

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION – JULY, 2014

COURSE CODE: ENG206 / IDE-ENG206
COURSE NAME: A STUDY OF POETRY
DURATION: 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the instructions carefully and answer as directed.
2. Answer any TWO questions.
3. Each question carries 30 marks.
4. Make sure you adhere to both literary and poetic conventions.
5. Make sure you proofread your work to eliminate grammatical errors.

**THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO
BY THE INVIGILATOR**

QUESTION 1

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow it:

“Piano” D.H. LAWRENCE

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cozy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is in vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

- a) Describe the situation evoked by the poem. [20]
- b) Comment on the poem's tone and mood. [10]

QUESTION 2

Critically analyse the content (subject, sense, theme, tone and diction) and form of the poem as a subgenre of heroic poetry. [30]

“The Birth of Shaka” Mbuyiseni Mtshali

His baby cry
was of a cub
tearing the neck
of the lioness
because he was fatherless.

The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins.

His heart was shaped into an ox shield
to foil every foe.

Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough
as wattle bark

and nerves
as sharp as
syringa thorns.

His eyes were lanterns
that shone from the dark valleys of Zululand
to see white swallows
coming across the sea.
His cry to two assassin brothers:

“Lo! You can kill me
but you’ll never rule this land!”

QUESTION 3

Choose one sonnet below and discuss its meaning, internal structure and versification. [30]

a) “Sonnet” Christina Rossetti

I wish I could remember that first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;
So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and to foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.
If only I could recollect it, such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand – did one but know!

b) "A Sonnet" Sir Philip Sidney

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame study's blows;
And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:
'Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write!'

QUESTION 4

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

"Great-Gran" John Foster

Great-Gran just sits
All day long there,
Beside the fire,
Propped in her chair.

Sometimes she mumbles
Or gives a shout,
But we can't tell
What it's about.

Great-Gran just sits
All day long there.
Her face is blank,
An empty stare.

When anyone speaks,
What does she hear?
When Great-Gran starts,
What does she fear?

How can we tell?
For we can't find
A key which can
Unlock her mind.

Great-Gran just sits,
Almost alone,
In some dream world
All of her own.

But when Mum bends
Tucking her rug,
Perhaps she senses
That loving hug.

"Grandfather" Dorian Haarhoff

my grandfather's eyes
are sea fog grey.
his face is scribbled
like a little sister's sketch,
his arms marked
like a giraffe.
my grandfather's voice
is a chirping bird
in a sunset nest.
hands that carved kraal patterns
on boxes and bowls
shake like shivering children.
he carved this whistle bird
at the end of an ox thong
round my neck.
grandfather's smell
is tobacco earth
ripe for reaping.
he sits sun-trapped
in pants wide
like water pipes –
specials from the trading store.
and if you bring him
ten cents tobacco,
he'll smile a crescent moon,
and chirp a tale
of how he walked
ten miles to school,

curved a kudu horn
for the Fathers,
cried when granny died,
how as a young man
sun ripe, he saw the seasons.

- a) Compare and contrast the images of old age captured in the two poems. [10]
- b) How do diction and tone serve to differentiate the two personas' relationship with their grandparents? [20]