

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

FIRST SEMESTER FINAL EXAMINATION
DECEMBER, 2017

COURSE CODE: ENG 405 / 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

Answer one question from this section.

Question 1

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

“Release, February 1990” Lynne Bryer

He emerged, walked free
looking like an ordinary, sweet grandfather
from the Eastern Cape:
those lovely old men we children knew
were wise and saintly, 5
walking down the streets
in ancient suits, greatcoats
from the first World War. We always greeted,
an exchange both courteous and right.

Grown older, we salute Mandela. 10
Not the bogeyman whose face
was a forbidden sight (abroad,
we looked in libraries); nor charismatic
warrior, giving tongue in blood and flame.

The heavens did not fall. 15
But then, for days before, the mountain
(struck by lightning) burned,
the dark alive with crimson snakes
writhing on air, black elevation of the night.

Confirmation came 20
less from our eyes, watching the images that flew
about the world, than from the way we felt:
elated, cool, not doubting this was true,
the destined time and place.

This is the way messiahs come – 25
when time can stand no more delay,
and people throng the streets, mill in the square,
climb trees to see.

Even the soldiers,
Nervous in the mob (since they alone are armed, 30
and so not free) are part of the convergence,
the dislocated, sudden calm of knowing:
This was the way it had to be.

- a) In a paragraph, give a summary of the poem. [5]
- b) Identify the aspects in Mandela's appearance and manner which led the poet to liken him to Christ. [5]
- c) Cite the lines which show the poet's approval of Mandela's release. [3]
- d) What does the third stanza mean, especially LL16-19? [5]
- e) Read the poem below; identify points of comparison and contrast between it and "Release" and discuss them. [12]

"First Grade, All Over Again" Thomas Ellis

[1]

When he was little
and just a boy
and called Barry,

his report cards
were shown, first, 5
to the one person

whose approval
mattered the most,
his mother, Ann Dunham.

Works well with others 10
who do not work
well with each other.

Another GOP *No*,
another honor roll of polls,
locked-in telephoto. 15

[2]

Barry Obama was
African-American,
African father, American mother,

but not Barack,
Barack Obama is mixed, 20
race-less and Black.

I have seen more photos
of Barack Obama
than I've ever seen

of my own mother. 25
Blame the Press,

digital photography, all
the camera phones,
raised like Rockefellers
above the rest of us.

30

Question 2

Comparatively discuss the manner in which the theme of Africa or the African American's ancestral past is treated in the following poems:

"African Dream" Bob Kuafman

In black core of night, it explodes
Silver thunder, rolling back my brain,
Bursting copper screens, memory worlds
Deep in the star-fed beds of time,
Seducing my soul in diamond fires of night, 5
Faint outlines, a ship-memory fright
Lifted on waves of color,
Sunk in pits of light,
Drummed back through time,
Hummed back through mind, 10
Drumming, cracking the night.
Strange forest songs, skin sounds
Crashing through – no longer strange.
Incestuous yellow flowers tearing
Magic from the earth. 15
Moon-dipped rituals, led
By a scarlet god.
Caressed by ebony maidens
With daylight eyes,
Purple garments, 20
Noses that twitch,
Singing young girl songs
Of an ancient love
In dark, sunless places
Where memories are sealed, 25
Burned in eyes of tigers.

Suddenly wise, I fight the dream,
Green screams enfold my night.

"Black Warrior" Norman Jordan

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.

Question 3

Read the following poems and answer the questions that follow them:

“I Have My Father’s Voice” Chris van Wyk

When I walk into a room
where my father has just been
I fill the same spaces he did
from the elbows on the table
to the head thrown back 5
and when we laugh we aim the guffaw
at the same space in the air.
Before anybody has told me this I know
because I see myself through
my father’s eyes. 10

When I was a pigeon-toed boy
my father used his voice
to send me to bed
to run and buy the newspaper
to scribble my way through matric. 15

He also used his voice for harsher things:
to bluster when we made a noise
when the kitchen wasn’t cleaned after supper
when I was out too late.
Late for work, on many mornings, 20

one sock in hand, its twin
an angry glint in his eyes he flings
dirty clothes out of the washing box:
vests, jeans, pants and shirts shouting
anagrams of fee fo fi fum until he is up 25
to his knees in a stinking heap of laundry.

I have my father's voice too
and his fuming temper
and I shout as he does.

But I spew the words out 30
in pairs of alliteration
and an air of assonance.

Everything a poet needs
my father has bequeathed me
except the words. 35

"Sticks" Thomas Ellis

My father was an enormous man
Who believed kindness and lack of size
Were nothing more than sissified
Signs of weakness. Narrow-minded,

His eyes were the worst kind 5
Of jury – deliberate, distant, hard.
No one could outshout him
Or make bigger fists. The few

Who tried got taken for bad
Beat down, their bodies slammed. 10
I wanted to be just like him:
Big man, man of the house, king.

A plagiarist, hitting the things he hit,
I learned to use my hands watching him
Use his, pretending to slap my mother 15
When he slapped mother.
He was sick. A diabetic slept
Like a silent vowel inside his well-built,
Muscular, dark body. Hard as all that
With similar weaknesses 20

- I discovered writing,
How words are parts of speech

With beats and breaths of their own.
Interjections like flams. Wham! Bam!

An heir to the rhythm 25
And tension beneath the beatings,
My first attempts were filled with noise,
Wild solos, violent uncontrollable blows.

The page tightened like a drum
Resisting the clockwise twisting 30
Of a handheld chrome key,
The noisy banging and tuning of growth.

- a) A careful reading of the two poems reveals one similarity and one contrast between the two fathers. Identify and discuss them and support your choice by citations from the poems. [10]
- b) Discuss how each son initially became his father's copycat and later broke away. [10]
- c) Discuss how each son found an outlet in poetry writing. [10]

SECTION B: PROSE AND DRAMA

Answer one question from this section.

Question 4

Both Niq Mhlongo's Dog Eat Dog and Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun capture the hopes and crushing disappointments of a supposedly free people in a discriminatory society. By focusing on two characters in each case, comparatively discuss their respective responses to the injustice surrounding them as depicted in the two texts. [30]

Question 5

- a) Comparatively discuss Mama, Beneatha, Walter, and George's roles in relation to Hansberry's depiction of the African American's ancestral past in A Raisin in the Sun. [20]
- b) Discuss Hansberry's standpoint in the play concerning African Americans' varying attitudes towards their African heritage. [10]

Question 6

- a) Discuss how Matlwa in Coconut advances the theme of self-hate. [20]
 - b) Which South African poem stands out in your mind as advancing the same theme? Discuss briefly. [10]
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