

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

SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATIONS – MAR. 2021

**COURSE TITLE:** Comparative Studies in African/Black Poetry

**COURSE CODE:** ENG 417

**TIME ALLOWED:** TWO (2) HOURS

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Answer any TWO questions.
2. Each question carries 30 marks.
3. Do not repeat material or write about the same poem more than once.
4. Make sure you adhere to poetic and other conventions.
5. Make sure you proofread your work to avoid loss of marks.

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

## Question 1

Comparatively discuss Motjuwadi and Selepe's treatment of the theme of identity in their poems below. [30]

### **"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 Nomgqhibelo 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...  
Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa.

## Question 2

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

**"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.

- a) In not more than 10 lines, give a summary of the situation presented in the poem. [7]
- b) List the aspects of Negritude that are presented in the poem. [5]
- c) How does Senghor treat the theme of alienation in this poem? [6]
- d) Discuss the activities in the poem that echo the persona's own experiences back home. [12]

**[30 marks]**

### Question 3

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

#### **“Poem at Thirty-Nine”** Alice Walker (USA)

How I miss my father.  
I wish he had not been  
so tired  
when I was  
born.

Writing deposit slips and checks  
I think of him.  
He taught me how.  
This is the form,  
he must have said:  
the way it is done.  
I learned to see  
bits of paper  
as a way  
to escape  
the life he knew  
and even in high school  
had a savings  
account.

He taught me  
that telling the truth  
did not always mean  
a beating:  
though many of my truths  
must have grieved him  
before the end.

How I miss my father!  
He cooked like a person  
dancing  
in a yoga meditation  
and craved the voluptuous  
sharing  
of good food.

Now I look and cook just like him:  
my brain light;  
tossing this and that  
into the pot;  
seasoning none of my life  
the same way twice; happy to feed  
whoever strays my way.

He would have grown  
to admire  
the woman I've become:  
cooking, writing, chopping wood,  
staring into the fire.

**“A Poem for My Father”** Sonia Sanchez (USA)

how sad it must be  
to love so many women  
to need so many black  
perfumed bodies weeping  
underneath you.

when i remember all those nights  
i filled my mind with  
long wars between short  
sighted trojans & greeks  
while you slapped some  
wide hips about in  
your private dungeon,  
when i remember your  
deformity i want to  
do something about your  
makeshift manhood.  
i guess

that is why  
on meeting your sixth  
wife, i cross myself  
with her confessionals.

- a) Describe the relationship that each persona has with her father. [10]

- b) Identify and discuss the factors that contributed to the shaping of their respective memories of their fathers. [14]
- c) Comparatively discuss the poems' form. [8]

**[30 marks]**

Question 4

- a) Comparatively discuss the two poets' treatment of the theme of Africa in the poems below. [25]
- b) Discuss whether or not you detect any aspects of idealization of the African ancestral past in any of the two poems. [5]

**"Black Warrior"** Norman Jordan (USA)

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.

**"Africa"** David Diop (Senegal)

Africa my Africa  
Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs  
Africa of whom my grandmother sings  
On the banks of the distant river  
I have never known you  
But your blood flows in my veins  
Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields  
The blood of your sweat  
The sweat of your work

The work of your slavery  
The slavery of your children  
Africa tell me Africa  
Is this you this back that is bent  
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation  
This back trembling with red scars  
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun  
But a grave voice answers me  
Impetuous son that tree young and strong  
That tree there  
In splendid loveliness amidst white and faded flowers  
That is Africa your Africa  
That grows again patiently obstinately  
And its fruit gradually acquires  
The bitter taste of liberty.

**[30 marks]**