

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
FIRST SEMESTER FINAL EXAMINATION
DECEMBER, 2014

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 conventional errors and thus avoid losing marks.
3. This paper is 5 pages, cover page included.

**THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN
GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR**

SECTION A POETRY

Question 1

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

"Mulatto" Langston Hughes

Because I am the white man's son – his own,
Bearing his bastard birth-mark on my face,
I will dispute his title to his throne,
Forever fight him for my rightful place.
There is a searing hate within my soul.
A hate that only kin can feel for kin,
A hate that makes me vigorous and whole,
And spurs me on increasingly to win.
Because I am my cruel father's child,
My love of justice stirs me up to hate,
A warring Ishmaelite, un-reconciled,
When falls the hour I shall not hesitate
Into my father's heart to plunge the knife
To gain the utmost freedom that is life.

"Sonnet to a Negro in Harlem" Helene Johnson

You are disdainful and magnificent –
Your perfect body and your pompous gait,

Your dark eyes flashing solemnly with hate,
Small wonder that you are incompetent
To imitate those whom you so despise –
Your shoulders towering high above the throng,
Your head thrown back in rich, barbaric song,
Palm trees and mangoes stretched before your eyes.
Let others toil and sweat for labor's sake
And wring from grasping hands their meed of gold.
Why urge ahead your supercilious feet?
Scorn will efface each footprint that you make.
I love your laughter arrogant and bold.
You are too splendid for this city street.

- a) Summarize the meaning of each of the two poems, taking into account each poem's key words and expressions (both literal and figurative) [16]
- b) Identify and discuss each poem's main theme(s) and the influence of setting on the themes. [8]
- c) Discuss the poems' form and the impact it has on the unfolding of the poems' themes. [6]

Question 2

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

"Frederick Douglass" Robert Hayden

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful
 And terrible thing, needful to man as air,
Usable as earth; when it belongs at last to our children,
 When it is truly instinct, brain-matter, diastole, systole,
Reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
 Than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:
 This man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
 Beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
 Where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
 This man, superb in love and logic, this man
 Shall be remembered. Oh not with statues' rhetoric,
 Not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
 But with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
Fleshing his dream of the beautiful needful thing.

"Remember" Don Mattera

Remember to call at my grave •
 When freedom finally
Walks the land
 So that I may rise
 To tread familiar paths
 To see broken chains
Fallen prejudice
 Forgotten injury
 Pardoned pains.

And when my eyes have filled their sight
 Do not run away for fright
 If I crumble to dust again

It will only be the bliss
Of a long-awaited dream
That bids me rest
When freedom finally walks the land.

- a) Discuss in detail the situation presented by the two poems, paying attention to certain key words and expressions (underlined for your convenience) which enhance the poems' meaning. [20]
- b) Identify and briefly discuss the major theme(s) of both poems as well as comparatively highlight any observable similarities / differences in their political statements while paying attention to each poem's setting. [10]

SECTION B PROSE & DRAMA

Question 3 (IDE)

A Lesson Before Dying Ernest Gaines
A Raisin in the Sun Lorraine Hansberry

Comparatively discuss the way in which the following four African American male characters relate to their adoptive country, America: Grant Wiggins, Jefferson, Walter Lee Jr. and George Murchison. *Your discussion should begin by briefly explaining their respective roles in the texts in which they appear.* [30]

Question 4 (Fulltime)

Manchild in the Promised Land Claude Brown
Coconut Kopano Matlwa

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

"I guess it was harder on the girls than it was on anybody. Dixie started tricking when she was thirteen. She was big for her age, and 'nice' ladies used to point at her and say, "Oh, ain't that a shame." But it wasn't. The shame of it was that she had to do it or starve. When she got hip and went out there on the street and started turning tricks, she started eating and she stopped starving. And I thought ...it ain't no shame to stop starvin' ..."

"I walked out of Silver Spoon that afternoon straight into The Meisies Store across the way. My heart was thumping against my rib cage, each breath hurtling out of my flared nostrils in short, forced bits. I could hear the blood rushing past my ears. I refused to lose this job. And so when I

got onto the escalator and headed down, first past the lingerie section and then the fragrances, I knew what I had to do. I calmly removed from the shelf the first size 32 black jeans I saw, folded them into my bag and went back up the escalator, past the fragrances and then the lingerie section and walked out of the store."

- a) Identify the speaker in each passage. [2]
- b) Briefly explain the setting (in time and place) of each passage and the predicament facing each of the narrators. [8]
- c) In a well-illustrated essay and using the excerpts as a point of departure, comparatively discuss how the two authors from the two literary regions approach the theme of girlhood. [20]

Question 5 (Fulltime)

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Narrative)
Manchild in the Promised Land (Manchild)

"It may be observed that attitudes towards manual work among African American males as depicted in Manchild constitute a revolt dating back to the slavery era when slaves were forced to work from dawn to dusk."

Respond to this observation by:

- a) Describing the prevalent working conditions of the slavery era as described in Narrative. [15]
- b) Focusing on not less than two characters in Manchild, discuss the prevalent male attitudes towards manual work. [15]

Question 6 (IDE)

"The South African/ African American's response to Christianity is a recurrent theme in both South African and African American literature; it is also the cause of a bitter generational conflict." Discuss this assertion in relation to any two texts you have studied in the course. [30]

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