

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

FIRST SEMESTER FINAL EXAMINATION
DECEMBER, 2016

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

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Answer TWO questions, one from each section.
2. Make sure you proofread your work to eliminate grammatical and other errors which may lead to loss of marks.
3. This paper is 7 pages long, cover page included.

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SECTION A: POETRY

Question 1

Apparently, disillusionment with the new South Africa runs through the three poems below. Discuss how each poet outlines this theme. Your discussion should also take into account each poet's viewpoint and peculiar diction. [30]

"There Will Be Signs" Mzi Mahola

My fat-necked potbellied brothers
Glide in cars of the future
Marry mechanical women
With names like Computer and Jacuzzi.
They melt behind iron curtains
In dream houses with swimming pools,
The envy of white folk.
They speak a language
Which is the heart of domination
And send their children
To the best institutions
To lift them above the lot.
And I say
Soar high, brothers;
Isn't this what we fought for?

They offer us tribal bones
Brushing their words with honey
Prescribing us the past
From which they flee.
Is it right
That we should adopt
Ways of lizards
And not also learn to fly?
Is it right that we should backtrack
While the world around is changing?
They say,
Go back to your roots and stay there!

Father said that
When the snarl of caressing dawn comes
There will be signs.

“Beginning” Donald Parenzee

This beginning
was subtle as a fingertip.
So many messages being tapped
on the summer’s skin
and barely a hand lifted.

Still the bodies on the beaches,
browning in peacetime,
loving and budding. Time
shying away with every wave
of killings in Natal. On Sunday
mornings the radio analysts
braved the week ahead.

We weren’t starving, really.
There were the peaches for breakfast
and the tree in the library
with its leaves shimmering on the inside
of Gramsci, De Bono and various
science fiction writers.

A strong touch of anger
At Codesa 2*, the logic
of the diagram impressive, nonetheless.
Perhaps there’s a poem there?

*Conference for a Democratic South Africa

We’re walking fast, downhill,
feet turned sideways, slipping feet;
arms ballet against the pines;
making love instead of lunch,
watching *Beyond the year 2000*. ** [Australian Television Program, dealing with the technologies of the new millennium]

But now the killings come:
a family strolls with rifles on their hips;
the young girl dreaming at the landscape
is learning to play with guns.

“Why?” Bongekile Mbanjwa

I have had enough of digging.
I searched, and was tired.

I asked and asked again,
But no one gave me the answer.
Why?

The cow's teat is full of milk
But there is no bucket,
So where are we going to store it?
Let it not turn to curds
Before the young generation can eat and finish up!
Milk-pail, where can we find you?
Milk-pail, how do we find you?
Milk-pail, who can find you?
Whose children will enjoy you?
If things go on like this
We shall be left sucking our thumbs.

Day and night wasps are buzzing.
I take pen and paper and write.
I write again and again
But curds end up in my fingers
Because I do not have the milk calabash.
Who can find it?

I thought about discriminating according to race
But disagreed.
We have our heroes who have the milk pail
Where we can guzzle.

Why don't they open the gate for us to enter?
Why are they not breaking these chains?
What are we going to leave for the generations to come?
I will not stop asking:
Why?

Question 2

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

“Nikki-Rosa” Nikki Giovanni

childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn

with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have your
 mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath from one
 of those
big tubs that folk in Chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
and though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
 christmasses
and I really hope no white person ever has cause to write
 about me
because they never understand Black love is Black wealth
 and they'll
probably talk about my hard childhood and never
 understand that
all the while I was quite happy

"Diary of a Bronzeville Boy" Eugene Perkins

As a small boy
I wandered through the jungle of Bronzeville
Carrying a jagged knife to conquer my enemies.
I was a soldier before puberty.

To be born in Bronzeville
Was to be born without justice

At twelve, I knew the violence of manhood
And the excitement of sleeping with women.
Once I jackrolled a crippled old man

Who sold pencils near the corner drugstore.

My father died when I was fifteen
Shot down by a cop's blinded emotions.
Mother became a whore and I sold newspapers.
We were on relief and the precinct captain
Gave food baskets on Jesus' birthday.
I never did see a black Santa Claus

School was a bore
I couldn't understand what made Hamlet mad
Or why George Washington told the truth
When he chopped down that damn cherry tree.

War came
Pearl Harbor was attacked during holy communion
I had thought all people respected God.
In Europe, Jews were being persecuted
While Bronzeville was promised a new deal.
I became a soldier again

In battle I learned how to live
I already knew how to die

War ended
The Third Reich had collapsed at Normandy
Hiroshima swallowed by a burning monster.
I never learned why the Jews were persecuted
I journeyed home to Bronzeville, with a lousy
Medal to compensate for a shattered leg.
I searched for the American dream
But I was betrayed.
The hatred didn't die in Germany
America still had segregated cemeteries.
(I finally learned why Jews were persecuted)

Instead of guns there were signs
Instead of a bomb there hung a rope

But no justice
For a Bronzeville boy.

- a) Give a brief summary of the situation presented by each poet. [10]
- b) Comparatively discuss the black experience advanced in the two poems. [12]
- c) Cite and discuss any obvious aspects of form in the two poems. [8]

SECTION B: PROSE AND DRAMA

Question 3

Coconut Kopano Matlwa
Dog Eat Dog Niq Mhlongo

Change is apparently a process, not something that happens overnight, in the new South Africa, as shown through the experiences of Dingamanzi, Ayanda and Tshepo.

Comparatively discuss the above observation in relation to the experiences of any two characters in the respective novel(s) in which they feature. [30]

Question 4

A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry
Coconut

Read the excerpts below and answer the questions that follow them:

“But perhaps it is for the better that the conditions in this dump never improve. They can serve as a constant reminder to me of what I do not want to be: black, dirty and poor. This bucket can be a daily motivator for me to keep working towards where I will someday be: white, rich and happy. ... I know what I want in life and am prepared to do anything in my power to get it.”

“This morning I was lookin’ in the mirror and thinking about it... I’m thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room... and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live...”

- Identify the speakers of the excerpts and the texts in which they appear. [4]
- Comparatively discuss the challenges which each speaker faces and the strategies he/she employs to overcome them. [20]
- Discuss whether each succeeds in his/her endeavours. [6]
