

UNIVERSITY OF ESWATINI
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
RESIT EXAMINATION – JAN 2020

COURSE TITLE: Comparative Studies in African/Black Poetry

COURSE CODE: ENG417

TIME ALLOWED: Two hours

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Answer **Question 1**, and **one** other question (**two** in all).
2. Each question carries 30 marks.
3. Make sure you have a clean copy of the poems provided for your use.
4. Do not repeat material or write about the same poem more than once.
5. Make sure you adhere to poetic and other conventions to avoid loss of marks. You also need to proofread your work.
6. This paper is 3 pages long, cover page included.

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE CHIEF INVIGILATOR

Question 1

Answer either A or B

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

“A Love Poem for My Country” Frank Chipasula (Malawi)

I have nothing to give you, but my anger
 And the filaments of my hatred reach across the border
 You, you have sold many and me to exile.
 Now shorn of precious minds, you rely only on
 What hands can grow to build your crumbling image. 5

Your streets are littered with handcuffed men
 And the drums are thuds of the wardens' spiked boots.
 You wriggle with agony as the terrible twins, law and order,
 Call out the tune through the thick tunnel of barbed wire.

Here, week after week, the walls dissolve and are slim 10
 The mist is clearing and we see you naked like
 A body that is straining to find itself, but cannot
 And our hearts thumping with pulses of desire or fear
 And our dreams are charred chapters of your history.

My country, remember I neither blinked nor went to sleep 15
 My country, I never let your life slide downhill
 And passively watched you, like a recklessly driven car,
 Hurrying to your crash while the driver leapt out.

The days have lost their song and salt
 We feel bored without our free laughter and voice 20
 Every day thinking the same and discarding our hopes.
 Your days are loud with clanking cuffs
 On men's arms as they are led away to decay.

I know a day will come and wash away my pain
 And I will emerge from the night breaking into song 25
 Like the sun, blowing out these evil stars.

- a) In about a page, use your own words to highlight the situation that the poem projects about post-independence Malawi. [10]
- b) State the poem's tone and briefly discuss how it complements its subject and creates a certain mood. [3]

- c) Although the poem is mostly written in straightforward denotative language, it does feature a number of figurative expressions. Identify and discuss at least five of these, along with how each vivifies the poem's meaning. [10]
- d) Is the poem conventional or free verse? Discuss with the aid of three illustrations. [7]

[30 marks]

- B.** Read the poem by Marumo Molusi (South Africa) titled, "Painful Good Friday" and answer the following questions:
- a) Give a succinct one-paragraph summary of the poem. [6]
- b) Give a detailed discussion of the various figures of speech used in the poem to create a network of powerful imagery which appeals to the different senses. [16]
- c) Identify and comment on the poem's tone and mood. [4]
- d) State and briefly discuss the poem's major theme. [4]

[30]

Question 2

By closely referring to the poems, "In Memoriam", "Viaticum", and "Easter Dawn", discuss how the exponents of Negritude inevitably touched on the theme of Christianity. [30 marks]

Question 3

Discuss the following South African poets' individual approaches to the theme of identity: Stanley Motjuwadi in "White Lies", Magoleng wa Selepe in "My Name", and Mafika Gwala in "The Children of Nonti". [30]

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POEMS SELECTED FOR JANUARY 2020 RESIT EXAMINATION

“Painful Good Friday” Marumo Molusi (South Africa)

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 stay which is not home.

A home is something else,
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.

“White Lies” Stanley Motjuwadi (South Africa)

Humming Maggie.
Hit by a virus
the Caucasian Craze,
sees horror in the mirror.
Frantic and dutifully
she corrodes a sooty face,
braves a hot iron comb
on a shrubby scalp.
I look on.

I know pure white,
a white heart,
white, peace, ultimate virtue.
Angels are white
angels are good.
Me I'm black,
black as sin stuffed in a snuff-tin.
Lord, I've been brainwhitewashed.

But for heaven's sake God,
just let me be.
Under cover of my darkness
let me crusade.
On a canvas stretching from here
to Dallas, Memphis, Belsen, Golgotha,
I'll daub a while devil.
Let me teach black truth.
That dark clouds aren't a sign of doom,
but hope. Rain. Life.
Let me unleash a volty bolt of black,
so all around may know black right.

“My Name” Magoleng wa Selepe (South Africa)

Look what they have done to my name...
the wonderful name of my great-great-grandmothers
Nomngqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.

The burly bureaucrat was surprised.
What he heard was music to his ears:
‘Wat is daai, sê nou weer?’
‘I am from Chief Daluxolo Velayigodle of ema-
Mpodweni
and my name is Nomngqibelo Mnqhibisa.’

Messiah, help me!
My name is so simple
and yet so meaningful,
but to this man it is trash...

He gives me a name
Convenient enough to answer his whim:
I end up being
Maria...
I...
Nomngqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.

“The Children of Nonti” Mafika Gwala (South Africa)

Nonti Nzimande died long, long ago
Yet his children still live.
Generation after generation, they live on;
Death comes to the children of Nonti
And the children of Nonti cry but won't panic
And there is survival in the children of Nonti.

Poverty swoops its deadly wings. But tough,
strong and witty are the children of Nonti.
The wet rains fall. The roads become like
the marshed rice paddies of the Far East;
And on these desolate roads there is song
Song in the Black voices of the children of Nonti.

Someone marries
The bride does not hide her face under the veil;
The maidens dance near the kraal
Dance before the ‘make it be merry’ eyes
of the elders. The elders joshing it

on their young days.
There is still free laughter
in the children of Nonti.

An ox drops to the earth, then another;
Knives run into the meat. Making the feast
to be blood-filled with Life.
The old, the dead, are brought into the Present
of continuous nature in the children of Nonti.
Got to be a respecting with the children of Nonti.

When a daughter has brought shame
The women show anger; not wrath.
And the illegitimate born is one of
the family.
When a son is charged by the white law
The children of Nonti bring their heads together
In a bid to free one of the children of Nonti.

There are no sixes and nines be one
with the children of Nonti. Truth is truth
and lies are lies amongst the children of Nonti.
For when summer takes its place after the winter
The children of Nonti rejoice
and call it proof of Truth
Truth reigns amongst the children of Nonti.

Sometimes a son rises above the others
of the children of Nonti. He explains the workings
and the trappings of white thinking.
The elders debate;
And add to their abounding knowledge
of black experience.
The son is still one of the black children of Nonti
For there is oneness in the children of Nonti.

And later, later when the sun
is like forever down;
Later when the dark rules
above the light of Truth
The black children of Nonti will rise and speak.
They will speak of the time
when Nonti lived in peace with his children;
Of the times when age did not count
above experience. The children of Nonti will stand
their grounds in the way that Nonti speared his foes

to free his black brothers from death and woes;
They shall fight with the tightened grip
of a cornered pard. For they shall be knowing that
Nothing is more vital than standing up
For the Truths that Nonti lived for.
Then there shall be Freedom in that stand
by the children of Nonti.
Truthful tales shall be told
Of how the children of Nonti pushed their will;
And continued to live by the peace
The peace that Nonti once taught them.

“In Memoriam” by Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal)

Sunday

The crowding stony faces of my fellows make me afraid.
Out of my tower of glass haunted by headaches and my restless
Ancestors
I watch the roofs and hills wrapped in mist
Wrapped in peace... the chimneys are heavy and stark.
At their feet my dead are sleeping, all my dreams made dust
All my dreams, blood freely spilt along the streets, mingled with blood
from butcheries.
And now, from this observatory, as if from the outskirts of the town
I watch my dreams listless along the streets, sleeping at the foot of the
hills
Like the forerunners of my race on the banks of the Gambia and
Salum
Now of the Seine, at the foot of the hills.
Let my mind turn to my dead!
Yesterday was All Saints, the solemn anniversary of the sun
In all the cemeteries, there was no one to remember.
O dead who have always refused to die, who have resisted death
From the Sine to the Seine, and in my fragile veins you my
unyielding blood
Guard my dreams as you have guarded your sons, your slender-limbed
Wanderers
O dead, defend the roofs of Paris in this Sabbath mist
Roofs that guard my dead
That from the dangerous safety of my tower, I may go down to the
street
To my brothers whose eyes are blue
Whose hands are hard.

“Viaticum” Birago Diop (Senegal)

In one of the three pots
the three pots to which on certain evenings
the happy souls return
the serene breath of the ancestors,
the ancestors who were men,
the forefathers who were wise,
Mother wetted three fingers,
three fingers on her left hand:
the thumb, the index and the next;
I too wetted three fingers,
three fingers of my right hand:
the thumb, the index and the next.

With her three fingers red with blood,
with dog's blood,
with bull's blood,
with goat's blood,
Mother touched me three times.

She touched my forehead with her thumb,
With her index my left breast
And my navel with her middle finger.
I too held my fingers red with blood,
with dog's blood.
With bull's blood,
with goat's blood.
I held my three fingers to the winds
to the winds of the North, to the winds of the Levant,
to the winds of the South, to the winds of the setting sun;
and I raised my three fingers towards the Moon,
towards the full Moon, the Moon full and naked
when she rested deep in the largest pot.
Afterwards I plunged my three fingers in the sand
in the sand that had grown cold.
Then Mother said, 'Go into the world, go!
They will follow your steps in life.'

Since then I go
I follow the pathways
the pathways and roads
beyond the sea and even farther,
beyond the sea and beyond the beyond;
And whenever I approach the wicked,
the Men with black hearts,

whenever I approach the envious,
the Men with black hearts
before me moves the Breath of the Ancestors.

“Easter Dawn” Kofi Awoonor (Ghana)

That man died in Jerusalem
And his death demands dawn marchers
From year to year to the sound of bells.
The hymns flow through the mornings
Heard on Calvary this dawn.

the gods are crying, my father’s gods are crying
for a burial – for a final ritual –
but they that should build the fallen shrines
have joined the dawn marchers
singing their way towards Gethsemane
where the tear drops of agony still freshen the cactus.

He has risen! Christ has risen!
the gods cried again from the hut in me
asking why that prostration has gone unheeded.

The marchers sang of the resurrection
That concerned the hillock of Calvary
Where the ground at the foot of the cross is level.

the gods cried, shedding
clayey tears on the calico
the drink offering had dried up in the harmattan
the cola-nut is shriveled
the yam feast has been eaten by mice
and the fetish priest is dressing for the Easter service.

The resurrection hymns come to me from afar
touching my insides.

Then the gods cried loudest
Challenging the hymnners.
They seized their gongs and drums
And marched behind the dawn marchers
Seeking their Calvary
Seeking their tombstones
And those who refused to replace them
In the appropriate season.

