FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2nd SEMESTER 2017

ASSIGNMENT 1

AFRICAN LITERATURE

AFL312S
Dear Student
I have just finished marking your assignment and this short Feedback letter serves to highlight some of the pleasing things I witnessed in your assignment, encourage you, challenge you and give you more direction so as to be fully conversant with some of the aspects that will make you appreciate the course African Literature. Worth noting first and foremost is that the first assignment performance was very discouraging.
What I need to highlight from the onset is that most of us did not do well. The performance was just below standard. Most of your assignments demonstrated that you had not put so much effort and what was evident in the assignments was a sense of unpreparedness in the answers. There was a sense of originality in some cases but sadly, this was not indicative of wide research and reading.
Let me again emphasise the fact that at this level, it is not enough to rely on the Study Guide only. The Study Guide is there to just give you directions – to guide you so that you can research more as guided by what is in the Study Guide. Hence, when you refer to other relevant books and also to the internet sources – I always reward broadly read students. With regards to the questions you did, the Study Guide was therefore not adequate at all for you to explore and address the question demands fully.

1. General Comments

I need to highlight from the onset that 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. 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 to the examination. Taking note of the fact that time is a non-renewable resource; you are particularly advised to read the different texts and poems many times to understand them. A single reading of a text or play or poem is never adequate; it is grossly insufficient. I advise that you read each text closely twice or more times, taking notes and writing your own summaries. This will also help you when it comes to Exam revision.

With regards to the individual questions, I will only comment briefly since 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; you might find them helpful. If you do not understand anything with regards to the comments, please contact me and get clarification.

2. Poor command of English
For someone pursuing a degree in English, it is obvious that your command of this language must be of the highest possible level. On the contrary, some students are so weak in their English expression that one wonders how they happen to be in this course. In regard to good expression, at this level, you are expected to: **Write in correct, legible English and check your answers for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors BEFORE you send it in. Use a dictionary to check your spellings.**

Thus, poor grammar was one of the most challenging components in the essays. Students are encouraged to thoroughly revise their work – that is what academic writers do. It is better to give a friend your work to revise before submitting it so that the friend may help you to eliminate unnecessary mistakes. It was quite pleasing to note that some of you typed their work. This practice is highly encouraged to ensure that you present your work neatly and professionally.

You are expected to be proficient in your command of the English language. Some of the answers were full of mistakes and errors. Try to revise your work thoroughly to avoid some of these mistakes. Short and simple sentences are also recommended if your mastery of the language is below standard. Long and wordy sentences result in more mistakes and meaningless sentences. Try to avoid them if possible.

It is very disappointing to be dealing with sentence construction, paragraph unity and coherence at this level. However, my job is to help you overcome any problems you may encounter in this course, and I can assure you I will help you, provided you are prepared to follow my instructions. One reason for such poor English is, once more, failure to follow instructions. I advise you to **take time over your assignments. Do not send in your first draft. Rework your draft several times if necessary.** Spend **DAYS** working on your assignment, and, mind your language. Take note of what I suggest you should do later in this Letter.

3. **Referencing**

Linked with mistakes and errors is the whole issue of referencing. By “referencing” I mean the system of indicating the source of information, showing where exactly you obtained the information from, both in the body of the answer, directly after you have mentioned it, and at the end, in the list of references. PLEASE note that we use the APA referencing style. Some of you have mastered it but others have no clue on how this should be done.

Unfortunately, referencing is such an involved area, and would take pages and pages to explain. For now it is enough to say that COLL recommends the APA style of referencing and you must master it fully. If you type your work, to indicate the title of a text, you either use italics, or underline, or type in bold print. For example, **Purple Hibiscus**, or **Purple Hibiscus** or **Purple Hibiscus**. Stick to one style throughout, and do not jump from one to the other. If you are using free handwriting, underline the title.

In addition, if you make reference to poems, use quotation marks and do not italicise the title of the short story. For example, “The ancestors,” “In Praise of the Ancestors” and “Farewell”.
Note that in-text referencing should also be done correctly. If you quote from a text, you show your source by naming the author’s surname, the date and the page number, as follows: *(Achebe 1975: 56).* As I said, referencing is a complex skill and would require its own tutorial letter. Other examples are illustrated in the paragraph below in bold letters:

For instance, *Riches (1986:8)* defines violence as “an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses.” This definition is rather restrictive as it focuses on physical harm and negates other forms of violence *(Schinkel, 2010).* Cited in *Schinkel (2010)*, *Norman Denzin (1984:488)* further defines violence as……

I am sure you now realise how complex referencing is. However, the APA Referencing guide is available at the Main Library for N$30.00. I advise that you get a copy to familiarise yourself with the APA referencing style.

### A. More information on Literature in English in general

Before I delve into the actual assignment questions, I think it is important to say a few words about this academic discipline called Literature in English. I do not intend to define it as such, but would like to share with you what I think, and know you need to understand about Literature in English in order for you to pass a course such as the one you are doing. As you can see, I say “MORE INFORMATION” because your Study Guide and the First Tutorial Letter have already furnished you with plenty of useful information.

My reason for doing this is because I have often wondered whether students know exactly what examiners want. I can tell you this: there is no mystery about what examiners reward. It is:

i) detailed knowledge of the text,

ii) made relevant to the question set (NOT a recapitulation of general notes or a rehearsed answer to a different question)

iii) a personal response to the text.

A Literature in English examination is an attempt to assess the individual candidate’s engagement with the text, and the feelings – based on knowledge and slanted as the question dictates – of each individual candidate about and towards each set text.

Candidates can demonstrate detailed knowledge of a text in a number of ways: direct quotation or close paraphrase, however short. This is much easier in drama, especially with Shakespeare, and with poetry. In prose it can be shown by correct reference to names of people, places, or times when incidents happened, other aspects of the setting, relationships, etc. What is not rewarded, though, is the answer that consists of a series of generalisations, or the answer that merely mentions any and everything that the candidate knows about a text without any relevance to the question. Unless there is close reference supporting, amplifying or illustrating the generalisation, demonstrating the candidate’s own involvement with the text, there is no proof that the candidate has actually read the text for himself or herself. Such answers are accordingly not rewarded *(Adapted from University of Cambridge Local Examinations)*

With this in mind, let me now address your performance in the assignment. I will focus on the texts that selected for study for this course. Please note that the following texts will be covered this year; these are the texts that the Part-Time students also studied. Your exam revision should focus on these texts. These are:

1. *Purple hibiscus* by Chimamanda Adichie
2. *Butterfly burning* by Yvonne Vera
3. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* by Athol Fugard
4. “Song of Lawino” by Okot p’Bitek

The poems are:
1. Achebe’s “A mango seedling”
2. Soyinka’s “Telephone conversation”
3. Kunene’s *The Ancestors and the Sacred mountain*.

I will put the poems on the e-learning platform for easy access

B. Question analysis

Once again I advise you to examine the question closely 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.

Below are general comments on Assignment 1, followed by specific comments on individual questions. The comments are based on the overall performance of all the students and you need to use them so that you can learn from other people’s mistakes and achievements as well.

**Question 1**

For this question, you can use a selection of quotations to back up your points; write a character profile for Kambili Achike.

Kambili constantly seemed the approval of her father but never got it no matter how hard she tried to please him. In your answer you should show how Kambili matures and how her family disintegrates; and to what extent it does.

You should try to cover the following aspects of Kambili’s characterisation: her narration, her actions in the novel in response to key incidents, her dialogue with others, descriptions of her that you find, the reaction of other characters to her, and the relationships she has with other characters. **Remember that the descriptions you find of Kambili are from her own point of view, and therefore reveal a lot about her self-esteem.** You can also say a lot about what Kambili admires in other people. The following quotes will help you analyse Kambili’s character:

**Kambili Achike**

- Painfully shy, 15 year old girl, living in her father’s shadow
- Initially is desperate to win father’s approval. E.g. p.26: “God will deliver us.” I said, knowing Papa would like my saying that. ..Then he reached out and held my hand, and I felt my mouth were full of melting sugar.”

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Only later realises the extent to which she is indoctrinated by her father not to question anything that he does. After her mother’s miscarriage after a beating the family prays for her forgiveness. “I did not even think to think what Mama needed to be forgiven for.” P. 36

Described by her form mistress as “intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible.” Principal: “A brilliant, obedient student, a daughter to be proud of.” But Papa would not be proud.” She came 2nd in class and “I was stained by failure.” P. 39: once again this causes a strong physical reaction in Kambili which shows her fear and distress. Her father tells her, “You didn’t put in your best this term. You came second because you chose to.” Next term, she fearfully remembers all her classwork to return to first place.

Kambili’s interactions with her classmate and teacher show her to be timid and socially almost paralysed. She is “awkward, tongue tied” and struggles to make conversation. The other girls refer to her as a “backyard snob” and assume she must be so because of her parents wealth. but she is really just shy. She runs off instead of walking to the school gate with the others. P49-51

Her response to adults is similarly timid. She seems to have no sense of her self, her own opinions or feelings. P. 57 When Ade Coker asks her if she and Jaja like coming to their village, they look at their father before answering. Eugene is proud of their quiet obedience, but Ade Coker rightly asks, “Imagine what the Standard would be if we were all quiet.”

She feels a connection to her grandfather Papa Nnukwu, even if it is forbidden by her father. She cannot find signs of “godlessness”, though she tries p. 61. She wants to stay longer with him (“I wanted to stay so if the fufu clung to his throat and choked him I could run and get water.”) p. 66

She admires her aunt Ifeoma: “I watched every movement she made; I could not tear my ears away. It was the fearlessness about her...”

She is a young fifteen- especially compared to her bold cousin Amaka who “asked many questions and did not accept many answers” 79

She recites her father’s words without thinking for herself at first. E.g. When Ifeoma wants to pick up Papa N and asks why their father would object, Jaja says “I don’t know” but Kambili says “Because Papa N is a pagan” and thinks ‘Papa would be proud that I had said that.”

Kambili has a short lived experience with Aunty Ifeoma – going to see the pagan masquerade. This seems to awaken something inside her: “That night, I dreamed I was laughing, but it did not sound like my laughter, although I was not sure what my laughter sounded like. It was cackling and throaty and enthusiastic, like Aunty Ifeoma’s.” 88

After this incident, Kambili begins wondering about more things, e.g. what it would be like to wear lipstick like her cousin Amaka (p..89) during Christmas day mass

Visiting her aunts family in Nsukka: Kambili is observant of all the ways her aunt’s family is so different from her own. She is frightened and unsure of how to behave. She has to contend with Amaka’s assumption that she thinks Nsukka is “uncivilised compared to Enugu”

Her timidity is shown by her voice: Amaka notices she talks in whispers p117 She follows Amaka with “frightened footsteps”

She is sensitive, “I wished that [Amaka] would not keep looking at me as if I were a strange laboratory animal to be explained and catalogued.”

She is very conscious of her new environment in Nsukka: “...I was observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished.” 120

Observing the way her aunt and cousins do the rosary – singing – is an experience for Kambili – another moment to question the status quo at home

However, breaking a number of rules is disturbing and difficult for her (eg abandoning the schedule, watching TV) – she says “I felt as if my shadow were visiting Aunty Ifeoma and her family, while the real me was studying in my room in Enugu, my schedule posted above me.” 125 – that night she has a nightmare of being flushed in a toilet by Amaka – sense of guilt, lack of purity

During the visit to the Uni, Ifeoma suggests K may go there with A – but K acknowledges “I had never thought about the university, where I would go or what I would study. When the time came, Papa would decide.”

Meeting Father Amadi has an immediate effect on Kambili. She is attracted to this “handsome priest” (137): “I wanted some of the cloudlike warmth in Father Amadi’s eyes to rub off on me”

She feels paralysed in his presence: “I could not move my tongue, could not swallow. I was too aware of his eyes, too aware that he was looking at me, watching me.” When he speaks to her,
she wants to say sorry that she did not smile or laugh, “but my words would not come, and for a while even my ears could hear nothing.” 139

- With Amaka’s friends or the neighbourhood children – she is not able to speak or answer their questions, she freezes up p 143
- The more differences she notices at Ifeoma’s e.g. Amadi, the prayer for Pape Nnukwu, laughter, freedom – she begins to internally question for the first time. Asks Jaja “Do you think we’re abnormal?” p. 151
- Cuts her nails to a “chafing shortness” following Papa. Self-abasement?
- Notices Jaja has begun to change (before her) – he tells Ifeoma about his finger
- She envies the relationship between her cousin and grandfather: “Amaka and Papa Nnukwy spoke sometimes, their voices low, twining together.”
- Her aunt begins to address some of the ideas Kambili has grown up with, e.g. around Papa N and his religious practice – but K is not yet ready to fully understand
- When Kambili sees Papa N talk to ancestors – she is able to make connections to her own saying of the Rosary and see him as a person just as worthy as herself. P168
- Turning point in novel – Amaka once again makes a smart comment about Kambili’s ignorance of food prep because she is rich – Aunty Ifeoma suddenly says “O ginidi, Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her!”. After a pause, she says “You don’t have to shout, Amaka. …I don’t know how to do the orah leaves, but you can show me.” She speaks calmly…and makes Amaka laugh. 170
- Kambili – borrows shorts and goes out with Amadi. She is attracted to him and feels guilty in the car with him where his shorts expose his muscular knee and she smells his cologne. Unable to make normal conversation she makes a confession – “I sleep in the same room as my grandfather. He is a heathen.” Amadi helps to gently question her, “Why is it a sin?” and she realises she doesn’t know. P175
- Amadi tells her she has “good legs for running” – an intimacy which makes her embarrassed. “Don’t you know how to smile?” he asks. But “I wanted to smile but I could not. My lips and cheeks were frozen.” He sees that she tried on lipstick for the first time.
- Amadi observes, “you haven’t asked me a single question” 179. She says “I don’t know what to ask.” Then she laughs for the first time – “It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh.”
- At home after that: she is full of the excitement of being with him. “Didn’t he know that I did not want him to leave, ever? … The afternoon played across my mind… I had smiled, run, laughed. My chest was filled with something like bath foam. Light. The lightness was so sweet I tasted it on my tongue..” 180
- When Aunty mentions her father has called, K has a physical reaction of fear – “my head was filling up quickly with blood or water or sweat.” That night she has a nightmare of Papa in a rage.
- The next morning, Papa N is dead.
- On return to Enugu, she is punished for “walking into sin” by having hot water poured onto her bare feet. P. 194
- Still has a crush on Father Amadi – doodles his name, “sees” him everywhere p 204. She has begun to change. “I joined the group of girls on the volleyball field on the second day of school. I did not hear the whispers of ‘backyard snob’…. I stood waiting with my hands clasped until I was picked. I saw only Father Amadi’s clay-coloured face and heard only ‘you have good legs for running” – he has given her self confidence
- Later when she and Jaja are looking at the painting of Papa N – it is like she wants to be caught by her father p. 209 “Perhaps it was what we wanted to happen…without being aware of it. Perhaps we all chanted after Nsukka – even Papa – and things were destined not to be the same, to not be in their original order.”
- She owns up to bringing the painting back and suffers a violent beating after refusing to let go of the painting. But she blocks it out and thinks of Amaka’s music. She does not accept guilt – mental opposition. p210
- P. 212 – her beating is so severe she receives extreme unction from Father Benedict.
- She does not respond to her father and feels mixed emotions towards her mother: “I wished I could get up and hug her, and yet I wanted to push her away, to shove her so hard that she would topple over the chair.” P 213
- She asks for Aunty Ifeoma, who comes with Father AMadi. She speaks directly to Mama – “When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head.”213. She insists K & J will come with her once she is out of hospital and Mama is to follow.
• She receives tutoring, and still comes 1st in class. Her classmates visit and wish her get well. This is another important moment for K – receiving the approval from her peers she has always wished for. 215
• She admits to Amaka she has a crush on Father Amadi and learns that he also cares deeply for her. “More than priestly concern” says Amaka, “he sounded like a person whose wife was sick.” 220
• When he visits and she hugs him it is “tense and delicious”
• During this visit she is far more conscious of the differences – as she watches Father AMadi encouraging the boys with the high jump, she observes “It was what Aunty Ifeoma did to my cousins… setting higher and higher jumps for them in the way she talked to them, in what she expected of them. …It was different for Jaja and me. We did not scale the rod because we believed we could, we scaled it because we were terrified that we couldn’t.” 226
• After Amadi takes her to have her hair plaited, he encourages her to try out for the part of Our Lady in the play. He tells her “You can do anything you want, Kambili.” P.239
• She observes all the changes in her father, Jaja, her mother and herself. When she is at Nsukka on Easter Sunday she helps Amaka prepare the garri – and she is proud of her independence: p. 264.
• P. 266 – she dares to disagree and joke with Amaka – “You’re funny,” “I had never heard that before. I saved it for later, to ruminate over and over that I had made her laugh, that I could make her laugh.”
• With Father Amadi, she admits she is thinking about her father. She doesn’t know what will happen when they go back p. 268. He called and neither she or Jaja spoke to him – although she wanted to.
• She feels divided – confused – by her love for her father, and her desire to escape him. “I did want to talk to Papa, to hear his voice, to tell him what I had eaten and what I had prayed for so that he would approve… and yet, I did not want to talk to hi; I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Aunty Ifeoma, and never come back.” 268
• Amadi says to Kambili “What you think will always matter to me, Kambili”. He makes her feel valued and loved. He values her opinion.
• That night in the bath “I sang as I bathed” 270 – new joy, new sense of peace and wholeness and self
• They go on a pilgrimage to Aopke to see the apparition of the Virgin p. 274 – Kambili has a religious experience. “The ribbons that cordoned off the apparition area shook, Yet there was no wind. The sun turned white, the colour and shape of the host. And then I saw her, the blessed Virgin: an image in the pale sun, a red glow on the back of my hand… she was everywhere.” This compares to Amadi’s assertion that he sees Christ in the faces of the children – it almost has more to do with the faith of the believer?
• On the way home, she sings Igbo chorus songs. Later she finds the courage to say “I love you” to Father Amadi. (Huge progress for a girl who never spoke!) He says “You are beautiful. You will find more love than you will need in a lifetime.”
• When her mother confesses, she reacts violently – “Why in his tea?” – thinking of the love sips. Did her mother care if she also harmed the children?
• She listens and sings along to Fela – like her cousin
• She goes back to Nsukka to visit the new family in Ifeoma’s flat and laughs loudly on the way back 299: “Because Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song. As laughter.”
• She carries around Amadi’s letters around. “They are long and detailed, because they remind me of my worthiness.” He helps her to reflect on what has happened to her. “he wrote that he did not want me to seek the whys.” P.303: “I no longer wonder if I have a right to love Father AMadi; I simply go ahead and love him.”
• When she visits Jaja to tell him he is getting out of prison she says “his eyes are too full of guilt to really see me, to see his reflection in my eyes, the reflection of my hero, the brother who tried always to protect me the best he could.”

The family’s deterioration is clearly shown in the opening Chapter 1; “Before Palm Sunday.” Kambili says: “Everything came tumbling down after Palm Sunday” (p. 257) What does she mean?
The chapter is introduced with a thunder storm raging outside breaking things, uprooting plants, causing doors to slam and making a lot of noise.

- It is a reflection of the falling apart of Eugen’s ‘ideal’ family.
- Jaja refuses to attend the catholic church and rebels further by refusing to eat at the dining room table with the whole family.
- Eugen’s health seems to be deteriorating as he keeps shaking and his face is covered in a rash.
- Beatrice was no longer as quiet as a mouse, she now speaks loudly e.g. when she tells Sisi to wipe the floor in case there are still small fragments of the broken figurines -She was not afraid to take food up to Jaja’s room in a dignified manner by putting it on a tray with matching plates as before she would hide it in clothes
- She seemed like a new person with a mind and voice of her own, which the reader might infer Eugen did not approve of due to his dominating authoritative rule he had over his family.
- Jaja was now actively objecting his father, for instance he knew his father did not approve of them spending time with Aunty Ifeoma and Papa-Nnukwu however when she called to tell them of the termination notice he simply told his father that he and Kambili would be going to Nsukka and did not ask for permission.
- Aunty Ifeoma’s life is also falling apart as she is given a notice of termination with one month’s notice her only hope was to have her visa approved so she can leave for America
- Which was good for her and her kids but not so much for Jaja and Kambili, as they wouldn’t have an escape from Eugene anymore if Aunt Ifeoma left. However, this was a necessary catalyst for them to grow, become more independent and stand up for themselves; especially for Jaja.
- All the characters’ lives were no longer the same, they were each respectively facing big obstacles that changed their lives forever.

**Question 3:** *Butterfly burning by Yvonne Vera*

Discuss the themes of love and ambition in the novel *Butterfly Burning* by Yvonne Vera.

- Phephelaphi’s love for Fumbatha
- Her mother’s love for the white policeman
- Her mother’s friend love for her when she (Phephelaphi’s mother dies)
- Deliwe and Zandile’s love for whitemen
- The sisterhood in Sidojiwe E2 street
- The people’s love for music, There’s a common relationship between music and freedom; it is a conduit from oppression to freedom. In the midst of colonialism therefore, *Kwela*, “a music that finds freedom in oppression” and frames the context within which some blacks seek and find alternative freedom. Consequently, once the people of Sidojiwe E2, Makokoba arrive home, “everyone is free, the young joyful”. Sidojiwe E2 is flooded with *kwela* music: “The feet feel free”.
- Phephelaphi’s ambition to be a nurse etc

The overall performance on the two questions was average. The majority of you have not mastered the novels as shown by the lack of quotations to support the discussion. The questions required an analytical approach; unfortunately, for those who had skeletal knowledge of the texts, the responses were inadequate. analysed the poem and the stories in isolation, there was a lot of repetition.

**A. Suggestions for future assignments and examinations**

**Firstly, buy** the prescribed set books, and **study** them. These books are listed in the First Tutorial Letter, and I don’t have to list them here again. When you are doing a course such as AFL312S, you cannot
depend on notes in the Study Guide. As the name says, this is just a guide. You cannot say you are studying Literature when you have not read the texts. You need your own texts, because as you study them, you have to make notes on the text themselves. You cannot, and should never, do that on library copies, or on somebody's books. Prescribed Literature books are your own possession and, like a toothbrush, you should not share them with anyone, not even your closest friend!

Secondly, learn the terms that are often used to discuss Literature. The Study Guide has good sections on this, but there are many other books that specialise in literary terms. If you want to write and speak with authority on Literature, and if you want to understand Literature better, you need to learn the vocabulary of Literature.

**Conclusion**
Marking your assignments was quite a pleasure. I am happy to say that I also obtained new knowledge from some of them.
The overall performance was satisfactory. To those of you who obtained good marks; let me say that as your Tutor Marker, I am are 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 Study Guide; make use of it exhaustively, as well as any other reading materials you can find. This will help you to prepare for the second assignment. In addition, make your own notes as you read to take note of the significant points in every set text.
Please do not hesitate to call or email us if you have any query concerning any of the course topics.
I wish you all the best in your preparations for the second assignment.

Your Tutor
Ms Juliet Pasi