

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FINAL EXAMINATION 2011

COURSE NAME: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
COURSE CODE: ENG 405 /IDE-ENG 405
DURATION: TWO HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Answer two questions, one from each section.
2. Good expression and adherence to literary conventions will count.
3. All the questions carry equal marks.
4. This paper is 7 pages long, cover page included.

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BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR**

SECTION A – PROSE

Answer ONE question from this section

Question One

A Dry White Season Andre Brink

Manchild in the Promised Land Claude Brown

- a) In not more than two pages, comparatively discuss how Gordon in A Dry White Season and Sonny's father in Manchild in the Promised Land relate to their sons. [15]
- b) Briefly discuss how the social context in each case has shaped the father-son relationship. [10]
- c) Briefly relate each novel's title to its social situation. [5]

Question Two

The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda

In My Father's House Ernest Gaines

"In The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda uses as his point of departure the Excelsior 19 sex scandal to explore various issues in the novel and Ernest Gaines in In My Father's House uses the arrival of Robert X in St. Adrienne as his point of departure to also explore various issues in his novel."

- a) In not more than two pages, briefly highlight the situations as presented in the Excelsior 19 sex scandal and in the arrival of Robert X to St. Adrienne along with the roles of the characters involved. [15]
- b) What social criticism is advanced in each case? Discuss in not more than a page. [10]
- c) Are the situations similar? Briefly account for your stand. [5]

Question Three

A Dry White Season

The Madonna of Excelsior

Comparatively discuss the roles of Jonathan, Robert, Viliki and Sekatle in the above-cited texts. *Your discussion should take into account each novel's socio-political context.* [30]

Question Four

The Madonna of Excelsior
Coconut Kopano Matlwa

- a) In not more than three pages, give a summary of the lives of Tjaart Cronje and Tshepo Tlou. [20]
- b) Discuss the aspects of South African life that the two characters' roles highlight. [10]

SECTION B – POETRY

Answer ONE question from this section

Question Five

Read the poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“Ancestor on the auction block” Vera Bell

Ancestor on the auction block
Across the years your eyes seek mine
Compelling me to look.
I see your shackled feet
Your primitive black face
I see your humiliation
And turn away ashamed.

Across the years your eyes seek mine
Compelling me to look
Is this creature that I see
Myself?
Ashamed to look
Because of myself ashamed
Shackled by my own ignorance
I stand
A slave.

Humiliated
I cry to the eternal abyss
For understanding
Ancestor on the auction block
Across the years your eyes meet mine
Electric
I am transformed

My freedom is within myself.

I look you in the eyes and see
The spirit of God eternal
Of this only need I be ashamed
Of blindness to the God within me
The same God who dwelt within you
The same eternal God
Who shall dwell
In generations yet unborn
Ancestor on the auction block
Across the years
I look

I see you sweating, toiling, suffering
Within your loins I see the seed
Of multitudes
From your labour
Grow roads, aqueducts, cultivation
A new country is born
Yours was the task to clear the ground
Mine be the task to build.

"Heritage" Countee Cullen

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
*One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?*
So I lie, who all day long
Want no sound except the song
Sung by wild barbaric birds
Goading massive jungle herds,
Juggernauts of flesh that pass
Trampling tall defiant grass
Where young forest lovers lie,
Plighting troth beneath the sky.
So I lie, who always hear,
Though I cram against my ear

Both my thumbs, and keep them there,
Great drums throbbing through the air.
So I lie, whose fount of pride,
Dear distress, and joy allied,
Is my somber flesh and skin,
With the dark blood damned within
Like great pulsing tides of wine
That, I fear, must burst the fine
Channels of the chafing net
Where they surge and foam and fret.

Africa? A book one thumbs
Listlessly till slumber comes.
Unremembered are her bats
Circling through the night, her cats
Crouching in the river reeds,
Stalking gentle flesh that feeds
By the river brink; no more
Does the bugle-throated roar
Cry that monarch claws have leapt
From the scabbards where they slept.
Silver snakes that once a year
Doff the lovely coats you wear,
Seek no covert in your fear
Lest a mortal eye should see;
What's your nakedness to me?
Here no leprous flower rear
Fierce corollas in the air;
Here no bodies sleek and wet,
Dripping mingled rain and sweat,
Tread the savage measures of
Jungle boys and girls in love.
What is last year's snow to me,
Last year's anything? The tree
Budding yearly must forget
How its past arose and set –
Bough and blossom, flower, fruit,
Even what shy bird with mute
Wonder at her travail there,
Meekly labored in its hair.
*One, three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?*

- a) Identify the major theme that is advanced in each poem. [5]
- b) Comparatively discuss how each poet tackles it, paying particular attention to the powerful imagery used in each poem. [25]

Question Six

Comparatively discuss Dikeni and Matthews' preoccupation in the poems below, mentioning any points of convergence and/or divergence in their preoccupation.

"Love poem for my country" Sandile Dikeni

My country is for love
so say its valleys
where ancient rivers flow
the full circle of life
under the proud eye of birds
adorning the sky

My country is for peace
so says the veld
where reptiles caress
its surface

with elegant motions
glittering in their pride

My country
is for joy
so talk the mountains
with baboons
hopping from boulder to boulder
in the majestic delight
of cliffs and peaks

My country
is for health and wealth
see the blue of the sea
and beneath

the jewels of fish
deep under the bowels of soil
hear
the golden voice
of a miner's praise
for my country

My country
is for unity
feel the millions
see their passion
their hands are joined together
there is hope in their eyes

we shall celebrate

"It is Said" James Matthews

It is said
that poets write of beauty
of form, of flowers and of love
but the words I write
are of pain and of rage

I am no minstrel
who sings songs of joy
mine a lament

I wail of a land
hideous with open graves
waiting for the slaughtered ones

Balladeers strum their lutes and sing of happy times
I cannot join in their merriment
my heart drowned in bitterness
with the agony of what white man's law has done