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WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

Grade 12 Term 1

2026

LEARNER GUIDE



SONNET 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun

By William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	a	quatrain
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;	b	
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;	a	
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.	b	
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,	c	quatrain
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;	d	
And in some perfumes is there more delight	c	
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	d	
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know	e	quatrain
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;	f	
I grant I never saw a goddess go;	e	
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.	f	
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare	g	couplet
As any she belied with false compare.	g	

Poet

Born 1564; Died 1616. English (born and died in Stratford-upon-Avon). He was married to Anne Hathaway, and they had three children. He is still known as one of the world's greatest poets, dramatist and playwright. He wrote 37 plays and 375 poems.

Structure
This is a Shakespearean or Elizabethan sonnet. It consists of three quatrains (4 lines each) and a rhyming couplet (2 lines). The rhyme scheme is consistent with this format: abab cdcd efef gg. The couplet serves as a final argument to drive home the speaker's point. The rhythm of the point is consistent, too, and follows traditional iambic pentameter. There are 10 syllables in each line.

Summary
Shakespeare uses eight 'anti-compliments' to describe the uniqueness and (non-idealised) beauty of his beloved. However, in the couplet he states that BECAUSE she is normal and 'real', he does not need to exaggerate her looks or his love for her. He loves her just the way she is – perfect in her imperfection. In other words, she is perfect to HIM – he does not need an idealised and superficial woman. Although he seems critical and rather rude in the first 12 lines, the reader realises that he is, in fact, sincere in his love for her. He does not need exaggerated and unrealistic comparisons to declare his genuine love for her. In being so brutally honest, he has ironically given her a heightened beauty, simply because he does not dote on her outward appearance.

TITLE:
This is sonnet number 130 in a series of 154 sonnets. It parodies the famous (and often over-the-top) Petrarchan sonnets in which poets described their partners in highly exaggerated and unrealistic ways. Although this poem contains similar themes as found in traditional sonnets (Female Beauty, Love and Admiration), Shakespeare does not idealise his beloved. He describes her in ways which are realistic and, therefore, more accurate and 'real'.

Theme(s)/ Message/ Central concern
Escape from Idealism – Shakespeare does not idealise his beloved. She in unlike the Petrarchan ideal – she is "real", and he loves her despite her imperfections. He states clearly in the couplet that people who describe their partners with idealised comparisons, are liars. This emphasises the absurdity of Idealism.
Femininity – This sonnet addresses the problem of stereotyping female beauty by setting unreachable standards for it. The fixed 'definition' of beauty is unrealistic and will make females inferior by not achieving the ideal standards of beauty. He questions real love – we should love our partners in spite of their imperfections.
Love – The speaker expresses his love for his beloved. He describes his values of love. He states that real love is not based on outwards appearances and idealised looks. His love is based on connection and emotion, not the superficial.
Real love doesn't need false tributes; any woman can be beautiful.
The speaker's lady's beauty is not that of a goddess, nor a beauty found in nature, because she is mere mortal. The theme is that of the power of genuine love despite other flaws.
Women and femininity; expectations of women (gender roles).

Tone/Attitude/Response/ Impression/State of mind/ Mood

Tone: Mocking conventional sonnets - but serious in his meaning; satirical.
Mood: Humourous, Realistic / Candid / Unromantic / Satirical/ Light-hearted/ Rational/ Mocking.

Context

Conventionally, beauty was described as being "fair". This meant that a woman was pale (white), with golden soft silky hair and rosy cheeks. Usually catalogues the characteristics and virtues of the beloved. Elegant, elevated language is used for over-the-top comparisons. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets published in his 'quarto' in 1609, covering themes such as the passage of time, mortality, love, beauty, infidelity, and jealousy. The first 126 of Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed to a young man, and the last 28 addressed to a woman – a mysterious 'dark lady'.



Content



In this sonnet, Shakespeare ridicules the courtly love tradition where a lover idealises and idolises his loved one.

He emphasises the strength of his love for an *imperfect*, but *very real* woman.

At first, he seems to feel nothing positive towards his love, but in the final couplet his sincere love for her is evident.

Literally, this poem lists characteristics of the speaker's loved one.

Figuratively, the speaker mocks society for what is considered the "perfect woman".

Imagery (Symbols/ Figures of Speech and Imagery)

LINE/S	FIGURE OF SPEECH	COMPARISON IN CONTEXT	EFFECTIVENESS (what does it show?)

Diction (Words and their connotative meanings)

LINE/S	WORD/S	UNPACK	CONTEXT

QUESTIONS

1. What does the phrase "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (line 1) convey about conventional beauty standards of the time? (2)

2 Refer to lines 7 – 8: "And in some perfumes … that from my mistress reeks."

2.1 Identify the mood in these lines. (1)

2.2 Explain how the mood is created. (2)

3. Refer to lines 11–12: "I grant … treads on the ground."
Discuss the effectiveness of the contrast in these lines. (2)

4 Critically discuss how lines 13–14: "And yet, by heaven … false compare"
convey the central message of the poem. (3)

[10]

Essay

In Sonnet 130, Shakespeare challenges the traditional idea that love poetry must exaggerate a woman's beauty. Discuss how Shakespeare presents the relationship between love and appearance in this poem with close reference to structure, imagery and tone. Your response should be in the form of a well-constructed essay of 250-300 words. [10]

In the poem, ,_____

_____(TOPIC). The poem _____

_____

_____(CONTEXT)

The diction "_____" conveys _____

_____ "_____" highlights

_____

_____.

"_____" portrays _____

_____.

The (image) _____ depicts

_____. (image)

_____

shows_____.

_____.

(image)_____illustrates

_____

_____.

Structurally, _____

_____

_____.

The tone_____

(Theme)_____

_____

_____

***SONNET 130* – William Shakespeare**

3.1 What does the phrase "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (line 1) convey about conventional beauty standards of the time?	(2)
My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	***The phrase shows that conventional beauty standards idealised exaggerated comparisons — women's features were often likened to nature or precious objects (e.g., eyes like the sun, lips like coral, skin like snow).*** ***[IDEALISED + EXAGERRATED]***

3.2 Refer to lines 7 – 8: "And in some perfumes … that from my mistress reeks." 3.2.1 Identify the mood in these lines.	(1)
And in some perfumes is there more delight/ Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	***Realistic / Candid / Unromantic / Satirical/ Light-hearted/ Rational/ Mocking.*** ***(ACCEPT VARS)***

3.2. Refer to lines 7 – 8: "And in some perfumes … that from my mistress reeks." 3.2.2 Explain how the mood is created.	(2)
And in some perfumes is there more delight Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	***The mood is created by the speaker's blunt and unsentimental diction, particularly 'reeks', which directly opposes the usual flattering language in love poems. This choice of words deliberately subverts poetic ideals, presenting a raw, human reality. The speaker uses exaggerated contrast and unflattering comparisons (e.g., "reeks") to mock the tradition of idealising women in sonnets. His tone pokes fun at unrealistic standards, suggesting that such comparisons are absurd.*** ***[2 DISTINCT IDEAS]***

3.3 Refer to lines 11–12: "I grant … treads on the ground." Discuss the effectiveness of the contrast in these lines.	(3)
I grant I never saw a goddess go; My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.	***The contrast is between an idealised, divine figure ("goddess") — who might be imagined to glide or float, untouched by the ordinary world — and a real, earthly woman who "treads on the ground," suggesting she is mortal, weighty, and grounded in physical reality. This is effective because it furthers the speaker's rejection of exaggerated comparisons and emphasises the authenticity of his affection. By acknowledging her flaws and ordinariness, the poem suggests that true love is not based on illusion, but on an honest acceptance of who a person really is.*** ***[CONTRAST + EFFECTIVENESS]***

3.4 Critically discuss how lines 13–14: "And yet, by heaven … false compare" convey the central message of the poem.	(3)
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare As any she belied with false compare.	***These lines serve as the volta, shifting the poem's argument and explicitly stating its central message. They convey that true love does not depend on, or require, idealised or 'false compare' to be considered 'rare' or valuable. The speaker's love is presented as authentic precisely because it acknowledges and embraces his mistress's imperfections, thereby mocking the superficiality of traditional love poetry. [LINES UNPACKED + CM + CD]***

POETRY ESSAY MEMORANDUM

Marking Guidelines

- Imagery:
- Shakespeare rejects exaggerated comparisons (e.g. eyes vs. the sun, lips vs. coral, hair vs. wires).
- Uses ordinary and realistic images instead of lofty metaphors.
- This imagery undermines false ideals of beauty and shows honesty in his portrayal of the mistress.
- Tone:
- Often humorous, mocking, ironic, and playful — especially in the way he parodies other sonnets.
- Shifts towards sincerity in the closing couplet, where his true love is affirmed.
- Tone supports the idea that love does not need flattery to be genuine.
- Structure:
- Traditional Shakespearean sonnet form (three quatrains + rhyming couplet).
- First 12 lines = critical, satirical descriptions.
- Final couplet = volta (turn) — speaker affirms that his love is "as rare / As any she belied with false compare."
- Structure highlights contrast between false ideals and truthful love.
- Overall attitude:
- Shakespeare values honesty and truth in love, not superficial beauty or poetic exaggeration.

Section A: Assessment rubric for literary essay: Poetry 10 marks					
Criteria	**Exceptional** 5-6 [83% - 100%]	**Skilful** 4 [67% - 82%]	**Moderate** 3 [50% - 66%]	**Elementary** 2 [33% - 49%]	**Inadequate** 0 - 1 [0% - 17%]
CONTENT Interpretation of topic: depth of arguments, justification and grasp of text. **6 MARKS**	In-depth interpretation of topic. Range of striking arguments extensively supported from poem. Excellent understanding of genre and poem.	Shows understanding and has interpreted topic well. Sound arguments given but not all of them as well motivated as they could be. Understanding of genre and poem.	Fair interpretation of topic. Some good points in support of topic. Some arguments supported but evidence is not always convincing. Basic understanding of genre and poem.	Unsatisfactory interpretation of topic. Hardly any points in support of topic. Inadequate understanding of genre and poem.	No understanding of the topic. No reference to the poem. Learner has not come to grips with genre and poem.
CONTENT ENGAGEMENT	***Discursive. Topic engagement: ALL 3 ASPECTS. 6: exceptional 5: excellent***	***More discursive than paraphrase with good engagement, but lacking in 1/2 topic aspect/s.***	***Paraphrase of poem with some discussion links to topic.***	***Accurate paraphrase of poem with hints to topic.***	***Inaccurate/ flawed/ chunk quoted.***
STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE Structure: logical flow and presentation. Language, tone and style used in the essay. **4 MARKS**	Coherent structure. Arguments well-structured and clearly developed. Language, tone and style mature, impressive, correct. Virtually error-free.	Clear structure and logical flow of argument. Flow of arguments can be followed. Language, tone and style largely correct.	Some evidence of structure. Essay lacks a well-structured flow of logic and coherence. Language errors, style and tone mostly appropriate.	Structure shows faulty planning. Arguments not logically arranged. Language errors evident. Inappropriate tone and style.	Poorly structured. Serious language errors and incorrect style.
	4 [100%]	3 [75%]	2 [50%]	1 [25%]	0 -1 [0% - 24%]
MARK RANGE	80% - 100%	60% - 79%	50% - 59%	30% - 49%	0% - 29%
CONTENT ALWAYS THE FOCUS. TONE AND STRUCTURE NATURALLY WILL NOT PROVIDE AS MUCH CONTENT AS IMAGERY AND DICTION. INDICATE LANGUAGE ERRORS.	LEADING IN LEARNING	CREDIT: L. MALLON, RUSTENBURG HIGH SCHOOL	COMPLETELY CREATIVE RESPONSE: 0 + 0 NO MORE THAN TWO BLOCKS DISCREPANCY. BE AWARE OF CHUNK QUOTES.		

THE CHILD WHO WAS SHOT DEAD BY SOLDIERS IN NYANGA - I. JONKER

The child is not dead
the child raises his fists against his mother
who screams Africa screams the smell
of freedom and heather
in the locations of the heart under siege
The child raises his fists against his father
in the march of the generations
who scream Africa scream the smell
of justice and blood
in the streets of his armed pride.

The child is not dead
neither at Langa nor at Nyanga
nor at Orlando nor at Sharpeville
nor at the police station in Philippi
where he lies with a bullet in his head

The child is the shadow of the soldiers
on guard with guns saracens and batons
the child is present at all meetings and legislations
the child peeps through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers
the child who just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere
the child who became a man treks through all of Africa
the child who became a giant travels through the whole world
Without a pass

Poet

Born 1933; Died 1965. (Afrikaans) South African. She had a traumatic childhood and adulthood. Her poetry often expresses her personal traumas, as well as the societal and familial injustices she perceived around her. She was a member of "Die Sestigers", a group of anti-establishment poets and writers who challenged the conservative literary norms and censorship of the 1950s and 60s in South Africa.

She posthumously (after her death) received the Order of Ikhamanga for her contribution to literature and commitment to the struggle for human rights.

Form/Structure:

Although this poem is separated into sections, it is devoid of a specific rhyme scheme or rhythm. It is, therefore, in free verse. The isolated final line emphasises the poet's message: freedom is needed! The third stanza develops the idea of this **child's wasted life** – what he could have become, had he lived. There is a parallel structure in "nor at" repeated in the second stanza. This rhetorical device gives examples of where police brutality occurred. It gives an historical accuracy to the poem.

Historical context

Wrote protest poem in Afrikaans, in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre. The Sharpeville massacre occurred on 21 March 1960 at the police station in the township of Sharpeville in the then Transvaal Province of the then Union of South Africa (today part of Gauteng). After demonstrating against pass laws, a crowd of about 7000 protesters went to the police station. Sources disagree as to the behaviour of the crowd; some state that the crowd was peaceful, while others state that the crowd had been hurling stones at the police, and that the mood had turned "ugly". The South African Police opened fire on the crowd when the crowd started advancing toward the fence around the police station, and tear-gas had proved ineffectual. There were 249 victims in total, including 29 children, with 69 people killed and 180 injured. Some were shot in the back as they fled. It refers to the killing of a young child in Nyanga. .

Writing in Drum magazine about the poem, Jonker said: "I saw the mother as every mother in the world. I saw her as myself. I saw Simone [Jonker's own child] as the baby. I could not sleep. I thought of what the child might have been had he been allowed to live. I thought what could be reached, what could be gained by death? The child wanted no part in the circumstances in which our country is grasped… He only wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga… [The poem] grew out of my sense of bereavement."

Jack Cope and William Plomer translated the poem. In Afrikaans it is referred to as "Die Kind" (The Child). Nelson Mandela read an English translation at the opening of the democratic Parliament on 24 May 1994.

Summary

The poem reflects on the pass laws of apartheid South Africa. Jonker wrote this poem in reaction to the shooting of a young child in his mother's arms during a protest against the Pass Laws. This happened in Nyanga township, near Cape Town. The child was killed while on his way to the doctor with his mother – the senselessness of his death is a result of the senselessness of the apartheid laws. This child remains nameless to represent all innocent lives taken during apartheid. The poem highlights the idea that violence within a country destroys innocent members of society (women and children) and damages the country and its future. This child's death has inspired others to take up the cause of freedom and given new energy to the struggle against Apartheid. Jonker yearns for a time when any child can grow and make his/her impact on the world, without restrictions of the Pass Laws.

Theme(s)/ Message/ Central concern

Freedom – ultimately the speaker dreams of a time when all people will be free. This freedom includes the freedom of speech, movement and in all human rights. Freedom from Apartheid and its brutal laws.

Resistance – This child stands up for what he knows is right and he (the symbol) can never die. He is not a physical person, but an idea. There is resistance against the blatant brutality and barbarism against the innocents. His raised fist symbolises the yearning for freedom, identity, and protest.

Title – The child is nameless as he represents the countless individuals who lost their lives.

L1 - "***child***" is repeated from the title. Emphasis on innocence of youth.

L2- ***"raises his fist"*** -Reveals the anger of the youth/symbol of resistance.

L3- ***"screams"***- repetition -to emphasise the anger.

L2/L7- ***"mothers" "fathers"*** - emphasises generational gap – Parents fought against injustice using a peaceful approach. The youth will resort to a more violent approach.

L5 -***"locations"*** – group areas act – people were segregated based on race.

"under siege" – under attack

L7 -***"march of the generations"*** – struggle is on-going

L8- ***"who scream Africa scream the smell"*** – urgency for change and anger not just for South Africa but the entire African continent.

L9 "***justice and blood"*** -in the plight for justice lives are lost.

L10 **"armed pride"** – The youth will function as proud soldiers as the fight against oppression.

L11 – "***The child is not dead"*** – the child is dead physically but will live on figuratively. Biblical Allusion – Jesus raises a dead child.

L 12-14 "***Langa/ Nyanga //Orlando Sharpeville/ Philippi"*** - places of violent uprising

L15 - ***"bullet in his head"*** – shocking imagery.

L16-17 – ***"guns saracens and batons"*** – various items of violence used by the police against the children.

L 18- 22 – Anaphora (Rhetorical device that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginning of clauses.

L 18 – ***"meetings and legislations"*** - law making

L 19 – ***"hearts of mothers"***- intimate/caring relationship with mothers.

L 20 – "child who became a man" – children had to take adult responsibilities before their time. Loss of innocence.

L 22 – ***"whole world"*** – People across the world are against Apartheid.

L 23 – ***"Without a pass"*** – Pass refers to Pass Laws (Apartheid Laws).-The line is isolated

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others".
NELSON MANDELA

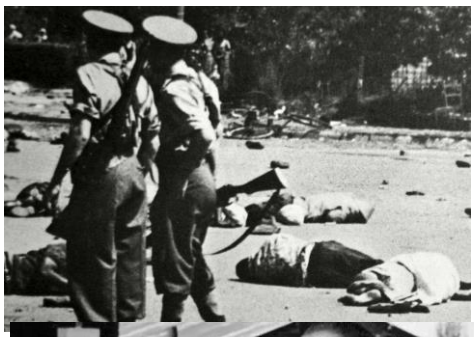
Tone/Attitude/Response/ Impression/State of mind/ Mood
The tone in the poem is passionate, inspired and determined. Despite the **despair** about the innocent child's death, the tone is not sympathetic overall. There is a sense of **outrage** and loss. The speaker remains **determined**.



The British Anti-Apartheid Movement marks the tenth anniversary of the massacre with a re-enactment in Trafalgar Square. *(Getty)*

Poetic Devices:

- **The repetition of "the child"** throughout the poem emphasises the **age and innocence of the youth** and highlights how many children were killed because of the apartheid laws. This repetition is called an **anaphora**. The **child becomes a symbol of resistance, hope and innocence.**
- The child is a metaphor for the thought of resistance and, ultimately, freedom. In the second last stanza the child is a **"giant"** to portray the growing sense of freedom, justice and **resistance by all those who are oppressed.** This "giant" travels the **world – anti-Apartheid protests did not only take place in South Africa**. The world watched and protested the brutal and unjust system.
- The poet's diction conveys the distress of the child and all others in the senseless Apartheid time. Her choice of "screams" and "raises his fists" highlights his anger.
- The **onomatopoeia** in "**screams"** is repeated to **emphasise his anger**.
- The **alliteration** in lines 3 and 8 emphasises the **urgency and desperate cries of the oppressed people.**
- **Enjambment** creates a **free flow of thought**.
- The **paradox** in the third stanza **("the child is not dead** ... where he lies with a bullet in his head") highlights the fact that this **child died physically, but he is still alive in the hearts of all Africans**. He becomes the symbol of innocence, resistance, and hope.







The aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre.
Universal History Archive/Rex

Imagery (Symbols/ Figures of Speech and Imagery)

LINE/S	FIGURE OF SPEECH	COMPARISON IN CONTEXT	EFFECTIVENESS

Diction (Words and their connotative meanings)

LINE/S	WORD/S	UNPACK	CONTEXT

QUESTIONS

1. What does the altered repetition of "The child lifts his fists against his mother / father" reveal about the generation gap that is reflected in responding to the laws of apartheid? (2)

2. "The child" is repeated ten times in the poem.
Explain what this conveys about the attitude of the speaker towards the child. (2)

3 Refer to lines 21 - 22: 'who became a man treks through all of Africa /
the child who became a giant travels through the whole world."

3.1 Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (1)

3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image. (2)

4. Critically discuss the effectiveness of the last, short line of the poem in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

[10]

Essay

The poem, "The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga" by Ingrid Jonker, highlights the legacy left by people protesting oppressive government regimes. In a well-structured essay of 250 – 300 words and with close reference to the text, discuss this statement with specific reference to tone, diction, and imagery. [10]

In the poem, ,_____

_____(TOPIC). The poem _____

_____

_____(CONTEXT)

The diction "_____" conveys _____

_____ "_____" highlights

_____

_____.

"_____" portrays _____

_____.

The (image) _____ depicts

_____. (image)

_____

shows_____.

_____.

(image)_____illustrates

_____

_____.

Structurally, _____

_____

_____.

The tone_____

(Theme)_____

_____

_____

ANSWERS

1 What does the altered repetition of "The child lifts his fists against his mother / father" reveal about the generation gap that is reflected in responding to the laws of apartheid? (2)

(The child is unhappy with the parents' submissive attitude – they did not fight hard enough. He (as a synecdoche the youth) will now take up the fight, literally. The child seeks a quick and possibly violent solution to the end of Apartheid as he 'lifts his fists'; whereas the protests of his parents would have been more peaceful as previous 'generations who are shouting Afrika' campaigned against Apartheid in this way. The youth is filled with rage at the Apartheid world they are forced to inhabit, the legacy of previous generations who 'allowed' matters to reach this intolerable point. Active and passive resistance)

2 Explain what these lines convey about the attitude of the speaker. (2)

Attitude: inspired/ determined.
The repetition emphasises the age and innocence of the child. The effect is to highlight the number of innocent people were killed in the fight against Apartheid. BUT the child has been an inspiration and is growing in impact.

3. Identify figure of speech.

3.1 **Metaphor/ metonymy** (1)

3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image in the context of the poem. (2)

The image of a 'giant' show that the child is now grown and has embraced his potential. The global impact has now spread.

4 Critically discuss the effectiveness of the last, short line of the poem in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

LINE: The child can now go anywhere freely without needing to produce a pass book.
CM: Freedom (including freedom of movement) should be a basic human right for all.
CD: The pass book implies restrictions and oppression. In death, and in impact, the child can now move freely as the resistance has been successful in abolishing apartheid rules.

[10]

POETRY ESSAY MEMORANDUM

Diction:

"the child is not dead" - This assertion challenges the perception of physical death, suggesting the enduring presence and influence of the child's spirit and resistance.

"screams Africa screams" - The repetition of "screams" conveys a sense of urgency and outcry, emphasising the collective struggle of the African people against oppression.

"smell of freedom and heather" - This juxtaposition of freedom and heather creates a sensory contrast, evoking both the aspiration for liberation and the natural beauty of Africa.

"armed pride" - This phrase suggests a sense of empowerment and defiance, highlighting the determination of the oppressed to resist tyranny and assert their dignity.

"lies with a bullet in his head" - This stark description of the child's fate underscores the violence and injustice inflicted upon innocent victims by oppressive regimes.

Imagery:

"shadow of the soldiers" - This image symbolises the pervasive presence and influence of state oppression, suggesting a sense of fear and intimidation among the population.

"peeps through the windows of houses and into the hearts of mothers" - This imagery conveys the intrusiveness of surveillance and the emotional toll of living under constant threat, highlighting the psychological impact of political violence.

"just wanted to play in the sun at Nyanga" - This image of innocent childhood innocence contrasts sharply with the reality of violence and oppression, underscoring the loss of innocence experienced by the victims of state brutality.

"became a man treks through all of Africa" - This image suggests a journey of self-discovery and empowerment, symbolising the transformation of the child into a symbol of resistance and solidarity across the continent.

"became a giant travels through the whole world" - This image of the child's global impact transcends geographical boundaries, emphasising the universal significance of their struggle for justice and freedom.

Tone:

The tone of the poem is one of defiance, resilience, and solidarity. While it mourns the loss of innocent life and exposes the brutality of state violence, it also celebrates the enduring spirit of resistance and the collective struggle for liberation. Overall, the poem serves as a powerful tribute to the legacy of protest against oppressive government regimes, honouring the memory of those who have sacrificed their lives in the fight for justice and equality.

In summary, "The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga" by Ingrid Jonker explores the legacy of protesting oppressive government regimes through its use of diction, imagery, and tone, highlighting the resilience and defiance of those who resist state violence.

[10]

SESSION 2

14 MARCH 2026





POEM OF RETURN - J. ROCHA

When I return from the land of exile and silence
do not bring me flowers.
Bring me rather all the dews,
tears of dawns which witnessed dramas.
Bring me the immense hunger for love
and the plaint of tumid sexes in star-studded night.
Bring me the long night of sleeplessness
with mothers mourning, their arms bereft of sons.
When I return from the land of exile and silence,
no, do not bring me flowers …
Bring me only, just this
the last wish of heroes fallen at day-break
with a wingless stone in hand
and a thread of anger snaking from their eyes.

Summary:
The speaker is contemplating his upcoming return to his home country. The speaker mentions his return from exile and the anguish associated with those who died whilst oppressed. The poem is written from the perspective of an individual who has been exiled, someone who had to flee their country of birth. The poem captures the sentiment of loss, lost opportunity and lost experience. He describes his 'host country' as "land of exile and silence" – this suggests that he was not happy there. He lists the things he missed while he was away and it is clear that he feels guilty about 'escaping' whilst his countrymen/women suffered. He makes it clear that he is not a hero and should not be welcomed or treated as one if he returns. He asserts that the real heroes are the ones who stayed and fought against oppression.

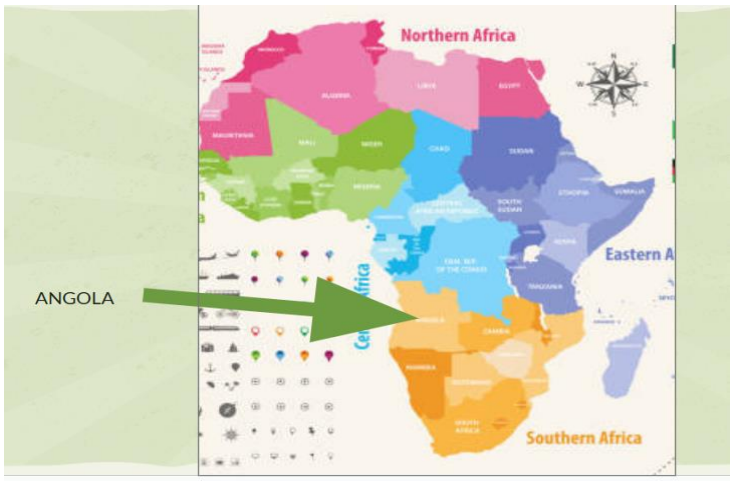
Structure:
Note that even though this poem has 14 lines, it is NOT a sonnet. There is enjambment present (where one line runs onto the next to complete the thought. There is no punctuation at the end of the line. Refer to lines 5-6, 7-8, lines 11-14. It has the qualities of a song as reflected in the refrain 'do not bring me flowers. The poem is divided into THREE stanzas of unequal length. It is written in free verse, more typical of contemporary poetry. In each one of them the speaker is expressing a different idea/s about what he anticipates when he returns home from exile. A pseudonym was used because the poet was under censorship.

Poet
The poet's birth name is Roberto Antonio Victor Francisco de Almeida. He used the pseudonym (also known as a 'war name' in Angola), 'Jofre Rocha'. He was born in 1941 in the village of Caxicane, Angola. He is a qualified Social Scientist, Lawyer, short story writer and poet. Because of political unrest in rural Angola, where guerilla warfare was taking place, his family moved to Luanda, the capital city of Angola. It is here where he became a political activist. As a political activist, he participated in the guerilla warfare for the liberation of his country. Between 1961 and 1968, Jofre Rocha was a political prisoner. It is at this time that he achieved some of his academic qualifications.

Theme(s)/ Message/ Central concern

The poet captures the sentiment of loss: lost opportunity and lost experience.

A poignant poem about the return from exile which should be celebrated but the poet is rather sad, mournful and inevitably becomes filled with anger. Rocha ends on an angry note due to the lost opportunities and experiences that some young people suffered as a result of colonisation, civil war and exile.



Tone/Attitude/Response/ Impression/State of mind/ Mood

Stanza 2 > tone of yearning, grief and melancholy

Stanza 3 > tone of anger and bitterness

Context

Rocha speaks about the colonial experience and focuses on the theme of war and the social and economic degradation that emerges from it.





DICTION

Word	Meaning
Land of Exile	Foreign place where one is restricted politically, socially & economically.
Dews	Water droplets forming on surfaces early in the morning.
Drama	Historic scenes of war, torture, protests, bloodshed, riots etc
Immense	Great
Plaint of tumid sexes	Arguments between lovers
Bereft	Without
Wingless stone in hand	A stone that was not thrown yet.

VOCABULARY

- **Line 1- "exile" (noun)** the state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political reasons or punishment.
- **Line 5- "immense" (adjective)** extremely large or great.
- **Line 6- "plaint" (noun)** literary - a complaint or lamentation.
- **Line 6-** "**tumid**" swollen, distended, tumescent.
- **Line 9 – "bereft"** (adjective) deprived of or lacking (something), sad and lonely, especially through someone's death or departure.

Imagery (Symbols/ Figures of Speech and Imagery)

LINE/S	FIGURE OF SPEECH	COMPARISON IN CONTEXT	EFFECTIVENESS

Diction (Words and their connotative meanings)

LINE/S	WORD/S	UNPACK	CONTEXT

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the speaker not want flowers upon his return? (2)

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Explain the speaker's attitude towards mothers "bereft of sons". (2)

_____

_____

_____

3 Refer to: "tears of dawns".

3.1 Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (1)

_____

3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image. (2)

_____

_____

_____

4. Critically discuss the effectiveness of the last stanza of the poem in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____[10]

Essay

In the poem 'Poem of Return' the speaker believes that the people who were not in exile suffered a great deal. With reference to **diction, tone** and **imagery** discuss to what extent do you agree with the above statement. Your response should be in the form of a well-constructed essay of 250-300 words. [10]

In the poem, ,_____

_____(TOPIC). The poem _____

_____

_____(CONTEXT)

The diction "_____" conveys _____

_____ "_____" highlights

_____

_____.

"_____" portrays _____

_____.

The (image) _____ depicts

_____. (image)

_____

shows_____.

_____.

(image)_____illustrates

_____

_____.

Structurally, _____

_____

_____.

The tone_____

(Theme)_____

_____

_____

ANSWERS

1. Why does the speaker not want flowers upon his return? (3)

Flowers are superficial. He also does not believe himself to be a hero who deserves flowers or accolades upon his return.

2. Explain what these lines convey about the attitude of the speaker. (2)
Attitude: sympathetic/ melancholic
Due to the political strife of the time, many young men (the sons) were imprisoned or killed. Some young men also went into exile. Thus, mothers were denied the presence of sons.

3. Identify figure of speech.
3.1 **Personification** (1)
3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image in the context of the poem. (2)
Even the "dawn" is crying. Even Nature is upset at the atrocities committed by people.

4. Critically discuss the effectiveness of the last, short line of the poem in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

anger" and "snaking" – implies that although the speaker is happy to be home, he still carries an enormous amount of anger and resentment towards their oppressors. He is definitely not forgiving. He seeks and demands justice for all those who were scarred/killed in the fight for freedom. "Snaking" alludes to something dangerous and poisonous – he will expose the atrocities and get justice for all. There is definitely an ominous tone.)

[10]

POETRY ESSAY MEMORANDUM

The following are points that could be included in your essay:

- People who were not in exile suffered a great deal
- They were subjected to (police brutality, torture, riots etc. 'dramas'
- The poet uses personification to show that even nature was distressed by the suffering it witnessed …. 'tears of dawn…'
- People were deprived of physical connection and overwhelming need for love 'bring me the immense hunger for love' for each other. Families and couples were separated.
- Mothers are having 'long nights of sleeplessness' and mourning
- for the absence of their husbands /sons, who have died fighting for liberation.
- The mothers' arms are said to be 'bereft of sons'
- Some of them died just before freedom was achieved 'day-break' and never got to witness the new dawn.
- They died thinking that their attempts were futile.
- They were only disgruntled, powerless as they were equipped only with anger 'thread of anger snaking from their eyes' and 'wingless stone in hand'
- The speaker uses an earnest tone to express feelings of alienation/ estrangement.
  [10]

AT A FUNERAL – DENNIS BRUTUS



(For Valencia Majombozi, who died shortly after qualifying as a doctor)

Black, green and gold at sunset: pageantry
And stubbled graves: expectant, of eternity,
In bride's-white, nun's-white veils the nurses gush their bounty
Of red-wine cloaks, frothing the bugled dirging slopes
Salute! Then ponder all this hollow panoply
For one whose gifts the mud devours, with our hopes.
Oh all you frustrate ones, powers tombed in dirt,
Aborted, not by Death but carrion books of birth
Arise! The brassy shout of Freedom stirs our earth;
Not death but death's-head tyranny scythes our ground
And plots our narrow cells of pain defeat and dearth:
Better that we should die, than that we should lie down

Poet

Brutus was born in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia on 28 November 1924 to South African parents. His parents moved back home to Port Elizabeth when he was aged four. He was a graduate of the University of Fort Hare. He was qualified lawyer but unable to practise under the Apartheid government, as he was of colour. He taught English and Afrikaans at several high schools in South Africa after 1948, but was eventually dismissed for his vocal criticism of apartheid. Brutus was a co-founder of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), an organisation that was heavily influential in the banning of apartheid-era South Africa from the Olympics. In 1961, he was banned for his political activities as part of SANROC. While in Mozambique, he was arrested and returned to South Africa where, while trying to escape, he was shot. After recovering from the wound, Brutus was sent to Robben Island for 16 months. He was in the cell next to Nelson Mandela's. After his release in 1965, Brutus left South Africa and went into exile in Britain. He settled in the United States in 1971 where he served as professor of African Literature at Northwestern University. He was eventually "unbanned" by the South African government in 1990 and returned to South Africa, based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He later settled in Cape Town, where he died of prostate cancer on 26 December 2009.

Title

The poem is a tribute to Valencia Majombozi. This makes it personal: the poet refers to a specific person and has a greater impact on the reader. 'shortly after qualifying' – Emphasises that all her dreams and hopes have been destroyed by death. This conveys a sense of frustration and aborted hopes.

Looking at the dedication:

For Valencia Majombozi, who died shortly after qualifying as a doctor

Dennis Brutus attended the funeral of Valencia Majombozi, a young woman who managed to qualify as a doctor after enormous hardship and sacrifice by her parents. Her mother took in washing and ironing, did the cleaning of apartment buildings, and put her through University. She got her medical degree and then, ironically, died just after completing her internship. We do not know how she died but Brutus uses her untimely death for political purposes.

Form/Structure:

There are two equal stanzas and a specific rhyme scheme (aaabab, cccdcd) in this poem. The formality of the poem mirrors the formal rites and rituals of a funeral ceremony.

Context

The speaker went to a funeral. The poem is about the years of sacrifice that end in nothing, and you could read the poem entirely on that level or just as an expression of frustrated and aborted hopes. Oppressed people cannot live their lives fully! He urges active resistance – "Arise!". He ultimately states that death is a better fate than yielding to "defeat and dearth".

Theme(s)/ Message/ Central concern

Criticises oppression
Call to arms: people should get up and fight
Frustrated and aborted hopes
Years of Sacrifice that end in nothing
The fight against injustice
Desire for freedom
Human Sacrifice for a cause.



Tone/Attitude/Response / Impression/State of mind/ Mood

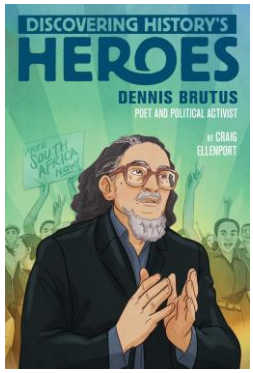
Anger
Dismay
Frustration
Disappointment
Stanza 1 – Calm and Reverent
Stanza 2 – Anger & Contemptuous

Mood:

Stanza 1- melancholic
Stanza 2 - vengeful

Diction

Word	Meaning
Pageantry	Elaborate display or ceremony
Stubbled	Small, sticking out, protruding, rough
Expectant	Expecting, rising up
Eternity	Timeless, infinite or unending in time
Gush	Fast flowing
Bounty	Generosity
Frothing anger	Froth from the mouth because of illness or excitement
Bugled	Played on a bugle - trumpet like musical instrument usually at funerals
Dirging	Playing a funeral song
Ponder	Think about something carefully
Hollow	Empty or meaningless
Panoply	An impressive display/collection
Devours	Swallows/completely destroys
Carrion	Rotting flesh of dead animal
Brassy	Brass musical instrument like a trumpet
Death's head	Human skull, symbol of mortality and death
Tyranny	Cruel/oppressive government/use of power.
Scythes	Cuts down
Dearth	Scarcity/lack of something



Imagery (Symbols/ Figures of Speech and Imagery)

LINE/S	FIGURE OF SPEECH	COMPARISON IN CONTEXT	EFFECTIVENESS

Diction (Words and their connotative meanings)

LINE/S	WORD/S	UNPACK	CONTEXT

QUESTIONS

1. What do the words "Black, green and gold" suggest? (2)

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Explain the reference to "hope" as it is used in line 6. (2)

_____

_____

_____

3 Refer to: "plots" in line 11.

3.1 Identify the figure of speech used in these lines. (1)

_____

3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image. (2)

_____

_____

_____

4. Critically discuss the effectiveness of the dedication in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

_____

_____

_____[10]_

Essay

In the poem 'At a Funeral", the poet depicts his desire to honour the legacy of those who have sacrificed their lives in their fight for freedom and calls for decisive action against the incessant oppression by the structures of apartheid.

With close reference to **diction, imagery** and **tone,** critically discuss the validity of this statement. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page). [10]

In the poem, ,_____

_____(TOPIC). The poem _____

_____

_____(CONTEXT)

The diction "_____" conveys _____

_____ "_____" highlights

_____

_____.

"_____" portrays _____

_____.

The (image) _____ depicts

_____. (image)

_____

shows_____.

_____.

(image)_____illustrates

_____

_____.

Structurally, _____

_____

_____.

The tone_____

(Theme)_____

_____

_____

ANSWERS

1 What do the words "Black, green and gold" suggest? (2)

These are the colours of the ANC and makes the reader see the poem in a political light.

2 Explain the reference to "hope" as it is used in line 6. (2)
Hopes for the future – the fulfilment of life by Valencia. Could also suggest a sense of hopelessness – "what was all of this for?" The poet speaks of "our hopes" – inclusive of the reader.

3. Identify figure of speech.
3.1 **Pun** (1)
3.2 Discuss the effectiveness of the image in the context of the poem. (2)
It can be a verb – to plot is to make a secret plan to destroy someone or something. In this context the political system makes plans to contain the black people in 'narrow cells. These could be prison cells or graves. Plots could also refer to literal graves.

4 Critically discuss the effectiveness of the dedication in conveying the central message of the poem. (3)

There is a definite mourning for this specific individual, but the speaker encourages the reader to think beyond that. He addresses the concept of death in general and the waste of life if a life is cut short, before a person reached full potential. He also uses the second stanza as a "call to arms" of sorts. He states that it is better to die than to submit to the powers of oppression

[10]

POETRY ESSAY MEMORANDUM

- Use the following points, among others, as a guideline to answering this question.
- In this poem, the poet pays tribute to a young lady, Valencia Majombozi, who was killed by apartheid forces during the Sharpeville massacre while protesting against the oppressive Pass Laws.
- The poet depicts the rich array of colour that adorned the funeral ceremony. The funeral ceremony is dignified with an elaborate display of colour('pageantry'), of a fallen hero who was killed while fighting for her freedom. This bears testimony to the poet's respect for the deceased who symbolises the powerful resilient spirit of young people who stood firm in their opposition to oppressive laws during the apartheid regime.
- In stanza1, there is a rich medley of colour from the 'black, green and gold' which represents the flag of the resistance movement to the colleagues of this doctor who attended her funeral wearing their university robes "In bride'-white, nun 's-white veils."
- Also, the nurses wore cloaks which are lined with bright red (the "red-wine."). Other nurses at the funeral wore white, which echo the nuns in their habits "In bride'-white, nun 's-white veils."
- The poet mourns the loss of a young person who had enormous talent and potential which have now gone to waste. She has become a symbol of resistance to the harsh apartheid laws that restricted the freedom of black people in South Africa. Throughout stanza 1, there is a melancholic mood as the poet joins the other mourners in paying their respects to the deceased.
- The tone in stanza 1 is calm and reverent which is in keeping with the poet's admiration for the deceased.
- However, in stanza 2, there is a huge shift in tone as the poet makes a strong political statement and renews his commitment to the fight for freedom in South Africa. His tone is commanding('Arise'), angry ('enraged') and contemptuous ('carrion books of death') i.e. the Pass laws which dictated the lives of black people and restricted their freedom of movement.
- The poet stresses that humans were reduced to dead flesh ('carrion). From the moment of birth, a black person was given this Pass Book, so that they would cease to be human beings from the point of birth. Thus, they would become 'carrion' or dead flesh. This ties in with the notion of abortion.
- The symbolism of "death's-head tyranny" is reminiscent of the power of the Nazis in Germany who were extremely powerful in destroying their opposition. Their army tanks that rolled through the streets of Berlin with the insignia of skull and crossbones was cheered wildly by their supporters. The poet suggests that similar methods were employed by the apartheid regime to suppress opposition to their policies. The poet's experience of political repression and his opposition to apartheid impart force and breadth to his poetry.
- The final line of the poem "Better that we should die, than we should lie down" is ominous as the poet is motivated by the deaths of all those who have sacrificed their lives in the struggle against apartheid. He honours the bravery of those who have fought selflessly against the injustices perpetrated by the apartheid regime which was responsible for the destruction of lives/dreams/hopes of people.