

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

MAIN PAPER EXAMINATION DECEMBER 2012/2013

TITLE OF PAPER: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN POETRY AND DRAMA

COURSE CODE: AL 213/IDE AL 213

TIME ALLOWED: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS

1. ANSWER THREE (3) QUESTIONS, ONE FROM EACH SECTION. EACH QUESTION CARRIES 25 MARKS.
2. EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE COMMENCED ON A FRESH SHEET.
3. DO NOT REPEAT MATERIAL OR WRITE ABOUT THE SAME TEXT AT LENGTH MORE THAN ONCE.
4. DO NOT BRING ANY READING MATERIAL IN TO THE EXAMINATION HALL.
5. IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THIS PAPER, CLARITY OF EXPRESSION AND OVERALL GOOD USE OF ENGLISH EARNS MARKS.

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR

SECTION A

THEORY

ATTEMPT AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM THIS SECTION

QUESTION 1

In the introduction to the 1988 edition of their *A Selection of African Poetry*, K. E. Senanu and T. Vincent, identify four basic phases through which African poetry has evolved. Discuss the features of each of the four stages indicating the dating of each phase. (25 marks)

QUESTION 2

Zodwa Motsa, in her article, "The Missing Link in siSwati Modern Drama," suggests that Swazi traditional/precolonial rites and ceremonies such as Incwala and Umhlanga are worth regarding as drama. Summarize the arguments she presents in support of her views. (25 marks)

SECTION B

POETRY

ATTEMPT AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM THIS SECTION

QUESTION 3

Study the three attached poems. Note that the common thematic thread that runs through the three poems, Leopold Sedar Senghor's "In Memorium," "Nuit de Sine," and Birago Diop's "Vanity," is that of ancestors. Analyze the way two of these poems treat the subject of ancestors. (25 marks)

Question 4

Study the following lines of poems excerpted from various poems. For each group of lines, state the name of the poet, title of poem, and in three to five lines say what the poem is about and its outstanding stylistic feature. (25 marks)

A

Have you seen dawn go poaching

in night's orchard?

See, she is coming back

down eastern pathways
overgrown with lilyblooms.

B

In those days
When civilization kicked us in the face
When holy water slapped our cringing brows
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons
The bloodstained monument of tutelage

C

It is the constant image of your face
framed in my hands as you knelt before my chair
the grave attention of your eyes
furveying me amid my world of knives
that stays with me, perennially accuses
and convicts me of heart's treachery;

D

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained but self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey – I am African."

(25 marks)

SECTION C

DRAMA

ATTEMPT AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM THIS SECTION

Wole Soyinka – *Death and the King's Horseman*

QUESTION 5

Identify and analyze the spiritual, cultural, and political elements of the Yoruba world that converge on the Elesin. (25 marks)

QUESTION 6

The Pilkings are puzzled by the fact that Western-educated Olunde does not reject what to them is his "barbaric" culture. What reasons does Soyinka introduce to establish how Olunde can still embrace his culture after being educated in the West? (25 marks)

QUESTION 7

Zakes Mda - *And the Girls in Their Sunday Dresses*

Of the two characters, Woman and Lady, which one is obsessing about "office girls in their Sunday dresses" and why? Discuss at length the symbolism of this obsession. (25 marks)

QUESTION 8

Read the excerpt below from *Joys of War*

MAMA: Thank God he is not dead this time. These past few days on the road I have had it up to here with dying babies. Your dolls always die.

NANA: He has lived so far because I took very good care of him. I took him to the clinic in the city and pretended I didn't come from the squatter camp. But he'll surely die in prison, Mama.

- a. Comment on the twelve year old girl who carries and cares for a doll that always dies as well as Mama's saying she's had enough of dying babies. (15 points)
- b. Discuss the theme of family in this play. (10 points)

In memoriam

Sunday.

The crowding stony faces of my fellows make me afraid.
Out of my tower of glass haunted by headaches and my restless
Ancestors

I watch the roofs and hills wrapped in mist

5 Wrapped in peace . . . the chimneys are heavy and stark.

At their feet my dead are sleeping, all my dreams made dust

All my dreams, blood freely spilt along the streets, mingled with blood
from butcheries.

And now, from this observatory, as if from the outskirts of the town

I watch my dreams listless along the streets, sleeping at the foot of the
hills

10 Like the forerunners of my race on the banks of the Gambia and
Salum

Now of the Seine, at the foot of the hills.

Let my mind turn to my dead!

Yesterday was All Saints, the solemn anniversary of the sun

In all the cemeteries, there was no one to remember.

15 O dead who have always refused to die, who have resisted death

From the Sine to the Seine, and in my fragile veins you my
unyielding blood

Guard my dreams as you have guarded your sons, your slender-limbed
wanderers

O dead, defend the roofs of Paris in this sabbath mist

Roofs that guard my dead

20 That from the dangerous safety of my tower, I may go down into the
street

To my brothers whose eyes are blue

Whose hands are hard.

Nuit de Sine

Woman, lay on my forehead your perfumed hands, hands softer than
fur.

Above, the swaying palm trees rustle in the high night breeze
Hardly at all. No lullaby even.

The rhythmic silence cradles us.

- 5 Listen to its song, listen to our dark blood beat, listen
To the deep pulse of Africa beating in the mist of forgotten villages.

See the tired moon comes down to her bed on the slack sea

The laughter grows weary the story-tellers even

Are nodding their heads like a child on the back of its mother

- 10 The feet of the dancers grow heavy, and heavy the voice of the
answering choirs.

It is the hour of stars, of Night that dreams

Leaning upon this hill of clouds, wrapped in its long milky cloth.

The roofs of the huts gleam tenderly. What do they say so secretly to
the stars?

Inside the fire goes out among intimate smells that are acrid and
sweet.

- 15 Woman, light the clear oil lamp, where the ancestors gathered around
may talk as parents talk when the children are put to bed.

Listen to the voice of the ancients of Elissa. Exiled like us

They have never wanted to die, to let the torrent of their seed be lost
in the sands.

Let me listen in the smoky hut where there comes a glimpse of the
friendly spirits

My head on your bosom warm like a dang smoking from the fire,

Let me breathe the smell of our Dead, gather and speak out again
their living voice, learn to

Live before I go down, deeper than diver, into the high profundities
of sleep.

Vanity

If we tell, gently, gently
All that we shall one day have to tell,
Who then will hear our voices without laughter,
Sad complaining voices of beggars
5 Who indeed will hear them without laughter?

If we cry roughly of our torments
Ever increasing from the start of things,
What eyes will watch our large mouths
Shaped by the laughter of big children
10 What eyes will watch our large mouths?

What heart will listen to our clamouring?
What ear to our pitiful anger
Which grows in us like a tumour
In the black depth of our plaintive throats?

15 When our Dead come with their Dead
When they have spoken to us with their clumsy voices;
Just as our ears were deaf
To their cries, to their wild appeals
Just as our ears were deaf
20 They have left on the earth their cries,
In the air, on the water, where they have traced their signs
For us, blind deaf and unworthy Sons
Who see nothing of what they have made
In the air, on the water, where they have traced their signs.

25 And since we did not understand our dead
Since we have never listened to their cries
If we weep, gently, gently
If we cry roughly of our torments
What heart will listen to our clamouring,
30 What ear to our sobbing hearts?