



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, THEOLOGY, HUMANITIES & EDUCATION

NHEC114: PRACTICAL CRITICISM

END OF FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

LECTURER: J. MUZAMHINDO

DURATION: 3 HRS

INSTRUCTIONS

You are required to answer questions as instructed in each section

Start **each** question on a new page in your answer booklet

Answer the compulsory question in **Section A**

Answer any **two** (2) questions from **Section B**

Credit will be awarded for logical, systematic and neat presentations

Write legibly

SECTION A (compulsory)

Question 1

Read the passage below and comment on the author's writing style (use of language, descriptive techniques and imagery). In your response, show how this contributes to the overall tone and mood of the novel.

"Two ridges, Kima and Makuyu, stood facing each other. Between them lay a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kima was Kirinyaga, the mountain of mystery. Before Makuyu lay the plain called Kamenno, the place of tranquility. The river was the only link between the ridges. It was the path of communication between the two worlds. It was the bond of their union. But the river, like many other rivers, had its own secrets. It was the divider of the two ridges.....Waiyaki looked at the river. A thousand emotions surged in him. He loved the river. It was part of him. It had given him life. He had drunk of its waters, quenching his thirst. He had played on its banks, his spirit leaping in jubilation. He had been to its depths, washed his body with its waters... The river was his friend." (extract from *The River Between* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o) [40 Marks]

SECTION B

Question 2

Define Practical Criticism as a method of literary analysis and discuss its purpose in the study of literature. [30 Marks]

Question 3

Discuss the importance of close reading as a technique in literary analysis and explore the ways in which close reading allows for a deeper understanding of a literary work's themes, characterization, and symbolism. [30 Marks]

Question 4

How does the socio-historical approach to Practical Criticism contribute to our understanding of a literary work's themes? Refer closely to *The River Between* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o [30 Marks]

Question 5

With reference to the application of feminist criticism in practical criticism, analyze the following passage highlighting the experiences and challenges faced by women in African societies and show ways in which feminist criticism enhances our understanding of social and cultural aspects as depicted in any text of your choice.

"I loved my husband passionately. I was proud of him. I trembled at his slightest touch, thrilled at his every glance. I loved him for his body, his intelligence, his character, his principles. I loved him in his weakness and in his strength. But I did not want to be swallowed up in him. I wanted to remain myself." (extract from *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Bâ) [30 marks]

Question 6

Read the dialogue below from *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and answer the questions that follow:

- Judge* : Kimathi, I may remind you that we are in a court of law
Kimathi: An imperialist court of law
Judge: I may remind you that you are charged with a most serious crime.
It carries a death sentence.
Kimathi: To a criminal judge, in a criminal court, set up by a criminal law:
the law of oppression. I have no words
Judge: Maybe you don't understand. Your long stay in the forest has .. I
mean...we are here to deal with you fairly, to see that justice is
done. Even handed justice.
Kimathi: I will not plead to a law in which we had no part in the making.
Judge : Law is Law...Justice is Justice
Kimathi: Whose law? Whose justice?
Judge : There is only one law. One justice.
Kimathi: Two laws. Two justices. [One law and one justice protects the man
of property, the man of wealth, the foreign exploiter. Another law,
another justice, silences the poor, the hungry, our people.
Judge : I am not talking about the laws of Nyandarua jungle
Kimathi: The jungle of colonialism? Of exploitation? For it is there you will
find creatures of prey feeding on the blood and bodies of those
who toil: those who make the earth yield
Us.
Those who make factories roar
Those who wait and groan for a better day tomorrow
The maimed
Their back bent
Sweat dripping down their shoulders
Beaten
Starved
Despised
Spat on
Whipped
But refusing to be broken
Waiting for a new dawn
Dawn on Mount Kenya.

Analyze the dialogue above and comment on:

- (i) how, through dialogue (language, tone), the author reveals character traits,
- (ii) the relationship between the characters,
- (iii) power dynamics as portrayed in the play
- (iv) the themes discussed in the play.

[30 Marks]