*Die Verwandlung*.”
- ✓ Kipling, Rudyard. “If- .” A poem.
- ✓ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Dirty Hands*. Originally published as *Les Mains Sales*. 1948.
- ✓ Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *Prisoners*. London: The Bodly Head, 1983. Originally published in 1981 as *Plenniki*.
- ✓ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. London: Hogarth Press, 1929