

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATION

DECEMBER, 2012

COURSE CODE: ENG 405 / IDE-ENG405
COURSE NAME: COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
DURATION: TWO HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Answer TWO questions, one from each section.
2. Make sure you proofread your work to ensure good expression and adherence to literary and poetic conventions.
3. All the questions carry equal marks.
4. This paper is 6 pages long, cover page included.

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

SECTION A - POETRY (Answer ONE question from this section.)

Question 1

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

“In My House” Mzi Mahola

In the last days
There was a call
For a final push
On the rotting tree
So that its fall
Could echo throughout the world.

A flock of birds
Feasting on its worms
Scattered to nearby bushes.
Sadly the grounded tree
Was not incinerated
And its vermin snuggled underneath.

Then a house was built
Where the blighted tree stood
And more parasites were positioned
To descend like a wave of locusts,
Suckers who feared no shame;
All soiling their nails with dirt
As temptation invaded their heads.

Our elders conferred,
This looting is a shame
Let's frustrate it from its roots
Or hunger will not allow
The poor to rest.
This freedom is for mankind,
We must call the elders of the South
*And the *SADEC was born. [Southern African Development Community*

“Frederick Douglass” Robert Hayden

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this

beautiful
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to our children,
when it is truly instinct, brain-matter, diastole, systole,
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful needful thing.

- a) Identify the setting of each poem and briefly comment on the implied social context. [10]
- b) Comparatively discuss the poets' response to attainment of freedom in their respective countries as reflected in the poems. [10]
- c) Focusing on key words in each poem, discuss how each poet reinforces his intended meaning through his diction and visual imagery. [10]

Question 2

After identifying each poem's setting, comparatively discuss how the two poets approach the theme of identity in the following poems:

"To a Brown Girl" Ossie Davis

Since I care naught for what is pale and cold,
My heart must hunger when the snows are down
For dearer climates, where the sun, of old,
Taught us that love is something warm and brown.

Here, like a stranger, stranded in the north,
I dream the scarlet dream of purple skies,
And strain for glimpses, as I hurry forth,
Of shy reports: rich-black, and passion-wise.

And laugh to plumb the deep-remembered flood
of tropic heats, where winter cannot come.
And feel within the pulses of my blood
The white-eyed throbbings of some ancient drum.

And I can treasure this: to catch a trace,
Still burning hot and bright beneath the chill –
Beneath the bosom of your brown embrace
Hot suns of Africa are burning still.

“The Visitation” Sun-Ra

In the days of my visitation,
Black hands tended me and cared for me...
Black minds, hearts and souls loved me...
And I love them because of this

In the early days of my visitation,
Black hands tended me and cared for me;
I can't forget these things
For black hearts, minds and souls love me-
And even today the overtones from the fire
of that love are still burning

In the early days of my visitation
White rules and laws segregated me...
They helped to make me what I am today
And what I am, I am.
Yes, what I am, I am because of this
And because of this
My image of paradise is chromatic black.

Those who segregate did not segregate in vain
For I am,
And I am what I am.

Question 3

Comparatively discuss how the theme of girlhood is advanced in the following poems:
“The Harlem Dancer”, “Ruby Brown”, “The Scarlet Woman” and “An Abandoned Bundle”.

[30]

Section B – Prose and Drama (Answer ONE question from this section.)

Question 4 – Coconut, Kopano Matlwa

In My Father's House Ernest Gaines

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry

Read the excerpts below and answer the questions that follow:

i) *“Say it, Tshepo, just say it.”*

“I don't know, Ofilwe, it's just...”

“It's just what, Tshepo? Why can you not just say what is on your mind? Speak!”

“It is like advertising. You market a product well enough and anybody will buy it.”

“Christianity, a product? Lord, are you listening to this? Are you crazy, Tshepo? Our whole social system is built on Christianity: our calendar, holidays, laws. Our upbringing. Now you want to tell me that it is all one big scam?”

“All I am saying is that my skin is black.”

“I do not pray. Gogo did enough praying to cover me and all my descendants from here to Kingdom Come.”

ii) *“I pray we never have to pick up torches, or guns, Billy.”*

“I done forgot how to pray,” Billy said....

“The Church?”

... “There ain't nothing in them churches, Pops, but more separation. Every little church got they own little crowd, like gangs out on the street. They all got to outdo the other one....”

“God spared you for a reason, Billy,” he said.

“I got out of there, mister, because I had the best shelter,” Billy said. “If you think I can thank God for saving me and letting my boys go like that you crazy....”

iii) *“Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its own stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God – there is only man (sic) and it is he who makes miracles.”*

a) Choose excerpts from two texts and identify the speakers and the context within which they make their pronouncements. [10]

b) Do you consider the pronouncements to constitute mere individual belief or generational representations? Discuss with the aid of illustrations, paying attention to the social context of each text. [20]

Question 5

Coconut Kopano Matlwa
Dog Eat Dog Niq Mhlongo

- a) Focusing on one common theme from the two novels, comparatively discuss how Matlwa and Mhlongo use characterisation to indict post-apartheid South Africa. [30]

OR

- b) From your reading of the two novels and focusing on the major characters, discuss how Matlwa and Mhlongo define the expectations of the youth from the new South Africa, and whether these expectations are met. [30]

Question 6

A Lesson Before Dying Ernest Gaines
The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda

Discuss how Gaines in A Lesson Before Dying and Mda in The Madonna of Excelsior indict their respective societies in the process of advancing the theme of boyhood. [30]

Question 7

In My Father's House Ernest Gaines
A Lesson Before Dying Earnest Gaines

Focusing on specific male characters discuss how Gaines in his two novels portrays the male as a threatened 'specie' in racist America. [30]

Question 8

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry
Coconut Kopano Matlwa
The Madonna of Excelsior Zakes Mda
In My Father's House Ernest Gaines

Focusing on two or more texts, comparatively discuss their authors' approach to the themes of girlhood and womanhood in their works. [30]
