ENG2603

COLOMAN AND POSTCOLONIAL
AFRICAN LITERATURES

Duration 2 Hours

Examiners
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Closed book examination.

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This examination question paper consists of 4 pages

You must answer TWO questions, one from Section A and one from Section B.

Each question carries 50 marks.

The examination total is 100 marks.
SECTION A

You must answer ONE question from this section

Question 1: Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun

BENEATHA (Eagerly opening the package and drawing out some records and the colourful robes of a Nigerian woman) Oh Asagai! ... You got them for me! . How beautiful and the records too! (She lifts out the robes and runs to the mirror with them and holds the drapery up in front of herself)

ASAGAI (Coming to her at the mirror) I shall have to teach you how to drape it properly. (He flings the material about her for the moment and stands back to look at her) Ah – Oh-pay-gay-day, oh-gbah-mu-shay. (A Yoruba exclamation for admiration) You wear it well very well. mutilated hair and all

BENEATHA (Turning suddenly) My hair – what’s wrong with my hair?

ASAGAI (Shrugging) Were you born with it like that?

BENEATHA (Reaching up to touch it) No of course not.

(She looks back to the mirror, disturbed)

ASAGAI (Smiling) How then?

BENEATHA You know perfectly well how . as crinkly as yours . . that’s how

ASAGAI And it is ugly to you that way?

BENEATHA (Quickly) Oh, no-not ugly . . (More slowly, apologetically) But it’s so hard to manage when it’s, well – raw

ASAGAI And so to accommodate that – you mutilate it every week?

BENEATHA It’s not mutilation!

(Act One, Scene II)

Using the scene from A Raisin in the Sun above as your starting point, write an essay in which you discuss Asagai’s influence on Beneatha’s identity and the changes her identity undergoes during the play

[50]

OR

[TURN OVER]
Question 2: Fred Khumalo, *Seven Steps to Heaven*

In *Seven Steps to Heaven*, Fred Khumalo places greater emphasis on Sizwe’s personal journey and the process of his identity formation than on the larger political transition that was taking place in the country at the time the novel is set.

Through close reading of the extracts below, write an essay in which you discuss the statement above.

**Extract 1:**
In his journal, he wrote ‘I am tired of this. I feel dirty. This is disgusting. I feel inferior. I feel belittled. Why is it that I always come after Thulani? His father seems to be leading the way, while mine follows. Why is this so? Are we inferior to them? Is there something wrong in our intellectual make-up?’ It was a question that would keep popping up in his mind in the years to follow.

As an afterthought, he made the following entry ‘I lost my virginity on the same day that Mandela was released from prison. Any significant meaning behind this?’

He laughed out loud until his mother poked her head into his bedroom ‘Are you all right?’

‘Mandela’s release has made me a mature, happy young man!’

**Extract 2:**
The South African elections of 1994 were one of the biggest stories of the century. They marked the end of apartheid, the most abominable system of racial oppression in the world. They also marked the return of the country to the fold of the international community after more than three decades of isolation as a result of its segregationist, violent regime.

But to Sizwe this moment was just a blur he never got to appreciate, engrossed as he was in the biography, hardly sleeping and hardly venturing out of the house. He read few newspapers these days, relying on Patrick to keep the clippings that would be of interest to him. He was quarantined in his writing studio, with Patrick coming in now and then to give him food and drink. He also prepared a huge collection of zols, which Sizwe smoked one after the other as he wrote feverishly.

[50]

**SECTION B**

You must answer ONE question from this section.

**Question 3: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions***

At the conclusion of *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha is afflicted by both anorexia and a nervous breakdown. She says to Tambu. “Look what they’ve done to us [ ] I’m not one of them but I’m not one of you.”

Using Nyasha’s comment as a starting point, write an essay in which you explore how her identity has been shaped by the colonial experience. You should also analyse other significant moments in the novel to support the argument that you develop. Remember that your essay should be carefully structured and that each paragraph should have a particular focus.

[50]

[TURN OVER]

Discuss the ways in which the poem "To Whom It May Concern" explores the theme of identity in urban apartheid South Africa. You should avoid simply summarising the poem and you should instead identify significant words or phrases and show how these advance the poem’s central concerns. This analysis should be carefully structured and each paragraph should develop a particular idea.

"To Whom It May Concern" (Sipho Sepamla)

Bearer
Bare of everything but particulars
Is a Bantu
The language of a people in southern Africa
He seeks to proceed from here to there
Please pass him on
Subject to these particulars
He lives
Subject to the provisions
Of the Urban Natives Act of 1925
Amended often
To update it to his sophistication
Subject to the provisions of the said Act
He may roam freely within a prescribed area
Free only from the anxiety of conscription
In terms of the Abolition of Passes Act
A latter-day amendment
In keeping with moon-age naming
Bearer’s designation is Reference number 417181
And (he) acquires a niche in the said area
As a temporary sojourner
To which he must betake himself
At all times
When his services are dispensed with for the day
As a permanent measure of law and order
Please note
The remains of R/N 417181
Will be laid to rest in peace
On a plot
Set aside for Methodist Xhosas
A measure also adopted
At the express request of the Bantu
In anticipation of any faction fight
Before the Day of Judgement