FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2ND SEMESTER 2020

ASSIGNMENT 1

AFRICAN LITERATURE

(AFL721S)
Dear Student

This Feedback letter serves to highlight some of the pleasing things I witnessed in your second assignment, encourage you, challenge you and also give you more direction so as to be fully conversant with some of the aspects that will make you appreciate the course African Literature. Although a few of you had high scores, the majority scored average marks. What I realised was that question interpretation and answering skills are a challenge; and if the topic is misinterpreted then the response will also be wrong. In addition, the knowledge of the text is also important, and I would like to encourage you to read your texts and poems and master them fully. I’m sure you will find the notes and articles on MyNUST also helpful.

Another major problem evident in Assignment 1 is that for those who scored low marks, there was no originality and the similarity percentage was quite high. In such cases, chunks were copied verbatim from different sites on the internet. Contrarily, for those who scored high marks, there was a sense of freshness in the answers, originality, and a consideration of wide views – which is indicative of wide research and reading. In such assignments, the essay followed the acceptable format, that is, it was in continuous form not point form; with a relevant introduction, ideas explored fully in different paragraphs and a summative conclusion. Ideas were well developed and well-argued as well as
presented in a logical manner. Such writing is encouraged and is assured of higher rewards – for it is a pleasure to mark.

I am also happy to say that most answers were of reasonable length – not too short. However, the expression and grammar in some cases was below standard.

On the other hand, assignments that scored mediocre marks exhibited a sense of unpreparedness in the answers. The assignments can be classified into two categories.

Firstly, there were assignments with a sense of originality but sadly, with no evidence of wide research and reading. Again, the answers were of reasonable length and there was an effort to address the demands of the question.

Secondly, there were assignments that were very sketchy and skeletal. The questions were in some cases misinterpreted and in others; the question demands were not fully explored to come up with adequate detail or information to address the question demands fully. In such assignments, the ideas were not well developed and not well argued in a logical manner. Such writing is not encouraged and is assured of a failure mark.

Thirdly, there were assignments that were merely copied from the internet without addressing the question and without acknowledging sources.

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

In addition, wide reading and researching around the area of study is a true mark of scholarship. It is not enough to simply decide to do the assignment and then you just grab the study guide and Tutorial letter and in an hour’s time scribble what comes to you. African Literature is a broad course that requires wide reading and since it is not factual, it can be interpreted differently and has layers and layers of meanings. Hence, for a student to hurriedly go over an assignment in a few minutes is a practice of frustration that does not bear fruits at all. Therefore, you are encouraged to take time on the assignments and to research widely. Please note that this also applies for the test that you will write at the end of the semester. Taking note of the fact that time is a non-renewable resource; you are particularly advised to read the different texts many times so as to understand them. A single reading of a text will never suffice – it is grossly insufficient. Read each text closely for four or more times, taking notes and writing your own summaries. This will also help you when it comes to Exam revision.
Coming to the questions, what I encourage you is to **look at each question many times and underline the key words** which you think that your answer needs to address. These are words which will guide you in interpreting the question.

Having done this, when you go through your final draft, you need to assess whether the aspects highlighted were adequately responded to or not. It is best as well if you first write a rough draft so that if you realise that there is any component that has not been attended to.

I have also written some comments in the body of each assignment and these are the comments which apply specifically to you. I encourage you to seriously look at the comments and try to make sense of them. View them positively and apply them. My goal is to assist you to attain the best possible level of excellence. If you do not understand anything with regards to the comments, please contact me and get clarification.

1. **Question analysis: ASSIGNMENT 1**

Below are 2 sample essays written by one of you that you may use for revision. Take note of the introduction, conclusion, ideas developed into paragraphs and the essay structure.

**QUESTION 1**

Analyse the play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* to illustrate how it expresses the social, political and economic challenges faced by black South Africans. Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion.

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**Sizwe Bansi is dead**

Sizwe Bansi is dead is a play written by Athol Fugard. The play was published in 1972. The play outlined subjects of racism and oppression which was experienced by black South Africans in the hands of white people during an apartheid system. Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to discuss how the black communities in the play “Sizwe Bansi is dead” were social, political and economically challenged. In the play, Fugard expressed and exposed the inhumane treatment of black people by white oppressors, which made the novel more controversy and complicated because Fugard was also a white person. The play focused on the inequality relationships between the colonists and black South Africans. The lives of black South Africans in the play were represented by three characters: Styles, Sizwe Bansi and Buntu, throughout the play they tell sad stories of poverty and hopelessness they faced in their motherland under the control of white oppressors through an apartheid system.

According to the play, black people were discriminated in all areas of their lives. Fugard (1993, pp. 153-153) explained that, in the play “Sizwe Bansi is dead “black South Africans were socially oppressed through discrimination as they were put on the margins of society. Discrimination reached different social spheres such as work. Black people were working under bed working conditions without personal hygiene which exposed them to diseases. Giving an example from the play, black workers in Ford Motors have been discriminated, working without protective measures, exploited and working under dreadful condition, but when one of the bosses of Ford Motors from America was coming to visit the company in South Africa, black workers including...
Styles were told by Bradley (Baas) to nicely bathe, they were given towels, overalls and all protective clothing, they were even told to sing, smile and pretend like they were happy in order to impress their boss but in reality the workers were not happy at all because they were social disadvantaged, maltreated and discriminated because they were black. White and black children had separate schools with varying infrastructure. Black children were given poor education (in bad infrastructure) while whites received better education (in good infrastructure). During apartheid, policies of segregation extended to every aspect of society. Blacks were demoted to a second class citizen in their home soil, therefore, Buntu who was born, raised and grown up in Port Elizabeth told Sizwe who came from King William’s town that “if I had to tell the trouble I had before I could get the right stamps in my book, even though I was born in this area! The trouble I had before I could get a decent job, born in this area! The trouble I had before I had to get this two-roomed house, born in this area”, Buntu was convincing Sizwe that he had suffered a lot in his home town before he got a job, a house and legal stamps on his passbook because he was a black man. Black South Africans got separate mode of transportation, shopping centers, swimming pools, and other recreational facilities, all good and nice looking facilities belonged to whites while the bad ones always belonged to black South Africans. Black South Africans were prohibited to move around freely and settle in a certain neighbourhood. Black South Africans had lost their identity, if black South Africans lose their passbooks this means that their identity is lost because it was only the identity they were given by white people.

Blacks’ identity was minimized to a number instead of their government names. All black South Africans were ordered to carry their passbooks wherever they go and failure to do so could lead to punishment and a fine, therefore the movement of black people was limited, they could not move freely within towns or within the country to associate with different people. For example, the movements of blacks between Port Elizabeth, King William’s town and New Brighton were not permitted to blacks without the right stamps on their passbooks. Due to social distance, communication (some information) cannot be transferred between blacks from different towns before Sytles started his photograph studio that then helped blacks to communicate with people from different towns, is where Sizwe went to write a letter to inform his wife and children that he lost his identity to acquire a job and to stay in Port Elizabeth. The living places for blacks and whites were separated as well, whites living in luxury houses in cities while blacks stay in shacks or in overcrowded areas outside the cities. Blacks were relocated from their origin land and taken to remote areas. Blacks were forced to live only 14% of the land, even if they were the majority of white immigrants. Blacks were not allowed to have romantic relationships with whites or to marry to whites, not even to socialize with them. The black South Africans were forced to lose their dignity and humanity in order to continue to exist. They were constantly treated as less than human. Blacks never given the respect every human being deserves.

In the opinion of Fugard, (1993, p. 182)), in political views, black South Africans in the play were exploited by the white men’s government even though South Africa has the huge majority of black people and a white minority population. Black South Africans were political overpowered and ruled by white immigrants who then imposed strict laws and acts to restrict them from doing whatever they wanted to do. The passbook (which was political introduced) was seen as a sign of the white people’s power over the black people, if someone found without passbook or without the legal stamp on his passbook like the one Sizwe had on his passbook, he would be given certain days to leave that specific place. For example, Bansi was given only three days to leave Port Elizabeth. A black person could also be taken out of a specific town, arrested then taken to the prison or even killed if found without passbook or without a right stamp on the passbook, therefore blacks in South Africa had no right of free movement during an apartheid system. The play showed that the solutions between white oppressors and black South Africans do not come through negotiations but through applying of political force or by using of violence, therefore, the whole system was mean to kill black people directly or indirect ways. Black people in South Africa were denied all their human rights during an apartheid system in South Africa, they have no right to say no to something they don’t like or they don’t want but they were forced to say yes to everything they want or not. Black people were not allowed to participate in any political activity which means that they were not permitted to vote, to join or establish any political party and to run as a candidate in an election. Blacks in South Africa had no right to form or to join any labor organisation or unions, strikes were illegal, black workers were not able to act against their bad working conditions. Black people were denied as well freedom of speech. Black newspapers and organizations were prohibited and banned. These made it very difficult for black people to express themselves to people around the world. However, as a result of these, black South Africans were suffering in silence. Wertheim (2000).

According to Fugard (1984), economic challenges faced by black South Africans in the play can be seen when Sizwe left King
William’s town to Port Elizabeth due to poverty to search for a job in order to provide for his family because at King William’s town there were no job opportunities, there was a dry land, with only one shop and with many people, the shop can only employ one person in the whole areas of King William’s town. Black South Africans were living in poverty with difficult living conditions due to racial discrimination in South Africa during an apartheid system. Black South Africans were staying in the least developed parts such as informal settlements. Blacks were not allowed to own properties. Throughout the play, black South Africans faced economic challenges because they were considered as inferior and the only way for them to make a living and provide for their families depends on the approval of the white people. This can be seen in the play when Sizwe was caught and told to return back to his home of King William’s town within few days because he was not permitted to stay in Port Elizabeth in order to look for employment and support his family back home. This means that Sizwe was condemned to poverty for life by whites government even though he was willing and capable of working, he could not secure a job in Port Elizabeth because the stamp he got on his passbook didn’t permit him to work and stay in Port Elizabeth. When Buntu finds out that Sizwe has no chance in Port Elizabeth, he convinced him to go look to search for a job in order to look for employment and support his family back home. This means that Sizwe was condemned to poverty for life by whites government even though he was willing and capable of working, he could not secure a job in Port Elizabeth because the stamp he got on his passbook didn’t permit him to work and stay in Port Elizabeth. When Buntu finds out that Sizwe has no chance in Port Elizabeth, he convinced him to go look for a job at the mines where whites never worry about influx control but Sizwe was not willing and not interested to work at the mines. Therefore, Sizwe replied that “I don’t want to work on the mines. There is no money there. And it’s dangerous, under the ground. Many black men get killed when rocks fall. You can die there”. However, the only way for him to find employment was to impersonate, lost his identity by changing his name to a dead man Robert Zwelinzima who had a right stamp on his passbook in order to secure a job and permitted to stay in Port Elizabeth. Black South Africans had no privileges to work or to stay where they want to work or to stay. Therefore, they got it had to survive because the situations were beyond their comprehension. The economic challenges put Sizwe and all black people to live in abject poverty which forced Sizwe to change and destroy his identity for him to get a job and to gain his fundamental human rights. Prece (2008).

Black South Africans worked for white people, where by white minority made sure that no skilled labor jobs given to black people. Black people have to work under the contract labor system usually for months and they got called back and spend their lives at the mines and sent the little money they got back home to their families, but their employers never took any responsibility for the welfare of their employees. Blacks have been working deepest in the mines with more dust and have been working nonstop. An example from the play is that of the Ford Company where after twenty-five years, employees are only entitled to a gold wrist watches as pension after getting exploited through hard labor, long working hours with low salaries or even nothing. Black people hard working made whites who do nothing to get the large amount of profits.

However, characters such as styles emerge and resist through this injustice in the play as he quits and starts his own business as a photographer in order to be on his own and be free away from humiliation and exploitation that he has been going through at Ford Motors. Before styles left the Ford Company to start his own business he expressed his disapproval of white people dreadful treatments to black workers by calling himself a monkey. Styles further indicated that he did not belong to a job he was working, he deserved something better as all human being. Therefore Styles said to himself that, “Come on, Styles, you’re a monkey, man, and you know it. Run up and down the whole bloody day! Your life doesn’t belong to you. You’ve sold it. For what, Styles? Gold wrist-watch in twenty-five years’ time when they sign you off because you’re too old for anything anymore?”. The Ford Company was a sign of economic alienation brought by the whites in the play. However, not only Styles as a black worker denied oppression of whites, but both Sizwe and Buntu as well acted against the oppression of whites. Sizwe denied it by changing his identity by literary killing Sizwe Bansi and bringing Robert Zwelinzima back to life for his survival and to stay in Port Elizabeth while Buntu was the main man who persuaded Sizwe to change his identity or to face the consequences.

In conclusion, the passbook played a big role in challenges faced by blacks in the play because it made it easier for whites to restrict every aspect of black South Africans. The passbook made blacks to suffer social, political and economically. When someone suffers social or when there are restrictions due to political laws, citizens can as well suffer economically, which is basically what happened to blacks in Sizwe Bansi is dead play. Therefore, blacks were challenged due to rules and laws imposed by whites, however, these affected their entire lives in those three ways, social, political and economically.

Bibliography
Without a doubt, black South Africans faced social challenges during the apartheid era. This is corroborated in the play by the oppression which the black people face. White colonialists decides for them (blacks) where they should go, where they should be and where they should work under the use of the “passbook”. The passbook is a symbol of oppression as it enforces the restrictions on employment and travel of all citizens of South Africa. Sizwe Banzi must leave Port Elizabeth and go back to King William’s Town. To add more salts to the wound, due to such challenges that the blacks are facing they choose to drown their problems in alcohol. Thus, Sizwe Banzi goes to a bar and drinks alcohol to drown his problems. This incident in the play raises eye brows to a critical reader, in such a way that it shows that alcoholism is another problem that create challenges for the black man. Thus, we see Sizwe failing to take the correct direction going home and he is assisted by Bantu who leads him to the correct direction.

To add on to that, racism and exploitation of blacks is another challenge that black people face in the play Sizwe Banzi is Dead. This is viewed vividly by Style who reveals continuous forms of deception which takes place at the Ford plant where he is employed. He makes the audience aware of how workers are exploited on the basis of race at Ford factory. When Mr Henry Ford Number Two arrives in South Africa, Style divulges the hypocrisy of apartheid through Mr Bradley who is the mediator of the exploitation of the black workers. He (Mr Bradley) creates the impression that the working conditions at Ford factory are perfect for instance he buys safe cloths, erects safety signs and makes the floor neat and clean. It is interesting to note that the black workers were labouring and toiling without any safety for their lives. It is also interesting to note that the apartheid government utilises the press to create a permanent impression on the minds of the black people that the coming of Henry Ford Two will definitely change the live of blacks in South Africa as it is quoted in the play that he is “… going to see to it that the conditions of their non-white workers in Southern Africa were substantially improved...”. Thus, it is clear that the black man’s life is dependant to the white man. On the same note, the blacks man are being demeaned and degraded to the extent that they are referred to as “boys” thus they (blacks) need to be taken care of by the “superiors” the whites. This is an intentional strategy to affirm supremacy and at the same time makes the black people feel inherently “inferior”.

To further convey that, black South African are not only facing socially problems, but they are also facing economic problems. This is justified in the play by Sizwe Banzi who is presented as poor. The playwright makes it clear to his audience that the main cause of poverty to black is lack of employment. Sizwe Banzi in not employed and he is barred from being employed in any form of a job in Port Elizabeth and he must go back to his home town which he left because he was looking for a job. This reveals that blacks are suffering economically as they do not have any source of income. As if that is not enough, the play also shows it clearly that Sizwe is separated from his wife and children because he has left them to look for a job so as to change his family’s socioeconomic life. The separation of a married couple under whatsoever reason is not good it affects the couple and it also affects the children. In this regard, blacks South African are presented as people who are economically affected by the oppressive rule of colonists, which also leads to the separation of spouses and the separation of parents with their children.
Furthermore, the playwright uses the theme of identity to present the challenges face by the blacks in South Africa. Firstly, the identity of Sizwe makes him to have challenges in as far as getting a job is concerned because of the stamp that is on his passbook. For this reason, Sizwe is forced to change identity and adopt the identity of a dead man Robert Zwelinzima because his passbook had a valid working permit. Blacks are also presented as people who are suffering from identity crisis. This is revealed by the fact that blacks are against the white colonialist or the apartheid regime, but they are found being named with English names for example Style and Robert. This shows that the blacks are trying to fit in within the white colonialists, but their skin colour is making them not to be accepted in the white regime. In the African context, names and surnames are given to people to show the people’s identity. It is interesting to note that, Robert’s surname “Zwelinzima” is a Zulu word which general means “the world or life is tough or difficult”. It is more interesting to note that, the playwright even names his black characters with names to show that they are facing challenges due to apartheid.

Last but not least, blacks are facing political challenges in the play Sizwe Banzi is Dead. This is validated by Styles’ narrative, his monologue, offers a spectacle of indirect political murder due to the fact that it shows both physical and psychological death that he has while working at the Ford factory. His monologue also suggests the means he used to escape from such tragic circumstances. The description of the working condition of workers in the Ford factory is an indication that the authority (political leaders) the white colonialist lack concern and they ignore the needs and rights of the black populace living in South Africa, such that their ignorance to the safety of the blacks shows it clearly that they do not care what happens to the blacks. They are only focusing on getting good results from the work that the blacks work. Style also puts it clear that he has escaped the process of political killings related to racism (Fugard, 1993).

In a nutshell, Sizwe Banzi’s play is revealing all the evil nature of the apartheid era. Unfortunately, Style who is presented as an observant black man is lacking the spirit of being a revolutionary is such a way that he could have stirred the spirit of revolution among other black workers at Ford factory to revolt against the apartheid rule. It’s also unfortunate that some parts of the world are still facing racial segregation. At all cost humans might fight against racism for the world to be a better place.

References

**Student :218031211**

**A good example of the introduction**

This essay is written in an attempt to critically dissect Athol Fugard’s play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* as commentary on the socio-political as well as socio-economic challenges that the black demographic experienced in South Africa during the apartheid regime. Because these challenges are so interwoven, this essay will be divided into sub headings titled ‘The Ford Factory’, ‘The Passbook’ and ‘Sizwe Bansi/Robert Zwelinzima’. This is done to place the challenges in a framework which allows better comprehension and vast discussion. Within these frameworks (headings), the essay also reflects on some of the themes critical for the play, which renders substance to the analysis made.

**Student 220004978**

**In Question 1, you needed to:**

1. Describe the apartheid system.
2. the social challenges
3. the political challenges
4. and economic challenges faced by black South Africans.

To avoid repetition of ideas, you could discuss the social challenges and group all the characters that exhibit such challenges in the play under this sub-heading. Explain fully and relate to specific examples or events in the play. Then proceed to the political, and finally economic challenges.

QUESTION 2 [50 marks]

Write an essay in which you compare the character of Beatrice and Aunty Ifeoma in Adichie Chimamanda’s *Purple Hibiscus*. Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion.

Some points to note about Aunty Ifeoma and Beatrice’s characters and quotes that you may find useful include:

**Aunt Ifeoma**
- Ifeoma is almost the opposite to Beatrice – she is playful, light-hearted, free. As a university lecturer of African Studies she has liberal, feminist views. She talks about her female students marrying early and “when they graduate, their husbands own them and their degrees” p. 75. In contrast to Mama, who says “a husband crowns a woman’s life.”
- Kambili describes her as fearless, p. 76. She has an expansive personality – gestures and smiles when she speaks in contrast to the severity of Eugene
- She dares to be “flippant” with him unlike anyone else
- Her eyes have “unconditional warmth”
- p. 95 “Her whisper was like her – tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life.” She is gutsy and proud. Although Eugene has offered to buy her a car if she does a range of things to please him, she refuses.
- She prays for ‘peace and laughter’ to Kambili’s surprise
- Unlike her daughter she is gracious and understanding of the children, helping to liberate them from the controlling presence of their father. She insists Amaka treats Kambili with respect p.141.
- She comes to visit Kambili in hospital and immediately offers to take her and bro, mother in – she acts her faith out.
Aunty Ifeoma p 222 learns of a list of disloyal lecturers who may lose their jobs, she is not afraid. “I am not paid to be loyal. When I speak the truth it becomes disloyalty.” When do we speak out, eh? When soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads?”

She is not so “loose” that she never disciplines her children – p245 – she punishes Obiora for being disrespectful to her friend

Mama - Beatrice Achike

“there was so much that she did not mind.” (p. 19) – not outspoken

“She spoke the way a bird eats, in small amounts.” (p. 20) – timid; has no voice

Always submits to Eugene, e.g. when she has morning sickness asks to stay in the car, but when re-questioned by him, she submits and comes in. He controls her almost like a benign dictator – not even needing to command her. (no freedom and not independent).

She usually speaks in a whisper p123 (- lacks confidence; timid

She feels terrible when her children are punished by Eugene but is too fearful of him to do anything – until later

Her response – parallels many people under tyranny – although she begins to resist

After Kambili and Jaja have been staying with Ifeoma for a while, she comes down. P. 248 She had been pregnant again – and after another beating, miscarried and was taken to hospital. When she gets back, she takes Eugene’s money and gets a taxi to Nsukka.

However – she is still weak – when Eugene speaks to her on the phone she says they are going back home: “she looked possessed by a different demon” 250. She continues to justify to Ifeoma why Eugene is a good man – she can see his good intentions and excuses his behaviour through stress

290 – Mama confesses “I started putting poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor.” – this was an act of desperation – and her response is calm, as if she expected to be found out

Afterwards, she is forever changed. She doesn’t care about her appearance p 296, her skin is speckled with blackheads, she writes letters to newspapers saying she killed him – she is mentally unstable

Conclusion
Marking your assignments was quite a pleasure. I am happy to say that I also obtained new knowledge from some of them, especially the examples.

To those of you who obtained good marks; let me say that as your Tutor Marker, I am very pleased when students excel like that. Bear in mind that marks are not given but awarded and where there is evidence of hard work it is rewarded handsomely.

For those of you with a mediocre average mark; I would like to urge you to work harder. Success comes with hard work.

Finally, I would like to advise all you to start preparing for the exams. Remember to read the different texts; read them exhaustively. Also read any other reading materials you can find. This will help you to prepare for the exams. In addition, make your own notes as you read for quick revision before the exam.

I wish you all the best in your preparations for the examinations and in the examinations, themselves.

It was a pleasure working with you.

Your Tutor

Dr Juliet Pasi