QUESTION 1

“Right at the beginning of Chaka … we can spot a discrepancy between the project and execution, between the voice and modality, substance and form. Mofolo set out to present himself as a chronicler in the traditional idiom, yet his style stands as an obstacle to this goal. He set out to contest the literate practice of objective history, yet his methodology defers massively to this practice. One senses the presence of this contradiction at the outset, but its significance only becomes apparent when one thinks about the novel as a whole. For it is only then that one can appreciate that the novel’s equivocation is not accidental but a defining characteristic, structuring it and permeating its every aspect.” (Neil Lazarus)

Assess the accuracy of this assessment with detailed reference to Thomas Mofolo’s Chaka.

QUESTION 2

“A Man of the People is a sparkling piece of satirical virtuosity, yet we feel throughout that deep anger, bitterness and disillusion are not far beneath the surface. The novel prompts one to ask: Is it too savage, too despairing…? Many readers find it so, but the skill with which Odili’s dual function is controlled and the hints at other criteria of judgement (in Edna’s mother’s remark and the village action against Josiah) do pose values other than those of the ‘eat-and-let-eat’ politicians. In including a military coup as the climax
QUESTION 2 continued

to the political chaos, Achebe is far from suggesting a practical remedy, for he treats it simply as another self-interested action in the larger national ‘game’; the coup happens because there was ‘so much unrest and dislocation that our young Army officers seized the opportunity to take over’. The people remain lethargic and cynical. A satirist is under no obligation to offer a blue-print for political action, and Achebe has been content in *A Man of the People* to rub his readers’ noses in the unsavoury details of public offence set in Nigeria but familiar in many other countries as well.” (Arthur Ravenscroft)

Discuss with detailed reference to *A Man of the People*.

QUESTION 3

“Many elements, like the sun, water, the house, are used here with their archetypal symbolic meaning. But the relationship Mary has with some of these objects, mere props on the stage of her daily life, is so charged with emotion that they become much more than mere metaphors in the narrative. The house and its contents are animated, take on a quasi-human identity. At times malevolent, more rarely reassuring, these objects are extensions of Mary; she turns upon them, as upon herself, her complex feelings of anger, hatred, fear, reacts to them with the same misdirected violence she shows in her interpersonal relations (with the doctor, Mrs Slatter, the ‘native’ women). They help to establish an increasingly fantastic atmosphere, reminiscent of gothic novels which, like one of their prototypes, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, have often been the imaginative expression of fundamental feminine anxieties. In the anguished world of Mary Turner, trapped with a husband and a marriage life that seem daily to lose consistency, and aware of the awakening in herself of dark impulses that can be fulfilled only in guilt and subjection, in a final surrender of the self and in death, a number of humble household objects – a sofa, some over-embroidered underwear, a tub, a tin roof – become portents of doom.” (Jacqueline Bardolph)

Evaluate the assertions made in this commentary on *The Grass is Singing*.

QUESTION 4

“In the light of an on-going South African literary conversation about the relations between white women and black men, it is of interest that Slovo’s novel (1) places Barcant as the object of exchange between the two men who function as the figures
QUESTION 4 continued

of white and black patriarchy, (2) portrays her sexual selection of the now more powerful black figure, (3) informs this portrayal with a view of the white woman’s own dominance as speaking subject and the possible obliteration of the black man’s voice, (4) displaces that dominance by revealing Mpondo’s voice as the ‘last voice’ on his own make up, and (5) gives to Barcant’s uncertainty the novel’s last scene. These textual moves are consistent with the novel’s interest in ambiguity and nuance, and specifically with its ability to keep the sceptical and the optimistic in a precarious balance that exceeds the reader’s usual expectations of popular fiction.

(Dorothy Driver)

Evaluate the veracity\(^1\) of Driver’s assertion, with detailed reference to *Red Dust*.

QUESTION 5

Either A

Assess the significance of the landscape, flora and fauna found in three poems written by the same poet, or a combination of poets. Your answer must make detailed reference to the poems found in *Voices of this Land*.

Or B

A significant number of poems in *Voices of the Land* clearly articulate the fundamental injustice that underpinned the colonial and / or the apartheid era in South Africa. Discuss, with detailed reference to three poems, how poets conveyed this message.

QUESTION 6

Analyse Summayya Lee’s use of the child’s eye narrative viewpoint in *The Story of Maha*, with detailed reference to the text.

\(^1\) Accuracy or truthfulness.