

167

# UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION 2012

**COURSE NAME** : COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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

**TIME ALLOWED** : TWO HOURS

## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Answer TWO questions, one from each section.
2. All questions carry equal marks.
3. Do not repeat material or write about the same text more than once.
4. Ensure that you adhere to grammatical structures and literary conventions.
5. This paper is 5 pages long. Cover page included.

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

**SECTION A – POETRY**

Question 1

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

“Black Warrior” Norman Jordan (US)

At night while  
whitey sleeps  
the heat of a  
thousand African fires  
burns across my chest

I hear the beat  
of a war drum  
dancing from a distant  
land  
dancing across a mighty  
water  
telling me to strike

Enchanted by this  
wild call  
I hurl a brick through  
a store front window  
and disappear.

“A Young Man’s Thoughts Before June the 16th” Fhazel Johennesse (SA)

Tomorrow I travel on a road  
that winds to the top of the hill  
I take with me only the sweet  
memories of my youth  
my heart aches for my mother  
for Friday nights with friends  
around a table with the broad belch of beer  
I ask only for a sad song  
sung by a woman with downturned eyes  
and strummed by an old man with  
a broken bow  
o sing my sad song sing for me  
for my sunset is drenched with red.

- a) Briefly discuss the situation presented by each poem. [10]
- b) Discuss how the personas' situations foster their actions. [10]
- c) Comparatively discuss the central theme(s) of the poems. [10]

## Question 2

Read the poems below and answer the questions that follow:

"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.l.a. and umkhonto kashaka  
 who knows  
 he might be dangerous  
 have you ever seen  
 an s.b. wearing a 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

170

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's 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 crystal stair.

- a) Identify the respective settings of the two poems above and comparatively discuss the black experience they project. [15]
- b) Discuss any predominant aspects of language use and form in each poem. [15]

### Question 3

“One of the disturbing images often painted by both black South African and African American poets concerning the human potential destroyed by the oppression of the black race is by focusing on the figure of the black woman.” Using two poems of your choice (one South African and one African American) learnt in the course discuss the validity of the assertion. [30]

## SECTION B – PROSE

### Question 4

The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda  
In My Father's House Ernest Gaines

Comparatively discuss the theme of hypocrisy in relation to Rev. Francois Bornman in The Madonna and Phillip Martin in In My Father's House. *Your discussion should be supported by your citation and discussion of specific incidents.* [30]

### Question 5

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry  
Coconut Kopano Matlwa

Focusing on not less than two characters from each text and taking into account the respective social context, comparatively discuss the portrayal of women in A Raisin and Coconut. [30]

### Question 6

In My Father's House Gaines  
Dog Eat Dog Niq Mhlongo

- a) Discuss how Robert X in In My Father's House and Dingamanzi in Dog Eat Dog respond to their poverty, country of birth and general family situation. [20]
- b) Do you feel that each character's respective social context influences his actions? Discuss. [10]

### Question 7

Coconut Matlwa  
The Madonna of Excelsior Mda

Comparatively discuss with the aid of illustrations how Matlwa and Mda approach the theme of change in their novels. [30]