

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FINAL EXAMINATIONS 2008

TITLE OF PAPER: **COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

COURSE CODE: **ENG 405/ IDE/ENG 405/E4P4**

TIME ALLOWED: **1. ENG 405/IDE-ENG 405: TWO HOURS**
2. E4P4: THREE HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. ENG 405/IDE-ENG 405: Answer TWO questions.**
E4P4: Answer THREE 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. All the questions carry equal marks.**
- 5. This paper is 5 pages long; cover page included.**

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

Question One

Read the following poems and answer the questions below:

“A Day in Our Life” Nkathazo ka Mnyaziwa

ask any black man
 he'll tell you
 without looking it up in a dictionary
 how's to be picked up
 booted in the back
 fly in – head first
 knocking yourself against the spare-wheel
 and to be driven around town
 buckshee
 ask any black man
 he'll tell you
 without looking it up in a dictionary
 how's to be picked up
 to talk about 'things'
 to a friend who always urges you
 to give your opinion of the m.p.l.a.
 frelimo f.n.la. and umkhonto kashaka
 who knows
 he might be dangerous
 have you ever seen
 an s.b. wearing uniform
 ask any black man
 he'll tell you
 without looking it up in a dictionary
 how painful it is
 sitting and writing in a cold candle-lit room
 till the wee hours of the following day
 then have your work banned
 and ruin the future of your publisher
 ask any black man he'll tell you
 without looking it up in a dictionary
 how bad it is
 to be promised a better wage in ten years' time
 while inflation and c.o.l. soars
 ask any black man he'll tell you
 without looking it up in a dictionary
 what pain is
 go on – ask him”

“Mother to Son” Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
 It's had tacks in it,
 And splinters,
 And boards torn up,
 And places with no carpet on the floor –

Bare.
 But all the time
 I've been a-climbin' on,
 And reachin' landin's,
 And turnin' corners,
 And sometimes goin' in the dark
 Where there ain't been no light.
 So, boy, don't you turn back.
 Don't you set down on the steps
 'Cause you finds it kinder hard.
 Don't you fall now –
 For I've still goin' honey,
 I've still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no cystral stair.

Questions

- Briefly highlight the situation presented by each poem. [12]
- Comment on any predominant aspects of language use and form in each poem [8]
- Comparatively assess the projected black experience in the two poems. [10]

Question Two

Compare and contrast how the narrators in A Dry White Season and A Lesson Before Dying are related to the events they narrate and to the novels' protagonists. Briefly comment on the projected black experience in the two poems. [30]

Question Three

Read the two poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“Just a Passer-by” Oswald Mbuyeni Mtshali,

I saw them clobber him with kieries,
 I heard him scream with pain
 Like a victim of slaughter;
 I smelt fresh blood gush

from his nostrils,
and flow on the stree.

I walked into the church
And knelt in the pew
“Lord! I love you.
I also love my neighbour. Amen”

I came out
my heart as light as an angel’s kiss
on the cheek of a saintly soul.

Back home I strutted
past a crowd of onlookers.
Then she came in –
my woman neighbour:
“Have you heard? They’ve killed your brother.”
“O! No! I heard nothing. I’ve been to church.”

“At War with the Preacherman” Senzo Malinga

My armful of goat skins
Captures the eyes of the preacherman;
I meet him at the shop verandah,
He tells me I have to change
my evil ways;
I go home cursing,
Declaring war against the preacherman.

Later he comes to my place
Accuses me of deflecting people
from the right way to Heaven;
I in turn call on my gods
To deliver their godly anger
upon this insolent preacherman;
For I do not live
That I may go to Heaven,
But that I may have supper tonight.

- a) Focusing on the theme advanced in the two poems, comparatively discuss the two poets’ approach towards this theme. [20]
- b) What aspect of black experience is highlighted in the two poems? [10]

Question Four

- a) How is police brutality depicted in *A Dry White Season* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*? [20]
- b) Account for the recurrence of this theme in the post-Apartheid novel. [10]

Question Five

- a) Basing your discussion on well selected scenes, compare and contrast Sonny and Grant's response to Christianity in *Manchild in the Promised Land* and *A Lesson Before Dying*. [20]
- b) Identify and discuss the major factors which have contributed to their attitudes, respectively. [10]

Question Six

Focusing on theme, characterization and setting, discuss the issues raised by the post-Apartheid novel as depicted in Zakes Mda *The Madonna of Excelsior* and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. [30]

Question Seven

Discuss with well chosen examples from any two texts (including the poetry) why it may be argued that the theme of identity is a recurrent theme in both South African and African American literature. [30]