FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2nd SEMESTER 2019

ASSIGNMENT 2

INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE 1B
ILT521S
Dear students

Here follows a short feedback letter on your second assignment. Most of you have done very well, so I am going to keep it short.

Question 1 was on the poem *Building the Nation* by Henry Barlow.

1a Asked you to analyse the poem with reference to literal and figurative meaning.

When you are asked a poetry question always remember that a poem could (mostly has) two different meanings. The first meaning is the obvious and easy one i.e the literal meaning . This is the meaning the poem has on an obvious level. In *Building the Nation* it is the experience of a government driver taking the PS to an important lunch meeting.

The second meaning is the less obvious one and is sometimes really difficult to find. This is then the deeper level meaning of a poem. If you really can’t find a deeper meaning to a poem, it probably doesn’t have one!

However, in this poem there is a deeper meaning. This “other” meaning a poem can have is called the figurative meaning.

Some students get confused and interpret the figurative meaning of a poem as all the figures of speech and poetic devices used in a poem like metaphor, simile, personification etc. This is incorrect.
As I said, the literal meaning requires you to tell, supported by details from the text/poem, what is happening in the poem. The driver (this is first person narration) tells us that he drove the PS to an urgent function, actually a luncheon, at the Vic. He tells us what was on the menu and that the PS asks him in a friendly fashion, using his name, whether he had lunch on their return trip. He answers that he had none as he is slimming. The PS lies and says he too had none and that he has stomach ulcers from the stress of his diplomatic duties. The driver concludes saying that he also has stomach ulcers, but his are caused by hunger.

As you can see this is quite simple. Simply re-tell the story of the poem in your own words and refer to the events stanza by stanza. Also use references (quotes) from the poem to strengthen your argument or presentation.

Now to the more difficult job, analyzing the poem’s figurative meaning.

I am going to include a good answer by one of the students to show how the student tackled this question.

The figurative meaning of the poem would be that the Permanent Secretary claims he has attended urgent matters while all he does is chat with friends and eat. He is living a wealthy life on the taxes that the poor people pay - people like the driver who went home on an empty stomach with cramps of starvation. It’s ironic that the one doing his job is the driver but he is the one not getting paid enough for it, while all the politician does is sit and eat and drink. The question now is what are the politicians doing? Are they really building the nation like they claim they are? These questions outline the corruption that is going on in Africa and other places in the world.

(I have taken the liberty to make slight changes)

QUESTION 1B required you to analyze the poem with reference to style and tone.

The style would require you to say that the poem consists of 5 stanzas each explaining a specific aspect. There is no rhyme scheme and it is written like a typical conversation.
The tone is sarcastic and ironic and also quite satirical. This light hearted way of presenting a serious issue gets the reader’s attention in a more effective way than if the tone was serious and angry.

**Question 2**

*Show how Makhaya changes due to his interaction with various characters he gets to know in Golema Mmidi. Use references from the text to substantiate your answer.*

This was an easy question and everybody did quite well in it. Everyone showed that Makhaya enters Botswana with many unresolved conflicts and demons. At Golema he becomes a better person due to his interaction with various people. His change to the better culminates in him marrying Paulina. Everyone got all this, and it is correct.

The problem with some answers was that some students did not mention any of the key characters who influenced Makhaya!

The answer must show the influence of Dinorego (a father figure) and Mme Millipede (a mother figure) on Makhaya. He meets Gilbert (a good friend) who is a white man and changes his perception of white people. George Appleby-Smith, the police inspector has the same effect on Makhaya. The most obvious change in his life is brought about by Paulina, as she teaches him the value of love and friendship. Etc,etc,etc

I hope this has helped.

Good luck with your exams

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