

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FUCULTYOF HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

FINAL EXAMINATION PAPER, DECEMBER 2013

TITLE OF PAPER: INTRODUCTION TO PROSE FICTION AND PROSE NON-FICTION

COURSE CODE: AL 111/IDE AL111 – SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER

TIME ALLOWED: THREE (3) HOURS

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- (1) ANSWER THREE (3) QUESTIONS IN ALL, INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE QUESTION FROM EACH SECTION.
- (2) DO NOT ANSWER TWO QUESTIONS FROM ONE TEXTBOOK
- (2) DO NOT REPEAT MATERIAL IN YOUR ANSWERS.
- (3) EACH QUESTION SHOULD BE COMMENCED ON A FRESH SHEET.
- (4) CLARITY OF EXPRESSION AND GOOD ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT WILL COUNT IN THE ASSESSMENT OF THIS PAPER.

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

SECTION A – PROSE FICTION

THINGS FALL APART- CHINUA ACHEBE

Question 1

“Okonkwo’s relationship with his wife Ekwefi and their daughter Ezinma is emblematic of Igbo culture’s paradoxical attitude toward the place of women in society.” Discuss. 25 points

Question 2

Read the excerpt below and suggest how this fable comments on a leading character in the story as well as the major thematic thrust of Achebe’s Things Fall Apart. In the plot progression of Things Fall Apart, how is this fable “prophetic”? 25 points

“Once upon a time,” she began, “all the birds were invited to a feast in the sky. They were very happy and began to prepare themselves for the great day. They painted their bodies with red cam wood and drew beautiful patterns on them with uli .

“Tortoise saw all these preparations and soon discovered what it all meant. Nothing that happened in the world of the animals ever escaped his notice; he was full of cunning. As soon as he heard of the great feast in the sky his throat began to itch at the very thought. There was a famine in those days and Tortoise had not eaten a good meal for two moons. His body rattled like a piece of dry stick in his empty shell. So he began to plan how he would go to the sky.”

“But he had no wings,” said Ezinma.

“Be patient,” replied her mother. “That is the story. Tortoise had no wings, but he went to the birds and asked to be allowed to go with them.

““We know you too well,’ said the birds when they had heard him. ‘You are full of cunning and you are ungrateful. If we allow you to come with us you will soon begin your mischief.’

““You do not know me,’ said Tortoise. ‘I am a changed man. I have learnt that a man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself.’

“Tortoise had a sweet tongue, and within a short time all the birds agreed that he was a changed man, and they each gave him a feather, with which he made two wings.

“At last the great day came and Tortoise was the first to arrive at the meeting-place. When all the birds had gathered together, they set off in a body. Tortoise was very happy and voluble as he flew among the birds, and he was soon chosen as the man to speak for the party because he was a great orator.

"There is one important thing which we must not forget,' he said as they flew on their way. 'When people are invited to a great feast like this, they take new names for the occasion. Our hosts in the sky will expect us to honour this age- old custom.'

"None of the birds had heard of this custom but they knew that Tortoise, in spite of his failings in other directions, was a widely-travelled man who knew the customs of different peoples. And so they each took a new name. When they had all taken, Tortoise also took one. He was to be called All of you .

"At last the party arrived in the sky and their hosts were very happy to see them. Tortoise stood up in his many- coloured plumage and thanked them for their invitation. His speech was so eloquent that all the birds were glad they had brought him, and nodded their heads in approval of all he said. Their hosts took him as the king of the birds, especially as he looked somewhat different from the others.

"After kola nuts had been presented and eaten, the people of the sky set before their guests the most delectable dishes Tortoise had ever seen or dreamt of. The soup was brought out hot from the fire and in the very pot in which it had been cooked. It was full of meat and fish. Tortoise began to sniff aloud. There was pounded yam and also yam pottage cooked with palm-oil and fresh fish. There were also pots of palm- wine. When everything had been set before the guests, one of the people of the sky came forward and tasted a little from each pot. He then invited the birds to eat. But Tortoise jumped to his feet and asked: 'For whom have you prepared this feast?'

"For all of you,' replied the man.

"Tortoise turned to the birds and said: 'You remember that my name is All of you . The custom here is to serve the spokesman first and the others later. They will serve you when I have eaten.'

"He began to eat and the birds grumbled angrily. The people of the sky thought it must be their custom to leave all the food for their king. And so Tortoise ate the best part of the food and then drank two pots of palm-wine, so that he was full of food and drink and his body filled out in his shell.

"The birds gathered round to eat what was left and to peck at the bones he had thrown all about the floor. Some of them were too angry to eat. They chose to fly home on an empty stomach. But before they left each took back the feather he had lent to Tortoise. And there he stood in his hard shell full of food and wine but without any wings to fly home. He asked the birds to take a message for his wife, but they all refused. In the end Parrot, who had felt more angry than the others, suddenly changed his mind and agreed to take the message.

"Tell my wife,' said Tortoise, 'to bring out all the soft things in my house and cover the compound with them so that I can jump down from the sky without very great danger.'

"Parrot promised to deliver the message, and then flew away. But when he reached Tortoise's house he told his wife to bring out all the hard things in the house. And so she brought out her husband's hoes, matchets, spears, guns and even his cannon. Tortoise looked down from the sky and saw his wife bringing things out, but it was too far to see what they were. When all seemed ready he let himself go.

He fell and fell and fell until he began to fear that he would never stop falling. And then like the sound of his cannon he crashed on the compound."

"Did he die?" asked Ezinma.

"No," replied Ekwefi. "His shell broke into pieces. But there was a great medicine-man in the neighbourhood. Tortoise's wife sent for him and he gathered all the bits of shell and stuck them together. That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth." 25 points

KHULUMANI SIVE- ZODWA MOTSA

Question 3

What two stories in your view illustrate setting and atmosphere's dominance in the overall impact of the story?

Question 4

"Some characters are the story." Discuss the truth of this terse statement using two stories as evidence.

SECTION B- PROSE NON-FICTION

THE AFRICAN CHILD – CAMARA LAYE

Question 5

‘We love the most the things that are slipping from our grasp.’

- (a) Relate the above statement to Laye’s nostalgic depiction of his childhood and upbringing. 10 points
- (b) How does this same statement speak to the broader issue of Africa’s embrace of Western modernity? 15 points

Question 6

One reader has this to say about *The African Child*: “Deeply nostalgic, the book is an autobiography portraying a vision of Islamic and ancient African community in the pre colonial era, a time when tradition engendered mutual understanding and respect for all.” Support this view paying special attention to how “tradition engendered mutual understanding and respect for all.” 25 points

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM- NELSON MANDELA

Question 7

Read the excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

Because of the universal respect the regent enjoyed – from both black and white – and the seemingly untempered power that he wielded, I saw chieftaincy as being the very center around which life revolved. My later notions of leadership were profoundly influenced by observing the regent at his court. I watched and learned from the tribal meetings that were regularly held at the Great Place. These were called to discuss national matters such as a drought, the culling of cattle, policies ordered by the magistrate, or new laws decreed by the government. All Thembus were free to come – and a great many did, on horseback or by foot.

On these occasions, the regent was surrounded by a group of councilors of high rank who functioned as parliament and judiciary. They were wise men who retained the knowledge of tribal history and custom in their heads and whose opinions carried great weight.

Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard: chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer. The foundation of self-government was

that all men were free to voice their opinions and were equal as citizens. (Women, I am afraid, were deemed as second class citizens.)

Only at the end of the meeting, as the sun was setting, would the regent speak. His purpose was to sum up what had been said and form some consensus among the diverse opinions. But no conclusion was forced on people who disagreed. If no agreement could be reached, another meeting would be held. At the very end of the council, a praise-singer or poet would deliver a panegyric to the ancient kings.

It was at Mqhekezweni that I developed my interest in African history. Until then I had heard only of Xhosa heroes, but at the Great Place I learned of other African heroes like Sekhukhune, king of the Bapedi, the Basotho king, Moshoeshe, and Dingane, king of the Zulus, and others such as Bambatha, Hintsahle and Makana, Montshiwa and Kgama. I learned of these men from chiefs and headmen who came to the Great Place to settle disputes and try cases.

- (i) The first sentence of the excerpt might lead one to wrongly believe that the regent's power was limitless. Identify one word in the sentence ensures we do not hold this false view. 1 point
- (ii) Identify, in the first paragraph, two items that were discussed at the tribal meetings that indicate that the regent's power was subject to colonial power. 2 points
- (iii) What, according to the excerpt, makes an opinion persuasive? 2 points
- (iv) The Swazi king is called 'mlomo longacali manga;' the mouth that tells no lie; a trait the regent also possessed. Why, according to the excerpt, could the regent be the mouth that tells no lie? 5 points
- (v) Show how the main elements of this excerpt are connected to the major thematic threads of Long Walk to Freedom. 15 points
- (vi) In the larger scheme of things of *Long Walk to Freedom*, why do you think Mandela chooses to dwell on the issues highlighted in the excerpt? 15 points

Total 25 points

Question 8

A critic has suggested that, "Autobiographical values are determined by the narrator's acute and pervasive sense of participating in a great historical moment. His valuable life surrenders its meaning in a gesture of collectivity." Interrogate this statement in the light of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*, paying particular attention to 'the narrator's acute and pervasive sense of participating in a great historical moment.' 25 Points END