



Junior Pen Point



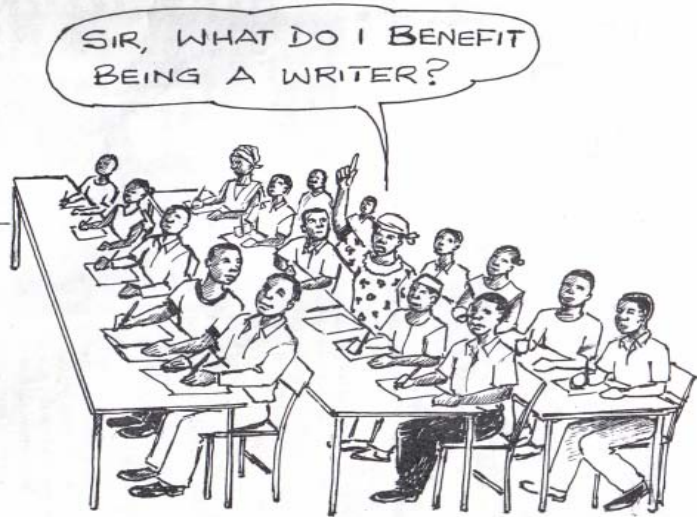
Vol 1

A Publication of Sierra Leone PEN

No.1

'CATCHING THEM YOUNG'

JUNIOR WRITERS' SEMINAR



How involved Are Young Sierra Leoneans in the Art of Writing?

**Good Bye Teachers
Good Bye Friends**



Honorary PEN President Talabi A. Lucan presents writing materials to a PEN school club member



FSSG Hosts Uganda PEN Centre Delegate

**Foreward By Sierra Leone
PEN President**

We at Sierra Leone PEN have a double reason to celebrate as the publication of this maiden edition of Junior Pen Point magazine has been made to coincide with the launching of an additional six PEN school clubs outside Freetown across the country. Indeed the two events are part and parcel of our Programmatic Fund project funded by Interantional PEN. These activities are designed to fulfil a number of our objectives- increase our membership, raise awarness about Sierra Leone PEN, generate interest in reading and writing



*PEN President
Mohamed Sheriff*

amongst young people and provide an outlet for the writings of not just our school club members but also young aspiring writers across the country. It is an understated fact that interest in reading and writing amongst young people has been undergoing a slow and painful decline. unless something definite is done to arrest and improve on the situation, in the face of growing competition from Nigeria, Indian and American movies as well as

satellite TV football, it will only get worse. The publication of this magazine is a modest but significant step towards addressing the problem. However Sierra Leone PEN alone can not achieve this goal. we need the active support of both the home and the school. children should be coaxed to read and contribute to the magazine. But this should not be limited to Junior Pen Point magazine, they should be encouraged also to read and contribute to our newspapers and other magazines and books and take part in writing competitions

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ABOUT US

Junior Pen Point is published by the Sierra Leonean PEN for young writers in schools. Send your comments and contributions to:
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Spical Appeal

Support Sierra Leone PEN school clubs to revive the culture of reading and writing especially among the young.
- you can make donation in cash or kind.

THE ROLE OF WRITERS IN SIERRA LEONE

As I thought about presenting a paper on the role of writers in Sierra Leone, the importance of building a bridge over a gaping valley, which you and others can safely go across, assumed a significance and magnitude which I had hitherto, never been aware of or never given thought to. I go for the imagery of a bridge because – a bridge is a thing that provides connection, contact. A common language is a bridge between cultures- a writer uses language – writing is communication- writers are communicators with an obligation to create access into the hearts of their audience and also for their audience into their Writers may build or destroy relationships within their communities. So considering the importance of a bridge in linking two blocks of territory which may be home to people of like or diverse orientation and cultures, I also came to realize that the necessity for the writers to be a responsible and skilled contractor cannot be over emphasized.

Let us come to an agreement that writers are people who write under whatever genre they choose, with the intention of having their material read or accessed by a target group within their world. Because wisdom and experience have it that “the pen is mightier than the sword”, I want to advice and believe that all who wield the pen must at least have some awareness of its potency, and also the gravity of its consequences both for its audience and themselves. Just as no word should be carelessly spoken so none should be written and broadcast or published without thorough examination of its implications for the minds of all to whom it will be exposed.

You might choose to communicate with your society by writing a novel, play, short story,

screenplay, song, poem or article. Whichever you choose, never lose sight of your responsibility to your audience. It is sacred. Whether as an entertainer, educator or just to inform- a journalist, you are affecting minds that you may guide one way of the other, either to make, break or mar the existence or co-existence within an environment. Sierra Leone needs healing and stability for development especially after its recent brush with the senseless diabolical savagery that many use as an identification card for our nation. Writers therefore have a very delicate balancing role to perform in bringing about restoration to sanity and laying a runway for our future development to take off. In effect writers in Sierra Leone have a responsibility to help build a new nation. In that vein let me invite you to come along with me as we consider some of the thoughts of Chinua Achebe between 1964 and 1966 writing on “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation”, “The Novelist As Teacher” and “The Black Writer’s Burden.”

Confronted with the idea that Africa writers should deal with the here and now rather than the past, Achebe states “African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; Their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty,— they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is dignity that they must now regain. The writer’s duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms, what happened to them, what they lost..... In Africa he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history.”

In “The Novelist As



Raymond De'souza George

Teacher” Achebe wants us to know that “the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front....”

Repeatedly returning to the topic of colonization, its impact, and its legacy in “the Black Writer’s Burden” Achebe tells us that “without subscribing to the view that the African gained nothing at all in her long encounter with Europe, one could still say, in all fairness, that she suffered many terrible and lasting misfortunes. In terms of human dignity and human relations the encounters was almost a complete disaster for the black race. It has warped the mental attitudes of both black and white.— Black writers have shown again and again, in giving expression to the plight of their people, how strongly this traumatic experience can possess the sensibility.

I do not believe that anyone of us would question the necessity for a proper sense of history if we are to effectively attend to the demands and pressures of the present which must also eventually make way for us to enter the future with purpose, focus and determination. However, I am convinced that the tendency to access, reside, inhabit and dwell in and on the past has been a neutralizing gear in our drive for peaceful co-existence stability and development. It is

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Pen Point News

Waterloo Gets Best Library In West Africa

The Chief Liberian of the Sierra Leone Library Board has expressed delight that very soon the people of the Waterloo Community in the Western Area of Sierra Leone are going to have the best equipped library in the West African sub region. Mr. Victor Coker made the statement recently in the Sierra Leone Right to Read Alliance meeting that was held at the Library Board, Conference room.

According to Mr. Coker, the library is going to be situated on several acres of land in Waterloo. He said construction work on the buildings have already commenced. "When finished in August, 2010, the Library will take over a thousand readers at the same time", he said

adding that "there will be 200 computers and over one million books. The library which will also serve as a training and resource centre will be under the supervision of the Sierra Leone Library Board and sponsored by the British Council. Mr. Coker disclosed that the library will be named "The Equiano Centre."

In her welcome statement earlier in the meeting, the senior Librarian of the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), Mrs. Alice Malamah-Thomas encouraged the public to make good use of the opportunity when it become available to them. She urged students to read. According to her "one can-

not develop or solve problems without information".

Mrs. Thomas spoke of the Conference on Access to Information by the visually impaired which was held last year at the British Council Tower hill, Freetown. She maintained that the idea of the Sierra Leone Right to Read Alliance was born at this conference. She said the blind too have the right to read. She said the stake holders in the library institutions recognized this fact. She welcomed the alliance and expressed hope that it would grow from strength to strength. She noted that reading materials for the visually impaired will be provided at the libraries.

Ballanta Conducts Music Festival

The Ballanta Academy of Music recently conducted the Ballanta Music Festival. The festival was held at the Miatta Conference Centre, Brookfields, Freetown, from Thursday March 13 to Friday March 14, 2008.

Speaking to Junior PEN POINT, the chairman of the Music

Academy, Mr. L.J. Tani-Pratt said the aims of the festival include launching the Ballanta Memorial Lecture Series and to show case the music of Sierra Leone and other African countries.

Mr. Tani-Pratt went on to say that the Ballanta Academy of Music intends to teach music to a high professional standard, provide

opportunities for teachers and learners of music to enjoy the art of music, and also research into the musical heritage of Sierra Leone.

The Academy offers tuition in the following subjects: piano, organ, keyboard, voice, guitar, saxophone, African drums and theory of music.

Watch Out For Pampana Comic Magazine

The Pampana Comic magazine, will soon be launched to the public. Speaking to Junior Penpoint about the magazine, the Publisher, Mohamed Sheriff who also is the President of PEN Sierra Leone noted that the demise of proper book stores and the closure of PZ in particular, where young and even older readers used to buy comic books up until the seventies, created a vacuum that has never been filled.

"Pampana Comic is designed to help fill the vacuum created for such reading materials, arrest the declining trend in reading and at the same time revive the culture of reading for pleasure," Mr. Sheriff explained.

He further stated that the magazine has a strong local flavour with a subtle blend of light hearted and serious materials designed to educate, inform and entertain both young and old readers.



Up Date From PEN Secretariat

By Allieu S.H. Kamara

International PEN, Sierra Leone chapter, is ever determined to achieve its goal in the country. May 13 this year marks the center's fifth year in existence.

Over the years, the PEN centre has created a channel of communication for published and unpublished writers to express their interests and seek advice on all aspects of writing and publishing. The centre continues to promote Sierra Leonean writers and literature it is striving to enhance the culture of reading and writing especially among the young.

Since its establishment on May 13th 2003, our PEN Centre has undertaken several literary activities including literary training workshops, writing competitions and advocacy for freedom of expression in the media. We also continue to expand the school clubs project across the country. The country's first National Writers Award Ceremony was held in 2005 when 14 writers were presented with plaques.

The Talabi Aisie Lucan writers workshop which is named in honour of a respectable Sierra Leonean woman writer has become an annual event. Every year, the Sierra Leone PEN with support from the United States Embassy organises a writers workshop.

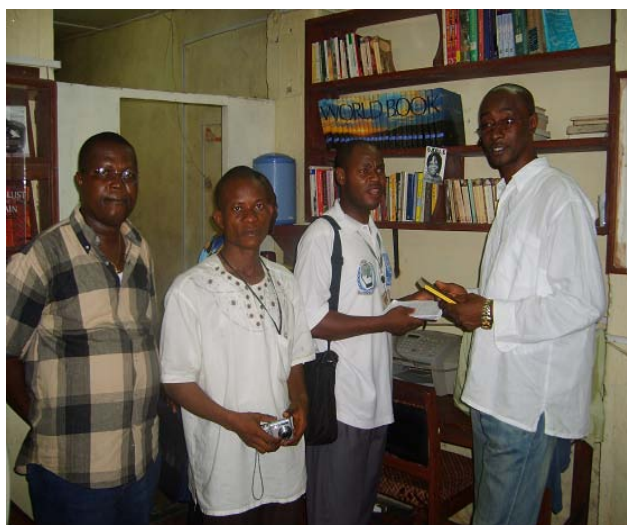
The first National Short Story Competition was held in February last year. The Centre in collaboration with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) conducted the second annual Essay, Poetry and Art Competition in April as part of the activities in celebration of the 39th anniversary of Earth Day. Attractive prizes are always awarded to the winners in accompany these writing competitions.

Local publishing is one of our main objectives. We have already established links with the regional publishing outfit Publishing Network (APNET). Our aim is to set up a local publishing house that could pro-

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PEN Sierra Leone Planning Committee Chairperson, Mrs. Esme James explaining background to the Induction workshop



Uganda PEN delegate and the host staff inspect PEN library in Freetown



PEN Sierra Leone School Committee Chairman, Nathaniel A. Pearce (centre) and teacher/facilitators meet to review PEN school clubs

Up Date From PEN Secretariat



From left to right: Ugandan PEN delegate Cornelius Wambi Gulere, Sierra Leone PEN Pressidnet Mohamed Sheriff and Treasurer Davidson T. Collier in a friendly atmosphere at the PEN office

mote Sierra Leone literature. Meanwhile, PEN Sierra Leone launched the Book of Voices in London in collaboration with the Flame Book Publishers in 2006. The centre has also published three editions of its literary magazine, the PEN Point which is a major publication of the centre.

The Centre has seen some changes in its organizational development and activities beginning last year. Through the support of the International PEN, The Sierra Leone chapter conducted the Induction/Strategic Planning Workshop on December 3rd 2007. The essence of the workshop was to consolidate its members to work together to develop and implement a long term plan for the centre. During the workshop, members were identified who would be in the different standing committees of International PEN and the Sierra Leone chapter to make the latter viable.

Our current activities include the expansion of the PEN school clubs. Also supported by PEN International, the goal of the project is to increase PEN membership and promote interest in reading and writing among school children in the regions across the country.

The number of the Sierra Leone PEN school clubs has now increased to eleven. The first five pilot school clubs in the Western Area are the Annie Walsh Memorial

School (AWMS), Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG), St. Edwards Secondary School, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School (AMSS) and the Methodist Boys High School (MBHS). This pilot project was supported by the Christian Literature Crusade (CLC).

The six new PEN school clubs in the regions are as follows:

Our lady of Guadalupe Secondary School in Lunsar, Port Loko District, the St. Francis Secondary School in Makeni, Bombali District, all in the Northern Province; the Koidu Girls Secondary school in Kono, Kono District, Government Secondary School Kenema, in the Eastern Province and the Government Secondary School Bo, (Bo School) and the Harford Secondary School for Girls in Moyamba District in the Southern province.

PEN Sierra Leone has a very good working relationship with both the civil society organizations, foreign mission and the government.

As most of the centre's programmes are funded by donors its main challenge is how to be self sustaining. We want to build the capacity of the centre. We want to set up an internet café and desktop publishing services to generate income.

We are also interested in opening a bookshop in Freetown and the provinces. We therefore encourage members to enhance our collective efforts in the pursuance of our mission.

PEN Members Set To Promote Literature

“I commit to serving PEN (Sierra Leone) diligently, selflessly, steadfastly and conscientiously in various capacities within my competence in order to enhance its viability, effectiveness and growth.”

The above statement was read by both old and new members during the Sierra Leone PEN Strategic Planning Workshop which was successfully conducted in Freetown in December, 2007. It was held at the Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement (GGEM), 57 John Street, Freetown. During the

Continued page 13

Junior Pen Poems

We Don't Need

Other Heroes

All our heroes have fallen
 They have broken the necks of women and children
 The cock no longer feels the suicidal rocket
 The guns too have rolled and clashed with the sea
 We...
 The polyphonies and homophonies are songs of war
 from the warawara hills
 Let the lion mountain hunch
 Let them compromise the sky
 Where our leaders negotiate
 Let the rocks proclaim no winner
 Between brave soldiers and suicidal brothers and sisters
 We....
 A year has added to years of suffering this year
 Men lived without dread in worldly prosperity
 Let men without heroes rise
 Let men without shadows emerge
 Up from the dust of desert
 Let those who have verses
 Call aloud for peace
 Sing them with the grandeur of maters
 We.....
 What we need is peace
 So if you have a mole hill
 Sprout from it and demand it now
 We.....

Marian Johnson

Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG)

No Doubt

Have no doubt about your ability,
 But be conscious about your creativity
 And know it is by developing a wise mentality
 That you can change your entire community
 Cause creativity comes out of the originality
 In using one's curiosity, sensitivity, along with your integrity
 In creating an intellectual society
 Have no doubt, but know that you can do it
 No matter how great your disability

A STAR

You can only become a star if you desire to be one
 You will only become a star if you strive towards being one
 You will continue being a star if you consistently live as one, and
 You might become a star of stars if you mingle with stars.

By Hawa Lahai-Talowoh

Anni Walsh Memorial School

Good Bye Teachers

Goodbye Friends

We have come to the end of yet another academic year

We have worked, we have toiled and we have burnt the mid-night oil

All for the Golden fleece

Dear parents, dear friends

There is time for everything

Well timed and apportioned by nature

This is time of course to go and rest

It is time for Harvest too

When the dignity of Labour become manifest

Hard work is greatly rewarded

While laying about hanky-panky

And truancy and buried in shame

Three months is not too long to be away

Friends! While you are on holidays

Be good to yourselves and be good to all

Today well spent creates a better tomorrow

After all Mr. President started

From the simple ABC and 123

Remember that the society is not for the ordinary.

Goodbye teachers, goodbye friends

We meet to part and part to meet but the institution

Remains immutable if we meet again, we shall smile if not, this Parting is well made

Goodbye

By Askia S. Massaquoi

AMSS Freetown

The African Child

Black, pale, thin he looks,

Struggling for food he goes,

Up the streets and in to the stores,

Using his little strength to Labour,

As his mama is a pauper,

And by his looks we know, that he is an African child.

He is detested and feels dejected,

Always scorned and rejected

Having no one to care for his welfare

And he wonders if things will someday be better.

O African child

You have endured sufferings for so long,

And you've been told that you have no future

But always know that God is your maker

And he only can make your life better

Junior Pen Poems

My Wish

I wish to be the best writer in Africa
 A Lawyer
 An author
 A successful writer
 A literary writer
 One of the prominent writers in Sierra Leone

I wish to become a creative writer
 A Lawyer
 A writer
 A very good writer
 A poetry writer
 One of the greatest writers in Africa

I wish to become a president
 A Lawyer
 A success with a pen to write to go to the USA

*By PEN Sierra Leone School Club Members
 compiled and edited*

by Cornelius Wambi Gulere, Uganda

A Natural Being In My Living -Death

Once upon a time in a living-death
 I there saw a traveler
 Coming from far with two
 Precious luggage. Woman! I called
 She could not respond

The woman bitterly cried by herself
 Eventhough her voice like a musical instrument
 Woman! The second time I called. Yet, she could not.
 Approaching towards I stand in a hut, I shrived
 That must not be an ordinary being I guess.

Thus her skin was nor white neither black
 And electronic device all over I see her
 Thin eyes is a macro-light and thy acrobate way
 Walk that time, no creature I never see do
 That pretty woman I saw once in a dream I see no
 more.

By Mohamed S. Kargbo

The Faithful Vagabond

Oh God is this going to continue
 Now the weather is so dark again and it
 Is about to rain no shelter no bed and
 No sleep I found no peace and no joy but
 I trust in the maker the universe controller

God give me the life I love give me the face
 Of the earth and the merriment of the heaven
 About pave the way before me wisdom I seek not
 hope

Or love nor a friend to know me all I seek is
 The Heaven above the road below me.

I have nothing to call my own
 God just give me what belongs to me
 I am a free of speech to the hot
 Burning sun, rain and the cold wind that used to
 Blow at night which season will I surrender

Thank God I am a rolling stone with no responsi-
 bility or care to carry, I sow no seed and I pay no
 rent

Hail to God for I can't thank any for his help
 Or food. If there is a life for a man
 Like me there is a life for every one

*Written by Mohamed Bashirie
 AMSS*

My Advice

My advice to all people on earth
 Keep away from all cigarettes
 You like it,
 It hates you
 When you smoke it
 It hurts you
 Scientists the world over say
 Cigarette may hurt in various ways
 It may give your heart cancer
 And then you will never hear your laughter,
 Your eyes will always be filled with tears,
 And to your grave you will be near,
 There fore for the sake of all our lovers
 This is my advice to all people on earth

*By Marian Abu Khahil
 Lebanese International School*

The Pigeon

I am a blessed pigeon and fly from tree to tree
 Always resting never flying because there are trees
 Then comes the spoiler who cut all the trees
 Now I cannot rest because there is no tree

I am a busy pigeon always flying around. Always
 Flying never resting because there is no tree
 The pigeon cannot perch
 No fruit and no herbs

I thought I was the only one feeling all this pain
 Now I know that others too feel the pain with me
 The earth is getting hot
 The land is left bare
 The rain is getting little
 The plants are growing in bite
 So much pain in the earth
 All because of the greedy spoiler

*By Saidu Kamara
 JT Reffell Preparatory school
 Tower Hill, Freetown*

News From PEN School Clubs

FSSG Hosts Uganda PEN Centre Delegate

Members of the Sierra Leone PEN school club at the Freetown Secondary School for Girls (FSSG) on December 22nd 2007 received a team from the Sierra Leone PEN centre leading a Ugandan PEN delegation on a tour of PEN Sierra Leone sites. The event was writers' visitation to one of our PEN school club project sites.

The meeting was chaired by the Sierra Leone PEN School Committee chairman, Mr. Nathaniel A. Pearce. He introduced the Uganda delegate, Mr. Cornelius Wambi Gulere. Mr. Pearce told the students that the Ugandan delegate was there as part of the African PEN Centre Exchange programme, 2007. The essence of the Exchange programme was for our two centers to share experiences with a view to enhancing our capacity to serve our respective centers.

Mr. Gulere came to learn about Sierra Leone PEN centre including what we are doing in our PEN school clubs.

On behalf of the principal and school club members present, the FSSG PEN school club facilitator, Philip Swaray, welcome the



Ugandan PEN delegate interacting with FSSG school club members

PEN team. He said they were happy to have a PEN club in their school because learning is not just limited to the four walls of the classroom.

He was proud to say that his pupils had won several writing competitions organized by PEN Sierra Leone over the years.

Presenting her school club Executive members to the PEN team, the FSSG school club President Jamie Shaw expressed appreciation for the good work members of the Sierra Leone PEN Centre had been doing to promote reading and writing among pupils.

In his response, the Uganda PEN Centre delegate expressed delight at visiting the

school more so because he had been a teacher since 1984. He talked about the essence of bridging each other's African PEN centres and the school clubs. He advised them to carry their pens and papers with them wherever they went.

Mr. Gulere further interacted with the pupils by asking many questions about their knowledge of Uganda, Africa and instructed them to write individual wishes on pieces of papers. Thereafter he compiled them into a poem called, "My Wishes," which he read later at the Literary Evening held at the Sierra Leone Library Board conference room in honor of the Exchange programme.



Mrs James shakes hands with new members while PEN Coordinator Allieu S.H. Kamara looks on



The Iranian Cultural Attache, Mohamed Ghezal Sofla making supportive statement for PEN



PEN school clubs members and teacher facilitators pose for the camera



Committees members developing recommendations and Action plan during the Induction workshop



Ramatulai Jalloh presenting gift to Uganda delegate on behalf of Sierra Leone PEN during a Round Table Conference held at the Lacs Restaurant as part of the African PEN Centre Exchange Programme 2007.



A child reading a winning entry



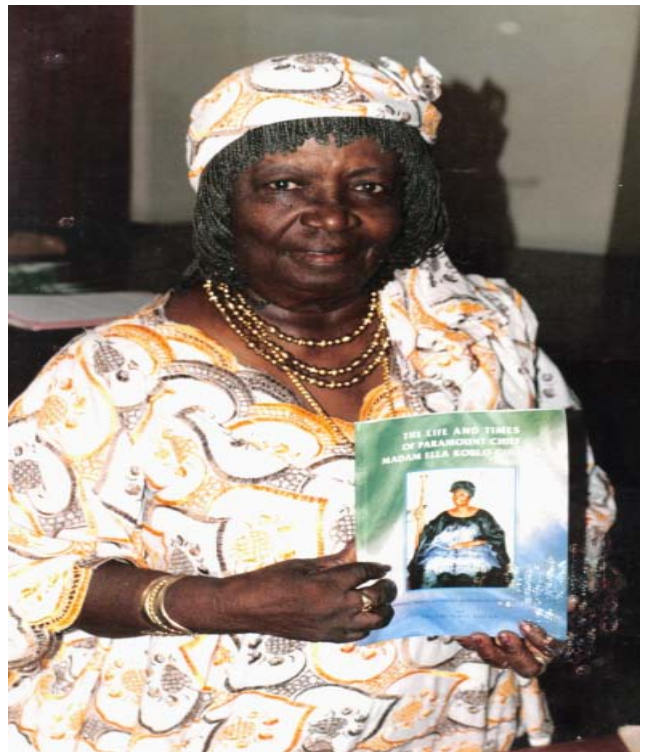
Launch time for participants at the Induction workshop



Annie Walsh pupil receiving books on behalf of her school club



Founder and First Executive Secretary of PEN Sierra Leone Mike Butscher



Honorary President of PEN Sierra Leone, Dr. Talabi A. Lucan display her novel for all to see



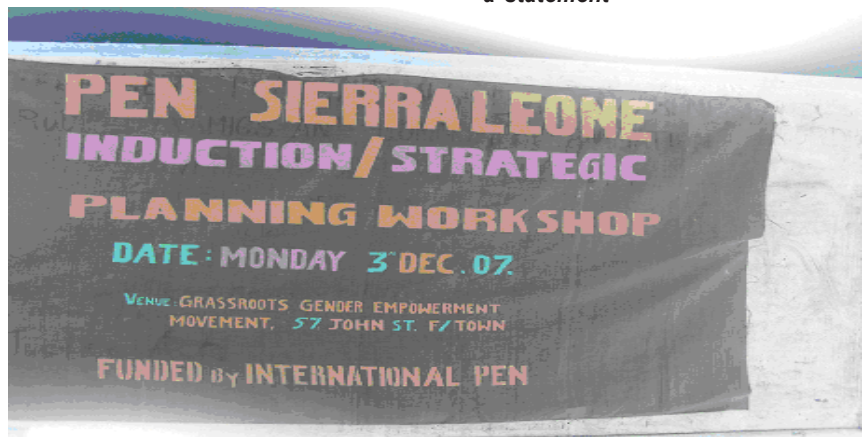
PEN President Mohamed Sheriff presenting prize to a winner of Short Story Competition



School Committee Chairman Nathaniel A. Pearce making a statement



PEN Editor, Arthur E.E. Smith reviewing a book



The Role Of Writers In Sierra Leone

From Page 2

this tendency that feeds a spirit of self pity that justifies stagnation and nurtures the evil of vendetta which sometimes informs our creativity as artists and our views as journalists.

We do know of instances in both world and our local history when writers have influenced, guided, directed and controlled the thinking of their people for goal.

In the 20's both dramatists and journalists in Sierra Leone dictated the mood socially and politically and when those same writers who had authored the change stood up against those they had swept to power through their pens, they were pursued. That for me is the past which should concern us, much more directly as we try to direct our people's thoughts to positive lanes of aspiration, rather than the all too frequent focus on imperialists, capitalist and western barnacles and handcuffs that we too readily invoke as excuses.

As the krios say, "if you nor no usay you de go, tray no usay you komot." "But when we are eternally focused on where we come from we are unaware that we are progressively losing sight of where we want to go or where we are going. We may have allowed negative sentiments for others to imprison and confine even our ability and capacity to think positively of ourselves to the extent that a sense of balance may have been better banished or exiled from our thoughts.

According to Ed Howe, "any man, who will look into his heart and honestly write what he sees there, will find plenty of readers." Of equal importance is the submission of William Dean Howells who said. "If I were authorized to address any word directly to our novelists, I

would say: Do not trouble yourselves about standards or ideals, but try to be faithful and natural." We all need courage to ply our trade if honesty, truthfulness and faithfulness must be accolade that our writings will attract.

Oinam Anand tells us that "the writers' vocation is to explain to the people the essential meaning of today's world, which contains the seeds of tomorrow and future hope. Courage and determination are essential for that mandate in Sierra Leone as everywhere else.

In this our current complex world the writer's mission or role cannot be seen as other than complex. Even in that light we cannot ignore the fact that there are certain features shared by writers through the world.

Again Anand goes further to say that "the writer's mission today is, as it has always been, to testify about man and his circumstances, and to seek to have a mark in literature by striking a blow at the indifference and ignorance which doom society and the world to stagnation and mutual misunderstanding.

"The germs of the future should be discovered in the foundation of the present, and the foundation of the present for the use of the future is only laid by writers, philosophers and thinkers.....

"The chief mission of the writer is to struggle for peace and upliftment of the society in which he lives. This role is determined not only by his place in literature but also by the degree of his involvement in the society's public life. "What is your involvement in that context?

"Since life is the source

of all inspirations serious writers cannot ignore the problems which confront people from day to day. Therefore, they set out to expose and condemn all manifestation of evils wherever they appear. "We need to be the people's people in the sense of seeking our society's interest.

It is vital for us as writers to realize that "society's moral health and the intellectual climate in which people live are in no small measures determined by literature and art. As writers in Sierra Leone, we have a war at hand, but we can only achieve success if we fight our unique battles with commitment, passion, discipline and truthfulness.

Let us be responsible to our society, be aware of our social responsibility and our commitment to our nation. If we should be able to stand up to the challenges at our doorsteps, let us develop writing kits which contain curiosity, passion, determination, awareness, energy, openness, sensitivity, perseverance, a listening ear and an observant eye.

The kind of interest which will feed a sense of nationalism is the least we need as writers to enable us to understand and perform the role which our aptitude has invested in us. Approve that however, let us protect our sense of honesty and also accept that if we cannot address the nation, we certainly can talk to a community. If any community that we attend can attend to those around it, we would have successfully built the bridges which are stipulated in our contract.

- Written and presented by Mr. Raymond de-Souza George, at the literary Evening held on 22 December 2007 in honour of a visiting Ugandan PEN centre delegate.

“Catching Them Young”

The 'catch them young' slogan has always been PEN Sierra Leone center's watch word.

Some of the comments and concerns expressed by writers on May 13th 2003, when PEN was launched in Freetown raised the big question about how the organisation could popularize the art of reading and writing in Sierra Leone in the face of numerous challenges not the least of which is inadequate bookshops.

Other reasons for the lack of interest in reading are poverty, poor reading culture, the popularity of Nigeria movies and satellite TV football among both the young and the old.

In order to arrest this downward

trend and rekindle the culture of reading and writing there should be a starting point. Thus the catch them young phrase. It's a crusade the PEN centre has declared against the low interest in reading since it was established five years ago.

The task of popularizing the art of reading and writing and creating literary community has seen the establishment of schools clubs across the country. The Centre is aware of the fact that there are a lot of unpublished works that must be brought to light; that besides, we are aware of the great reservoir of talents that we can help to develop. It is in view of this that the PEN membership thinks it would be worth-

while to introduce a writers' club in schools so as to "catch them young" and contribute in tapping and developing their talents.

PEN Sierra Leone believes that writers should start at an early age. This underscores the importance of imagination in childhood. Early start in introduction to creative writing will also enhance reading which will in turn improve writing skills.

If the children are caught young in the writing world, they would be able to contribute meaningfully to the development of our nation.

PEN Members Set To Promote Literature

From Page 6

opening ceremony, the chairperson of the Sierra Leone PEN Planning Committee, Mrs. Esme James gave the background to the workshop. She reiterated the International PEN request for PEN Sierra Leone to consolidate its membership in order to develop and implement a long term plan for the centre and to maintain a healthy relationship with other Africa PEN centers.

The workshop objectives were outlined as follows:

A. To identify members who would be in the different standing committee of International PEN and the Sierra Leone chapter.

B. To enable participants to explore ways of consolidating membership and making the centre viable.

The following committees were identified and established:

1. The Fundraising Committee
2. Writers for Peace Committee

3. Writers in prison Committee
4. Women writers Committee
5. Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee
6. Publishing Committee
7. Journalism Committee

The centre now has established committees. This is the first time in the history of PEN Sierra Leone when committee chairpersons would be having technical meeting with the Executive Board to map out and implement various activities. The first meeting took place on the 19th January 2008. During the committee meeting, members revived the past activities of the centre.

The strategic planning workshop was made possible through the Innovation Funding provided by PEN International. The funding also made provision for the training of two PEN senior officials in managerial skills and financial accounting.

Foreward

From Page 2

organised both locally and internationally. In this way, slowly but surely, we can resuscitate this dying interest in reading and writing.

Children should know that few things, if any at all, contribute to their overall education as much as reading. Reading improves their communication skills and broaden their horizons in all spheres of knowledge. knowledge acquired through reading increases their chances of climbing up the socio-economic ladder. All other things being equal, the child or grown up who makes reading his or her hobby is very likely to do better in school or the work place and in society as a whole than the one who does not.

It is therefore with great pleasure and hope of a brighter future for reading and writing that we publish the maiden edition of this quarterly publication. we hope that it will grow in strenght and we will be overwhelmed with contributions from all over the country for our subsequent editions.

Elements of Creative Writing For Children

BY MRS T. A LUCAN

Writing is an Art. Anything that is creative is an Art.

Creative Writing therefore is an Art in a double sense, and anyone who engages in it can lay claim to being in the domain of the Artist. Whatever activity one engages in for the benefit of children, be it their feeding, or their education or just their welfare, must be carefully handled and when it comes to writing for them this must be artistically done. Before going on to the subject of this paper, permit me to dwell a little on the creative writer, the Artist himself or herself. I shall ask three questions.

1. Your Inclination – when did you become aware of your inclination, or tendency towards creative writing for children? Was it just when you saw the advert for entries and the prizes being offered for the competition or has there been a long-standing urge to express yourself in words on paper. Of course I know that in fact some of you have been writing for some time. But it is the art of writing for a specific audience that is the problem. You must put yourself in the place of your target audience, in this case children- the age group concerned.

2. Motivation - Assuming that you had or have always had an inclination or tendency towards writing, what then motivated you to actually write? It could have been your association with children in the home, at school or in society. Perhaps it was something you heard in a taxi or saw on Television. Something triggered off a passionate feeling or some irresistible urge for you to write. Perhaps you woke up in the middle of the night, seized by an inspiration resulting in an idea.

3. The Idea – what did you do about the idea you had? Did you scribble it down as it came to you? Once you get an idea, it is best to jot it down, then develop it fully in your mind, before you begin to write. Remember that the most difficult materials to present is that which is intended for children, whether fiction or non-fiction. Says an Indian writer of folk tales for children “I had to bring a certain mobility and action into these art forms which are usually static. This I thought would give the children greater involvement and interest in the story and ensure that they would want to travel from page to page.”

Now let us look at the elements in creative writing. Let me say that these elements apply to creative writing for any audience, but here we are concerned with children. These elements are:-

1. The Characters

In developing an idea, the writer needs characters- the persons or objects which would give life and meaning to the idea. Here it is necessary to create believable characters. If the central character is a child let him/her come out as real person. It makes no difference if the character is human or animal, a devil or a ghost; it should be believable even by children. Kunny Rabbit must really perform believable tricks. The main characters must always initiate action. Children love characters with whom they can identify so the writer should know his characters well and describe them clearly enough to be recognized by the child. Choose their names carefully. Make them easy to remember.

2. THE PLOT

A plot tells what happens to the

characters in a story. It is build around an event or a series of events which take place within a given time. A story might begin with a background which builds up to a climax the highest point of the story leaving the reader asking “what happens next?” the answer comes in the outcome at the end of the story. Children like stories in which exciting things happen. They do not like stereotypes

3. THE THEME

If you are an avid reader as you should be, you would realize that every good story leaves an emotional feeling in your mind-love, hate, fear, joy, envy, hope or something. It need not be a clear message or a moral, but what develops from the interplay of the characters and the plot. Even in creative writing for children, however young, there must be a theme which would evoke some emotion.

4. THE STYLE

The way you present your story is very important. You may wish to begin with the usual “il-ow-wan de yah” or “once upon a time”, these are customary beginnings, but you may choose your own style- get off to a cracking start- especially for the upper primary. Use dialogue skillfully, bring in dramatic scenes, and some humor where appropriate.

A story may be written in the first person as though the writer is the principal character or in the third person where the writer stands apart from the characters and tells the story. This is usually preferred by beginning writers.

In conclusion, you may now look at your entry in the light of the elements of (1) character (2) plot (3) theme and (4) style and see whether you can do an analysis to find out where the weaknesses lay.

Junior Short Stories

Traffic Congestion

Traffic congestion is a situation where in a long line of vehicles on a road or street cannot move or can only move slowly causing blockage and various inconveniences.

It occurs mainly in the city and is usually caused by cars that breakdown in the streets due to mechanical problems, lack of servicing or poor servicing and inadequate repairing of tires. Also the size of vehicles like trucks, trailers, huge vans moving along narrow streets causes traffic congestion as they take a long time moving carefully and slowly along so as not to cause accidents. The situation causes a lot of problems including road accidents mostly due to impatient drivers trying to over take cars that are in front of them. These drivers are being very reckless and on high speed cause accidents leading to traffic congestion. Street sellers also construct footpaths causing pedestrians to walk on the roads giving rise to accidents.

Another problem which traffic con-

gestion causes is lateness that occurs very often especially among students going to schools. For example, one day, I was on a bus that left Kissy, in the East end of Freetown and was heading towards the centre of the town on my way to school along with some other students. It was around seven in the morning and we had not even gone very far when we met a long line of traffic caused by slow coordination and poor direction of vehicles by the traffic police Officer who was conducting traffic. We had to sit there in the bus in the heat and suffocating atmosphere for about two complete hours without even getting out as we were constantly told that we would soon be moving. It was even difficult to stretch our legs as the bus was so jam-packed that you might mistakenly step on someone without meaning to. We finally left at around nine o'clock reaching our different destinations and schools very late, and had to un-

dergo punishments even though we tried giving reasons for our lateness.

This situation can however be controlled by prohibiting large vehicles like trailers, huge vans, trucks from passing along narrow streets and roads like the Hill Cut Road, Mountain cut in Freetown etc so as to prevent accidents and traffic congestion. Street trading should be stopped in places where cars are likely to pass; proper maintenance, servicing cars, repairing of tires should be done before cars are ready for usage.

Since street sellers obstruct foot paths and do not allow free flow of traffic and pedestrian movements because of traffic congestion giving rise to frequent road accidents and confusion between drivers, the above suggested controls should be enforced by the police and make sure that they are adhered to.

- *By Hawa Talowoh*
AWMS

How True Love Began

There lived a young man called Sundu whose parents loved him so much that he was advised strongly not to have any affair with a woman. Since he was young and healthy, he fell in love with a beautiful girl by the name of Wanja. Wanja was chased by all the princes in that kingdom but Sundu was her favorite.

Sundu who never asked his parents to explain why he should not have affairs with a woman, took Wanja in his bed room. Before day could break, Sundu had died. Wanja sat by his dead body and reported the incident the next morning.

The father of Sundu asked the men to bath him and after which his body was to be burnt in fire because as his father explained, his death may be an ill omen in their family. He should have waited for certain

rituals to be performed before getting married. Wood was then brought for Sundu's body to be burnt. When Wanja got to know the reason for his lover's death she decided to join him in the fire. Both were burnt to ashes.

Both of them met in the land of the dead. They kept on going for a trip to another land so as to be away from their previous home. They reached at a town and decided to sleep in that first town. A certain lady who became interested in Sundu gave them food and lodging in exchange that Sundu would carry her along. Sundu agreed and they kept on their journey the other day along with Wanja.

They arrived at an area which had a big river that was not easy to cross in any way. A newly born baby had to be sacrificed

to the gods. A lady by the name of Abbie offered her baby to the devil but decided to marry to Sundu after crossing. Sundu had three beautiful young ladies and continued their trip to another land. They came to the town where the king lived. The king has a very beautiful daughter by the name of Hannah. The king who became envious of Sundu wanted to kill him by using charm. He arranged with his daughter to offer a ring to Sundu. She asked Sundu to take her to the river where she dropped the ring from her father. The next day, the death of the King was pronounced and Sundu along with Hannah including the other wives took over the land as king and wives of Sundu.

By Bernardette N. Moiwo
R.C. School Koidu Town

Junior Short Stories

A True Happening In A Village Called Fonoyama, A Village In The South Of Kono

"Soko's Mystery"

There lived a certain woman called Soko. She has this name because she was responsible for the initiation of the young girls to the Bondo Society. She has several children and even became famous and popular in the entire area. In her life, Soko never glanced at a grave with her naked eyes. When she was asked for the reason, she assured all the villagers that the greatest thing she feared in her life was the grave. When she was

asked who would be buried in her own grave at the time of her death, she answered that when the time approached that problem would be solved.

Soko lived many years after that and one day, she put on her best clothes, especially the one she usually wore at initiation caremonies. People around asked to know her destination which she never revealed to them. She picked her pail, made of rattan and a

sword and left. She arrived at a junction and in between was a stick where she hung the pail and stocked the cutlass or sword on the tree. She was not seen up to this time. Her disappearance created awareness to all in the area. They searched and searched for many days without any sight of her. The destination of Soko up to this time has still not been known. Where has Soko gone to?

By Bernardette N. Moiwo

All That Shines Is Not Gold

Long ago, there lived ghost triplets who died at their middle age. They started visiting village by village without doing harm to any one. They were so handsome that the young women who saw them never refused their sight in company or marriage.

There lived three spinsters at Boodu who were not having children and were mocked at by their friends and elders. So they decided among themselves that any young man who came to their village and asked them for marriage, surely that man would never leave them behind.

Fortunately for these three girls Sia, Kumba and Finda sat one evening discussing their plight and saw these ghost triplets entered the village. They welcome them, warm water for them to wash and offered them food. Because of the warm reception which impressed the ghost triplets, they asked them for marriage. They accepted and even added that they would not stay but decided to go along with them to any destination so as to avoid the laughter and the gossip in the village.

They all joined these three men and decided to go to any destination they took. They traveled for the rest of the day and arrived to a place which had a very big rock and where three chains were hanged

suspending from the sky.

The three ghost triplets held the chains one after the other. They asked their girl friends to get hold of the chains each after the proposed husbands. As they were about to get off the ground, the ghost triplets burst into a song.

This is the song:

Siah, yoeh bia chendeh cheh

Tun tekeh

Tun tun te keh

Tun tekeh

Kumba yoeh bia chendeh cheh

Tun te keh

Tun tun tekeh

Tun tekeh

Finda yoeh bia chendeh cheh

Tun te keh

Tun tun te keh

Tun te keh

Before they came to the end of the song, the chain which was about to reach to their destination but unfortunately for Siah, she fell back on the rock and scattered into pieces. She never continued the journey.

Kumba and Finda arrived with their husbands while one of the ghost triplets had none. They lived for a time with their husbands who brought everything they wanted for them.

While these two young ladies were in this town, there was an old lady who watched their movements. They helped her to bring water and

did some domestic works for her. She called them in secret and advised them that there will be a time in the future, when their husbands would ask them to go back. If the time comes, never pick any clean box but the dirtiest among them should be chosen. Those with clean outward appearances are not favorable she puts it. Finda refused that she cannot take something dirty after a long stay. She discussed it with Kumba. The later decided to pick the dirty one and said "who knows what it would contain? Not everything that looks outside can be inside".

The time came for their departure and they chose their choices. Kumba took the dirtiest box while Finda took the cleanest and they set off back home.

As they entered the village, all embraced Finda for her clean box. There were few comments on Kumba's choice but she never heeded to their gossips. Both went to their different houses. Kumba opened her box and there were the best jewelry and precious stone which she sold to get herself and her family rich. When Finda opened her box in a closed house, lion, leopards, snakes and crocodiles came out and ate everyone of them. So it is not everything that looks pretty outside that carries value.

Junior Short Stories

A Decision Taken Too Hastily By A Parent

Rosaline was a bright student in form four in a reputable Secondary School who has grown up tall and beautiful for her age of 14, with protruding breasts and large buttocks that winds when she walks causing the men to follow her with their eyes.

Born to a Christian family, her father had wanted her to become the first female priest of their mission. But her character changed considerably when she befriended some girls who have left school earlier as dropouts. They convinced her to have a boyfriend and she began to sneak from home to attend activities at night, returning in the morning. Her father caught her returning home one morning after attending a disco and dance and it annoyed him so much that he asked her out of his house.

Rosaline went and lived with her friends who would leave her every evening sleeping on a mat on the floor only to return home early in the morning. Tired of sleeping alone in the house at night, she decided to accompany her friends one day and they took her to a brothel in the heart of the city where the operator fancied Rosaline and engaged her in a tete-a tete.

During their conversation, Rosaline explained her plight and she was readily offered employment with free lodging in the brothel without being briefed about the nature of her job. After a week of 'niceness', her boss assigned her as a call girl to the top brass of male visitors that went to the brothel. At first she found the job embarrassing, having to cope with the many men that visited the brothel and the free drinks they offered her before or after service.

Gradually, Rosaline adjusted herself and was having fun performing her duties. She was very popular with her customers, and soon she became a professional. She saved a lot of money and bought herself many beautiful dresses. After some time, she resigned from the brothel, rented a flat and set up her own business.

As her business expanded, her customers multiplied, ranging from military personnel, sailors and tourists among others. After a long period, she feels ill and went to see her doctor who discovered and told her that she was infected with the AIDS virus. Broken hearted, she died later.

Her mother, Mammy Mary was taking breakfast that morning when her appetite was disturbed by a knock on the front door. A heavily

built short fellow with an unkempt hair and dirty beard, who claimed to be the bodyguard of the late Rosaline, standing between the half opened doors, greeted. "Good morning Ma' am."

Surprised to see such a tramp at her door, Mammy Mary quickly replied: "Good morning, but I think you are at the wrong address."

"That's wrong Mama," the fellow retorted. "I know I'm at the right address and I've come to tell you that your daughter, Rosaline is dead. She passed away for the great beyond at the dead of night yesterday," the fellow said and paused.

"No! it can't be my daughter! What in hell must have killed her?" Cried the mother. "Her doctor revealed to her that she was infected with AIDS and broken hearted, she died after a short illness. Her remains are at the government hospital in town. Thanks Ma, that's all I know and I must leave now," he closed the door behind him and left.

Rosaline's mother screamed making the neighbors rush into the house to enquire what had happened. She broke that sad news to them and soon many people crowded around her house which they quickly cleaned and transformed into one that looked like where there was a funeral. The elders of the church too gathered and began to console the mum with verses from the bible, while others sang funeral songs.

The remains of the late Rosaline were brought home lying in a coffin in the parlour. The mother on seeing the corpse fainted and had to be revived. When she gained consciousness, she stared at the remains of her daughter. Breathing fast and with a voice almost hoarse, she said: "Rosaline my daughter, you were a good girl going to school. But suddenly your character changed for the worse and..." choked with emotion she burst out crying again at the top of her voice and then continued "May the good Lord forgive your sins and grant you a place in Heaven. Greet all my people over there and tell them that I am coming but not just now," the mother concluded.

While some of the mourners sulked, the mother stood up, stared again at the remains of her daughter for sometime rather weakly, her strength began to fail her and her feet could no longer carry her weight. She reeled backwards, fell on the ground and fainted again as the last nail was hammered into the coffin to seal it.

By Billy Briggs

How Involved Is The Young Sierra Leonean In The Art Of Writing?

Sierra Leoneans are people renowned for creativity and as a people enriched with knowledge. Sierra Leone has indeed produced remarkable and revered writers at International level. People like Prof. Syl Cheney – Coker who is a distinguished and celebrated writer, coming from a small West African country like Sierra Leone.

Yes, it is very obvious that most writers did not start at an early age but, it is as well necessary for the young ones to practice the art of writing as it plays a very fundamental role in molding them up for the future.

The young Sierra Leonean of our days pays less attention to the art of writing. I throw a challenge that, less than 30% of the young Sierra Leoneans of today pay attention to writing. This is very sad start for the future.

The Art of Writing should be part of every school going person in any country. “I am not an art student” is the common excuse most of them give. Even the so called “art students” pay less attention to writing. Most of them mistakenly feel that, spending some of their study time writing is a mere waste of time. This is one of the major reasons why most students find it very difficult to write essays, analyze speeches and composition when they are asked to do so in exams.

It should be made crystal clear to everyone that, anyone can be a writer as long as you wish. Being a writer does not mean, abandoning your profession and taking up writing instead. If one carefully goes through a senior secondary school pupils writing, one will find it very disorganized and boring. One reason for that is, because the student has not practiced writing; practice we should remember ensures perfection. Except you are fortunate

but, if you try to get one or two students to talk about writing, it will end in an unexpected and counterproductive way. It appears that writers clubs and magazines in schools are dead. Except for now that we are hearing about plans on the way to revitalize them by courtesy of the Sierra Leonean PEN.

The Sierra Leonean PEN has now been established to bring writers together and help build up growing writers. As a result of this, the PEN centre first established five PEN (pilot) school clubs in the Western Area and has now increased the number of PEN Clubs in the Provinces just to get the young ones on board. It is clear that, PEN observed the backward state of the young Sierra Leonean in literature. Now, the school clubs are in existence with eleven schools on board.

But one question that plays in my mind is, how serious do the young Sierra Leonean take these clubs. The Centre has a library at the office, but how many students go there to read? How many students submit articles for publications? How many ask for guides as to how one school be engage in writing? It is really a big problem. How many students are really interested in literary activities? Some may say, “I don’t know how to write” and others say, “I find it very boring.”

But, it does not happen by magic. The effort has to be made before work is done. You cannot expect the fulcrum of a machine to move when no effort has been made. The books are there at the centre, gathering dust. Very few of them are touched by few people.

Writers’ workshops for beginners are

being organized, but very few are there to take part in them. Yet they continue to groan, “I don’t know how to write.” Every body can write, but how can you write when you don’t practice? Young people do not; in any way make use of the centre. Even those who claim to be members of the PEN school clubs don’t. If you sit at the centre for the whole of the day, 96% of the visitors are grey haired men and women who come to fulfill various interests.

If it was a place where CD’s are auctioned and rap music is taught, you will see young boys and girls going up for service. It is ridiculous.

The pen is powerful and the power to write is very important. If the young Sierra Leoneans embark on writing, then, we will really realize the power of the word. We can use our pens to sensitize the citizens of the odds in our communities. Writing, really teaches us about life as we come across many writings that are meaningful in the human life. We also need to develop our mental power to meet the demands of the future. No one knows what the future holds. Let us try and abandon the negative expressions: I am not a writer; I am not an art student or I find it very boring.” Let’s practice writing and make use of the opportunity that is by us.

By Edward B. Kargbo

St Edward Secondary School.

**Articles by pupils
were collected
over a period
from 2004 to
2007**

How Could I Benefit From Being A Member of PEN

Meeting Published Writers

PEN's main resource is writers. It has among its membership the core of published writers based in Sierra Leone. You will have the opportunity to meet with them, share and learn from their experiences. Some of these writers have volunteered to support our schools visitation programme to inspire and challenge young people and simultaneously populariz writing and reading.

Monthly Meetings

Writers, by the nature of their work, spend much time alone. PEN will hold monthly meetings for members, most meetings take the form of a lecture/discussion on a relevant topic, poetry or short story reading,

followed by discussion and then an informal social gathering. These sessions will be informal and highly interactive. An Annual General Meeting takes place on May 13 to commemorate our anniversary.

Visiting Overseas PEN Centre

Members of PEN have access to facilities in centers outside Sierra Leone as a member of the International PEN family.

International Events

Sierra Leone PEN observes International Writers' Day (June 7) each year. It organizes literary programmes attended by writers from all over the country.

International PEN holds a congress each year and PEN Centers and members around the

world are invited.

PEN also observes World Literacy Day (September 8) in collaboration with other partners in education.

Services for Members

Training workshops on creative writing are held periodically in collaboration with the British Council, the United States Embassy and other partners. Local and international resource persons will conduct such workshops and deliver lectures.

Our Resources Centre connects you with publishers and writers abroad and provides a meeting place for writers of all ages and persuasions to interact and plan together.

PEN provides for members an archival service for research on literature and writing and current affairs, rental of books etc. PEN administers literary awards for excellence in writing

PEN gives you an outlet to express yourself through short stories, poetry, drama, articles/essays and creative writing tips through our PENPOINT literary magazine

PEN encourages and provides you with the opportunity to read and write.

"The writers' sword"

International PEN runs high profile campaigns for writers harassed or imprisoned in all countries. It regularly sends books to writers in prison, and it makes representation to government on censorship and on freedom of expression. As the largest international organizations for writers (with some 15,000 members worldwide), PEN's influence is considerable.

INTERNATIONAL PEN SIERRA LEONE CHAPTER

CENTRE FOR CREATIVE WRITERS & THOSE INTERESTED IN WRITING

DO YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN WRITING ?

DO YOU WANT TO WRITE?

**DO YOU HAVE STORIES, POEMS OR SONGS YOU
WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP AND PUBLISH?**

DO YOU WANT TO MEET ESTABLISHED WRITERS?

**DO YOU WANT TO JOIN A SCHOOL WRITER'S
CLUB?**

THEN THE SIERRA LEONE PEN CENTRE IS THE PLACE
TO CONTACT

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YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO WRITE

