INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Candidates are requested to write legibly

This paper consists of 10 pages. Please ensure that you have them all
QUESTION 1. (A)
Read the poem below carefully, and then answer the questions that follow.

NEW COUNTRY
by Kelwyn Sole

In the soft part of our palms,
in the clasp of our own hands,
hidden between the calluses and scars,
that’s where we’ll find our country.

1. Comment on the metaphoric tension in this poem between softness and hardness. What is the significance of this tension in the light of the whole poem, and also in the light of Sole’s commentary on South African history. (30)

2. Discuss the extended metaphor of hands in this poem. (10)

3. Comment on the idea of agency in line two, particularly in the words ‘our own hands’. (10)

[50 marks]
QUESTION 1. (B)
Read the poem below carefully, and then answer the question that follows.

THE ROAD AHEAD
by Mxolisi Nyezwa

don’t ask me about any of my poems
for i will tell you that people are murdered in my country
and their deaths arrive slowly as an illness
as a desolate knock
on a blank sky

i wear my shoes in the morning like i’m in a hurry for something
the tea-cup rests on the table, its shadow long and tapering
everywhere the fruit gives golden or red sulphur
what has become of us?
what has become of us?

In the introduction to his anthology *In the Heat of Shadows: South African Poetry 1996-2013* Denis Hirson claims the following: “South African poets writing today find themselves writing in the midst of uneasy political transformation, some of it neither planned nor hoped for . . . Their work is charged with restlessness, bursting with diversity. Gone is the intense inward focus required to deal with a situation of systematic oppression, though awareness of that time continues to surface sharply. Gone is the overriding, enclosing effort of concentration on a single predicament” (2014:13).

Write an essay of approximately 3 pages, in which you critically discuss the ways in which contemporary South African poets have shifted their ‘effort of concentration on a single predicament’. Make specific reference to the above poem by Nyezwa in your answer.

[50 marks]
QUESTION 1. (C)
Read the poem below carefully, and then answer the question that follows.

DON’T THINK OF ME AS A CHAOTIC WRITER
by Mlungisi Mkhize

Don’t think of me as a poet
Blind of beauty
A poet who always
Sings songs of grief
A chaotic writer
I love to sing of beauty
And sing of joy
But I wake up
In the morning
Trudge the ghetto paths
Searching for beauty
That I can sing of joy.
But to my dismay
I meet unemployed
Young ones
I see
Crumbling mud-houses
And daily
I meet widows
I meet urchins
I meet orphans
I meet the unwillingly drunk
People
So tell me honestly
O dear friend
How can I write
About big apples, sheets of
Green grass
Green valleys, beautiful
Flowers
Big bungalows, and shady
Sycamores
For in my part of the world
It’s only a barren piece of
Earth
Rich with the fragrance of poverty.

Write an essay of approximately three pages in which you critically discuss the aesthetics of a Literature of Commitment as it is put forward in this poem by Mkhize. In your essay make specific reference to the poem.

[50 marks]
Question 2 (A)

“Even though written from the point of view of the mirror, Sylvia Plath’s poem “Mirror” explores various human factors and is thus about the exploration of human conditions.”

Using the above quote as your point of departure, discuss ways in which “Mirror” critiques some of the human shortcomings through the use of extended personification. You will also need to discuss:

- The kinds of weaknesses that are rebutted in the poem
- The effectiveness of using an inanimate object as persona
- The sense, intention, feeling and tone (SIFT) employed throughout the poem

[50 marks]

MIRROR

by Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful –

5 The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

10 Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

15 I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.
Question 2 (B)

Carefully read Catherine Obianuju Acholonu’s poem, “Other Forms of Slaughter”, reproduced below, and write a short essay of not less than 3 pages, in which you critically analyse the poem and discuss ways in which the structure and imagery used throughout the poem effectively communicate the poem’s meaning to the reader.

In the course of your essay you may want to consider any one or more of the following issues:

- As a second generation African writer, how does Acholonu offer a counter-discourse to the historiography of the first generation writers? What specific devices (i.e. choice of words/diction, structure, tone, figures of speech) are used throughout the poem to show that the poet seeks to offer an alternative history/poetic narrative to the (male) dominant one of the anticolonial and postcolonial struggles?

- You may also want to comment on the foregrounding of the domestic space as tantamount to a battlefield. What are the poet’s intentions for drawing parallels between the actual combat war zone and the home sphere?

- Also striking is the symbolic use, throughout the poem, of hyperbolic language of contrasts. Identify such instances and explain how effective they are in acutely drawing the reader’s awareness to the immensity of the gendered violence unleashed on the hapless victims of this ‘war’.

- In course of your discussion, always bear in mind the addressees and the persona/spokesperson. Who are implicitly and/or explicitly addressed in this poem? Who is the persona?

[50 marks]

OTHER FORMS OF SLAUGHTER

by Catherine Obianuju Acholonu

there were other forms
of slaughter
you know
when hands of sandpaper
5 jarr at tender tendons
of daughter drums

when rods of aggression
rip through sealed valves
of flutes of reed

10 when innocent virgins
basking in the sun
suddenly wake up
to greedy eyes
lecherous tongues

and devouring breath
15 and gathering their cloths
about them clamber
hurriedly
up the cliff

20 but heavy boots
are at their heels
heaving chests pin
them down
then greedy hands

25 rummaging
tear open
the frills of their
delicate legend
unfolding a lustful era

30 of anarchic bestiality

yeah!
there were other forms of slaughter
Question 2 (C)

Critically review Frank Chipasula’s poem below and answer the questions that follow.

A LOVE POEM FOR MY COUNTRY
for James

by Frank Chipasula

I have nothing to give you, but my anger
And the filaments of my hatred reach across the border.
You, you have sold many and me to exile.
Now shorn of precious minds, you rely only on
What hands can grow to build your crumbling image.

Your streets are littered with handcuffed men
And the drums are thuds of the warden’s spiked boots.
You wriggle with agony as the terrible twins, law and order,
Call out the tune through the thick tunnel of barbed wire.

Here, week after week, the walls dissolve and are slim,
The mist is clearing and we see you naked like
A body that is straining to find itself but cannot
And our hearts are thumping with pulses of desire or fear
And our dreams are charred chapters of your history.

My country, remember I neither blinked nor went to sleep
My country, I never let your life slide downhill
And passively watched you, like a recklessly-driven car,
Hurrying to your crash while the driver leapt out.

The days have lost their song and salt.
We feel bored without our free laughter and voice.
Every day thinking the same and discarding our hopes.
Your days are loud with clanking cuffs
On men's arms as they are led away to decay.

I know a day will come and wash away my pain
And I will emerge from the night breaking into song
Like the sun, blowing out these evil stars
1. Explain the irony in the title of the poem. (5)

2. Throughout the poem Chipasula uses harsh and sharp words that hint at the considerably treacherous state of affairs endemic in ‘his country’. Identify these words and explain the impact they have in our understanding of the state of affairs explicated in the poem. (15)

3. The persona addresses the country as if it were a person? Explain the significance of this poetic device in view of the overall thematic concern of the poem. (10)

4. Refer to line 13 “… our hearts with pulses of desire or fear”. Explain how this line explains the relationship the persona has with ‘his country’ and the emotions s/he appears to harbour towards ‘his country’ (10)

5. Give a brief account of the surprising ending of the poem (i.e. the last stanza) and explain the possible reasons for this. (10)