

# **POETRY REVISION**

## **POSSIBLE KCSE QUESTIONS**

*Series 1 of Possible KCSE Poetry Examinable  
Questions.*

**KCSE POETRY TRIALS (1-60)**

**SERIES 1**

**FOR MARKING SCHEMES**

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## POETRY TRIAL 1 QNS

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

### IF

If you can keep your head when all about you  
    Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
    But can make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired of waiting,  
    Or be lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
    And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

If you can dream and not make dreams your master;  
    If you can think and not make thoughts your aim  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
    And treat those two imposters just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
    Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
    And stoop and build 'em up with worn out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
    And risk it on one turn of pitch- and -toss,  
And lose and start again at your beginnings  
    And never breath a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
    To serve your turn after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run  
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,  
And- which is more-you'll be a Man, my son!

**Rudyard Kipling**

### **Questions**

- (a) Identify the persona of the poem. **2mks**
- (b) How does the persona suppose our view of life should be? **2mks**
- (c) In stanza two, the words 'Triumphant and Disaster' are capitalized. Give a reason for the capitalization. **2mks**
- (d) With illustrations, identify two features of style used in the poem. **4mks**
- (e) What is the dominant tone of the poem? **2mks**
- (f) With close reference to stanza three line 1-4, comment on the attitude of the persona towards losing. **2mks**
- (g) Explain the meaning of the following lines. **3mks**
- (a) And stoop and build 'em up
  - (b) And never breath a word
  - (c) Walk with kings
- (h) What 4 things according to the persona does it take for one to be a 'Man'? **4mks**

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## POETRY TRIAL 2 QNS

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

### **Mid- Term Break**

I sat all morning in the college sick bay

Counting bells knelling classes to a close.

At two o' clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying-

He had always taken funerals in his stride-

And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram

When I came in, and I was embarrassed

By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my troubles,'

Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest'

Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.

At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived

With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops

And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him

For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,

He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.

No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four foot box, a foot for every year.

*(Seamus Heaney)*

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) What is the poem about? (4mks)
- (b) Who is the persona in the poem? (2mks)
- (c) How differently does the persona's father react to this tragedy? (2mks)
- (d) Identify any two instances of alliteration used in the poem. (2mks)
- (e) Contrast the father's and the mother's reactions to the tragedy (2mks)
- (f) What is the mood of the poem? (2mks)
- (g) How did the persona's brother die? (2mks)
- (h) Has the persona expressed his reaction towards the tragedy in the poem? Explain your answer. (3mks)
- (i) Explain the meaning of the following line as used in the poem. (1mk)
- He had always taken funerals in his stride*

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## POETRY TRIAL 3 QNS

### A TAXI DRIVER ON HIS DEATH BED (By Timothy Wangusa)

When with prophetic eye I peer into 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.

Thus I shall die: not that I care

For any man's journey,

Nor for the proprietor's gain.

Nor yet the love of my own.

Not for these do I attempt the forbidden limits.

For these defy 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 the poem about? (3mks)
- b) What is the attitude of the persona towards his fate? (2mks)
- c) With illustrations, identify the persona in the poem (2mks)
- d) What is the irony in the poem? (2mks)

- e) With illustrations, identify and comment on any other two stylistic devices used in the poem (6mks)
- f) Comment on the following line (2mks)  
“Poor chap, another victim to the ruthless machine”
- g) How will the persona’s death come about? (2mks)
- h) Give the poem another title (1mk)

## POETRY TRIAL 4 QNS

*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)*



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## QUESTIONS

- a) Briefly explain what 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 a 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:  
"Has no more need of, and I have" **(2 marks)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 5 QNS

*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)*

## QUESTIONS

- i) Identify the persona in the poem above. **(2 marks)**
- 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

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## POETRY TRIAL 6 QNS

### THE CROP THIEVES

Tswiri-twiril! The person I suspect  
What have you heard that makes you suspicious?  
I had things said, rumours of weaver birds  
They ate corn in Lesiba's field and finished it.  
And when they left they sounded human  
They said, "Listen to the numerous weaver birds,  
Sons of Mosima's family,  
Children of the horse that ate the courtyards  
And the times.  
It is the numerous weaver birds,  
The grey ones that go about in swarms,  
Children with the little red beaks,  
Children that make a noise in the mimosa trees,  
Tupu – tupu! The smoke comes out while the  
dew still glitters  
Howaa ! Sweaa! – is heard in the early morning  
They are finishing the corn, the numerous weaver  
Birds  
Children with the little red beaks,  
At hone it is yo!yo!  
The children are crying  
Their mothers have gone to the fields to the birds,  
It is Zulus that have entered the country  
Take axes and chop the tree branches,  
Yo ! This year we shall eat fire  
We shall lack even a blue-tongued goat!  
It is numerous weaver birds, the grey ones that go about in swarms.

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) To which category can you place this song. Illustrate (2mks)
- (b) Identify any four ideophones used in the song, stating who makes the sound in each case. (4mks)
- (c) What can you say is the behavior of weaver birds. (2mks)
- (d) If you were to perform this song, what would you do to make it interesting. (2mks)
- (e) Mention two characteristics of an oral song that features in the one above. (4mks)
- (f) Identify the lines that show that unless people keep the birds away there will be suffering. (2mks)
- (g) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the song (2mks)
- i. It is Zukus that have entered the country
  - ii. We shall lack even a blue-tongued goat.
- (h) What economic activity does this community practice. (2mks)

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## POETRY TRIAL 7 QNS

### 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,  
I will not mourn for me.

## QUESTIONS

- 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)

## POETRY TRIAL 8 QNS

### NIGHTFALL IN SOWETO

Nightfall comes  
Like a dreaded disease  
Seeping through the pores of a health body  
And ravaging it beyond repair

A murderer's hand  
Lurking in the shadows,  
Clasping the dagger,  
Strikes down the helpless victim.  
I am the victim.  
I am slaughtered  
Every night in the streets  
I am cornered by the fear  
Gnawing at my timid heart;  
In my helplessness I languish.

Man has ceased to be man  
Man has become beast  
Man has become prey  
I am the prey  
I am the quarry to be run down  
By the marauding beast  
Let loose by cruel nightfall  
From his cage of death.

Where is my refuge?  
Where am I safe?



Not in my matchbox house  
Where I barricade myself against nightfall  
I tremble at his crunching footsteps  
I quake at his deafening knock, at the door,  
“Open up!” he barks like a rabid dog  
Thirsty for my blood

Nightfall! Nightfall!  
You are my mortal enemy  
But why were you ever created?  
Why can't it be daytime?  
Daytime forever more

## **QUESTIONS**

- a) Who is the persons in this poem ( 2rnks)**
- b) Explain briefly what this poem is about ( 3mks)**
- c) Identify and illustrate three feature of style in the poem (6rnks)**
- d) What is the persona's attitude towards night fall (2mks)**
- e) What is the general mood in the poem? (2mks)**
- f) Give two illustrations in the poem that show that Soweto is a slum (2mks)**
- Explain the meaning of the following expressions as use in the poem: (3rnks)**
- (i) Man has ceased to be man**
- ii) Man has become prey**
- (ii) Not in matchbox house**

## POETRY TRIAL 9 QNS

### MY FATHER'S WOODEN HOUSE

Let not your grinning ads lure me  
But leave me in my fathers wooden house  
Unseen  
Amidst the woods of africa's sunny plains  
Surrounded by apes and hippos  
Discerning the jazz of nocturnal birds and bugs  
Let me close to mother earth remain  
Embraced in her Nature's rugged cloak  
Out of this my lowly home  
Precede my faith dog to hunt,  
The heards boy removes to tender sheep and cows  
And evening hours in nature's mirth abound  
Around the smoky wooden fire  
Which warms my father's wooden.

Oh Manhattan Manhattan.  
The chiefest isle beyond the seas,  
I envy you not,  
I covet not your naked thighs  
Artificially dyed in Parisian perfumes

And on the beach soliciting summers tan,  
With all your noisy calls to purchase  
The latest chemical gadgets  
Whilst with my slackening muscles work  
And toil with nature  
Under my feet and about my way.

Manhattan in all your conglomerate noises  
Of muddled trains and trucks and cars and helicopters  
Running and never resting:  
Dull you remain to those tender touches  
Of man's friendship and love  
Laughing with gilded row of movable teeth  
The symbol of your artificial ways

So let me abide in Nature's threshold  
Cautiously treading on the paths of cobras black,  
And sleep on warping wooden beams  
Overlain with antelope's hairy leather  
Wearing and eating of nature's overflows:  
But let my feeling human heart  
Forever remain with me,  
Let me spend my years counting  
The open stars above my head,  
And let be greet my kin and neighbor  
With a heart of love.  
But you lofty Manhattan  
With picture printed cards  
Your sons and daughters greet  
Par avion across the seas,  
And let the sleeping pills

Your health sustain.  
Shall I compare your towering majesty  
Oh Manhattan,  
To our grassy stubble roofs?

Yours is the vast road with cars and cans and banks,  
But leave me unmolested  
My gravel path to plod,  
Holding the shepherd's crooked rod.  
Oh leave me in my father's wooden house  
Close to nature,  
And close to kin, neighbor and friend  
(*John S.Mbiti*)

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Identify the persona in the above poem (2mks)
2. What is the poem talking about? (3mks)
3. Illustrate three poetic styles used in the poem (6mks)
4. Explain the persona's attitude towards the Manhattan? (2mks)
5. Why does the persona want to be left in their father's house? (2mks)
6. Explain the meaning of the following words as they are used in poem (3mks)
  - (a) Bustling ceaselessly through your calendars
  - (b) Wearing and eating nature's overflows
  - (c) Dull you remain to those tender touches
7. What is the significance of the last stanza? (2mks)

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## POETRY TRIAL 10 QNS

### DEFEAT

They all pass, they feel and pass,  
they stare at me, and poke,  
as though I were in a stall,  
a stallion, a foal, a mare.  
Tribal sheikhs, turbaned, glorious,  
their beards reeking with scent,  
plumes glistening in the sun,  
shekels jingling the rhythm of bidding.  
Matrons, spitting tobacco and foul words,  
chins pressed against their throats,  
bodies bent to the weights of  
heavy consciences and sagging breasts.  
Horses neighing, riders whipping,  
Don Juans bursting into fits of laughter,  
Master beseeching, begging, creeping,  
to get a fat amount for me.  
I stand, erect, a market-piece, as  
the Sheikh pats me on my bottom,  
I cannot flinch an eye-lid  
Or squeak or squeal, but bear.  
I feel the stare, am ashamed, but  
as my cloth is pulled off,  
can only despise the rubied hands,  
that feel and press my budding breasts.  
Fingers slide across my arms, and  
I feel the lust as they crawl  
on my naked limbs, attesting me

fit, to draw water from a well.

They jingle their shekels, they

bid and raise their prices

flash their rubies, and

take part in my auctioning.

I know what it is to be

defeated and captured in war.

*(Parvin Syal)*

### **QUESTIONS**

- a) Who is the persona in this poem? **(2mks)**
- b) Briefly explain what this poem is about. **(3mks)**
- c) With illustrations identify any two aspects of style which are used in the poem. **(4mks)**
- d) Explain the possible reason as to why those who have come to the market would like to buy the persona. **(2mks)**
- e) What is the tone of the poem? **(2mks)**
- f) What are the feelings of the persona towards the tribal Sheikhs? **(2mks)**
- g) According to the poem, what is the effect of war? **(2mks)**
- h) Give the meaning of the following as used in the poem. **(3mks)**
- i) bottom
- ii) crawl
- iii) auctioning

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## POETRY TRIAL 11 QNS

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

### **THE MONEY CHANGERS (Richard S. mabale)**

Dreamed my way to church  
Church built of coloured paper  
On silver-coated paper  
Normal unintelligible rumble  
Of muttered prayers  
Barely audible above  
The rustle of notes  
And the clink of coins  
Strange prayer indeed!  
Our father who art – CLINK-  
Hallowed be thy – CLINK-  
On earth as it in heaven  
Give us this day our daily – CLINK-  
And forgive us our –CLINK-  
  
As we –CLINK- those who trespass against us  
  
And lead us – CLINK- into- CLINK-  
But – CLINK CLINK CLINK – evil  
A – CLINK

It was a magnificent sight  
Enough to inspire the most hardened sinner  
But I couldn't help trembling  
And looking over my shoulder wondering

When

We could be driven out

With a whip!

## **QUESTIONS**

- a) Comment on the poet's use of the title of this poem. **(4mks)**
- b) Explain the allusion "we could be driven out with a whip" (lines 26 and 27) **(4mks)**
- c) What is the tone of the poem? **(2mks)**
- d) Explain the effort of the stylistic device(s) the poet has used in the poem. **(4mks)**
- e) What is the speaker's attitude towards what is going on in the church and what is the ironic of what he says about it? **(4mks)**
- f) i) Enough to inspire the most hardened sinner. (Add a question tag) **(1mk)**  
ii) We could be driven out. (Change into the negative) **(1mk)**



## POETRY TRIAL 12 QNS

**Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow:-**

Like the tout loading heavy luggage onto a bus  
Heavily heaves as he hosts the lawyer,  
    The doctor, the engineer  
And even the robber into the bus of academic pursuit  
To differentiate destinies  
He is the teacher, the role model  
The conveyor belt of knowledge.  
Cyclically repeats the chain  
Encountering a vicious cycle of stubborn clients  
Taking long and short strides  
To hold the academic hand of sojourners  
To assist them cross this busy road.  
Some stop mid-road  
And he painfully has to drag them.  
He is immensely wealthy  
For he has a rich bank account  
Of books and biros  
Chalk and chinks  
Pens, pencils and paper.

While others count money in bank sheets  
He counts marks in mark sheets  
He's got a strong body  
For he is a punching bag for the politician,  
A dartboard for the parent over pupil's laziness  
A milking cow for the trade unionist, the taxman....  
The landlord.....

He is important  
For he receives claps and handshakes  
And a million 'thank yous',  
Plus a kick in the back  
From a cynical, thankless society  
Undeterred he teacher moves on.

## QUESTIONS

- a) Who is the persona in the poem? **(2 marks)**
- b) How does the speaker compare the teacher to a tout? **(2 marks)**
- c) State the effectiveness of any two figures of speech in the poem. **(6 marks)**
- d) Underline the prepositional phrase in the following line: - **(1 mark)**  
He counts marks in mark sheets.
- e) What is your attitude towards the conveyor belt of knowledge? **(2 marks)**
- f) Explain the tone used by the persona in stanza two. **(2 marks)**
- g. Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem: - **(3 marks)**
- i) Cyclically repeats the chain. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) A milking cow for the trade unionist, the taxman. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) Undeterred, the teacher moves on \_\_\_\_\_
- h) With a reason, state an appropriate title for the poem. **(2 marks)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 13 QNS

### MONANGAMBA

On that big estate there is no rain  
It's the sweat of my brow that waters the crops

On that big estate there is coffee ripe  
And that cherry – redness  
Is drops of my blood turned sap.

The coffee will be roasted,  
Ground, and crushed,  
Will turn black, black with the colours of  
The contract labourer

Black with the colour of the contract labourer

Ask the birds that sing,  
The streams in carefree wandering  
And the high wind from inland

Who gets up early? Who goes to toil?  
Who is it that carries on the long rod  
The hammock or the bunch of kernels?  
Rotten maize, rotten fish,  
Ragged clothes, fifty shillings  
Beating for biting back?

Who?

Who makes the millet grow  
And the orange groves to flower?  
Who?

Who gives the money for the boss to buy  
Cars, machinery, women  
And Negro heads for motors?

And the birds that sing,

The streams in carefree wandering  
And the high wind from inland  
Will answer

Mongambee ee...

Ah! Let me at least climb the palm trees  
Let me drink wine, palm wine  
And fuddle by my drunkenness forget.

Mongambee ee...

## QUESTIONS

- a) Classify the above poem giving a reason for your answer. (2 mks)
- b) Identify the persona and state his/her predicament. (2 mks)
- c) Rhetoric questions have been employed in the poem. Cite **two** such examples and explain their effect. (3 mks)
- d) State **two** problems that the persona experiences at the hands of his superior. (2 mks)
- e) Which is the **major** theme in this poem? (2 mks)
- f) Describe the tone of the poem. (2 mks)
- g) Make clear the persona's attitude towards his/her boss. (2 mks)
- h) Why do you think the persona mentions the birds that sing and the streams that wander? (2 mks)
- i) Who gets up early? (1 mk)  
(*Rewrite beginning : He wanted .....*)
- j) Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem.
- i) Black with the colour of the contract labourer. (1 mk)
- ii) Beating for biting back. Which style is this? (1 mk)

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## POETRY TRIAL 14 QNS

### THE TEARS OF A SLAVE

Adieu, to my native shore,  
To toss on the boisterous wave;  
To enjoy my kindred no more,  
But to weep – the tears of a SLAVE!

By the sons of freemen I'm borne,  
To the land of the free and the brave;  
From my wife and children I'm torn,  
To weep – the tears of a SLAVE!

When, I think on mother and friends,  
And the joy their countenance gave;  
Ah! How my sad bosom it rends,  
While weeping – the tears of a SLAVE!

Ah! Now, I must labour for gold,  
To pamper the pride of the knave;  
Ah! Now, I am shackled and sold  
To weep – the tears of a SLAVE!

Keen sorrow so presses my heart,  
That often I sigh for my grave;  
While feeling the lash-cruel smart!  
And weeping – the tears of a SLAVE!

Ye sons, of the free and wise,  
Your tender compassion I crave;

Alas! can your bosoms despise  
The pitiful tears of a SLAVE!

Can a land of Christians so pure!  
Let demons of slavery rave!  
Can the angel of mercy endure,  
The pitiless – tears of a SLAVE!

Just heaven, to thee I appeal;  
Hast thou not the power to save?  
In mercy the power reveal,  
And dry – the sad tears of a SLAVE.

By *Africus-Freedom Journal*.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Who is the persona in the poem? (2mks)
2. What is happening to the persona in the first stanza? (3 marks)
3. Identify the dominant two styles used in the poem and state their effectiveness? (4mks)
4. What is the tone of the poem? (2mks)
5. Who do you think is described as ‘knave’ in the fourth stanza? Give a reason for your answer. (2mks)
6. In what way does the persona question religion? (2mks)
7. What solution does the poet offer that will end slavery? (2mks)
8. Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. (3mks)
  - a. From my wife and children I’m torn.
  - b. Keen sorrow so presses my heart.
  - c. Your tender compassion I crave.

---

## POETRY TRIAL 15 QNS

### WE THINK THEE

For flowers that bloom about our feet,

For tender grass, so fresh and sweet,

For song of bird and hum of bee,

For all things fair we hear or see,

Father in heaven, we thank thee!

For blue of stream and blue of sky,

For pleasant shade of branches high,

For fragrant air and cooling breeze,

For beauty of the blooming trees

Father in heaven, we thank thee!

For mother- love and father- care,

For brothers strong and sister fair,

For love at home and here each day,

For guidance, lest we go astray,

Father in heaven, we thank thee!

For this new morning with its light,

For rest and shelter of the night

For health and food , for love and friends,

For ev'rything His goods sends,                      Father

in heaven, we thank thee!

---

## QUESTIONS

- a) Who is the persona in this poem? (2mk)
- b) What is the poem about? (2mk)
- c) Identify any two poetic devices used and comment on their effectiveness. (4mks)
- d) Paraphrase the last stanza. (3mks)
- e) Giving illustrations from the poem identify any three senses that the poet appeals to. (3mks)
- f) Explain the meaning of the following lines.
- i) Blooming trees (1mk)
  - ii) For brothers strong and sisters fair. (2mks)
  - iii) Lest we go astray (1mk)
- g) Comment on the mood of poem. (2mks)



## POETRY TRIAL 16 QNS

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

Horizon hidden by the high rise walls  
Watchmen closing the day  
Kicking out the dying embers of fires that  
Have kept them through the night  
Twilight girls  
Assessing their gains. counting their losses Night  
revelers.  
Clutching at the vanishing darkness  
Travellers from upcountry  
Complete with chickens and stuffed bags  
And the drunks  
Completing the pudding  
With a word for every soul.  
The city is theirs  
For the time being.

**Christine Mpaka**

### QUESTIONS

- (a). Identify the setting of the poem, stating the time of day. (2mks)
- b). Identify and give an example of one stylistic device used in the poem. (3mks)
- (c). Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. (4mks)

- (i) And the drunks  
Completing the pudding
- (ii) Twilight girls  
Assessing their gains, counting their losses
- (iii) Clutching at the vanishing darkness
- (iv) Stuffed
- (d) Identify and briefly explain two themes the poet addresses in this poem **(4mks)**
- (e) Describe the mood of the poem **(2mks)**
- (f) What would be an appropriate title for this poem? Explain your answer **(2mks)**
- (g) In note form, state the different kinds of people mentioned in the poem **(3mks)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 17 QNS

### MONEY – MADNESS

*By D.H. Lawrence*

Money is our madness, our vast coilecive madness. And of course, if the multitude is mad the individual carries his own grain of insanity around with him.

I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note without a pang; and a real **tremor**, if he hands out a ten-pound note.  
We quail, money makes us quail.

It has got us down, we grovel before it in strange terror.  
And no wonder, for money has fearful cruel power among men.

But it is not money we are so terrified of, it is the collective money-madness of mankind.  
For mankind says with one voice: How much is he worth?  
Has he no money? Then let him eat dirt, and go cold.

And if I have no money, they will give me a little bread so I do not die, but they will make me eat dirt with it. I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt if I have no money.

It is that that I am frightened of.  
And that fear can become a delirium.  
It is fear of my money-mad fellow-men.

We must have some money  
To save us from eating dirt

And this is all wrong.

Bread should be free, shelter should be free, fire  
should be free to all and anybody, all and anybody,  
all over the world.

We must regain our sanity about money  
before we start killing one another about it.  
It's one thing or the other.

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) Why are people or the 'we' so terrified of the collective money-madness of mankind than money itself? **(2marks)**
- (b) List the things that the persona mentions which ought to be for free. **(3marks)**
- (c) What is the theme of this poem? **(2marks)**
- (d) Other than irony, identify and illustrate any **two** literary devices that the poet uses. **(4marks)**
- (e) Describe the feelings of the persona towards the collective money madness of mankind. **(3marks)**
- (f) Identity the irony brought in **stanza four**. **(2marks)**
- (g) We must regain our sanity about money before we start killing one another about it.  
(Rewrite as one sentence using: Either) **(1 mark)**
- (h) Do you think the persona is totally opposed to people having money? Illustrate your answer **(2marks)**
- (i) Explain the meaning of the word 'tremor' as used in the poem. **(1mark)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 18 QNS

### PUBLIC BUTCHERY

*by Jagjit Singh*

Some people fear death, Others must face it  
before a crowd specially invited to witness  
the ceremony of their last breath.

Coups have succeeded elsewhere,  
and heads have rolled, and  
blood has flown, quite  
indiscriminately.

But on condemned conspirators,  
your fate is martyred while you watch,  
heads and hearts held high, dead  
defiance lurking still in eyeballs bathed  
in sweat, as the judge performs the  
abortion for your baby hatched in  
haste, before the mother was fully  
pregnant.

Once you were greeted and treated as  
VIPs.

Now there is blank silence as  
a crowd watches four  
hooded ministers hanging in  
the air.

## **QUESTIONS**

- a) i)** What s the theme of the poem? Support your answer with illustrations from the poem. **(3mks)**
- (b)** Using your own words, explain two consequences of coups as stated in stanza two, three and four. **(6mks)**
- (c)** Identify two poetic devices and show the effectiveness of each in bringing out the subject matter of the poem. **(6mks)**
- (d)** Explain the meaning of the following phrases as used in the poem. **(4mks)**
- (i)** to witness the ceremony.
  - (ii)** Your baby hatched in haste before the mother was fully pregnant.
- (e)** Suggest another suitable title for the poem. **(1 mk)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 19 QNS

### THE WHIPTAIL WALLABY

*(By Keith Harvey)*

Where the eucalyptus trees are tall

And tower on every side

Below the rocky eastern wall

That forms the Great Divide

And mess mate grows with mountain ash

Above the ferns and grasses

Through shadowed gullies like a flash

The little whiptail passes

The head is small and fine as lace

All stripped in white and yellow

The Bushmen call him pretty race

He's such a handsome fellow

His coat is grey as winter skies

With white on hips and shoulders

And swift as any bird he flies

Between the rocks and boulders

He's very active, small and shy

And naturalists salute him

And I have often wondered

Why the 'sportsmen' want to shoot him.

He quietly roams the bush land wide  
And harms no other creature  
But shooters think  
To lift his hide quite a sporting feature.

So soft his body you find  
Hung over fence and slip rail  
A 'sport' must have a weak  
Sick mind to want to kill the whiptail.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. Identify the persona (2mks)
2. What is the above poem about? (2mks)
3. (a) Name the 'he' being referred to. (1mk)  
(b) State the literary term that 'he' falls under as presented in the poem. (1mk)
4. In stanza one, identify poetic devices employed other than the one you have identified in 3 (b) above. (4mks)  
(a) Why do you think the term 'spokesmen' is within quotation marks? (2mks)  
(b) State the persona's attitude towards these 'sportsmen.' Give a reason (2mks)
5. Explain the irony in the poem (2mks)
6. Describe the character of the 'sportsmen' (2mks)
7. Explain the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem (2mks)  
(i) Naturalists salute him  
(ii) A 'sport' must have a weak sick mind



## POETRY TRIAL 20 QNS

### I REFUSED TO TAKE YOUR BROTHERLY HAND

Your nails are black with dirt, brother  
 And your palms are clammy with sweat  
 I refuse to take the hand you extend in help  
 I shall not join hands with you brother  
 For unclean hands make me uneasy  
 For filthy fingernails rob me of my pride.

You argue, gesticulating with your once  
 Impeccably clean and beautiful hands  
 That before long it shall not matter  
 For 'everybody' is delving and digging  
 And all shall have hands dripping with dirt.

That nobody shall know clean hands look like  
 And there shall be comfort in the dirty crowd  
 And enough to eat, for there are good yields  
 When the stinking manure is well dug in  
 With strong and bold hands in time

Are you going blind brother?  
 I ask how many have the sludge  
 Or the strong and bold hands like yours  
 With which to dig and delve?  
 Brother the hands of many are too weak with hung  
 And for many the sludge is out of reach  
 And yet for others the stink is too nauseating!  
 But all have eyes and hunger fills them with anger

I have seen hungry envious eyes  
 Watching silently through your chain-link fence  
 I have seen eyes in deep sunken sockets  
 Burning with anger intently watching you  
 I have seen parched mouths water with saliva  
 And heard the rumbling of hollow empty  
 stomachs

As they watched you feed the dog with meat  
 From the heavy yields of city sludge

Have you entirely forgotten Brother  
 The fragrance and comfort of clean hands?  
 The confidence, the peace you have when you  
 know

You'll leave no ugly smudge upon sheet?  
 Don't you remember the repulsion you had  
 When you shook hands with fat dirty men  
 With their dirty clammy plams?

Let me trudge brother and from the top from the  
 top of the cliff

Don't offer me your dirty hand in help.

Let me trudge the long way up

Let me trudge the long way up

For the short cuts are clammy with the sweat of  
 fear

And your fingernails are clogged with dirt.

As they watch your fingernails fill with dirt!

*Henry Barlow*

*Adapted from Poems from East Africa by Cook & Rubadiri,*

*H.E.B, 1971, 18-19*

## QUESTIONS

- a) Briefly explain the message in the above poem. (3mks)
- b) Identify the **two** types of hands referred to in the poem and explain what they represent. (2mks)
- c) What reasons does the poet give in stanza one for referring to take the “Brotherly hand?” Give your answer in note form. (3mks)
- d) Why does the persona wonder whether the brother has gone ‘blind’? (2mks)
- e) The ‘brother’ seems to have changed from a previous lifestyle. Write out **two** lines to prove this. (2mks)
- f) Identify and explain any **two** poetic devices used in the poem. (4mks)
- g) What is the persona’s attitude towards the brother? (2mks)
- h) Explain the following as used in the poem. (2mks)
- (i) Fingernails are clogged with dirt
- (ii) Parched mouths

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## POETRY TRIAL 21 QNS

### “NATURALLY”

I fear the workers. They writhe in bristling grass  
And wormy mud out with dawn, back with dusk  
Depart with seed and return with fat-bursting fruits  
And I ate the fruit

And still they toil at boiling point  
In head-splitting noise and threatening  
They suck their energy from slimy cassava  
And age-rusty water taps: till they make a Benz

And I ride in the Benz: Festooned with  
Stripped rags and python copper coiling monsters  
While the workers clap their blistered hands  
And I overrun their kids  
They build their hives: often out  
Of broken bones of fallen bones  
And I drove in them-“state house”  
Then “collegize” them officialize them  
And I...I whore their daughters  
Raised in litter-rotting shovels  
And desiring a quick quick high high life life  
To break the bond

And I tell the workers to unite  
Knowing well that they can't see, hear or understand  
What with secret and grim sealing their ears  
And eyes already blasted with welding sparks

And are speaking a colourless tongue

But one day a rainstorm shall flood

The litter rotten hovels and

Wash the workers ears and eyes clean

Refresh the tattered muscles for a long-delayed blow

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) Describe the working conditions of the workers as depicted in stanza 1 and 2 **(4 marks)**
- (b) The persona assumes different roles in stanza 3, 4 and 6. with illustrations explain the role **(6 marks)**
- (c) Identify and explain two images from the poem **(4 marks)**
- (d) Which bond do the girls want to break in stanza 5 and how do they do it **(2 marks)**
- (e) What reasons are given for the workers inability to understand the persona **(2 marks)**
- (f) What is the poem suggesting in the last stanza

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## POETRY TRIAL 22 QNS

### 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  
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

- a) Who is the persona in the poem? Explain. (2 marks)
- b) Briefly discuss the subject matter in this poem. (3 marks)
- c) Identify two stylistic devices in the poem and show their effectiveness. (4 marks)
- d) Show how the persona and the others suffer in the poem. Illustrate your answer. (4 marks)
- e) What is the dominant mood in the poem? (2 marks)
- f) Is the title of this poem suitable? Explain (3 marks)

Identify and explain one economic activity practiced by the persona's community.

## POETRY TRIAL 23 QNS

### 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,

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)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 24 QNS

### 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

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

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) Comment on the title of this poem. **3 marks**
- (b) Explain the dilemma of speaker in the first stanza. **2 marks**
- (c) What is the speaker's attitude towards their relationship?
- (d) Discuss and illustrate two character traits of the persona. **4 marks**
- (e) Comment on the imagery of the plane. **3 marks**
- (f) Explain how the relationship is compared to a game of chess. **3 marks**
- (g) Explain the meaning of the following line: leaving the naked me. **3 marks**

## POETRY TRIAL 25 QNS

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

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

## **QUESTIONS**

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

## POETRY TRIAL 26 QNS

### 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)*

### QUESTIONS

- 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 TRIAL 27 QNS

### **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)*

## **QUESTIONS**

- i) Identify the persona in the poem above. **(2 marks)**
- 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.

---

## POETRY TRIAL 28 QNS

### 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*

---

## 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)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 29 QNS

*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.

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!

## **QUESTIONS**

- (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)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 30 QNS

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

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?

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')*

### **QUESTIONS**

- 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

---

## POETRY TRIAL 31 QNS

### 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.

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 puts forth new shoots.

Slowly its fruits grow to have

That bitter taste of freedom.

## **QUESTIONS**

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

---

## POETRY TRIAL 32 QNS

### THE SMILING ORPHAN

And when she passed away,

They came,

Kinsmen came,

Friends came,

Everybody came to mourn her.

Hospitalized for five months

The ward was her world

Fellow patients her compatriots

The meager hospital supply-her-diet

When she was dying

Her son was on official duty

The state demanded his services

Her only daughter, uneducated,

Sat by her

Crying, praying waiting for an answer

From God far above

Wishing, she spoke the language

Figures in white-coats do understand

They matched, the figures did

Stiff, numb and deaf, to the cries and wishes

Of her dying mother

As she was dying

Friends and kinsmen TALKED of her

How good, how helpful: a very practical woman

None reached her: they were too busy, there was no money,

Who would look after their homes?

Was it so crucial their presence?

But when she passed away, they came,

Kinsmen came, friends hired cars to come,

Neighbours gathered to mourn her,

They ought to be there, to be there for the funeral

So they swore

The mourners shrieked out cries

As they arrived in the busy compound of the dead.

Memories of loved ones no more

Stimulated tears of many.

They cried dutiful tears for the deceased

Now stretching their hands all over to help

The daughter looked at them

With dry eyes, quiet, blank

The mourners pinched each other

Shocked by the stone – heartedness

Of the be-orphaned.



She sat: watching the tears soak their garments

Or in the soil around them; wasted

That night, she went to her love,

In the freshly made emergency grass hut,

And let loose all ties of the Convectional Dress she wore

Submitting to the Great Power, she whispered:

‘Now .....

You and I must know Now.....

Tomorrow you might never understand

Unable to lick my tears .....

And there was light

In the darkness of the hut

While outside

The mourners cried

Louder than he Orphan

*By Grace Birabwa Isharaza*

## **QUESTIONS**

a) Who is the persona in the poem?

**(2 marks)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 33 QNS

### ‘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

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 gave,

I am the dream and the

Hope of the slave

I rise

I rise

I rise

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

## QUESTIONS

- (a) With support from the poem, briefly explain what the poem is about. (3 marks)
- (b) Identify three challenges that the speaker in the poem contends with. (3 marks)
- (c) What is the attitude of the speaker towards these challenges? (2 marks)
- (d) Identify and illustrate figures of speech from the poem above. Comment on their effectiveness. (4 marks)
- (e) Other than the style in (4) above, identify and illustrate other two stylistic devices employed by the poet. (4 marks)

(f) 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.

(g) Supply the following sentence with the correct question tag. **(1 mark)**

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

---

## POETRY TRIAL 34 QNS

**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.

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)**
- b) Identify and illustrate any two character traits of the speaker. **(4 marks)**
- c) Identify and illustrate three poetic devices used in the poem. **(6 marks)**
- d) What is the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. **(2 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)**

## POETRY TRIAL 35 QNS

### 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

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 mks)**
- 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

---

## POETRY TRIAL 36 QNS

### 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  
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)

---

## POETRY TRIAL 37 QNS

### WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Sheets of tin nailed to posts

driven in the ground

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)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 38 QNS

### 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

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.*

---

## QUESTIONS

- (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)**
- i) My Jumbo
- Shot its way
- Across the sky
- ii) That beautifully strangled my neck.
- iii) To keep them till next rains.

---

## POETRY TRIAL 39 QNS

### 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)**



---

## POETRY TRIAL 40 QNS

### 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

## QUESTIONS

- 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 TRIAL 41 QNS

### 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,  
I will not mourn for me.

## QUESTIONS

- 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)

---

## POETRY TRIAL 42 QNS

**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;

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***

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) Explain the meaning of the poem (3 marks)
- (b) Discuss the use of the rhetorical questions in the poem. (3 marks)
- (c) Describe the tone of this poem (3 marks)
- (d) Identify and explain two other stylistic devices (apart from the rhetorical questions) (4 marks)
- (e) 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)
- (f) What does the persona think about relationships? (2 marks)
- (g) Explain the appropriateness of the title. (1 mark)

---

## POETRY TRIAL 43 QNS

### 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:

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 TRIAL 44 QNS

### OPERATING ROOM, By John Reed

Sunlight floods the shiny many-windowed place,

Coldly glinting on flawless steel under glass,

And blaring imperially on the spattered gules

Where kneeling men grunt as they swab the floor.

Startled eyes of nurses swish by noiselessly,

Orderlies with cropped heads swagger like murderers;

And three surgeons, robed and masked mysteriously,

Lounge gossiping of guts, and wish it were lunch-time.

Beyond the porcelain door, screaming mounts crescendo

Case 4001 coming out of the ether,

Born again half a man, to spend his life in bed.

### QUESTIONS

- a) Describe the setting of the poem. (3 marks)
- b) Briefly explain what the poem is talking about. (4 marks)
- c) Who is the persona in the poem? (2 marks)
- d) Illustrate the use of the following styles and state their effectiveness. (4 marks)
- a. Metaphor
  - ii. Hyperbole
- e) What is the tone of the poem? (2 marks)

- f) Discuss the general mood of the poem. **(2 marks)**
- g) Why do the men grunt as they swab the floor? **(1 mark)**
- h) Explain the meaning of the following phrases as used in the poem. **(2 marks)**
- i) Robed and masked mysteriously
- ii) Case 40001 coming out of ether

---

# **POETRY TRIAL 45 QNS**

## **THE WAR LORD**

Cut, thrust, plunge

Slash, slit, stab

Starve, maim, shoot

Torch, burn, scar

The trumpets herald you with regal glory

Epauettes 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

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)**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 46 QNS

### 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.

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)**

## POETRY TRIAL 47 QNS

### 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*

### 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)**



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## POETRY TRIAL 48 QNS

### 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  
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)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 49 QNS

### OLD AND NEW

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

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

---

## POETRY TRIAL 50 QNS

### 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;

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)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 51 QNS

### 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,  
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.



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## QUESTIONS

- a) Identify the persona in the above poem. **(2mks)**
- b) In note form, summarize what each stanza is talking about **(4mks).**
- 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 **(2mrks)**
- g) Explain the paradox in the line: **(2mks)**  
    -things she never used  
    But needed:
- h) Explain the persona’s sense of guilt? **(2mrks)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 52 QNS

### 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)
- (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)
- When their African-tongued masters wake to guide them.
  - 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)

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## POETRY TRIAL 53 QNS

### “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 ArnaBomtemps. New York: Hill and Waug 1974)*

## 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)

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## POETRY TRIAL 54 QNS

### “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 fire burning on your hearth?”

The fellow replies,

“I am merely warming water for my bath.”

The neighbour persists,

“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)
- (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)

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## POETRY TRIAL 55 QNS

### 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!

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

**Henry Barlow**

## **QUESTIONS**

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



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## POETRY TRIAL 56 QNS

*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

Blood iron and trumpets

Blood iron and trumpets

Blood alone

## **QUESTIONS**

- (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)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 57 QNS

### 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 strutted 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

Strange prejudice for gods.

## **QUESTIONS**

- (a) Who is being talked about in this poem? Give evidence. **(2 marks)**
- (b) With two evidences, discuss the poet's general attitude towards the subject of the poem. **(3 marks)**
- (c) 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?”
- (d) Who are referred to as “toiling race of earthworms” and why? **(3 marks)**
- (e) Discuss two stylistic devices used in the poem. Give their effectiveness
- (f) Explain the significance of the title. **(2 marks)**
- (g) What is the tone of the poem? **(1 mark)**

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## POETRY TRIAL 58 QNS

### 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.

But son,

Always serve wine

*(Peter Meinke)*

## QUESTIONS

- 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'') **1mark**
- h) Give two meanings of each of the following words. **2marks**
- Last
- Fast
- i) Give the meaning of the last two lines **2marks**

---

## POETRY TRIAL 59 QNS

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

Monday morning –  
School-  
And spilling out ghetto alley  
Like a flower spit forth  
From  
A mouth unbrushed,  
Little Chiku,  
Trotting and tripping along  
In final minute hurry hurry

Now dashing onto highway  
(Her bus is waiting)  
Looking and not looking  
Then a-a-a!!  
No time to jump across  
Too late to retreat  
In decision  
Face of fear-  
Trapped

Desperate forward drive

Frantic feet pressing pedals  
Wrestling of wheels  
Squealing tyres  
Jesusing  
Tightly shut eyes  
Screams  
Dull thud sound  
Muffled cry of pain

Driver stepping out-  
Be late for that production meeting now  
Damn!  
Little curled up body

Twitching once  
 Then lying still  
 In its already pool of blood.

Rapidly a mob forms  
 Shock  
 Anger  
 Helplessness  
 Then in ghetto rage  
 They turn on the sleek  
 Metallic grey Mercedes  
 280 SLE  
 Automatic and smash it

Later the cops will come  
 Will record elaborately  
 (Not forgetting the commas)  
 And the small body, now cold, will lie covered  
 For a while  
 The court - file will gather dust  
 After a while  
 And the driver will be guilty  
 For a while.

**QUESTIONS**

- a). Paraphrase the events that unfold in the poem. (4marks)
- b). What is the character of the driver as depicted in the poem? (2marks)
- c). Explain two major issues highlighted in the poem? (4marks)
- d). Comment on any two poetic devices used in the poem. (4marks).
- f). Give the meaning of the following lines as used in the poem. (2marks).
  - (i) Jesusing .....
  - (ii) And the driver will be guilty  
 For a while.
- g). What is the tone of the poem? (2marks).
- h). Comment on the use of short lines in the poem. (2marks).



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## POETRY TRIAL 60 QNS

### POETRY: (20 MARKS)

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

#### In the city

All moving the lord knows where,

Dressed in suits and tatters,  
Bowties, tights, ochred sheets and earrings,  
All thinking of things to come,  
Africa is in a state of opportunity,  
All look for easy chances.

Of self- upliftment or underserved promotion  
That often mirage further and further  
Making frustrate  
Minds that should be content.

It is a time of opportunity –

When one line makes a poet  
And a little acquaintance or chance  
Rockets one the highest office.

But the peasant, the pillar of the nation,  
Has only to cope with prices that shift  
Like the waves that rock the ship  
Carrying yellow maize to the city.

The employed call out strikes  
That only deplete the little funds  
That may relieve the peasant.

The elder brother keeps the younger in hunger  
At home, if there's any,  
The child plays with an empty bottle,

Cries for more milk  
When the cost is daily on the rise.

While the incomes remain static  
And the higher brackets are daily filled  
By youths that will not retire  
Within this century.

The child laughs gaily,  
Displaying its only four teeth  
That shows it grows to eat,  
Unaware of all that shapes her decade

*Adapted from a poem by Joseph G. Mutiga*

- (a) Who is the persona in the poem? (2 marks)
- (b) Briefly describe what the poem is about? (3 marks)
- (c) Explain the significance of the first line in the poem. (2 marks)
- (d) Identify the aspect of style used in stanza six and show its effectiveness. (3 marks)
- (e) Describe the kind of society presented in this poem. (2 marks)
- (f) What is the tone of the poem? Support your answer. (3 marks)
- (g) Identify and discuss the use of sarcasm in the second last stanza. (3 marks)
- (h) Explain the meaning of the following lines in the poem. (2 marks)
  - (i) Africa is in a state of opportunity.
  - (ii) The pillar of the nation.

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