

# POETRY QUESTIONS

## ENGLISH POETRY QUESTIONS



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# POETRY QUESTIONS

For answers call Sir Abraham

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*1. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow. (20 mks)*

**Song of Agony**

I put on a clean shirt

And go to work

Which of us

Which of us will come back?

Four and twenty moons

Not seeing women

Not seeing my hand

Which of us

Which of us will die?

I put on a clean shirt

And go to work my contract

To work far away

I go beyond the mountain

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# POETRY QUESTIONS

Into the bush

Where the roads end

And the rivers run dry

Which of us

Which of us will come back?

Which of us

Which of us will die?

## Questions

- Who is the persona in the poem? Explain(2 marks)
  - Briefly discuss the subject matter in this poem(3 marks)
  - Identify two stylistic devices in the poem and show their effectiveness.(4 marks)
  - Show how the persona and the others suffer in the poem. Illustrate your answer. (4 marks)
  - What is the dominant mood in the poem?(2 marks)
  - Is the title of this poem suitable? Explain(3 marks)
- g)Identify and explain one economic activity practiced by the persona's community.

## 2. Read the poem below then answer the questions that follow

### THE NECKLACE

From a distance  
Fearful of inching any further,  
A cold sweat trickled rivulets,

Making me shiver at noon.  
Undaring to approach the form

It was over in minutes,  
The necessities of execution availed,  
The firestone tyre,  
Petrol in blackened tin,  
And ignites in numerous hands  
Each participant ready and anxious,  
To set the man a flame.

As the smouldering form blackened,

# POETRY QUESTIONS

Smell of sizzling flesh filling in the air  
Piercing the nostrils,  
And choking me breathless,  
I watched in wonder,  
Witness to an unwritten law.

As the crowd dispersed,  
The haggling and bargaining resumed,  
Buying, selling and cheating,  
As men in uniform arrived,  
Bearing away the charred remains

## Questions

- a) How relevant is the title of the poem above? (2 marks)
- b) Describe the character of the executionists in the poem (2 marks)
- c) What was needed to carry out the execution? (3 marks)
- d) Explain the difference in the use of the word "form" in stanza one and stanza three (2 marks)
- e) (i) Who is the persona? (1 mark)  
(ii) What deters the persona from getting closer to the scene of action? (1 mark)
- f) Explain the meaning of the following phrases as used in the poem (3 marks)
- i) Smell of sizzling flesh  
ii) Each participant ready and anxious  
iii) Witnessed to an unwritten law
- g) What mood is portrayed in the poem? (2 marks)
- h) Paraphrase the last stanza (4 marks)

### 3. Read the poem below and answers the questions that follow (20 MARKS)

#### WEDDING EVE

Should I  
Or should I not  
Take the oath to love  
For ever

This person I know little about?  
Does she love me

Or my car

Or my future  
Which I know little about?

Will she continue to love me



# POETRY QUESTIONS

When the future she saw in me  
Crumbles and fades into nothing  
Leaving the naked me  
To love without hope?

Will that smile she wears  
Last through the hazards to come  
When fate strikes  
Across the dreams of tomorrow?

Like the clever passenger in a faulty plane,  
Wear her life jacket  
And jump out to save her life  
Leaving me crush into the unknown?

What magic can I use  
To see what lies beneath  
Her angel face and well knit hair  
To see her hopes and dreams  
Before I take an oath  
To love forever?

We are both wise chess players  
She makes a move  
I make a move  
And we trap each other in our secret dreams  
Hoping to win against each other

Everett Standa

## QUESTION

- |    |  |         |         |
|----|--|---------|---------|
| 1. | Comment on the title of this poem.                               | 3 marks |         |
| 2. | Explain the dilemma of speaker in the first stanza.              | 2 marks |         |
| 3. | What is the speaker's attitude towards their relationship?       |         |         |
| 4. | Discuss and illustrate two character traits of the persona.      |         | 4 marks |
| 5. | Comment on the imagery of the plane.                             | 3 marks |         |
| 6. | Explain how the relationship is compared to a game of chess.     |         | 3       |
|    | marks  |         |         |
| 7. | Explain the meaning of the following line: leaving the naked me. |         | 3       |
|    | marks  |         |         |



# POETRY QUESTIONS

4. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.  
(20 marks)

**The inmates**

Huddled together  
Cold biting their bones  
Teeth chattering from the chill,

The air oppressive,  
The smell offensive  
They sit and they reflect

The room self contained  
At the corner the 'gents' invites  
With the nice fragrance of ammonia,  
And fresh human dung,  
The fresh inmates sit thoughtfully

Vermin perform a guard of honour  
Saluting him with a bite here  
And a bite there  
'Welcome to the world, they seem to say'  
The steel lock of the door  
The walls insurmountable  
And the one torching tortuous bulb  
Stare vacantly at him  
Slowly he reflects about the consignment  
That gave birth to his confinement  
Locked in for conduct refinement  
The reason they put him in prison

The clock ticks  
But too slowly  
Five years will be a long time  
Doomed in the dungeon  
In this hell of a cell

- a) Who is the persona in the poem? (1 mark)  
b) Briefly explain what the poem is about. (2 marks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- c) Identify and illustrate three aspects of style in the poem. (6 marks)
- d) Give evidence from the poem which indicates the inmates are suffering. (3 marks)
- e) Why is the fresh inmate in prison? (2 marks)
- f) Identify and explain the mood of the new convict. (2 marks)
- g) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem.
- i) That gave birth to his confinement (1 mark)
- ii) The room is self contained (1 mark)
- h) What does the steel lock in the door and the insurmountable walls suggest? (2 marks)

## 5. Read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

### The Courage That My Mother Had

The courage that my mother had  
Went with her, and is with her still;  
Rock and New England quarried;  
Now granite in a granite hill.

The golden brooch my mother wore  
She left behind for me to wear;  
I have nothing I treasure more;  
Yet, it is something I could spare.

Oh, if instead she'd left to me  
The thing she took into the gravel!  
The courage like a rock, which she  
Has no more need of, and I have.

*(Had – Edna St. Vincent Millay)*

- a) Briefly explain how the poem is about. (4 marks)
- b) Is the speaker male or female? How do you know? (2 marks)
- c) What does the speaker wish the mother had left behind? Why can't the wish be fulfilled? (3 marks)
- d) Describe the character trait of the mother in the poem. (2 marks)
- e) Identify and illustrate the imagery used in the poem. (4 marks)
- f) What is the speaker's attitude towards the mother and the golden brooch in the poem. (3 marks)
- g) Rewrite the following in your own words: (2 marks)  
"Has no more need of, and I have"



# POETRY QUESTIONS

6. Read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow.

## THE PAUPER.

Pauper, pauper, craning your eyes  
In all directions, in no direction!  
What brutal force, malignant element,  
Dared to forge your piteous fate?

Was it worth the effort, the time?

You limply lean on a leafless tree  
Nursing the jiggers that shrivel your bottom  
Like baby newly born to an old woman.  
What crime, what treason did you commit  
That you are thus condemned to human indifference?

And when you trudge on the horny pads,  
Gullied like the soles of modern shoes,  
Pads that even jiggers cannot conquer;  
Does He admire your sense of endurance  
Or turn his head away from your imprudent presence?

You sit alone on hairless goatskins,  
Your ribs and bones reflecting the light  
That beautiful cars reflect on you,  
Squashing like between your nails.  
And cleaning your nails with dry saliva.

And when He looks at the grimy coating  
Caking off your emaciated skin,  
At the rust that uproots all your teeth  
Like a pick on a stony piece of land,  
Does He pat his paunch at the wonderful sight?

Pauper, pauper, crouching in beautiful verandas  
Of beautiful cities and beautiful people,  
Tourists and I will take your snapshots,  
And your M.P. with a shining head and triple chin  
Will mourn your fate in a supplementary questions at question time.

*(Adapted from poems from East Africa, by Cook and Rubadiri EDS)*

i) Identify the persona in the poem above.

(2 marks)





# POETRY QUESTIONS

- ii) What evidence from the poem suggest that the subject is poor? (4 marks)
- iii) Comment on the writer's use of imagery in stanza two. (3 marks)
- iv) Apart from the imagery indentified in (iii) above, discuss any two other stylistic devices employed in the poem. (4 marks)
- v) What is the persona's attitude towards the M.P. (2 marks)
- vi) Discuss one theme brought out in the poem. (2 marks)
- vii) Explain the meaning of the following words and expression as used in the poem. (3 marks)
- a) Emaciated .
  - b) Crouching.
  - c) Gullied like the soles of modern shoes.

*7. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.*

## OUT-CAST

They met by accident  
He proposed the idea  
She gave her consent  
All the way to the altar

The casualty was male  
And his pigment was pale  
Unlike his alleged sire  
Who was black with ire

The recourse was legitimate

He disclaimed responsibility  
So they had to separate  
The boy remains illegitimate

Last month, not long ago  
They both took their go  
Coincidentally by accident  
No will, no estate  
Nothing to inherit

The poor boy is hardly ten  
And knows no next-of-kin  
He roams the streets of town  
Like a wind-sown out-cast

*G. Gathemia*



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- a) Briefly explain what the poem is about. (4 marks)
- b) Describe two characters traits of the mother in the poem (4 marks)
- c) Explain the meaning of the following as used in the poem. (3 marks)
- (i) Disclaimed.
- (ii) Unlike his alleged sire who was black with ire
- d) Identify and explain one instance of irony in the poem (3 marks)
- e) What is the persona's attitude towards the boy in the poem? (3 marks)
- f) Rewrite the following in your own words. (1 marks)
- ('They both took their go')
- g) Give a proverb which appropriately summarizes this poem. (2 marks)

## 8. Read the following oral poem and answer the questions that follow.

After a brief struggle I got myself  
A job  
My food was meat and banana  
flour  
A hundred cents a month and

soon I had some money.

Soon afterwards I bought myself  
A beautiful girl  
My heart was telling time this  
was a fortune  
So heart you were deceiving  
me and I believed you  
On a Saturday morning as I was  
leaving work  
I was thinking I was being

awaited at home  
But on arrival I couldn't find my bride

Nor was she in her parents home  
I ran fast to the river valley;  
What I saw gave me a shock.



# POETRY QUESTIONS

There was my wife conversing  
with her lovers.

I sat and silently wept.  
I realized there is no luck in this world.  
People aren't trustworthy and  
will never be!

- (a) Place this song in its appropriate genre. (2 Marks)
- (b) State and illustrate two functions of this song. (4 Marks)
- (c) What evidence is there to show that this is an Oral Poem? (4 Marks)
- (d) Explain briefly what the poem is about. (2 Marks)
- (e) Give any two character traits of the singer. (4 Marks)
- (f) Identify and illustrate two economic activities practiced by the society in the song. (4 Marks)

9. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.  
(20 marks)

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end-  
Of those who wear the head plumes  
We shall die on the earth. The earth  
does not get fat. It makes an end of those who act swiftly as heroes.  
Shall we die on the earth?

Listen O earth. We shall mourn because of you.  
Listen O earth. Shall we all die on the earth?  
The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of  
The chiefs. Shall we die on earth? The  
earth does not get fat. It makes an end  
Of the women chiefs. Shall we die on earth?

Listen o earth. We shall mourn because of you.  
Listen O earth. Shall we all die on earth?  
The earth does not get fat. It makes an end  
Of the nobles. The earth does not get fat  
It makes an end of the royal women.  
Shall we die on earth?



# POETRY QUESTIONS

The earth does not get fat. It makes an end  
of the common people. Shall we die on the earth?  
The earth does not get fat. It makes an end of all the beasts  
Shall we die on the earth?  
Listen you who are asleep, who are left  
tightly closed in the land. Shall we all sink  
Into the earth? Listen O  
Earth the sun is setting tightly. We shall enter into the earth.  
We shall not enter into the earth.  
(From: 'The Heritage Of African Poetry')

- a) What is the poem about?  
(3 mks)
- b) Who is the persona in the poem?  
(2mks)
- c) Identify and illustrate any two features of style used in the poem?  
(4mks)
- d) What is the tone of the persona in the poem?  
(2mks)
- e) What in the poem shows that death is indiscriminate in its manifestations?  
(2mks)
- f) Describe the political setting of the community from which the poem originates.  
(2mks)
- g) What is the mood of the poem?  
(2mks)
- h) Explain what the expressions below mean :  
(3mks)
  - i) The earth does not get fat .
  - ii) Those who wear the head plumes
  - iii) Earth the sun is setting tightly

10. Read the poem below and then answer the question that follow.

## AFRICA

Africa my Africa  
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannah's  
Africa my grandmother sings of  
Beside her distant river  
I have never seen you.

But my gaze is full of your blood.  
Your black spilt over the field.  
The blood of your sweat  
The sweat of your toil  
The toil of slavery  
The slavery of your children.



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Africa, tell me Africa,  
Are you the back that bends.  
Lies down under the weight of humbleness?  
The trembling back stripped red.

That says yes to the whips on the road of noon?

Solemnly a voice answers me  
"Impetuous child, that young and sturdy tree.  
That tree that grows.  
There splendidly alone among white and faded flowers.  
Is Africa, your Africa. It puts forth new shoots.

With patience and stubbornness pouts forth news shoots.  
Slowly its fruits grow to have  
That bitter taste of freedom.

1. Who is the persona  
( 2mks)
2. What is the message of the poem?  
(3mks)
3. Identify any three stylistic devices used in the poem. (6mks)
4. What is the tone of the poem?  
(3mks)
5. From the above poem, explain the meaning of the following lines?  
a)' But the gaze is full of your blood. Your blood spilt over the field.' (1mk)  
b)' Africa, my Africa  
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral Savannah' (1mk)
6. But my gaze is full of your blood.  
(1mk)  
(Add an appropriate question tag)
7. What is the meaning of the following words? (3mks)  
i) Solemnly  
ii) Sturdy  
iii) Toil

11. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.  
20mks

## POEM FOR MY SISTER

My little sister likes to try my shoes to strut them,



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Admire her spindle thin-twelve year-old legs  
In this season's style  
She says they fit perfectly,  
But wobbles  
On their high heels, they're  
Hard to balance.

I like to watch my  
little sister playing  
hopscotch, admire the  
neat hops-and -skips  
of her, their quick  
peck,  
never missing their  
mark, not over-  
Stepping the line. She is competent at peever.

I try to warn my little sister  
about unsuitable shoes,  
Point out my distorted feet, the  
Callouses, odd patches of hard skin.  
I should not like to see her  
in my shoes.  
I wish she would stay  
Sure footed,  
Sensibly should.

*(by Liz Loch head in poems I' ed. Celeste flower. Singapore: Longman 1995)*

- a) Why does the little sister try the persona's shoes?  
3mks
- b) How do we know from the first stanza that the shoes do not fit?  
1mk
- c) Why does the persona like watching her younger sister play hopscotch? 4mks
- d) In the third stanza, the persona gives us new reasons why her little sister should not wear her shoes. What are these reasons?  
2mks
- e) What is the message of this poem?  
5mks



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- f) Describe the tone of the poem.  
3mks
- g) Explain the meaning of the following line.  
2mks

“I should not like to see her in my shoes.”

(2 marks)

12. Read the following poem and respond to the questions appropriately.

## 'STILL I RISE'

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.  
Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells'  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like tear drops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your word  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Out of the hurts of history's shame



# POETRY QUESTIONS

I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I raise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear  
In the tide  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a day brake that is wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my  
Ancestors game,  
I am the dream and the

Hope of the slave  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise

*Adapted from: Maya Angelous' STILL I RISE (1978)*

1. With support from the poem, briefly explain what the poem is about. (3 marks)
2. Identify three challenges that the speaker in the poem contends with. (3 marks)
3. What is the attitude of the speaker towards these challenges? (2 marks)
4. Identify and illustrate figures of speech from the poem above. Comment on their effectiveness. (4 marks)
5. Other than the style in (4) above, identify and illustrate other two stylistic devices employed by the poet. (4 marks)
6. Explain the meaning of the following phrases as they are used in poem. (3 marks)
  - a) 'Cause I laugh I've got gold mines'
  - b) 'But still, like dust, I'll rise'.
  - c) I am Black Ocean, leaping and wide.
7. Supply the following sentence with the correct question tag. (1 mark)

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

## 13. Read the following poem and answer the questions that follow.

**I WENT TO CHURCH.**

I went to church today.  
Yes I went and prayed for all  
Friends and foes a like.  
Dead and those alive.

I also prayed hard.  
For the soul of that soldier.  
Who got short.





# POETRY QUESTIONS

Fighting for our motherland  
While I shot hot life into his wife.  
And I prayed to God too  
That I live long  
To go and pray again

## Questions.

- a) What is the poem about?  
(4 marks) (4)
- b) Identify and illustrate any two character traits of the speaker.  
marks) (6)
- c) Identify and illustrate three poetic devices used in the poem.  
marks) (2)
- d) What is the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem.  
marks)  
i) While I shot hot life into his wife.  
ii) That I live long to go and pray again.
- e) i) What is the tone of the poem  
(2 marks)  
ii) Explain the overriding mood of the poem.  
(2 marks)

14. Read the poem below and then answer the question that follows. (20 mark)

## THE PRESS

So What is the mountain deal?  
About the minister's ailing son  
That makes boiling news?

How come it was not whispered?  
When Tina's hospital bed was **crawled** with maggots  
And her eyes oozed pus  
Because the doctors lacked gloves?

What about Kasajja's only child  
Who died because the man with the key  
To the oxygen room was on leave?

I have seen queues  
Of emaciated mothers clinging to  
Babies with translucent skins  
Faint in line  
And the lioness of a nurse



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Commanding tersely  
'Get up or live the line'  
Didn't I hear it rumored that  
The man with the white mane  
**Ushered** a rape case out of court  
Because the seven-year-old  
Failed to testify?  
Anyway, I only remembered these things  
Ehen I drink  
They indeed tipsyexplosions.  
*Susan Nalugwa Kiguli*  
*Adopted By from: Echoes across the valley.*

## Questions

- a) Identify and explain the social evils dealt with in the poem. (6 marks)
- b) Pick out three poetic devices evident in this poem and comment on their significance. (6 marks)
- c) Comment on the tone of the poem. (2 marks)
- d) Is the title significant? Why or why not? (2 marks)
- e) Explain the irony of the poem? (2 marks)
- f) Explain the meaning of the following words: (2 marks)
- i) Crawled
  - ii) Ushered

## 15. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

(20 marks)

### Their City

City in the sun  
without any warmth  
except for wanaotosheka  
and the tourists escaping  
from civilized boredom  
Sit under the Tree  
any Saturday morning

and watch the new Africans,  
the anxious faces  
behind the steering wheels  
in hire purchase cars  
see them looking important  
in a tiny corner  
behind the chauffeur

We have seen them  
in a nightmare,  
the thickset directors



# POETRY QUESTIONS

of several companies;  
we have seen them  
struggling under the weight  
of a heavy lunch  
on a Monday afternoon  
cutting a tape

to open a building,  
we have seen them  
looking over their  
gold-rimmed glasses  
to read a speech  
And in the small hours  
between one day and the next  
we have strolled through  
the deserted streets  
and seen strange figures  
under bougainvillea bushes

in traffic islands  
figures hardly human  
snoring away into  
the cold winds of the night;  
desperately dying to live.

*(Lennard Okola)*

## Questions.

- a) Who is the persona in the poem? (2 marks)
- b) Explain what the poem is about. (3 marks)
- c) What is achieved by repetition of "We have seen them"? (2 marks)
- d) Identify and explain **two** thematic concerns of the poet. (4 marks)
- e) Why are the "new Africans" said to have anxious faces? (2 marks)
- f) Explain the meaning of the expression;  
figures hardly human  
desperately dying to live. (2 marks)
- g) How does the persona portray the rich? (2 marks)
- h) Describe the tone in the poem. (3 marks)

**16. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.**

(20 marks)

## Western civilization

Sheets of tin nailed to posts  
driven in the ground



# POETRY QUESTIONS

make up the house

Some rags complete  
The intimate landscape  
The sun slanting through the cracks  
welcomes the owner.

After twelve hours of slave  
labour  
Breaking rock  
shifting rock  
breaking rock  
shifting rock  
fair weather  
wet weather  
breaking rock  
shifting rock

Old age comes early  
a mat on dark nights  
is enough when he dies  
gratefully  
of hunger

## Questions.

- a) What is the poem about? (4 marks)
- b) Identify and illustrate two features of style used in the poem. (4 marks)
- c) What does the fifth stanza suggest about the work done by "he"? (2 marks)
- d) What basic requirements does the "he" in the poem lack? (3 marks)
- e) Why do you think the "he" dies "gratefully"? (1 mark)
- f) Describe **two** themes brought out in the poem. (4 marks)
- g) Explain the meaning of "Old age comes early" (1 marks)
- h) Supply a word that means the same as hunger as used in the poem. (1 mark)

## 17. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

### Beggar in the three a piece.

My Jumbo  
Shot its way  
Across the sky  
To distant lands  
Across blue seas

I descended the ladder  
To a waiting ribbon



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Of blood-red carpet  
A quick glance at my  
Three piece suit and the tie  
That beautifully strangled my neck.

On my left hand hang  
My beaded knob kerry  
On my right I clutched  
My rusty inter- nation Begging Bowl  
On my face I wore humility and need  
And of course dignity.

Sir, the dearth of food  
Had rendered my people thin  
And hungry  
Scoop us a little  
You know  
Just little  
To keep them till next rains.

But Sir, beggars  
In three piece  
Are a rare sight  
But your suit is beautiful  
Honestly.

Now my suit  
Which cost me a fortune  
In a Parisian Texture  
Has denied me a fortune  
And my countrymen, life.

*By. L.O. Sunkuli.*

- (a) Who is the persona in the poem? (3 marks)
- (b) What is the subject matter of this poem? (4 marks)
- (c) Explain the satire in this poem and comment on its effectiveness. (4 marks)
- (d) Describe the tone of this poem. (3 marks)
- (e) Explain what the last stanza implies. (3 marks)
- (f) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. (3 marks)
- My Jumbo  
Shot its way  
Across the sky
  - That beautifully strangled my neck.
  - To keep them till next rains.

# POETRY QUESTIONS

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

## White child meets black man

She caught me outside a London  
Suburban shop, I, like a giraffe  
And she a mouse. I tried to go

But felt she stood  
Lovely as light on my back

I turned with hello  
And waited. Her eyes got  
Wider but not her lips.  
Hello I smiled again and watched.

She stepped around me  
Slowly, in a kind of dance,  
Her wide eyes searching  
Inch by inch up and down:  
No fur no scales no feathers  
No shell. Just a live silhouette,  
Wild and strange  
And compulsive  
Till mother came horrified

'Mummy is his tummy black?'  
Mother grasped her and swung  
Toward the crowd. She tangled  
Mother's legs looking back at me  
As I watched them birds were singing.

*James Berry (Jamaica)*

## QUESTIONS

- (a) Briefly explain what the poem is about. (3mks)
- (b) Explain what the reaction of the white child makes the persona feel. (4mks)
- (c) Compare and contrast the reactions of the mother and daughter to the black man. (6mks)
- (d) Identify and explain any **two** figures of speech used in this poem. (4mks)
- (e) Explain the significance of the last line of the poem. (3mks)

19. Read the Poem below and answer the questions that follow:

(20 Marks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

## The Twist

In a little shanty town  
Was on a night like this

Girls were sitting down  
Around the town  
Like this

Some were young  
And some were brown  
I even found a miss

Who was black and brown

And really did  
The twist

Watch her move her wrist  
And feel your belly twist  
Feel the hunger thunder  
When her hip bones twist

Try to hold her, keep her under  
While the juke box hiss  
Twist the music out of hunger  
On a night like this

- a) What is the poem about?  
(3 marks)
- b) Identify **three** senses that the poem appeals to.  
(3 Marks)
- c) What is the main theme of this poem? (2 Marks)
- d) What is the attitude of the persona towards the girls mentioned in the poem? (2 Marks)
- e) Identify three poetic devices used in the poem.  
(6 marks)
- f) What are the achievements of the persona on this night?  
(2 marks)
- g) Explain the meaning of:
- i) ..... a miss (who was brown and black). (1 Marks)
- ii) Twist the music out of hunger. (1 Marks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

20. Read the poem below and then answer the question that follow.  
(20 marks)

## DEATH OF MY FATHER

His sunken cheeks, his inward-looking eyes,  
The sarcastic, scornful smile on his lips  
The unkempt, matted, grey hair,  
The hard, coarse sand-paper hands,  
Spoke eloquently of the life he had lived.  
But I did not mourn for him.

The hammer, the saw and the plane,  
These were his tools and his damnation,  
His sweat was his ointment and his perfume.  
He fashioned dining tables, chairs, wardrobes,  
And all the wooden loves of colonial life.  
No, I did not mourn for him.

He built colonial mansions,  
Huge, unwieldy, arrogant constructions;

But he squatted in a sickly mud-house,  
With his children huddled stuntedly,  
Under the bed-bug bed he shared with Mother.  
I could not mourn for him.

I had already inherited  
His premature old-age look,  
I had imbibed his frustration;  
But his dreams of freedom and happiness  
Had become my song, my love.  
So, I could not mourn for him.

No, I did not shed any tears;  
My father's dead life still lives in me,  
He lives in my son, my father,  
I am my father and my son.  
I will awaken his sleepy hopes and yearnings,  
But I will not mourn for him,





# POETRY QUESTIONS

I will not mourn for me.

- a) Identify the persona. (2 marks)
- b) What is the poem talking about? (3 marks)
- c) Comment on the **alliteration** that is used in the poem? (2 marks)
- d) Apart from alliteration, identify and explain any other **two** aspects of style that the poet has used. (4 marks)
- e) What reason does the persona give for not mourning his father's death? (3 marks)
- f) What is the father's profession from the poem? (1 mark)
- g) Explain the **meaning** of the following lines as used in the poem: (3 marks)
  - i) The hard, coarse sand-paper hands,  
Spoke eloquently of the life he had lived.
  - ii) His premature old-age look,
  - iii) I will awaken his sleepy hopes and yearnings,
- h) What is the **attitude** of the persona towards his father's life? (2 marks)

21. Read the following poem and answer the questions that follow.

## The Gourd of Friendship.

Where is the curiosity we've lost in discovery?  
Where is the discovery we've lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we've lost in communication?  
Where is the communication we've lost in mass media?  
And where is the community we've lost in all these?  
Where is the message we've lost in the medium?  
It is easy to go to the moon:  
There, there are no people.

It is easier to count the stars:  
They will not complain.  
But the road to your neighbour's heart - who has surveyed it?  
The formula to your brother's head - Who has devised it?  
The gourd that doesn't spill friendship - In whose garden has it ever grown?  
You never know despair Until you've lost hope;



# POETRY QUESTIONS

You never know your aspiration Until you've seen others disillusionment.

Peace resides in the hearts of men.

Not in conference tables and delegates signatures.

True friendship never dies - It grows stronger the more it is used.

*By Richard Nturu*

1. Explain the meaning of the poem (3 marks)
2. Discuss the use of the rhetorical questions in the poem. (3 marks)
3. Describe the tone of this poem (3 marks)
4. Identify and explain two other stylistic devices (apart from the rhetorical questions) (4 marks)
5. Explain the meaning of these lines. (4 marks)
  - i) "where is the curiosity we have lost in discovery".
  - ii) "But the road to your neighbour's heart - who has surveyed it?" ( marks)
6. What does the persona think about relationships? (2 marks)
7. Explain the appropriateness of the title. (1 mark)

## 22. Read the poem below and answer the questions below. (20 marks)

*Theme for English B.*

The instructor said,  
*Go home and write a page tonight.*  
*And let that page come out of you.*  
*Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it is that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.  
I went there, then Durham, then here  
To this college on the hill above Harlem,  
I am the only colored student in my class.  
The steps from the hill lead down into Harem,  
Through a park, then I cross St Nicholas,  
Eighth Avenue, seventh, and I come to the Y  
The Harlem BranchY, where I take the elevator  
Up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's no easy to know what is true for you or me  
At twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what  
I feel and see and hear. Harlem, I hear you:



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Hear you, hear me-we two-you, talk on this page.  
(I hear New York, too) me- who?  
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.  
I like to work, read, learn and understand life.  
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,  
Or records- Bessie, bop, or Bach.  
I guess being colored doesn't make me not like  
The same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?  
Being me, it will not be white.  
But it will be A part of you, instructor.  
You are white  
Yet a part of me, as I am part of you.

That's American.  
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be part of me.  
Nor do I often want to be part of you.  
But we are, that's true!  
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me- Although you are older- and white- And somewhat more free.  
This is my page for English B.  
(Langstone Hughes)

## Questions.

- a) Who is the speaker in the poem? Illustrate your answer. (2 mks)
- b) Identify two themes in the poem. Explain. (4 mks)
- c) Describe the mood of the poem? What details contribute or help establish that mood?  
2mks
- d) What point does the speaker seek to make by listing the things that he or she likes? (2mks)
- e) What is the tone of the poem? Explain (2 mks)
- f) Identify the use of personification in the poem. (2mks)
- g) In what ways is the speaker and the addressee similar and different? (2mks)
- h) Describe the relationship between the persona and the addressee (2mks)
- i) i) "I wonder if it is that simple." Rewrite as a yes/no question.  
ii) Rewrite the following beginning with: neither....  
You don't want to be part of me. Nor do I often want to be part of you (1 mk)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

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

## THE WAR LORD

Cut, thrust, plunge

Slash, slit, stab

Starve, maim, shoot

Torch, burn, scar

The trumpets herald you with regal glory

Epaulettes glisten and medals gleam

Plunder, loot and steal

Blind, brand, rape

Curse, crush, kidnap

Smash, torture, kill

Your arrival is welcomed with carpets of steel

Ramrod backed your subjects hail you

Bind, bludgeon, bury

Garotte, impale, castrate

Order, imprison, enslave

Censor, cajole and destroy

Your scarlet cape billows as you sense fresh converts

Ever more shrill their praises grow.

Barren, bleak, blackened



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Shattered, sterile, stricken

Torn, poisoned, defiled

Bloodied, entombed, rotting

The prize presented on some stolen silver

A maggot riddled remnant of a once serene world.

## Questions

- (a) Briefly explain what the poem is talking about. (3mks)
- (b) What is the attitude of the persona to the warlord? Elaborate your answer. (2mks)
- Explain the relevance of having separated words for stanza one, three, five and seven. (3mks)
- (c) Explain the irony in the poem. (3mks)
- (d) What is the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem?
- (i) The trumpets herald you with regal glory.  
Epaulettes glisten and medals gleam. (2mks)
- (ii) The prize presented on some stolen silver.  
A maggot riddled remnant of a once serene world. (2mks)
- (e) Apart from irony, which other stylistic device has been used in the poem? (2mks)
- (f) Identify one thematic concern of the poem. (3mks)

**24. Read the poem below and then answer the questions that follow.** (20 marks)  
**A TAX DRIVER ON DEATH BED. (By Timothy Wangusa)**

When with prophetic eye I peer in to the future  
I see that I shall perish upon this road  
Driving men that I do not know  
This metallic monster that I now dictate,  
This docile elaborate horse,  
That in silence seems to simmer and strain  
Shall surely revolt some tempting day.



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Thus u shall die: not that I care  
For any man's journey,  
Nor for proprietors gain  
Nor yet for the love of my own.  
Not for these do I attempt the forbidden limits.  
For those deft the traffic - man and the cold cell,  
Risking everything for the little little more.  
They shall say, I know, who pick up my bones  
'Poor chap, another victim to the ruthless machine'  
concealing my blood under the metal.

## Questions.

- a) What is this poem about? (3 marks)
- b) What is the attitude of the persona toward his fate? (2 marks)
- c) With illustration identify the persona in the poem. (2 marks)
- d) What is the irony in the poem? (2 marks)
- e) With illustrations identify and comment on any other **two** stylistic devices used in the poem. (6 marks)
- f) Comment on the following line.  
'poor chap, another victim to the ruthless machine?' (2 marks)
- g) How will the persona's death come about? (2 marks)
- h) Give the poem another title. (1 mark)

## 25. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

### Your Cigarette Burnt the Savannah Grass.

Come  
Listen to a boiling pot  
torch its heart and tell me  
What do you hear?

the sun sent down sowers of it  
that burnt to cinder your eddying conscience  
the earth at the touch of your fingers  
cracked

Colour melts at your stare  
Orange white blurred and all  
are the same to you  
Your cigarette burnt the savannah grass  
The scorpion bit me and I cried.

*Charles Owuor*



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- i) Identify and illustrated any **three** appeals the persona puts across to his adversary (3 marks)
- ii) What is the subject matter of this poem? (3 marks)
- iii) Identify and explain any **three** aspects of style and explain their functions. (6 marks)
- iv) Explain the meaning of the following lines. (4 marks)
- (a) 'Come  
Listen to a boiling pot'
- (b) ' the sun sent down showers of it that burnt to cinder your eddying conscience!
- (v) What is the mood of the poem? (2 marks)
- (vi) What is the persona's attitude towards his adversary? (2 marks)

26. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow:

## THE VILLAGE WELL

By the well,  
Where fresh water still quietly whisper  
As when I  
First accompanied Mother and filled my baby gourd,  
By this well,  
Where many an evening its clean water cleaned me;

This silent well  
Dreaded haunt of the long haired Musambwa  
Who basked  
In the mid-day sun reclining on the rock  
Where I now sit  
Welling up with many poignant memories;

This spot,  
Which has rung with the purity of child laughter;  
This spot,  
Where eye spoke secretly to responding eye;  
This spot,  
Where hearts pounded madly in many a breast;

By this well,  
Over-hung by leafy branches of sheltering trees  
I first noticed her  
I saw her in the cool of red, red evening  
I saw her



# POETRY QUESTIONS

As if I had not seen her a thousand times before  
By this well  
My eyes asked for love, and my heart went mad.  
I stuttered  
And murmured my first words of love  
And cupped  
With my hands, the intoxication that were her breasts

In this well,  
In the clear waters of this whispering well,  
The silent moon  
Witnessed with a smile our inviolate vows  
The kisses  
That left us weak and breathless.

It is dark.  
It is dark by the well that still whispers.  
It is darker  
It is utter darkness in the heart that bleeds  
By this well  
Where magic has evaporated but memories linger.

Of damp death  
The rotting foliage reeks,  
And the branches  
Are grotesque talons of hungry vultures,  
For she is dead  
The one I first loved by this well.

## Questions:

- (i) Who is the persona in this poem? (2 marks)
- (ii) What is the significant of the well to the persona? (4 marks)
- (iii) Identify imagery in the poem. (2 marks)
- (iv) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem.
  - (a) Dreaded haunt of the long haired Musambwa. (2 marks)
  - (b) I saw her in the cool of a red, red evening. (2 marks)
  - (c) It is dark by the well that still whispers. (2 marks)
  - (v) Comment on the change of mood in the last two stanzas. (4 marks)
  - (vi) What is the attitude of the persona towards death? (2 marks)

27. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow. (20 marks)

## Old and New

She went up the mountain to pluck wild herbs,  
She came down the mountain and met her former husband,





# POETRY QUESTIONS

She knelt down and asked her former husband,  
"What do you find your new wife like?"  
"My new wife, although her talk is clever,

Cannot charm me as my old wife could,  
In beauty of face there is not much to choose,  
But in usefulness they are not at all alike,  
My new wife comes in from the road to meet me,  
My old wife always came down from her tower.\*  
My new wife is clever at embroidering silk;  
My old wife was good at plain sewing.  
Of silk embroidery one can do an inch a day;  
Of plain sewing, more than five feet.  
Putting her silks by the side of your sewing,  
I see that the new will not compare with the old."

*Anonymous 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C.*

## Questions

- What is the poem about? (3 marks)
- With illustrations identify **one** similarity and difference in the two wives. (4 marks)
- Comment on any **two** poetic devices used in the poem. (6 marks)
- Explain the meaning of the following lines.  
"My new wife, although her talk is clever, cannot charm me as my old wife" (3 marks)
- Identify aspects of social life noticeable in the poem. (3 marks)
- What is the tone of the poem? (3 marks)

28. Read the poem given below and answer the questions that follow.

### THAT OTHER LIFE

(By Everett M Standa)

I have only faint memories  
Memories of those days when all our joyful moment  
In happiness, sorrow and dreams  
Were so synchronized  
That we were in spirit and flesh  
One soul;

I have only faint memories  
When we saw each other's image everywhere;  
The friends, the relatives,  
The gift of flowers, clothes and treats,  
The evening walks where we praised each other,  
Like little children in love;



# POETRY QUESTIONS

I remember the dreams about children  
The friendly neighbors and relatives  
The money, the farms and cows  
All were the pleasures ahead in mind  
Wishing for the day of final union  
When the dreams will come true

On that day final union  
We promised each other pleasures and care

And everything good under the sun  
As a daily reminder that you and me were one forever.

## QUESTIONS

- a) What does the day of the final union mean to the persona?  
(3 marks)
- b) What faint memories does the persona have, according to the poem? (3marks)
- c) What is the persona's attitude towards their marriage?  
(2marks)
- d) Explain the following expressions as used in the poem  
(i) Happiness, sorrow and dreams were so synchronized.....  
(2marks)  
(ii) ..... praised each other like children in love  
(2 marks)  
(iii) All were pleasures ahead in mind.  
(2marks)
- e) Identify two aspects of style used in this poem and explain their effectiveness. (4 marks)
- f) What is the mood of the poem  
(2 marks)

29. Read the poem below and answer the question that follows

**My grandmother**

*by Elizabeth Jennings*

She kept an antique shop-or it kept her.

Among Apostle spoons and Bristol glasses,

The faded silks, the heavy furniture,



# POETRY QUESTIONS

She watched her own reflection in the brass  
Salvers and silver bowls, as if to prove  
Polish was all, there was no need for love.

And I remember how I once refused  
To go out with her, since I was afraid.  
It was perhaps a wish not to be used  
Like antique objects. Though she never said  
That she was hurt, I still could feel the guilt  
Of that refusal, guessing how she felt.

Later, too frail to keep a shop, she put  
All her best things in one long, narrow room.  
The place smelt old, of things too long kept shut,  
The smell of absences where shadows come  
That can't be polished. There was nothing then  
To give her own reflection back again.

And when she died I felt no grief at all,  
Only the guilt of what I once refused.  
I walked into her room among the tall  
Sideboards and cupboards-things she never used  
But needed: and no finger-marks were there,  
Only the new dust falling through the air.

- a) Identify the persona in the above poem. (2mks)  
b) In note form, summarize what each stanza is talking about (4mks).



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- c) Identify and briefly explain the use of any two images in the poem (4mks)
- d) What does the persona feel towards the subject matter? (2mks)
- e) What do the following lines mean in the poem? (2mks)  
"too frail to keep a shop"  
"Only the new dust falling through the air"
- f) Describe the tone the persona uses in the poem above (2mks)
- g) Explain the paradox in the line: (2mks)  
-things she never used  
But needed:
- h) Explain the persona's sense of guilt? (2mks)

**30. Read the poem below then answer the questions that follow.**

## Riding Chinese Machines

There are beasts in this city  
they creak and they crank  
and groan from first dawn  
when their African-tongued masters wake  
to guide them lax and human-handed  
through the late rush  
when they're handled down and un-animated  
still as we sleep, towering or bowing  
always heavy

We pour cement through the cities  
towns, through the wild  
onwards, outwards  
like fingers of eager hands  
stretched across the earth  
dug in

The lions investigate  
and buried marvel rumbles  
squeezed for progress  
*By Liyou Mesfin Libsekal*

## Questions

- (a) Briefly describe what the poem is about. (3mks)
- (b) Explain how the poet feels towards the beasts in the city. (2mks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- (c) Identify **two** poetic devices employed by the poet in the poem. (4mks)  
(d) Explain the irony of the type of development described in the poem (3mks)  
(e) Explain the meaning of the following lines in the poem. (4mks)  
i) When their African-tongued masters wake to guide them.  
ii) The lions investigate and buried marvel rumbles squeezed for progress.  
(f) Identify and explain **one** theme tackled in the poem. (2mks)  
(g) Explain the significance of the title to the poem. (2mks)

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

## "Sympathy"

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass  
And the river flows like a stream of grass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its petals steals –  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats its wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he rather would be on the branch a – swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting –  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,  
When he beats his bars and would be free;  
It is not a song of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to heaven he fings –  
I know why the caged bird sings!

*(Adapted from the poem by Laurence Donbar in 'American Negro*

*Poetry' edited by ArnaBomtempo. New York: Hill and Waug 1974)*

## Questions



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- a) Explain briefly what the poem is about. (3 marks)
- b) What does the poet focus on in each of the three stanzas? (6 marks)
- c) How would you describe the persona's feelings towards the caged bird? (4 marks)
- d) What can we infer about the persona's own experiences? (3 marks)
- e) Identify a simile in the first stanza and explain why it is used. (2 marks)
- f) Explain the meaning of the following lines:
  - (i) And the faint perfume from the petals steals (1 mark)
- g) Supply another suitable title for this poem. (1 mark)

32. Read the oral poem below and then answer the questions that follows:-

## "FAMINE"

The owner of yam peels his yam in the house's:  
A neighbour knocks at the door  
The owner of yam throws his yam in the bedroom:  
The neighbour says, "I just heard  
A sound, 'kerekere', that is why I came,"  
The owner of the yam replies,  
"That was nothing, I was sharpening two knives."  
The neighbour says again, "I still heard  
Something like 'bi' sound behind the door."  
The owner of the yam says,  
"I merely tried my door with a mallet."  
The neighbour says again,  
"What about his huge fie burning on your hearth?"  
The fellow replies,  
"I am merely warming water for my bath."  
The neighbour persist,  
"Why is your skin all white, when this is not the Harmattan season?"  
The fellow is ready with his reply,  
I was rolling on the floor when I heard the death of Agadapidi."  
Then the neighbour says, "Peace be with you."  
The owner of the yam start shut,  
"There cannot be peace  
Unless the owner of food is allowed to eat his own food!"

## Questions.

- (a) Briefly explain what the poem is about. (2 marks)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (b) What does the neighbor hope to achieve by being so persistent? (3 marks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- (c) Using illustrations, describe any **two** character traits of the owner of the yam. (4 marks)
- (d) Identify the ideophones words in the poem. (2 marks)
- (e) How do we know that the neighbour is observant? (3 marks)
- (f) Describe the tone of the owner of the yam. (1 mark)
- (g) The neighbour says, "peace be with you." Why is this statement ironic? (3 marks)
- (h) What lesson can we learn from this poem? (2 marks)

33. Read the oral poem below and then answer the questions that follows:-

## BUILDING THE NATION

Today I did my share  
In building the nation  
I drove a permanent Secretary  
To an important urgent function  
In fact a luncheon at the Vic.

The menu reflected its importance  
Cold Bell beer with small talk,  
Then friend chicken with niceties  
Wine to fill the hollowness of the laughs  
Ice-cream to cover the stereotype jokes  
Coffee to keep the PS awake on return journey.

I drove the Permanent Secretary back.  
He yawned many times in the back of the car  
Did you have any lunch friend?  
I replied looking straight ahead  
And secretly smiling at his belated concern  
That I had not, but was smiling!

Upon which he said with a seriousness  
That amused more than annoyed me,  
Mwananchi, I too had none!  
I attended to matters of state  
Highly delicate diplomatic duties you know,  
And friend, it goes against my grain,  
Causes me stomach ulcers and wind.  
Ah, he continued, yawning again,  
The pains we suffer in buiding the nation!

So the PS had ulcers too!  
My ulcers I think are equally painful  
Only they are caused by hunger,  
Not sumptuous lunches!



# POETRY QUESTIONS

So two nation builders  
Arrived home this evening  
With terrible stomach pains  
The result of building the nation -  
- Different ways.

**Henry Barlow**

1. Identify two voices in the poem (2 mks)
2. Explain what the poem addresses (4 mks)
3. Identify and illustrate the use of any two poetic devices uses in the poem and explain their effectiveness (6 mks)
4. Describe the tone in the poem (2 mks)
5. How would you describe the attitude of the permanent secretary towards the persona?(2 mks)
6. Describe the rhyme scheme in stanza one (2 mks)
7. i) "He yawned many times in the back of the car." Add a question tag (1 mk)  
ii) "I drove the permanent secretary back." Write in passive voice

## ORAL LITERATURE

*34. Read the oral piece below and answer the questions that follow*

Blood iron and trumpets  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Forward we march  
(others fall on the way)  
Blood iron and trumpets  
We shall hack kill and cure  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Singers of the datsun blue  
Forward we drive breaking the records  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Let bullets find their targets and the earth be softened  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Let the dogs of war rejoice  
And the carrion birds feed  
We are reducing population sexplosion  
Blood iron and trumpets  
The uniformed machines are around  
Put on your helmet iron and rest  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Only through fire can be baptized to mean business  
So once again  
Blood iron and trumpets

We shall always march along





# POETRY QUESTIONS

Blood iron and trumpets  
Blood iron and trumpets  
Blood alone

- (a) Classify the oral piece above (2 Marks)
- (b) What are the functions of the oral piece above? (3 Marks)
- (c) Identify two features of oral poetry evident in the oral item. (3 Marks)
- (d) What two issues is this oral poem talking about? (4 Marks)
- (e) Cite one social and one economic activity of the community from which this oral poem is taken
- (f) Who would be the most suitable audience for the oral poem? Give reasons for your answer (2 Marks)
- (g) "The uniformed machines are around" Explain the meaning of this statement. (1 Mark)
- (h) Describe the mood of the poem. (2 Marks)

**35. Read the following poem and answer the questions that follow**

## SECOND OLYMPUS

From the rostrum they declaimed  
On martyrs and men of high ideals  
Whom they sent out  
Benevolent despots to an unwilling race  
Straining at the yoke  
Bull dozers trampling on virgin ground  
In blatant violation  
They trampled down all that was strange  
And filled the void  
With half digested alien thoughts  
They left a trail of red  
Whatever their feet had passed  
Oh, they did themselves fine  
And struttled about the place  
Self proclaimed demi- gods  
From a counterfeit Olympus  
One day they hurled down thunder bolts  
On toiling race of earthworms  
They might have rained own pebbles  
To pelt the brats to death  
But that was beneath them  
They kept up the illusion  
That they were fighting foes

Killing in the name of high ideals  
At the inquest they told the world  
The worms were becoming pests  
Moreover, they said  
They did not like wriggly things



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Strange prejudice for gods.

## Questions

- 1) Who is being talked about in this poem? Give evidence. (2 marks)
- 2) With two evidences, discuss the poet's general attitude towards the subject of the poem.(3 marks)
- 3) What do you understand by the following three lines?  
"they trample down all that was strange  
And filled the void with half digested alien thoughts?"
- 4) Who are referred to as "toiling race of earthworms" and why? (3 marks)
- 5) Discuss two stylistic devices used in the poem. Give their effectiveness
- 6) Explain the significance of the title. (2 marks)
- 7) What is the tone of the poem? (1 mark)

36. Read the poem below and answer the questions below.

### Advise to my son

The trick is, to live your days  
as if each one may be your last  
(for they go fast, and young men lose their lives  
in strange and unimaginable ways)  
but at the same time, plan long range  
(for they go slow : if you survive  
the shattered windshield and burning shell  
you will arrive  
at our approximation here below  
or heaven or hell)

To be specific, between the poeny and the rose  
plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;  
beauty in nectar  
and nectar, in desert saves  
but the stomach craves stronger sustenance  
than the homed vine.  
therefore, marry a pretty girl  
after seeing her mother;  
speak truth to one man,  
work with another;  
and always, serve bread with your wine.



# POETRY QUESTIONS

But son,  
Always serve wine  
(Peter Meinke)

- a) Who is the speaker in the poem. Illustrate your answer. 2marks
- b) In what circumstances do many young people die? Illustrate your answer from the poem.  
4marks
- c) What do heaven and hell symbolize? 2marks
- d) Identify items in the poem that represent life's necessities on one hand and life's luxuries on the other. 2marks
- e) Identify and illustrate the use of the paradox in the poem. 3marks
- f) What does the persona mean by 'marry a pretty girl after seeing the mother'? 2marks
- g) The stomach craves stronger sustenance. (Rewrite using (What")) 1 mark
- h) Give two meanings of each of the following words. 2marks  
-Last  
-Fast
- i) Give the meaning of the last two lines 2marks

37. Read the poem below and then answer the questions. (20mks)

## BACK HOME

And one day I went back home:  
Back home to the old homestead  
With a ring of old huts  
Surrounding a wide compound:

Swept clean for children to play  
And yell and laugh and cry.  
I walked briskly, thinking of home  
Smoke rising from the huts  
Filtered through the thatched roofs:

Dripping wet after a shower of rain;  
Moist ground in the compound,  
Grandpa sitting on his stool  
and sipping from his gourd;  
Birds singing in the mango tree:

And then finally I reached home:  
The air heavy with silence  
Huts, down in dry heaps of dilapidation  
Shoots of scorched elephant grass:  
Growing piously in the compound:



# POETRY QUESTIONS

A carpet of mango leaves  
Falling on the mound of earth  
Under which was buried but the tip  
Yes, only the tip of grandpa's walking staff  
Could be seen peeping from under the earth:

Pointing down to where the owner lay;  
The lasting indication  
Of his inability to talk again  
Except by echoes of silence  
Telling me I went back too late:  
**Jwani Mwaikusa.**

## Questions

- (a) Describe the setting in this poem. (2 marks)
- (b) Who is the persona in the poem? (2 marks)
- (c) Where is grandpa? Give reasons for your answer. (2 marks)
- (d) What is the effect of the alliteration in line 17? (2 marks)
- (e) Giving **two** examples, show the effect of contrast as used by the poet. (4 marks)
- (f) Identify and illustrate the **two** different moods prevailing in this poem. (4 marks)
- (g) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. (4 marks)
- (i) 'A carpet of mango leaves  
Falling on the mound of earth'
- (ii) 'Of his inability to talk again  
Except by echoes of silence'

38 Read the poem below carefully and answer the questions that follow.

### Pedestrian to passing Benz-man

You man, lifted gently  
Out of the poverty and suffering



# POETRY QUESTIONS

We so recently shared; I say  
Why splash the muddy puddle onto  
My bare legs as if, still unsatisfied  
With your seated opulence  
You must sully the unwashed  
With your diesel-smoke and mud-water  
and force him buy, beyond his mean  
A bar of soap from your shop?  
A few years back we shared a master  
Today you have none, while I have  
Exchanged a parasite for something worse  
But maybe a few years is too long a time.

- (a) Briefly explain what is happening in the poem. (3 marks)
- (b) With two illustrations from the poem, describe the economic condition of the persona. (4 marks)
- (c) Explain the **significance** of the following **images** in the poem. (6 marks)
- (i) Muddy puddle/mud-water.  
(ii) Diesel smoke.
- Parasite.
- (d) What is the importance of the last line in relation to the rest of the poem. (4 marks)
- (e) Explain the tone of the poem. (3 marks)

**39. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.**

I wonder by the edge  
Of this desolate lake  
Where wind cries in the sledge  
Until the axle break  
That keeps the stars in their round  
And hands hurt in the deep  
The banners of east and west  
And the girdle of light is unbound,  
Your breast will not lie by the breast  
Of your beloved in sleep

- (i) Describe the rhyme scheme of the poem. (2mks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

- (ii) Identify and illustrate any two sound pattern used in the poem (4mks)
- (iii) How would you say the last two lines of the poem? (2mks)
- (iv) Give homophones for the following words used in the poem (2mks)

Wonder –

Break-

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

## From Song of Prisoner

Where is my gold pen?  
I want to write letters  
To my children  
And send them money.

I will not tell them  
I am here  
I don't want them  
To know that I am  
A prisoner,  
I want them to grow up  
Without suffering,  
I want them to pass  
Their examinations  
And get good jobs  
And buy land,  
Houses,  
Cars ...

I do not want my children  
To get shocked  
I do not want them  
To feel sad and sorry  
And cry for me,  
I do not want them to know  
That my hands and feet  
Are tied with ropes  
And I am sitting  
On the naked thigh  
Of the stone floor ...

There is an empty chair  
In the cabinet room,  
The occupant is on leave,  
He is alone  
Buried in soft cotton wool



# POETRY QUESTIONS

Thoughts of hope  
Filled with poisoned needles  
Of hopelessness ...

Where is my writing pad?  
I want to write  
To my parents,  
I want to send a fat cheque  
To my old mother  
And another fat cheque  
To my old father ...  
But how can I tell them  
That I am shoeless,  
That my feet are swollen,  
Blistered and bleeding?  
How can I tell  
My mother that I am  
Naked and bruised  
All over?

Okot p' Bitek

## QUESTIONS

- a) Who is the persona in the poem? (2mks)
- b) What is the poem about? (4mks)
- c) What is the persona's attitude towards his family? (2mks)
- d) Identify instances of repetition in the poem and comment on their effectiveness. (2mks)
- e) Apart from repetition, describe **TWO** other features of style in the poem and their effectiveness. (4mks)
- f) Describe the mood of the poem in the second stanza. (2mks)
- g) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases.
  - i. Fat cheque.
  - ii. Blistered.
  - iii. Cry for me (3mks)



# POETRY QUESTIONS

h) Suggest another title for this poem. (1mk)

