FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2nd SEMESTER 2019

ASSIGNMENT 1

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF WORLD POETRY 2B
(TPP621S)
Dear students

This is a short feedback letter on your first poetry assignment this semester. Last semester I discussed plagiarism and other important issues in the tutorial letter as well as at the vacation school.

Here follow some general guidelines of what was expected of each answer to the questions. You may have answered differently, but these are the main aspects you should have included in your answers.

Unfortunately, some students did not have their work proofread before they submitted and they were penalised for language errors. Your work should be virtually free of language errors as you have had time to proofread it or to have someone proofread it for you.

**QUESTION 1**

Here you had to choose 3 images from the poem and analyse their use and effect.

In stanza one we have the simile “like escaping newborn sunray”. This implies something swift and unstoppable like sunrays when the sun rises.

A metaphor in the stanza is “‘cause I’m the Fight”. Here the narrator says that he is the fight (against colonialism/oppression/apartheid etc)
The simile in stanza 2 is “As unknown as an unborn battle”. This implies secrecy and surprise.

Another metaphor is “I’m death conceived”. In other words I am the idea of death or death that has been born and come to light.

Further metaphors are “I’m a soldier……” , “I’m a poisoned arrow”, “I’m a string-bow….sharpened spear…sword”

These are all deadly weapons, and the persona is comparing himself to them. The implication is that they will be deadly against the enemy when they are used.

**QUESTION 2**

It is said that a poet often writes his/her own time. Analyse this statement and relate it to the poem “City Johannesburg”.

(You were given the poem)

Some students answered this question WITHOUT REFERRING TO THE POEM!!

Obviously, this was then a disaster. Whenever you are given a poem and a question, you must refer to the poem in your answer. That is why the poem is there!

The question here means that the poet writes about the times he/she is living in. In the case of “City Johannesburg” it is during the times of “apartheid” in pre-1994 South Africa, where black people did not have equal rights to white people. There were strict
laws regulating the black population and their freedoms were limited. As we see in the first stanza they also had to carry pass books.

The persona refers to poverty and hunger in stanza 2 and 3. “My stomach groans…..” and “My comic houses and people, my dongas and my ever whirling dust…..”

The persona also mentions the dangerous living conditions where criminals (tsotsis) can strike at any moment “My death,…the wink of an eye”. “Where death lurks in the dark…”

The persona goes on to describe how Jo’burg City is sucking the life out of him and many others. It is an unfeeling city

Jo’burg City, Johannesburg,

Listen when I tell you,

There is no fun, nothing, in it,

When you leave the women and men with such frozen expressions,…

We can clearly see in the poem that Johannesburg is a hostile environment for the black people who have to travel from the outlying areas to come and work there. The main reason is that it is the political system that makes survival there difficult, yet many black people have to travel to the city for work and leave behind their areas where they are comfortable in, despite their poverty “…my dongas, and my ever whirling dust”.

This question required you to examine the poem and relate it to the times the persona/poet was living in. There are ample examples in the poem which you should have used to strengthen your argument.

Some students got a lot of information from the internet and simply regurgitated it without answering the question. A line-by-line analysis was not required. If you spoke of
rhyme-scheme, similes, metaphors etc you also missed the requirements of the question.

I hope this has helped you to see what was required, and that this guides you in your next assignment.

Good luck with assignment 2!

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