

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION

JULY, 2013

COURSE CODE: ENG 405 /IDE-ENG 405
/ 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/poetic conventions.
3. All the questions carry equal marks.
4. This paper is 7 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 poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“Bye Bye, Overcoat” Mutiswayo Shandu

The day before yesterday Mr Straun
gives me this overcoat. Today I catch
this train to my Stepmother’s, wearing it.
It is a splendid coat, fawn, almost new
- just this small gap in the seam of one sleeve.

It is past midday, the train not crowded
with mostly shoppers and half-day meisies.
Still, I am standing, strap-hanging, swaying
but I prefer it: such a cool garment
of such swaggering cut should not be creased.

Comes payday: a good hat –maybe a fine
snap-brim fedora, perhaps from PATEL’S
is quite definitely indicated.
Step-mama has a Singer at her place ...
The air around me goes into deepfreeze.

Turning, I see at the far end: Main Ou
has joined us, accompanied by a pair
of tough-looking tsotsis. Over dozens
of heads his eyes meet mine. He is staring
at my new overcoat. Tixo! Such luck!

They start working the silent, sullen folks,
towards me: peering in wallets, purses,
emptying handbags; some men have to stand
to have their back-pockets patted. Main Ou
does not work or hang on. His legs are braced.

He hardly moves with the train’s rock and roll.
He taps a bicycle spoke with a stained
wood handle, coolly, on his left thumb-nail.
His two thugs work quietly and quickly:
it is nearly all money and trinkets ...

But one man has already lost his fine
leather jacket. Bruce Lee, where are you now!
There are dozens of us, just three of them.
As usual, each of us is alone
against the predator, the oppressor ...

For once, even the SAP would do!
When I reach Step-mama's distinctive house
I am too sad to speak, and she sees it.
She serves me tea, strokes my defeated neck.
Her Singer stays, unused, under her bed.

"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.'

- a) Give an adequate discussion of the encounter outlined in each poem. [10]

- b) What personal details does each persona give about himself, and how do the details reforce the experiences described? [10]
c) Comparatively discuss the social indictment advanced by the poems. [10]

Question 2

“Painful Good Friday” Marumo Molusi

Life is a battle against the forces of evil.
In 1978 on a Good Friday,
I was bedded in a hospital ward
With pains like knives cutting into my knee:
Multiple fractures of the legs
Made me call out for help in a sea of anguish.
I was nailed in the darkness of the Golden City ...

I cried like a madman for the nurses and medical people

To help relieve the pain in my hour of need.
Pain like a dragon’s teeth bit persistently, endlessly
Through the entrails of my black body.
Pain
Pain
And more pain, biting like a dragon ...

My face was drowned in waves of sweat,
No one answered my plea for help;
Why are men silent when their brothers suffer?
In that dense forest, my roar was not of power but of weakness.

Hunger and agony live in a black man’s forest.
Other patients, riddled by their own maladies,
Listened and nodded.
Pain is personal.

Yes, waves of pain commanding and controlling the
ship of my body,
Waves beating and bashing me for more days than I
could count
... Were these the same pains felt by the Son of MAN?

By Jesus Christ ...?
Pain is personal ...

I rolled in the bed of endless days that came,
Into dark nights where angels fear to tread.

They told me to go home.
I was unwell,
But they told me to go.
Where ...?

I limped to the place where I stayed, which is not home.

A home is something,
A home is people.

For me, there was nobody.
No friends,
Just a Native Shelter,
Just Soweto
Far away ...

Pain is indeed a lonely and personal thing.

“Black Woman” Georgia D Johnson

Don't knock at my door, little child,
I cannot let you in,
You know not what a world this is
Of cruelty and sin.
Wait in the still eternity
Until I come to you,
The world is cruel, cruel, child,
I cannot let you in!

Don't knock at my heart, little one,
I cannot bear the pain
Of turning deaf-ear to your call
Time and time again!
You do not know the monster men
Inhabiting the earth,
Be still, be still, my precious child,
I must not give you birth!

- a) Describe the situation faced by the persona in “Painful Good Friday” along with his emotional response to it. [10]
- b) Citing a couple of well selected examples, discuss language use in the poem and its effect on the reader. [10]
- c) Identify and comment on the poem's central theme and show how the second poem, “Black Woman” may be said to complement this theme. [10]

Question 3

Focusing on at least two poems by Mzi Mahola, comparatively discuss how he has used prose-verse to express his disillusion with conditions under post-apartheid South Africa. [30]

SECTION B – PROSE and DRAMA (Answer one question from this section)

Question 4

In My Father's House

The Madonna of Excelsior

- a) Choose one recurrent theme in the two novels and comparatively discuss the writers' responses to it. [20]
- b) Discuss which of the two writers' responses you found the more satisfactory. Explain your answer. [10]

Question 5

Coconut Kopano Matlwa

Dog Eat Dog Niq Mhlongo

- a) Discuss how Matlwa in Coconut and Mhlongo in Dog Eat Dog relate the titles of their novels to their content through choice of episodes and themes. [20]
- b) Are the issues they raise about post-apartheid South Africa similar? Discuss with the aid of examples. [10]

Question 6

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry

Coconut

- a) Focusing on Fikile's Gogo in Coconut and Lena Younger in A Raisin in the Sun, discuss how Matlwa and Hansberry respond to the challenges of black womanhood in their works. [20]
- b) In your reading of the two texts, did you detect any element of protest against the status quo? Discuss. [10]

Question 7

“In all the set texts for this course, Christianity, racism and identity in its various manifestations constitute recurrent themes.”

- a) Choose one of the themes and comparatively discuss its delineation in at least two texts. [20]
- b) How have the writers used the themes to indict their respective societies? [10]

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