

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION 2005

COURSE TITLE: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

COURSE CODE: ENG405/IDE-E4P4

TIME ALLOWED: THREE HOURS: E4P4
TWO HOURS: ENG 405

- INSTRUCTIONS:
1. E4P4: Answer THREE questions.
ENG 405: Answer TWO questions.
 2. Do not repeat material or write about the same text at length more than once.
 3. Good expression and adherence to literary conventions will count.
 4. This paper consists of 6 pages, cover page included.

**THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION
HAS BEEN GIVEN BY THE INVIGILATOR**

Question 1

Write a well illustrated essay in which you cite, compare and contrast the recurrent themes of South African and African American poetry.

Question 2

Read the following poems and compare and contrast the way the poets respond to incidental encounters provoked by blackness, and conclude by stating the themes projected in the poems:

Always a Suspect Mbuyiseni Mtshali

I get up in the morning
and dress up like a gentleman –
A white shirt a tie and a suit.

I walk into the street
to be met by a man
who tells me 'to produce.'

I show him
the document of my existence
to be scrutinized and given the nod.

Then I enter the foyer of a building
to have my way barred by a commissionaire
'What do you want?'

I trudge the city pavements
side by side with 'madam'
who shifts her handbag
from my side to the other,
and looks at me with eyes that say
'Ha! Ha! I know who you are;
beneath those fine clothes
ticks the heart of a thief.'

Incident Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

White Child Meets a Black Man James Berry

She caught me outside a London
suburban shop, I like a giraffe
and she a mouse. I tried to go
but felt she stood
lovely as light on my back.

I turned with a hello
and waited. Her eyes got
wider but not her lips.
Hello I smiled again and watched.

She stepped around me
slowly, in a kind of dance,
her wide eyes searching
inch by inch up and down:
no fur no scales no feathers
no shell. Just a live silhouette,
wild and strange
and compulsive
till mother came horrified.

'Mummy is his tummy black?'
Mother grasped her and swung
toward the crowd. She tangled
mother's legs looking back at me.
As I watched them birds were singing.

Question 3

Compare and contrast the images of black life captured in the portrayal of Vyry in Jubilee and Rebone in Down Second Avenue.

Question 4

The black family structure projected in Lorraine Hansberry's portrayal of the Younger family in A Raisin in the Sun and Ezekiel Mphahlele's autobiographical account in Down Second Avenue invites interesting comparisons. Discuss, focusing on a few selected issues.

Question 5

Citing the respective texts in which they appear, compare and contrast the factors motivating Grant Wiggins to tell the story of Jefferson and Ben Du Toit to tell the story of Gordon Ngubene.

Question 6

Read the following poems and answer as directed:

Ruby Brown Langston Hughes

She was young and beautiful
And golden like the sunshine
That warmed her body.
And because she was colored [colored in this context means black]
Mayville had no place to offer her,
Nor fuel for the clean flame of joy
That tried to burn within her soul.
One day,
Sitting on old Mrs. Latham's back porch
Polishing the silver, she asked herself two questions
And they ran something like this:
What can a colored girl do
On the money from a white woman's kitchen?
And ain't there any joy in this town?

Now the streets down by the river
Know more about this pretty Ruby Brown.
And the sinister shuttered houses of the
 bottoms
Hold a yellow girl
Seeking an answer to her questions.
The good church folk do not mention
Her name anymore.

But the white men,
Habitués of the high shuttered houses,
Pay more money to her now
Than they ever did before,

When she worked in their kitchens.

The Harlem Dancer Claude McKay

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose upon her form;
To me she seemed like a proudly-swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck black, shiny curls
Profusely fell; and, tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her with their eager, passionate gaze;
But looking at her falsely-smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

An Abandoned Bundle Mbuyiseni Mtshali

The morning mist
and chimney smoke
of white city Jabavu
flowed thick yellow
as pus oozing
from a gigantic sore.

It smothered our little houses
like fish caught in a net.

Scavenging dogs
draped in red bandanas of blood
fought fiercely
for a squirming bundle.

I threw a brick;
they bared fangs
flicked velvet tongues of scarlet
and scurried away,
leaving a mutilated corpse –
an infant dumped on a rubbish heap –
'Oh! Baby in the Manger
sleep well
on human dung.'

Its mother
 had melted into the rays of the rising sun,
 her face glittering with innocence
 her heart as pure as un-trampled dew.

White Lies Stanley Motjuwadi

Humming Maggie,
 Hit by a virus,
 the Caucasian Craze,
 sees horror in the mirror.
 Frantic and dutifully
 she corrodes a sooty face,
 braves a hot iron comb
 on a shrubby scalp.
 I look on.

I know pure white,
 a white heart
 white, peace, ultimate virtue.
 Angels are white
 angels are good.
 Me I'm black,
 black as sin stuffed in a snuff-tin.
 Lord, I've been brain-white-washed.

But for Heaven's sake God
 just let me be.
 Under cover of my darkness
 let me crusade.
 On a canvass stretching from here
 to Dallas, Memphis, Belsen, Golgotha,
 I'll daub a white devil.
 Let me teach black truth.
 That dark clouds aren't a sign of doom,
 But of hope. Rain. Life.
 Let me unleash a volty bolt of black,
 so all around may know black right.

- (a) Comparatively discuss the images of black girlhood projected in the poems. [10]
- (b) Briefly state how these images mirror the oppression and degradation of black people, at the time, in the United States of America and South Africa. [10]
- (c) Briefly comment respective use of language to win reader sympathy, ridicule, etc. [10]