

# Techniques for Creating Suspense in Literary Texts: A Study of Selected Short Stories by John Luangala

*Florence Tembo*  
The University of Zambia

## Abstract

It has been argued that compared to the novel, the short story has had remarkably little criticism devoted to it, and what theory exists reveals few definitive statements about its nature (Pasco, nd). Gullason and many others have argued that, although the short story may be an “underrated art” it remains remarkably hardy. Various techniques are used in making the short story interesting and worth reading and one such technique is the use of suspense. This article, therefore, discusses how suspense in short stories is created with a focus on the following selected short stories by John Luangala: ‘A Narrow Escape,’ ‘the Innocence of a Dog,’ ‘In the Arms of the Law,’ ‘My Sister’s Keeper,’ ‘Catching A Thief,’ ‘Night Hunter’, and ‘Love On First Sight.’ It has been found the analysis of the selected short stories by Luangala that placing characters in increasing danger, use of verisimilitude, gradually developing suspenseful events and reversing suspenseful situations are some of the ways in which suspense is created by Luangala. Using examples from the selected stories, and the narratological approach as the overarching theoretic framework, this article shows how each technique is manifested thereby creating suspense in the stories.

**Keywords:** suspense, narratology approach, techniques, short story

## **Introduction**

One literary technique that has been used by authors to create interest in their literary texts is suspense. A literary text gets the interest of the reader once the reader is emotionally involved in the particular work. Iwata (2008) argues that ‘suspense is mostly experienced while reading and has the reader involved with the story.’ Hedonic (2013) also argues that ‘suspense is the emotional investment readers experience with regard to the resolution of a story. It is experienced in stories and is associated with enjoyment’. Therefore, one way in which a reader’s attention or interest can be captured by the author is through the creation of suspense.

It has been argued that although suspense is a vital tool, most books on writing only mention it in passing and few devote much space to its creation and development (Irvine, 2016). Although rarely discussed, authors create suspense using different techniques. This article, therefore, aims at discussing how suspense is created in the short stories by John Luangala. While Luangala has written a number of short stories, only a selected few will be analysed in this study. These are ‘A Narrow Escape,’ ‘the Innocence of a Dog,’ ‘In the Arms of the Law,’ ‘My Sister’s Keeper,’ ‘Catching A Thief,’ ‘Night Hunter’, and ‘Love On First Sight.’ The article first defines suspense then discusses the theoretical framework that can be applied to the discussion of suspense. This is followed by a discussion on techniques used to create suspense in literary texts generally, and then a discussion of techniques used by Luangala to create suspense in the selected short stories.

## **Definition of Suspense**

Suspense is defined by Schmidt, (1995:143) as a dramaturgy technique that plays the difference in knowledge between the audience and the characters on the screen. It is the intense feeling that a reader would have as he or she awaits certain outcomes of an event. Kemertelidze and Manjavidze (2013: 693) define suspense as ‘a state or condition of anxiety and uncertainty or excitement about an outcome of something unknown.’ They add

that suspense is a state of tension or worry about something that may happen.

Lehne (2014:15) defines suspense as an emotional phenomenon that is experienced in a multitude of contexts. He argues that patterns of suspense and resolution contribute to aesthetic emotions evoked by works of art. Reading literature can induce emotions, these emotional experiences are often the main motivator for people to read.

Doust (2015:23) argues that suspense is one narrative phenomenon capable of maintaining the attention of viewers or readers over surprising long periods of time. Csikszentmihalyi (2009: 196) suggests that suspense is the capacity to focus attention; it may strengthen the effects of the emotions that are experienced during the reading of a story.

In short, suspense is the feeling of anxiety or anticipation of what will happen in the story. This paper intends, therefore, to show what techniques are used by Luangala in some of his short stories that have been selected for the purposes of this study. Techniques in this study will refer to the way Luangala creates suspense. While the term suspense in this study will mean any narrative phenomenon capable of maintaining the attention of viewers or readers over surprising long periods of time as has been defined by Doust (2015:23). Narratology will be the theoretical framework used in this study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Narratology (Narrative Theory)**

The narrative theory also known as narratology is defined as the theory of the structures of narrative (Ameriana, and Jofib, 2015: 183). The term narratology was introduced in 1969 by Tzvetan Todorov, from its French version *narratologie*. Other proponents of narratology include Vladimir Propp, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, Seymour Chatman Umberto Eco, and Jean Francois Lyotard. (Meamy, 2001:32).

Narratology is structural in nature and is concerned with the formal features of a narrative. It is described as “the analysis of the structural components of a narrative, the way in which those components interrelate, and the relationship between this complex of elements and the narrative’s basic story line (Meamy, 2001:1) According to Prince (1982: 5), narratology examines what all narratives have in common, and what allows them to be narratively different. He adds the idea that narratology is not concerned with “the history of particular novels or tales, or with their meaning, or with their aesthetic value, but rather with the traits which distinguish narrative from other signifying systems and with the modalities of these traits.” Ameriana and Jofib (2015: 184) state that it is clear from Prince’s and other definitions that narratology does not deal with the abstract levels of a specific narrative nor with the interpretative dimension of narratives; but it investigates narratives’ structure and basic traits which ultimately give shape to what a narrative is and what distinguishes it from other forms. In other words to study a narrative from a narratological perspective is to study all parts of the narrative in relation with each other (Meamy, 2001:34). The principle aim of narratology is to investigate and describe the structural properties of a narrative and the major concepts of narratology or narrative theory are narration, focalisation, narrative situation, action, story analysis, tellability, tense, time and narrative modes. Although there are many definitions to narratology, this study is concerned with the major concepts of narratology; narration, narrative situation, focalisation, action, story analysis, tellability, tense, time and narrative modes rather than the definition of what narratology is.

The rationale of using concepts of narratology in the current analysis is to justify the view that to study all parts of narrative in relation with each other is key to understanding a text. The nature of this study also entails studying all aspects of the texts (plot, setting, characters, theme, style etc.) to understand how Luangala creates suspense in the selected stories.

It should be noted that while the parts of a narrative can provide great meaning to what a literary text means, the role of the reader

cannot be over looked. This relates to the argument advanced by Tyson (2006) that ‘the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature.’ This also relates to the argument postulated by Lehne and Koelsch (2015) that ‘experiences of suspense in a literary text are associated with negative emotions such as fear, concern or distress that a reader can have. Lehne and Koelsch further argue that in some cases suspense is positive and can, in fact, be a major motivator in engaging in certain activities. That is to say, the meaning does not reside in the text but in the reader’s interaction with the text mediated by the social and cultural experiences of the reader which can either be positive or negative. What this means is that the emotional impact or feeling of anticipation that the reader experiences as he or she reads a literary text are drawn not just by the parts of the texts in this case plot, setting, character, theme and others but also by the physical experience that the reader has with regards to the narrative subject.

### **Some Techniques for Creating Suspense in Literary Texts**

It has been argued that suspense in literary texts is created through various means. According to Anastasova in her work, *Patterns of Creating Suspense in Stephen King’s ‘The Shining’* (2016) one way in which suspense is created in literary texts is by dividing the narrative into different parts. This can be done by creating chapters, sections or even books within a book. Anastasova (2016) argues that King creates suspense by dividing the story into five books; that is Book One, Book Two, Book Three, Book Four and Book Five. She indicates that although the first books do not really abound in suspense-inducing episodes, they have a function in creating suspense as the main suspense bombs are planted in these parts. The elements in the first Books are the basis upon which suspenseful motifs are introduced in the story.

The other way in which suspense is created in a literary text is through delay or withholding of information. Lodge (1992: 15)

postulates that narratives have to keep the reader interested in them and to do so, they usually raise questions in readers' minds and present the answers after some delay and this is the only way to sustain suspense. This also relates to the view by York (2009) that the author must build suspense from one crisis to another so as to give the reader breathing room. This view by York entails that the author must not just reveal everything at once but must unfold the story in phases. This means that the author must delay some information or events to create a successful flow of suspense in the story.

Suspense is also created by the minute details such as knocks on the door, movements of objects such as chairs, sounds and other details that the author includes in a literary work. What this entails is that the narrative will have more details between the introduction of the conflict and the resolving of the same. These details are sometimes not directly related to the conflict and its outcome but the author uses them anyway to build suspense and also to delay the narrative which as seen from above is another way of creating suspense.

Placing characters in situations of making choices is also another way in which suspense is created in literary texts. The author places characters in situations or challenges where they have to make choices and how they make decisions on which choice or solution, is critical to suspense. This is in tandem with Sheey's (2009) argument that suspense develops when a reader anticipates what a character is going to do. This anticipation is built around a choice the character needs to make.

Word referents are also another way in which authors create suspense. The reader is left to make sense out of the references, such as 'it', 'they' and so on by the author not immediately revealing what 'it' or 'they' is. This entails that the reader must somehow pay attention to the details of words and phrases used and to not isolate each word from the entire work as these act as verbal clues. Cupchik (2002) argues that fiction events are presented symbolically (through language) rather than representationally (through images and sounds), so readers may have more control

over emotional distance than viewers. In a frightening book, for example, one can choose to imagine what a monster looks like, to some degree, whereas in a frightening movie one can't help but see the dripping fangs and a gaping maw. Cupchik (2002) argues that this does not necessarily mean that movies are more frightening than books, of course, as one may well tend to imagine the monster in a book as precisely the sort of monster that scares one the most. What this does mean, however, is that people are more in control of the representation of characters, objects, and events in a book and this may have implications for anticipated emotional reactions. This also relates to the reader-response approach which views the reader's reactions to a literary work as vital to the interpretation or meaning of the literary work.

Dibell (1988) in his book *Plot* suggests three ways to produce suspense; this is by switching plots, that is, using subplots to slow the main action, delaying the plot; and repeating of an event to heighten the expectations about the outcome and how the outcome might be different this time. Dibell here seems to suggest that for suspense to be present in a work of fiction, information should be withheld to give more room to the reader to anticipate what will happen in the narrative. This is in tandem with Doust's (2016:23) view that suspense is a narrative phenomenon capable of maintaining the attention of viewers or readers over surprising long periods of time. The long periods of time are created by the author withholding information thereby maintaining the attention of the reader to read further.

Foreshadowing is also another way of creating suspense. Foreshadowing is when the author hints at a particular plot development but only focuses or uses that particular plot at a later stage. According to Bae and Young (2015: 1), foreshadowing implicitly alludes to a future event in a manner that makes it difficult for the reader to recognise its meaning until the event actually happens. This is what narratologists like Genette (2005) refer to as advanced mention narrative. Authors use this narrative technique to make readers think about what they have read and how it connects to future events. Foreshadowing adds dramatic

tension to a story as it creates anticipation on what will happen next in the plot that has been developed.

Flashbacks are other techniques that are used to create suspense in literary text. A flashback is a narrative device in which a narrator talks about the past of a character or refers to some past events in connection to the present. Bae and Young (2015:3) state that flashback often functions to provide backstory in support of a main story line being presented either as a continuous sequence or as a series of scenes showing only the crux of the backstory.

Therefore, from the foregoing discussion, there is reason to argue that there are various ways in which suspense is created in literary texts and various authors use various techniques from story to story and from author to author. This paper seeks to evaluate the techniques which Luangala uses to create suspense in selected short stories in the book titled '*The Innocence of the Dog: A Collection of Short Stories*.' The next section will, therefore, focus on discussing the techniques.

### **Techniques Used by Luangala to Create Suspense in the Selected Short Stories**

There are many techniques that Luangala employs in his short stories to create suspense. These include placing characters in increasing danger or in dangerous situations, stipulating logical or real worlds, gradually developing the suspenseful events, and creating reversals in situations within the stories.

#### ***i. Placing Characters in Increasing Danger or Situations in Which They Face Oppressive and Restrictive Situations***

One technique in which suspense is created in Luangala's short stories is by placing characters, especially protagonists, in increasing danger or where they face oppressive and restrictive situations or circumstances and where they have to make choices without the help of any other character. This is done by placing characters in various conflicts or situations where they are supposed to make choices and in dilemmas. Luangala creates characters (mostly protagonists) whose own traits or urge to overcome something causes them to face an adversary within or outside themselves who opposes the protagonist in achieving what he or she intends. In short,



there is a creation of a conflict that the reader's hopes to see resolved and how the affected character would resolve such a conflict. In most cases, the reader hopes that the hero will succeed and when there are signs of failure, the reader develops fear and this leads to a rise in suspense. It can be argued that in Luangala's short stories, the characters especially the protagonists are placed in such dangerous situations or conflict that creates suspense in the reader. For example, in 'A Narrow Escape,' the protagonist Njeleka is faced with conflicts which are dangerous to the development of this character. One situation Njeleka is placed in, which is increasingly dangerous, is an abusive marriage. We are told that Njeleka is beaten by her husband every now and then and this situation is itself dangerous as it has left her physically injured and could actually lead to her death. The narrator says of this situation:

He had beaten her up again that night, even more viciously than ever before. One front upper tooth had been knocked in, and it only hangs loose onto the shreds of the inner gum. The inside of the upper lip was lacerated, as though it had barely survived the sharp claws of a maddened leopardess. The whole lip drooped swollen over her mouth, forcing it out of shape, so that it looked like that of a tortoise. She also had found herself unable to swallow the saliva that kept welling up into her mouth; nor could she lick clean that which kept collecting in the corners of the mouth and then dripping onto her bosom. The hard knuckles of his clenched fist, big like the head of a giant python and rough like the bark of a hard dry tree, had also blackened the right eye, and the lower lid was puffed up, with its soft inside turned out rather like a loose peeling of an over-boiled tender sweet potato (Luangala 2007: 1).

This situation is clearly a dangerous situation and the reader hopes that Njeleka will come out of it or find a favourable solution to it. Therefore, by using this scene, Luangala places the protagonist Njeleka in an increasingly dangerous situation and ultimately creates suspense in the reader.

Another situation in which Njeleka is placed in a dangerous situation is

when she escapes from her home but on the way has an encounter with wild animals. We are told:

“..... Njeleka had finally decided to run away, to leave Liko for good. She had decided to save her life. She no longer cared what people would say. Her life was more important than the marriage... She did not want to dwell much on the possibility of her being attacked by wild animals, even though that thought did steal into her consciousness from time to time. The villages were very far apart and the game management area was not far away. Quite often, elephants had strayed into people's fields. Lions had also been spotted on and off each year. These were the most dangerous two of the wild species known so far, apart from the mambas. But Njeleka would not be stopped by anything, four-legged beast or slithering reptile..... She was just about to relax guard completely, and then she heard some rustling in the tall elephant grasses to her left but in front. She just went frozen. That loud buzz in her ears resumed, as the heart shook her bosom again, furiously. A low but deep raspy guttural purr from the roadside rose above the buzz in her head; “gri-ri-ri-ri-ri!” it went. Njeleka felt dizzy at first, then numb all over, before she finally slid into a stupor. She stood transfixed to the spot, her open palm spread on the baby's back protectively and the right hand clenched into a tight fist but hanging stiffly beneath the hip. She was able to see everything, but it was rather like in a dream. Although both her feet were firmly planted in the ground, she could not feel her own weight; it was as though she was floating in a thick jelly of nothingness. She could see, but it was as though the eyes were not her own, and as though she was seeing through some water. And then

one large animal, with the amber colour of the drying ripe elephant grass, emerged. Like a giant puppy, but with short ears like those of a normal cat, and the slit nuzzle too of a cat, it walked as though proudly into the clearing of the road, the massive shoulder blades taking turns as they stood out. Stopping in the middle, it turned its head and looked in the direction of Njeleka's, its eyes bright and sparkling and its long smooth tail twirling and twitching up and down rather suggestively and in rhythmic undulating waves, like a playful cat that had spotted either a rat or a lizard. Then it turned back, as if to ignore her presence, and walked on to the right side of the road, where it lay down in the short green grasses as if to wait in mock ambush. The continued rustling in the grass to the left suggested that there was still another beast there, perhaps two, or perhaps several; Njeleka could just not tell (7-11).

This scene does not just place the Character Njeleka in danger it also creates a near miss and a very traumatising situation in which both the reader and the character are left thinking about what occurs.

Another example from which we can draw to show that Luangala uses the technique of placing characters in increasing danger is the story 'In the Arms of the Law'. In this story, the character Yatelo Tembo also referred to as ba-Tembo, is placed in a situation of increasing danger by the author. Luangala does this by making the character ba-Tembo have good personality traits and loyalty. He is a caring, loving, kind, respectful and peaceful person. He actually has a moral code which he terms 'the three habits of his life which are: never smoke, never drink, and bear nobody any grudge at all' (21). It is Yatelo Tembo's personality traits, attitude, convictions and even stand on human relationships that make the reader to love, follow or even cheer

for him. However, curiosity is created in the reader as to how Yatelo Tembo would maintain his personality and continue to be loyal to others in the face of provocation. Therefore, it is clear that Luangala uses these personality traits to create a conflict in which ba-Tembo has to decide either to uphold his personality trait of peace or give in and pick up a fight with another character Jones. This dilemma is what the reader looks forward to being resolved in the story.

It can also be argued that as Yatelo Tembo matures in years, we expect him to apply reason to his decisions or choices he makes. Yet we see him obeying commands from Jones and passes through the rains to go and get Lizzie, a situation that leads to tragic consequences. Luangala applies a technique that leads to suspense by making ba-Tembo not apply logic or reason to his choices or decisions. The reader is left to question what will happen as ba-Tembo chooses to uphold his habit or value of not having any grudge against anyone and instead chooses to pass through the rains to go and call Lizzie as instructed by Jones at the expense of being rational. What we see later is actually Lizzie being more rational by refusing to pass through the rains to go and meet Jones.

“But ba-Tembo. Even you yourself ba-Tembo, how do you imagine me going out in the rain like this for sure? Why can’t he come here himself?”  
(Luangala, 2017: 27).

Lizzie’s response is exactly what we expect ba-Tembo’s response to be, yet he chooses to go through the rains just for the sake of not picking a fight with Jones. This action by ba-Tembo does not just frustrate the reader but leaves the reader in suspense as to what will happen when ba-Tembo goes to Lizzie and back to Jones without Lizzie. Even Jones and his friend seem to be more rational than Yatelo Tembo as they shelter themselves from the rains as can be seen from the excerpt below:

The late November rain was now getting even

heavier when ba-Tembo was arriving back at the tavern. Jones and his friend were sheltering in the narrow corridor in front of the back doorway. (ibid).

Therefore, by placing Yatelo Tembo in a situation where he has to choose either to uphold his habits of not bearing anybody any grudge or apply reason, is how Luangala creates suspense in the short story 'In the Arms of the Law'. Luangala's story clearly shows that the technique of placing characters in dangerous situations contributes largely to the way suspense is created and developed in his short stories.

In all the scenes in Luangala's short stories discussed above, the reader is left to anticipate, worry about, or fear what is going to happen to the protagonists. In the stories, the reader fear the worst is going to happen to the characters Njeleka and ba-Tembo and so the reader sympathises with them. This shows that the author creates suspense by placing characters in dangerous situations in which the reader sympathise with the particular character. According to Irvine (2016) suspense is created when the reader cares about a particular character and when they fear the worst will happen to the character they care about. Luangala does just this to create suspense.

## **Verisimilitude**

Another way in which Luangala creates suspense is through the use of settings and characters that are logical and realistic or what can be referred to as verisimilitude. The use of verisimilitude makes the stories believable and stokes the reader's emotional engagement in the texts. Realism is seen in the fact that Luangala's characters think and act like real people and their worlds are like those of reality. Logic is seen in the way Luangala's characters make decisions. In other words, the worlds around Luangala's characters are logical and realistic and, therefore, their experiences are believable and easily felt by the reader. Luangala's works are presented as if they were real human beings, with feelings and

desires like those of the real world. This is seen in the stories “My Sister’s Keeper,” “Catching a Thief”, ‘A Narrow Escape’ and ‘The Innocence of a Dog’.

In the story ‘My Sister’s Keeper,’ this is seen when Mama NaPhiri disappears and her whereabouts are not known. The first thing we see is that her nephew Chizola begins to search for her starting at the Kingdom Hall where she usually spent her time.

It was her nephew who raised the alarm. It was barely a day after Mama NaPhiri had last been seen. Chizola went to the Kingdom Hall in the morning of that Monday and reported that Auntie had not returned home the previous day. He had come to inquire whether it could be ‘that the Congregation had sent her far out with others to go and witness,’ he said, squatting on the floor while resting his right-hand elbow on the small bench that had been pointed out to him for a seat (Luangala 2017:123).

This is a logical and real-world situation that Luangala uses in this story to create suspense. It is true that someone in real life can go missing and it is true and logical that once this happens, the close relatives begin to search for the person in places where they suspect the person may possibly be. The outcome of the report by Chizola that Mama NaPhiri had been missing is also true in that the people outside the home engage in the search as well. This usually includes neighbours, police, the church, friends and even relatives from afar and this is what we see Luangala depicting in this story. Just like the characters in the story, the reader begins to wonder where Mama Na Phiri is and so anticipation as to where she is, grows thereby experiencing a level of suspense created by the author. Therefore, this is an indication that Luangala uses real and logical worlds to create suspense in his short stories.

Another example is in the story ‘In the Arms of the Law’. The incidence earlier described in this paper in which Njeleka goes through is close to reality. It is true that in many instances, women get beaten by their drunkard husbands for no apparent reason or

on mere suspicion of promiscuity and it is also true that some women may hide such cases, as Njeleka initially does, while some women choose to run away from such abusive marriages. The experience that Njeleka goes through when she encounters wild animals as she tries to run away is also close to reality and is logical as there is a possibility that the animals may kill her which in reality does happen. The vulnerability that Njeleka experiences is also not just logical but true in real life as one encounters wild animals. This vulnerability causes intense emotions in the reader because it is an unexpected event which the author introduces to prevent the plot from being predictable. The reader is curious as to what will be the end of Njeleka. The initial line of thought which is close to reality is that maybe the baby will cry and alarm Liko who would then follow up Njeleka, but Luangala resolves this by Njeleka having the baby suckle so that she (Njeleka) has an opportunity to escape. When she manages to escape, the reader is looking forward to her reaching her village safely, but then there is a sudden intrusion which creates fear and anxiety in the reader. The reader begins to wonder as to whether Njeleka will continue on this journey, or whether she will be found by Liko or worse still whether the Lions will spare her or kill her. This from a psychoanalytical thought upsets one's psychic state. Njeleka experiences post-traumatic stress and so does the reader in reality. This relates to Carroll's (1996) view that 'suspense arises when a well-structured question, with neatly opposed alternatives, emerges from the narrative and calls forth what was earlier referred to as a simple answering scene (or event).' Therefore, while the decision by Njeleka to escape looks simple and an idea favoured by the reader, this decision brings in more questions that the reader expects to be answered through the narrative. For example, will she survive to attack of the animals or will she escape?

The emotional outburst by Njeleka is yet another real reaction to a situation that one experiences and a logical one as well. From a logical point of view, we do not expect Njeleka to smile after a stressful situation from the beatings from her husband and the

encounter with the lions and so her reaction observed by the outburst is a logical thing to do.

Njeleka had arrived at Mulopwe village deep in the night, announcing her arrival with the wailing on top of her voice. Because that was when she felt terribly sad about her relationship with Liko (13).

This act by Njeleka is a sign of post-traumatic stress which Njeleka experiences as a result of the intrusion she has and as she escapes the beatings from her husband. This actually confirms the law of logic which is identity. The Law of Identity in Logic implies that all things have characteristics, because without characteristics, something cannot be identified and, therefore, we could call something a something in the first place because it has characteristics. Therefore, in relation to Njeleka's reaction, we are able to identify that she is emotionally distressed over the situation she is found in as we see the characteristics of emotional distress such as her outburst when she reaches the village. This can be a fallacy if without the author showing us what Njeleka goes through, we assume that the cry is a result of emotional stress. In other words, logic entails that we do not rely on Njeleka's emotions only but on the factors that have led to the emotions.

It can, therefore, be argued from the examples of the stories by Luangala, that the author creates suspense by the use of verisimilitude stipulating what is real and logical of people, places and events.

In 'Catching a Thief', again Luangala uses a real-life situation or verisimilitude to create suspense. In this story, one aspect which we see as a reflection of the real and logical world is the loss of maize that the owner reports at the police:

When harvest time came, one senior villager approached the camp commander one afternoon, with a special complaint. His field was the very last towards the border. He and his wife were currently



busy plucking the dry maize off the stalks and stacking the cobs neatly onto a heap on a cleared patch in the centre of the field, waiting for the time when he would cart all of it to the village when it was all harvested. But for quite a long time now, they had observed that each morning they went back to the field, they would notice some subtle disturbance on the stack, such as several cobs loosely strewn around somewhat carelessly. In addition, the stack itself would look much smaller than they had left it on the previous late afternoon. They had, therefore, come to the final conclusion that someone was stealing their maize during the night (Luangala, 2017:156).

It is true that in reality once the harvest time comes, the farmers usually pluck the dry maize off the stalks and stack the cobs into heaps and storing these into sheds wherever they are available. It is also true that sometimes this maize is stolen by people and this loss is usually identified by the size of the stacks one finds on a particular day in comparison to what would have been there previously. It is also logical that once the owner notices this difference in the stacks of maize gathered with what is actually present, they conclude that someone has stolen some maize and logically in normal situations, this is reported to the police or the headman of a village in places where police stations are far. Therefore, by creating this scenario which is close to reality and logical worlds, the reader is able to relate to what the story is about and not just sympathises with the owner of the maize in this story, but also looks forward to finding out who the thief is just like the owner of the maize does.

Another example worth citing on how Luangala uses real and logical worlds in his stories as a technique of creating suspense is in the story 'The Innocence of a Dog.' In this story, Luangala uses various settings which are real and logical to build up the narrative and subsequently the suspense. The settings in this story

include nights, cold season, green grass, hospital and so on.

June nights were always very cold in Lusaka, so much so that any metal roofing sheets would keep dripping the freezing cold dew throughout. Every household would then keep their windows tightly closed, for the warmth especially. And with so many people in Jube's house tonight, all of them awake and active, he should have felt the air rather thick and suffocating. But what made him want to open the window was not the need for fresh air; rather, it was the sheer desperation for possible tale-tell sounds of dawn. He pushed the window far out, using the usual piece of stone as a wedge to block it so that it would not swing back with the wind. As he leaned far outside, his dry eyes smarting in the cold breeze, he strained his ears for what he hoped would be the sound of a rooster announcing the advent of dawn. But he could not hear any at all. Instead, all that he could hear were other sounds of the night. A lone dog kept barking somewhere to the east of the compound, its guttural voice lingering on in the stillness of the cold night. The one in the yard opposite his house just kept whining, scratching the concrete tiles under the heavy steel gate, obviously anxious to come out and see if anything sporty was going on in the vicinity. In the tuft of the green grass by the water tap in the western corner of his own yard, he could hear crickets screeching and one lone Frog croaking unceasingly. And to the north, he could hear the sound of a heavy goods truck thundering along the Great East Road. Jube knew then that dawn was still very far away. He panicked. (Luangala, 2017: 99).

From the quotation, the season setting raises a number of questions that leave the reader in suspense. Some questions that arise just

from the setting quoted are: Why does Jube panic in the night and when it is so cold? Why does he look forward to dawn and why does he open the window when it is clear that the weather is not favourable; why are all these people in his house at night? These questions, therefore, begin to create anticipation and anxiety in the reader as to what really is happening or is going to happen. The suspense is amplified when there is a mention of a hospital.

And then somebody in the bedroom said something loud, as if despairingly. Jube was able to tell that it was his wife. He did not quite catch the words themselves; only the plaintive tone of the tremulous voice. And then the other women all took it up, in waves of choruses in agreement to something. Jube could barely catch some of the words, but he was almost certain that 'chipatala' (hospital) was one of those repeated most often. He felt weak in the knees with deep apprehension. His longing for dawn grew so intense that he was suffocating on it. (ibid, 99).

The night setting and anticipation of dawn that we see earlier linked to the mention of hospital creates tension not just with Jube, but also in the reader. The reader does not yet know what is happening but Jube knows, yet the tension that is felt by the reader and Jube is something that is fearful. Therefore, this setting helps to build suspense in Luangala's story as it is later the base upon which we understand why he was panicking and yet doing nothing about the situation that causes him to panic.

Thus, it can be argued from the above discussion that Luangala chooses the kind of setting that is real, logical and likely to increase tension in the reader and thereby creates suspense. Settings such as forests, night, rain, all create suspense in the works. It should be noted that although verisimilitude or realism and logic are used in creating suspense in his short stories, unreal or illogical settings such as those found in Science fiction can also create suspense in a story. This means that suspense is not only created by the

inclusion of real or logical settings but unreal or illogical settings can also contribute to suspense.

### **Gradual Development of Plot**

One way in which suspense is created in Luangala's short stories is through a gradual development of the plot with suspenseful events. He does this by withholding information thereby delaying time. In 'Night Hunter,' the story begins with Luwo not able to sleep and already it creates curiosity in the reader as to what would cause Luwo not to sleep.

Luwo lay wide awake now, blinking in the dark, rather like an idle owl. Except that he could not see at all, in the pitch darkness of a late November rainy night. With one protective ear, he was listening to his wife's gentle breathing on the other reed mat where she lay sleeping with the baby (41).

The author, however, creates suspense in this episode by gradually developing the suspenseful events which is by delaying the narration. He begins by showing the reader that Luwo's attention is divided and this is inferred from the following:

'....with one protective ear, he was listening to his wife's gentle breathing on the other reed mat where she lay sleeping with the baby' (41),

From the above quotation, it can be argued that the reader is curious as to why Luwo's attention is divided; what is on Luwo's mind? What is he using the other ear for? Thus, instead of giving a narration on why Luwo's attention is divided, or with what is he using the other ear, the author begins to give a narration about Luwo's past.

Luwo always hated people who snored. And he could still remember once sharing a hut with a distant uncle who, as it turned out, snored so

loudly that Luwo could hardly sleep a wink. It was as though a large empty gourd had been placed beneath his wide nostrils to amplify the guttural and snorting sound, Luwo always remarked to himself. But Mele was a quiet sleeper. Her breathing in and out was always so gentle, like a soft breeze wafting through some green grass. Luwo could not see her in that dense darkness. But he knew that she was lying with one arm folded beneath her neck, for a cushion, and the other encircled around the baby, to hold the quilt in place behind its back. She always snuggled the baby closer to herself, closer to her heart, to give it some of her own warmth, and also some reassurance. Luwo was happy to own a wife and a child. He felt that he was indeed a true man (41).

Luangala spends quite a good time in narrating about Luwo's past before he can narrate about Luwo's present especially as it relates to why he cannot sleep. It is also after this past narrative that he says what Luwo is using the other ear for.

With the other ear, Luwo was listening to the sounds of darkness outside (41)

This gradual development of the plot creates a lot of suspense in the story. According to Anastasova (2016), a general tendency in the structure of narratives with suspense is that the events unfold in the course of several chapters that do not follow one another but are interspersed among different chapters. This relates to Bae and Young's (2008) view that in a narrative, there exist two different levels of time. One is story time experienced by the characters in the story world and the other is discourse time experienced by the readers and through these different levels of time, the author can let readers know about some facts in advance or hide some information until a certain point for dramatic effect. This is also in tandem with Jahn's (2005) view that there are two kinds of tenses in a narrative: the narrative past and the narrative present, which are further classified according to the anteriority

or posteriority relationship between discourse-NOW and story-NOW, which in turn gives up three classifications: retrospective narration which produces a past-tense narrative whose events and action units have all happened in the past; concurrent narration that produces a present-tense narrative whose action takes place at the same time as it is recounted and at last prospective narration produces a future-tense narrative which recounts events that have not yet occurred (Jahn, 2005: 4.). This is precisely what we see Luangala do in a 'Night Hunter' as he begins the introduction of the narrative with stating that something is happening to Luwo, (narrative present) and yet he does not immediately state what is happening but instead flashes back to Luwo's past (narrative past). It is clear that the author uses Luwo's recall of past events in order to create a substantial time lapse between the experiences of the character and the narration. Although the duration of the gap between the threads of narration is short, the author still manages to create suspense in the reader. According to Bayer (2013), time plays a significant role in the creation of suspense. Luangala delays the narration of the events yet he manages to create suspense by initiating events that generate suspense through questions such as why was Luwo awake? With what his other ear was engaged? Why was he looking at his wife? Why did he dislike people that snore? Did he dislike his wife and so on? Luangala pauses the linear narration by introducing some description of the past every now and then within the story 'Night Hunter' and this postpones the outcome of the situation in which Luwo is in and creates suspense. The suspense is actually intensified when the story reaches the climax where Luwo has an encounter with the lion.

Luwo gently opened the door, lifting it with his strong hands and then deftly pushing it aside with the sole of his right foot. Then he sneaked into the darkness outside, trailing the weapons in his hands.... Still squatting beneath the eaves, he gently pulled the door back. He could not venture into the night and leave his wife and daughter exposed to the danger that he thought he might be

in himself. He stayed still for some brief moment, holding back his breath for a while and letting it out gently through the open mouth to find out if he could detect anything in the darkness. And then he heard the goats bleat somewhat uneasily, their feet also stamping on the floor. He headed that way.

As he stood up, he felt his knees suddenly buckle and tremble. The back of his neck pulled and twitched, with something crawling like a spider. His heart started beating harder and faster, and the gentle wind ceased to be cold. In his experience, he only knew one animal that had that sort of effect on a hunter; a lion..... Luwo was only halfway towards the goat pen when he must have startled something.... Before he could even start wondering what it was, a huge beast sprang up into the air, struck out with its menacing paws, and growled deafeningly like thunder. It was only the hunter's instinct to survive that made him leap into the air at just the very instant the beast pounced.... Then he half ran and half crawled towards the only light that he could see, glancing behind once or so... He could not tell how long it had taken him to reach and enter the hut; he only started thinking about it when he was now barricading the door. And then realised where he was; not his own hut (43).

The narration as quoted above is the purpose of the story. It was not about Luwo's past but about his encounter with the lion, hence the title. Luwo's past are used to delay the plot and also as a way to connect his present actions of saving himself from the lion to his past experience. The event when the goats bleat somewhat uneasily and when Luwo's instincts tell him the beast was a lion create more suspense as to what would happen to Luwo. The feeling of a possible bad outcome intensifies the suspense in the reader. Once he enters the hut there is a resolution to the suspense.

The reader is no longer suspenseful as to what will happen to Luwo at the hands of the lion, instead another angle of suspense is created by Luangala as Luwo enters the mother-in-law's hut and not his. The reader, as well as Luwo, are curious as to what will happen when the whole village discovers that Luwo was in the mother-in-law's hut and half dressed.

In the story 'In the Arms of the Law', someone killed someone else but who has been killed and why he was killed is not known. This information is revealed gradually as the story unfolds and almost at the end of the story as much of the details of why the particular character was killed are withheld until in the last section of the story. It is clear from the first page that it is a man who has been killed;

"How far has the case of your elder brother's death gone now, Vin...?" (16).

This is the first piece of the puzzle. However, it is not known who this man is and why he was killed and who killed him and this is what the reader looks forward to knowing as the story unfolds. The kind of suspense that Luangala creates here is that of fear. There is fear and intensity as ba-Tembo's brother begins to narrate what happened to ba-Tembo and as Luangala takes us in the past by shifting the point of view from ba-Tembo's brother to the omniscient narrator and then to ba-Tembo when he himself is narrating how he was sent to and from to call Lizzies before he finally met his fate. From narratological point of view this shifting of point of view between omniscient narrators to participant narrators is actually an aspect of focalisation. This shift creates fear in the reader on what the outcome of Lizzie's resistance to come with ba-Tembo will be. It should be argued that suspense is not always about something scary but a state of uncertainty. It is clear from the narration in the story that something bad happened but what it is, remains uncertain to the reader. From this, it can be argued that the gradual development of a suspenseful event is a technique that Luangala's uses in his short stories to create suspense.

The gradual development of suspenseful plot in Luangala's



short stories is also done by giving minute details in describing little things such as knocks on the door, movements of objects such as chairs, sounds, and other details as well as by the constant switching of plots. This is seen in, for example, 'Catching a Thief.' Luangala begins this story with a long narrative about the Guerrilla war in Mozambique and how the Renamo bandits were perceived by the villagers. When he introduces the conflict; the stealing of maize, he has spent much time giving details about the Renamo than what the actual story is about and this in itself creates anticipation in the reader.

This is also what we find in the story 'In the Arms of the Law.' Luangala narrates the event that leads to the conflict with minute details in between the storyline as seen from the following excerpt:

The first worker to arrive at the tavern that morning was na-Monde. She was the one on duty that week, the one responsible for the cleaning up, both inside and outside the premises. The tavern was surrounded by a thick green hedge that ba-Tembo always kept fairly well trimmed. Inside this hedge was a ring of concrete slabs on which revellers sat, in groups of friends as they passed their plastic container from one mouth to another. To the front of the tavern, the space was wider and the turf was worn out by dancing feet. To the back of the tavern, the turf was intact and well-tended, again by ba-Tembo. Usually, na-Monde would have entered the yard to find ba-Tembo busy helping out with the cleaning up. Using a pointed stick as a fork, he would be walking back and forth, collecting various objects discarded on the previous night by the customers; empty cigarette packets or empty plastic ones of loose tobacco, pieces of paper discoloured with the fat dripping from doughnuts or orange rinds either sucked thoroughly of the sweet juice or scraped clean of the insides. But today she did not find him doing so (Luangala, 2017: 23).

The above excerpt shows the minute details that are used to build up suspense in the story. The author does not immediately tell the reader that ba-Tembo has been killed, but gives a detailed description of things at the tavern as well a description of the workers at the tavern.

In the story 'Love On First Sight,' Luangala spends much time on minute details of events before he actually unveils what the real conflict or what the real issue is.

"Hi, Don," "Hi, Ken." "How are you doing?" "Fine; how's the Friday?" "So-so; how is the Friday?" "I can't complain." Such was typical of the greeting ritual these days between these two childhood friends, Donald and Kennedy. They had known each other for close to forty years now, and their favourite maxim was that they had been together through thick and thin. "Through sick and sin actually," corrected Ken, introducing Don to his other friend who had recently moved into the neighbourhood in Lusaka's Ibex Hill. "That's more precise really, through sick and sin," said Don in agreement, smiling knowingly, as he tenderly shook hands with the new friend. "It's already dark; otherwise you would have seen that both of us are now greying on the head, and on the chin. "In a lot of other places too, and especially in the inconspicuous nooks and crevices," added Ken, a wicked smile broadening his chin. "Yes indeed, in the nostrils as well," said Don, extending the epithet. "You know, the funny part of it is that when you comb your hair only the black stands stick to the comb. The grey ones remain on the skull," the new friend joined in. "That's the agony. The trick nowadays is to keep the scalp shaved clean, Isaac Hayes style. People think it's a style; meanwhile, you yourself know what you are doing," said Ken. And so on went the chatting. The three men were at the time sitting on camp chairs under a mulberry tree adjacent to the

bar that Ken was running. He was sipping at a brown bottle of lager, and Don called out for one as well. The new acquaintance had a clear bottle of mineral water in his hand, half empty. After a short while, he signalled his intention to proceed home. "To go and see the chickens," said Ken, reciting a new fashionable excuse for going home rather early. "Yes, to go and see the chickens," the new neighbour echoed, a thick smile on his lips. "We farmers are used to counting the chickens before they go in for the night." "Or counting the eggs," Don suggested. "Most precisely, to gather the eggs," the neighbour agreed, standing up to be off. "A nice neighbour it seems," remarked Don, after the new friend had disappeared. "Yes, a nice neighbour it seems," Ken agreed. "But you never know people well enough until you have drunk with them, as they say; and I have never done that with him." "Say 'not as yet'," Don corrected. "Because I know you will soon." "Maybe," replied Ken. "He looks the home early type. "The type that monitors the wristwatch you mean?" "Not only the minute hand; the second one too," Ken added. "By the way, how is it in Mikomfwa? Any word from there of late?" Almost two months had gone by since the engagement party. "Yes, I was with her on the phone only about thirty minutes before I arrived here actually. She says hi." "Oh, thanks." "My only worry is that she is becoming a bit more devout these days. At the time that I called, she was somewhere at a football pitch, she said, attending a crusade." "Oh, that's good then." "I supposed so." "Why does it worry you?" "She might turn out the type that demands you home early." "It depends on the first days." (page

It is clear from this excerpt that much time is spent on details of how Ken and Don relate; describing the way they greet each other, what they called each other, how they perceived each other

and so on and the actual exposition of the story only begins after the narrative details.

What is seen, therefore, from the above examples is that the Luangala's narratives have more details between the introduction of the conflict and the resolution of the same. These details are sometimes not directly related to the conflict and its outcome but the author uses them anyway not just to keep the story a bit longer or to connect one event to another but to create suspense as well. In other cases, the details are connected directly to the events or the unfolding of the conflict and its resolution. This is in tandem with the principle of time, tense and narrative mode as propounded by narratologists such as Genette. When?, How long?, and How often?, are critical aspects of time that contribute to the structure of the narrative. Genette (2005) actually argues that these are sub-categories of tense and are divided into three sub-categories: Order, Duration, and Frequency. These principles are also critical for creating suspense. Therefore, Luangala orders the events in a thought out way, with a proper calculation as to when events must begin, how often the narration that relates to the conflict must be made and when the narration must reach a climax and this creates suspense in the stories. According to Doust (2015), plot is strongly linked to suspense and the manipulation of a plot by using time intervals can be construed as one of the ways that suspenseful narratives are created.

#### **iv. Reversal of Situations**

Not only does Luangala place his characters in increasing danger, stipulate real or logical worlds, and gradually develop his suspenseful events as techniques to create suspense in his short stories, he also creates false solutions that end up being traumatic or led to anticipation to the characters as well as to the reader. For instance, in the story 'A Narrow Escape,' we see a false solution to Njeleka's problems when her relatives and those of Liko come to the couple's house to help them.

Mulopwe instructed three of Njeleka's brothers in the

extended family to pay her a casual visit, pretending that they were just passing by. They could not go there and tell her straight away that they had come to attend to her marital problems because she had not reported any. Rather, they would pretend to have come to some neighbouring villages looking for a heifer to buy and to have then taken advantage of the proximity to call at her home and just see how she was, with the children and her husband. "You have done well to have come to see me," she said, at a convenient point when they had settled down and had recovered their breath. "I am in good health, as you can see for yourself, and your brother-in-law is in good health too." "And where is he himself?" enquired Mbizule, another one of her numerous brothers. "He has gone to the fields," She lied. He had gone to the next village to drink, and she was already worried about what would happen when he returned later in the day (ibid.4).

At this point, the reader anticipates that a solution will be found but Luangala reverses the situation by letting Njeleka lie about her going through abuse.

"But my sister, are you happy?" asked Ndombo, who was her immediate elder brother. He looked at her straight into the eyes, scrutinising the pupils to see whether they would squint in hesitation. The wrinkles on his brow showed that he wanted an honest answer. "I am living well," she replied, averting her eyes from his piercing gaze. She reached out her hesitant hand for a dry wig, broke it into half using the thumb and two of her fingers, threw one-half away, and then used the other half to scratch and poke wide an ant-hole next to where she was sitting. "No, do not hide, my sister," insisted Makoza, another one of her brothers. "We have been hearing that he is always beating you. Tell us the truth, so that we can help you." "Who is

saying that he is always beating me?” Njeleka asked, rather defensively. “Can’t a man have a small quarrel with his wife? Don’t you yourselves sometimes quarrel with your wives? I am asking which one of you does not differ with his wife at times?”

“But what we hear is that he actually beats you very often and that he does so very badly. That is not what many men do to their wives, my sister.” “No it is not true,” Njeleka persisted. “Yes, he has beaten me once or twice. But what does that matter? Which real wife has never been disciplined by her husband once or so? This is where some people are not good, meddling into other people’s affairs. They should just mind their own marriages, not other people’s.” She sat tensed up in anger, shrugging her shoulders and pouting her lips in utter displeasure as she intensified her scratching of the earth, (6).

This reversal is in applying the concepts of narratology an aspect of tellability; the ability to tell the story throughout without losing the reader. Telling the story despite many obstacles is key to developing suspense and this is actually well achieved by Luangala. According to Doust (2017:5) ‘telling a story is equivalent to going through an ordered list of events one by one. To “tell an event in the story”, we take the next event from a list of untold events and add it to the tail of a list of Told events. Each new told event may have an effect on one or more narrative threads.

This is also what we find in the story ‘In the Arms of the Law.’ It is clear that Tembo narrates his ordeal and what the reader expects or anticipates is that the culprit will be brought to book, but the situation turns around when the narration is given on when one of the police begins to have an affair with Lizzie which affects the investigation and consequently, leads to the release of the culprits.

‘Love On First Sight’ is also another story where we see the

reversal of situations. Don and Priscilla meet for the first time in a bar and what is anticipated by the reader is that this is just a one night relationship which would just end in nothing as Don is going back to Lusaka the next day. However, there is a reversal when Priscilla proposes marriage to Don. One strange thing is that just as the reader, Don is himself startled by this proposal because not just was he not expecting this relationship to develop beyond the one night where he desired a woman, but it was shocking that the woman was so daring in making the proposal.

They were still in bed at the time, although Donald was busy contemplating getting up to start the formalities of seeing her off. At such instants a man was always busy trying to decide on the departure fee, a mental activity that involved recollection of the events of the night before, to match the money with the services rendered. And then she proposed. It was the casualness with which she said the words that staggered him at first; the confidence she seemed to display in her own decision. "Tiyeni tikwatilane ba-Don (Don, let's get married)," she said squarely looking at him with serious but imploring eyes, the corners of her shapely mouth executing that disarming smile, and a dimple on either of the cheeks adding the finishing touch to the killing beauty. "Sorry, what did you say?" asked Donald. Not that he had not heard, but that he just could not believe that a woman could possess the sort of daring as would enable her to say what he had just heard her say (39).

There is a clear reversal of situations here, as what is anticipated by both the reader and Don is not what Luangala shows. Priscilla's proposal is what actually builds more suspense in the reader. Questions such as what is Don's response going to be, will they finally marry, will there be any objections by friends and family and so on begin to be asked as the narration progresses. Therefore, the events that follow this proposal actually help the reader to even understand why Priscilla was so daring or confident to make a proposal. The use of reversal situations that Luangala uses, it could be argued, is done to stop the plots of the stories from being predictable. If the plot is created in such a way that all events are

predictable, then no suspense would be created in the stories.

The other way in which we see this reversal of situations is when there is conflict within a conflict as is seen in 'In the Arms of the Law.' The conflict initially depicted is that of the death of ba-Tembo yet within this conflict another is built when Lizzie develops an affair with the police. This is conflict based on the outcome of the major conflict. What we anticipate as readers is that the outcome of ba-Tembo's murder will be dependent upon what actually happened and who was actually involved and as this is revealed by the character ba-Tembo, it brings hope of a straightforward resolution. However, the outcome is not as the reader anticipates, when Luangala creates initiating events and outcome events to resolve conflicts. The initiating event is presented before the reader and then it is not followed by an outcome event expected by the reader but by a detailed narrative or other aspects that may have caused the conflict and not a narrative that will resolve the conflict. In some cases, the outcome events do not resolve the conflict or meet the reader's expectation. For example, in 'My Sister's Keeper,' the conflict of who killed the old woman mama naphiri is not resolved as expected by the reader because there is a reversal situation; the fact that Chizola is the one that reports the case of the disappearing of Mama NaPhiri leaves very little room for him to be caught as the killer. Many signs show that he is the killer, but it is difficult to pin him down because he is active in the search; first by reporting and then by participating in the search and then consequently, released from jail for lack of evidence.

Chizola's name was again frequently banded about in the whispers during the funeral proper that followed. This seemed to compel the police to take him in, for what they said was a routine questioning. But they released him only a few days later, for what they said was lack of evidence. The case remained open, nonetheless, and it has remained like that ever since, up to today (136).

Luangala creates a reversal situation when the story takes a twist



from the culprit being punished, to him being free.

Another example is in the story 'Catching a Thief.' In this story, the conflict within a conflict is created at the end of the story to show the reversal of situations. Luangala shows that there is a conflict when someone is stealing the maize and later shows another conflict when the owner of the maize discovers who has been stealing the maize. At this point, there is a shocker: the revelation that the thief is no other than the owner's son-in-law creates a reversal in resolving the conflict. The reversal happens in the sense that the reader looks forward to knowing what will happen when the thief is caught and less of who the thief is. However, this situation is reversed when the thief is the son-in-law to the owner. The reader is left speechless just as the owner of the maize is speechless and more suspense is created as the storyline is changed from the search of who is stealing the maize to what will happen to the person who has been discovered to have been stealing the maize. The author does not resolve this mystery and the reader is left to draw their own conclusion to the story.

## **Conclusion**

The way the narrative is presented in the various stories by Luangala that were selected for this study illustrates the definition of suspense by Zillmann (1980), who emphasises that suspense involves, more specifically, the fear that a favoured outcome may not be forthcoming, the fear that a deplorable outcome may be forthcoming, the hope that a favoured outcome will be forthcoming, the hope that a deplorable outcome will not be forthcoming, and any possible combination of these hopes and fear (135).

In Luangala's short stories, it can be argued that the patterns or techniques of suspense and resolution vary from story to story but in most cases, narrative structure remains constant, with characters facing dangerous situations and being placed in situations where their choices drive the narrative forward; characters failing to show hospitality, love and care and whose thoughts are more

about themselves than about others around them. The reader's experience in understanding the narrative structure or techniques used by authors is actually central in stimulating emotions that are key in reading suspense stories. Mar *et al.*, (2010: 12) argue that emotions are central to the experience of literary narrative fiction. Once evoked by the story, these emotions can, in turn, influence a person's experience of the narrative. Mar *et al.*, (13) have also argued that distinct cognitive processes are required for the comprehension of literary fiction. Therefore, the level of suspense that is created in the reader varies from reader to reader but the author must ensure that the technique of suspense is not missing in the narrative if the reader is to be glued to the book.

It has been argued by Tyson (1999) that a text cannot be separated from what it does and how an author achieves this varies from author to author and from story to story. In the selected stories analysed in this study, Luangala has carefully used techniques such as placing characters in dangerous situations, use of real and logical worlds or in other words verisimilitude, gradually developing the suspenseful events and creating reversal situations to create suspense. It can also be argued that the narrative structure that Luangala has selected has greatly contributed to the creation of suspense in his short stories. Luangala reorders the events, resolutions, times and places of the stories as a way of manipulating the readers' perspectives or alternating the storyline by embedding narratives that is developing another suspenseful event while dealing with the major event or major conflict of the story, therefore, creating suspense. He also constantly switches the narration between the omniscient narrator and the participant narrators. For example, in the story 'In the Arms of the Law,' the story shifts from the omniscient narrator to participant narrator when ba-Tembo narrates about his attack by Jones and his friend. Luangala's narrative has also shown consistency in the consequences of actions by characters. It is clear that in all the stories selected for this study, the bad characters go unpunished, while the good characters suffer injustice. Jones in 'In the Arms of the Law' is unpunished even when ba-Tembo reveals that

he (Jones) is the one who beats him, Chizola in the story 'My Sister's Keeper' also goes unpunished when he is the suspect in the murder of Mama NaPhiri, Liko beats his wife Njeleka to near death but he is unpunished, Jube in 'The Innocence of a Dog' is also unpunished and instead shown love by Jonase his neighbour whom he offended. In conclusion in order to identify how suspense works, one has to understand how the plot is narrated and what techniques the author employs to attain suspense.

## References

- Ameriana, M., and Jofib, L. (2015). 'Key Concepts and Basic Notes on Narratology and Narrative' in *Scientific Journal of Review*, 2015, Vol 4 Issue10 pp. 182-192.
- Anastasova, M. (2016). Patterns of Creating Suspense in Stephen King's *The Shining*. *English Studies at NBU*, 2016, Vol. 2, Issue 1, pp. 43-58.
- Bae, B.C., & Young, R. M. (2008). A use of flashback and foreshadowing for surprise arousal in narrative using a plan-based approach. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling*, pp. 156–167. Accessed from <https://www.cc.gatech.edu/~riedl/pubs/jair.pdf>
- Bayer, L. (2013). Suspense in selected works of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century romance An Analysis based on *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Evelina* Verfasserin. Thesis report.
- Carroll, N. (1996). *Theorizing the Moving Image*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Cupchik, G.C. (1996). Suspense and Disorientation: Two poles of emotionally charged literary uncertainty. In Peter, Wulff, and Friedrichsen, 189-97. *Hillsdale, NJ*: Erlbaum.
- Doust(2017)[https://www.researchgates.net/publication/320016094\\_A\\_model\\_of\\_suspense\\_for\\_narrative\\_generation](https://www.researchgates.net/publication/320016094_A_model_of_suspense_for_narrative_generation).
- Kemertelidze, N., and Manjavidze, T. (2013). Suspense and Its Classification In Modern English Linguistics. Conference

- Paper available at [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net). 12/8/2018.
- Mar, Raymond A., Oatley, Keith, Djikic, Maja and Mullin, Justin (2010) 'Emotion and Narrative Fiction: Interactive Influences Before, During, and After Reading', Cognition & Emotion. Wales: Psychology Press.
- Meamy, R.C. (2001). "A narratological study in the fictional works of Ruskin Bond " Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut.
- Saylor Foundation (2012). An Introduction to Literary Theory' Coursepack:[“Trauma Theory”] accessed on 20/07/2017 (<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ENGL301-Trauma-Theory.pdf>).
- Rebecca Y. (2009). Techniques for Creating and Sustaining Suspense and Tension accessed from <http://rebeccayork.com/theauthor/tips-for-writers/techniques-for-creating-and-sustaining-suspense-and-tension/>
- Schmidt K. (1995). Film – History, Art, Industry. Gyldendal: Denmark.
- Sheehy (2009). Creating Suspense: A look at two classic tricks. Accessed from <https://sheehyenglish.wikispaces.com/file/view/How+Writers+Create+Suspense.pdf>.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Zillmann, D. (1980). 'Anatomy of Suspense.' In P. H. Tannenbaum (Ed.), *The Entertainment Functions of Television*, (pp. 133-163). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.