

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

MAIN PAPER EXAMINATION MAY 2012/2013

TITLE OF PAPER: ADVANCED STUDIES IN AFRICAN POETRY AND DRAMA

COURSE CODE: AL 314/IDE AL 314

TIME ALLOWED: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS

1. ANSWER THREE (3) QUESTIONS, ENSURING YOU DO NOT ANSWER TWO QUESTIONS ON A SINGLE TEXT. 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

DRAMA

Do not answer two questions from one textbook

Athol Fugard – *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

Question 1

Read the brief excerpt below and comment exhaustively on its thematic and stylistic features.

[To the name board.]

Styles Photographic Studio. Reference Books; Passports; Weddings; Engagements;  
Birthday Parties and Parties. Proprietor: Styles.'

When you look at this, what do you see? Just another photographic studio? Where people come because they've lost their Reference Book and need a photo for a new one? That I sit them down, set up the camera . . . 'No expression, please..' . . . click-click . . . 'Come back tomorrow, please' . . . and then kick them out and wait for the next? No, friend. It's more than just that. This is a strong-room of dreams. The dreamers? My people. The simple people, who you never find mentioned in the history books, who never get statues erected them, or monuments commemorating their great deeds. People who would be forgotten, and their dreams with them, if it wasn't for Styles. That's what I do, friends. Put down, in my way, on paper the dreams and hopes of my people so that even their children's children will remember a man . . . 'This was our grandfather' . . . and say his name. Walk into the houses of New Brighton and on the walls you'll find hanging the story of the people the writers of the big books forgot about.

Question 2

"*Sizwe Bansi is Dead* illustrates the way the oppressive super-man state leaves the oppressed man feeling robbed of their manhood and being forced to resort to ingenious and at times futile ways to reclaim it." Write a well-reasoned response to this assertion.

Athol Fugard – *The Island*

Question 3

Fugard's play within a play in *The Island*, though a clever way of portraying a needful and subversive message, however fails to convince." How far do you agree with this view?

**Question 4**

Discuss humour and pathos in *The Island*.

**SECTION B**

**POETRY**

**Question 5**

Read the attached Christopher Okigbo poem excerpted from *Distances* (1964). (It begins, 'Death lay in ambush.') Comment on the elements that have been utilized to evoke death and desolation in this excerpt.

**Question 6**

Basing your discussion on the Okigbo poems you have read, what would you say is the contribution of length of lines and punctuation to the impact of a poem?

**END**

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Death lay in ambush,  
that evening in that island;  
and the voice sought its echo,  
that evening in that island,  
and the eye lost its light,  
and the light lost its shadow.

And the wind, eternal suitor of dead leaves,  
unrolled his bandages to the finest swimmer . . .

And it was an evening without flesh or skeleton;  
an evening with no silver bells to its tale;  
without lanterns; without buntings;  
and it was an evening without age or memory –

for we are talking of such commonplace things,  
and on the brink of such great events –  
and in the freezing tuberose of the white  
chamber, eyes that had lost their animal  
colour – havoc of incandescent rays –  
pinned me, cold to the marble stretcher,  
until my eyes lost their blood,  
and the blood lost its odour;  
and the everlasting fire from the oblong window  
forgot the taste of ash in the air's marrow . . .

Anguish and solitude . . .  
Smothered, my scattered  
cry, the dancers,  
lost among their own  
snares; the faces,  
the hands, held captive;  
the interspaces  
reddening with blood . . .

And behind them all,  
in smock of white cotton,  
Death herself,  
the chief celebrant,  
in a cloud of incense,  
paring her fingernails . . .

At her feet roll their heads like cut fruits;  
about her fall  
their severed members, numerous as locusts.

Like split wood left to dry,  
the dismembered joints  
of the ministrants pile high.

She bathes her knees in the blood of attendants,  
her smock in the entrails of the ministrants . . .