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POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

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B.A. English (Hons.) - 6th Semester

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Content

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

Question Paper—June–2023 (Solved)	1-2
Question Paper—December–2022 (Solved)	1-2
Sample Question Paper–1 (Solved)	1-2
Sample Question Paper–2 (Solved)	1-2
Sample Question Paper–3 (Solved)	1-2

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
--------------	-----------------------------------	-------------

BLOCK-1: NOVEL: NADINE GORDIMER'S *JULY'S PEOPLE*

1. An Introduction to Writings from South Africa	1
2. Reading the Text	14
3. Social Configurations	24
4. Problematizing Gender	32

BLOCK-2: SHORT STORY

5. An Introduction to the Postcolonial Short Story	40
6. Bessie Head, 'The Collector of Treasures'	51
7. Ama Ata Aidoo, 'The Girl Who Can'	60
8. Grace Ogot, 'The Green Leaves'	69

BLOCK-3: POETRY

9. An Introduction to Poetry in the Postcolonial Space	81
10. Pablo Neruda : "Tonight I Can Write", "The Way Spain Was"	92

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
11.	Derek Walcott : “A Far Cry From Africa”, “Names”	110
12.	David Malouf: ‘Revolving Days’, ‘Wild Lemons’	127

BLOCK-4: DRAMA: VIJAY TENDULKAR’S *GHASHIRAM KOTWAL*

13.	Theatre in India	138
14.	Reading <i>Ghashiram Kotwal</i>	147
15.	Plot and Technique	155
16.	Themes and Characterisation	162



**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

B.E.G.C.-114

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Note: Answer any five questions. Question No. 1 is compulsory..

Q. 1. Discuss the following stanzas with reference to context:

(a) Laying the small bones out in rows of the moon to suck.

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from poem 'First Things Last' composed by David Malouf F.

Explanation: This explanation on the origins of moral and social ideals and how society as a whole comes to recognise and uphold them is clever. Malouf contrasts small images from dreams or newspaper articles with massive cliches or proverbs in these last stanzas. The implication is that this is how society falls over its ideals. Here, there is a rare and oddly dignified form of sarcasm and even comedy. The wit in the phrase "First Things Last" has been interpreted in a number of ways. It implies that we either live in unfinished times or, more likely, in innocent times. Malouf takes the ambiguous phrase in the last line (above) seriously. Styles, players and regulations are actual, yet they are also relative and temporary.

(b) Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer and these the last verses that I write for her.

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from poem 'Tonight I can Write' Composed by Pablo Neruda.

Explanation: The poet returns to the night because "during evenings like this he had held her in his arms", forcing him to remember the passionately intimate times he spent with her. His "soul isn't pleased that he has lost her", as the night serves as a reminder of these recollections. However, the poet is inspired by these feelings to turn his suffering into poetry and he comes to the conclusion that "though this be the final anguish that she makes me endure and

these the last verses that I pen for her." The poet uses rejection in romantic relationships as inspiration for writing. The speaker experiences a flurry of complex and contradictory feelings, and the poem serves as a vehicle for him to express his commitment to move on. In Agosin's opinion this poem along with some others in this collection, "marks a clear transition from the era of Spanish-American modernism to that of surrealism, with its often disconnected images and metaphors, which will dominate Neruda's next phase."

(c) What is that to the white child hacked in bed?

To savages, expendables as Jews?

Ans. Context: The lines are taken from poem 'A Far Cry from Africa' composed by Derek Walcott.

Explanation: In the second stanza, the landscape of pre-colonial Africa is vividly described as an old civilisation abounding with flora and animals that is now torn by conflict as a result of colonialism. The anti-colonial critique is made more clear in this verse as Walcott portrays the civilised white man as more monstrous for wrecking havoc on this area and celebrating his military victories by cruelly tormenting the natives. This is in contrast to the animals, who follow the laws of nature.

Q. 2. Problematize the ideas of 'gender' with a critical discourse on Nadine Gordimer's July's People.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 32, 'Introduction' and Page No. 33, 'Locating the Protagonist'.

Q. 3. Distinguish the two broad periods into which South African writings can be classified.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 12, Q. No. 10.

Q. 4. Discuss the importance of family and social life in Grace Ogot's 'The Green Leaves'.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 74, 'Family and Social Life'.

Q. 5. Attempt a critical appraisal of Derek Walcott as a poet and dramatist.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 117, Q. No. 4.

Q. 6. What are the major concerns of the writings of David Malouf?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 132, Q. No. 1.

Q. 7. Describe the development of Marathi Theatre with its historical background.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 140, 'Marathi Theatre' and Page No. 145, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. Explain how song and dance taken from Indian folk forms create a special blend in the play 'Ghashiram Kotwal'.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 155, 'The Historical Background', Page No. 157, 'The Soliloquy' and 'Part 2'.

Q. 9. Discuss postcolonial literatures with their critical nuances.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Themes, Issues and the Influences of History'.



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Sample Preview of The Chapter

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POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

BLOCK-1: NOVEL: NADINE GORDIMER'S *JULY'S PEOPLE*

An Introduction to Writings from South Africa



INTRODUCTION

The body of writings created in the Republic of South Africa, whether in Afrikaans or English, is referred to as South African literature. South Africa was conquered by Europeans and for a while following, it became a battleground between the British and the Boers. Even though South Africa gained independence in 1910, its many different ethnic groups have not yet been able to coexist peacefully. Because of this, a lot of South African literature captures the tension that results from the unequal relations between blacks and whites. The late 19th century marked the beginning of indigenous South African writing, which grew very prolific in the 20th century.

How to Make Sense of the Expression, South African Literature?

The collection of works and narratives in English and Afrikaans that have been orally passed and preserved in South Africa, the southernmost nation on the African continent, is known as South African literature. The primary language of the Boer settlers is Afrikaans, is a dialect evolved from Dutch and of the seventeenth century. It has a diverse vocabulary that includes words from Bantu, Khoisan, Malay and Portuguese. Due to this mingling, Afrikaans lost its linguistic status and became a *kombuistaal* (kitchen language) and the wealthy Boers viewed its speakers with contempt, while using High Dutch themselves. The larger category of African Literature is used to study the literatures from other African countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria.

Communities

The lineament of South Africa is intriguingly patchwork and cosmopolitan and its state of society is profoundly creolised. Four communities: Anglo-Afrikaner, Indian, Nguni-Sotho and Khoisan, constitute the diverse South African social environment through

their interactions, discourses and conflicts. The Afrikaner population is made up of the Boers or early Dutch colonialists. The Boers were settlers from the Transvaal and the Orange Free State who had Dutch, German and Huguenot ancestry. The Anglo-Afrikaner, which includes the white, tenuously creolised Afrikaners and the British, united (after the South African war of 1899-1902) against the black or the non-white South Africans is the predominant amalgamation of two communities with divergent colonising histories.

They were thorough in their comprehension of market dynamics and well-versed in maritime navigation and industrial production. The Anglo-Afrikaner community, existed since the 17th century is not extremely old in terms of its origin and subsequent presence. The 19th century saw the introduction of the Indian community from the former British colony of India, which was primarily made up of members of the working-class and semi-working-class, as-well-as individuals from the commercial class. The Indian population is relatively new in terms of assimilation and subsequent presence; it first appeared in Natal after 1860.

The Nguni, Sotho (or Suthu or Suto) and Tswana people, all of whom speak Bantu languages and had prior expertise producing iron, make up the Nguni-Sotho community. They also greatly rely on their knowledge of agricultural techniques, livestock maintenance, herding and animal husbandry. The Nguni-Sotho ethnic group existed from roughly the 11th century. The Khoi and the San, who were traditionally known as Hottentot and Bushman, respectively relied on and were consequently characterised by pastoralist and hunter-gatherer forms of sustenance, made up the ancient Khoisan group.

The Khoisan community is the oldest, most distinct indigenous group until much later, when a mingling

with the Afrikaner and slave communities gave rise to the “mixed race”, the Cape Coloured community, which stands in the middle of “whites” and “blacks”. The Anglo-Afrikaner, Indian, Nguni-Sotho, and Khoisan populations, respectively, each have their unique oral and literary traditions. In the larger smorgasbord of world literatures, the fusion of these traditions as a result of social and literary creolisation from the pre-colonial period up to the present creates a labyrinth of South African literary forms and texts that depict the complex nature of regular inter-community exchanges in South Africa, ranging from brutality and ethnic conflict to the expression of love and intimate bonding.

There are super communities made up of homosexuals, queers, cis-gendered straight women, as well as political and religious organisations, in addition to these communities based on ethnicity and indigeneity. The concerns and experiences of the members of these super-communities have given rise to a number of significant literary trends.

Colonisation

Beginning with the establishment of the first VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie in Dutch; Dutch East India Company, officially known by the name of United East India Company) refreshment station in Cape Town in 1652 and continuing through the formation of the first democratically elected government in 1994, South African society experienced a number of volatile transitional phases marked by unrelenting violence, communal tension and dissent. South Africa was largely colonised in two waves. The Dutch led the first wave, which was followed by the British, the second competing European coloniser group.

Therefore, the British brought about the second wave by enforcing their control over the Cape in 1795 to protect it from the invading French and its allies during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). When the British handed over control of the Cape to the Dutch under the terms of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, there was a brief period of peace. To manage the important sea route to the East, the British retook it in 1806 and strengthened it as an operational base.

In South African literature, the non-white population is depicted as making a titanic social and personal journey from being oppressed, dehumanised and subjugated by the arm-yielding whites to achieving equality, dignity and voting rights for all South Africans through extraordinary sacrifices and several era-defining movements. As more and more of their traditional hunting grounds were taken over by the colonisers to expand the Cape Province up to the Orange river from the earlier limit up to the Sak, Kabbo, a renowned San storyteller and visionary of the 19th century, describes his journey to imprisonment

at Breakwater Prison after stealing sheep from the Xamspeech community to feed their families.

South African literature also reflects the uneasy conflict between historically peremptory Europeanist and real, anti-establishmentarian Africanist readings of its past, in addition to the depiction of the brutal conflict separating the non-white majority from the white minority.

CHAPTER AT A GALANCE

THEMES, ISSUES AND THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY

The main themes in South African literature are affected by a long tradition of defiance, dissent and protest against colonisers who violated basic rights, anarchy, social unrest and unjustified brutality against the colonial masses. In addition to the ongoing friction between whites and non-whites, there is also the tragic loss of priceless cultural systems and oral literatures brought about by the colonisers’ eradication of indigenous tribes and villages. In her article titled “Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, Shula Marks discusses the eradication of the Khoisan and the subsequent eradication of indigenous languages, oral histories, traditional practices and belief systems. The various South African communities’ proportionally skewed visibility index can be attributed to such heinous acts of genocide and the destruction of cultural and literary heritage. This served as the inspiration for a number of significant works by authors as diverse as Olive Schreiner and Zoe Wicomb.

Mfecane/Difiqane

In addition to the harm caused by the colonising forces, there were periods of occasional communal rivalry, civil war and internal instability within the native populations that rendered the land vulnerable to the rapacious aims of the white colonisers. Despite the Dutch colonisers’ geopolitical and cultural subjugation of the Khoisan, their power was reduced by the arrival of the Nguni-Sotho since the Khoisan were unable to equal their level of development in terms of iron production and improved agricultural methods. Deep internal segregation resulted from the Nguni-ascent Sotho’s and amplifying power. The Xhosa subgroup within the southern Nguni group was divided for the first time in the 18th century by the successors of King Phalo into two distinct houses: the Great House, led by Gcaleka and the Right Hand House, led by Rharhabe. Shaka (or Chaka), who led the Zulu subgroup of the northern Nguni, allied with the Natal Nguni to create the dreadful Zulu empire. Shaka’s reign, however, was short-lived and after the first quarter of the 19th century, he was assassinated by his half-brothers.

The brutal Mfecane or Difiqane, a fratricidal civil war that the Zulus launched under Shaka's military control against the neighbouring towns, took place between 1820 and the time of Shaka's assassination. These bloody inter-communal conflicts slowly weakened the indigenous societies' foundations and sapped their ability to resist better-armed colonial intrusions. In works like Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1931), Monica Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* (1936), Jeffrey Peires' *The House of Phalo* (1981), Jeff Guy's *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (1994) and many more, the brave posture of the Ngunis, unfazed by escalating colonial belligerence, is emphasised. Early works like Thomas Pringle's *African Sketches* (1834), which include a prose chronicle of his time in the Cape and thirty-nine poems, fearlessly take on the colonial government's covert prods to fuel genocides, veiled promotion of slavery and ulterior land-grabbing ploys. The poem "The Forester of the Neutral Ground", which advocated for inter-racial sexual connections between the Boers and the Khois, was one of the most controversial.

Xhosa Cattle Killing

In addition to the devastation of communities brought on by protracted infighting, there was also the mysterious episode of resource self-sabotage known as the Xhosa cow massacre, which occurred from April 1856 to June 1857 and resulted in the famine that followed. Approximately 4,00,000 animals were butchered and thousands of acres of crop fields were set on fire as part of what was perceived as a millenarian movement, led by the vision of the 15-year-old Nongqawuse. Over 40,000 people died as a result of famine in the aftermath. Although early colonial historians suggested that this was a mass suicide, modern investigations strongly imply that the Xhosa livestock killing was the first known case of organised passive resistance on a broad scale.

The domestic power struggles and resistance movements like the Xhosa livestock massacre have been the subject of a sizable body of literary writing. In his 2000 novel 'The Heart of Redness', Zakes Mda utilises this particular movement and its terrible results to divide the Xhosa community into believers and unbelievers. This ideological split pits allegiance to tradition against advancement fuelled by reason. In a contemporary 21st-century scenario, the two factions are still unable to come to an agreement over constructing a casino and a vacation resort in the scenic village of Qolorha-by-the-Sea, thus the author also examines the history of this ideological fight. 'The Dead Will Arise' by Jeffrey Peires, published in 1989, is another important book that discusses Nongqawuse and the Xhosa cow massacre.

Colenso Controversy

Another significant instance of a religious-political power struggle that received literary attention was the controversy John William Colenso, the first bishop of Natal, courted in the latter half of the 19th century for being overly liberal in his support of Zulu belief systems and questioning the veracity of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) in the *Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862). Colenso was able to master the Zulu language, thanks to his sharp, analytical mind and his academic interest in Zulu culture. Colenso thought about how the Zulu converts were challenging the reliability of the Pentateuch because they were open to questions and arguments. He opposed the concept of eternal punishment held by the heathen, refused to condemn the Zulu practice of polygamy, refuted the biblical doctrine of creation, disputed the accuracy of the dates and numbers used in Genesis, questioned how to interpret biblical miracles and challenged the long-held belief that Moses wrote the Pentateuch under inspiration. His removal in 1863 by a group of South African bishops led by Bishop Robert Gray was followed by the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, his reinstatement after an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council in 1865 and ultimately the schism in the Anglican Church in 1869-1870.

Colenso left a lasting influence via his liberal understanding of indigenous cultures and his vision in realising the necessity of incorporating South African religious practices to enable Christianity to creatively engage with South African, non-Christian belief systems. The Colenso debate and its societal ramifications were satirised by Olive Schreiner and Douglas Blackburn in their respective novels. Additionally, there are various forms of oral performance (songs, narratives, rituals), as well as the literary recollections of poets, folk artists, playwrights and intellectuals like Magma Magwaza Fuze, John Langalibalele Dube, Krune Mqhayi, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, Thomas Mofolo and Herbert Dhlomo.

The Great Trek

In South African works, migration and its associated hardships and periods of ruthless desperation, as-well-as the socio-psychological effects it has on a community's life and well-being, are also major themes. *Mhudi*, a classic by Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje (authored in 1919; published in 1930), emulates the Bantu storytelling tradition by fusing song and narrative. Other examples are Stuart Cloete's *Turning Wheels* (1937), Francis Carey Slater's long poem *The Trek* (1938), Peter Abraham's *Wild Conquest* (1951) and Philippus Villiers Pistorius' *No Further Trek* (1957). The issue of human connections, which affects all races

and men has gained the same amount of traction as the issue with nature. To avoid the frequent, attritional clashes between the colonising Dutch and British groups over territorial disputes, the hostile takeover of pasture lands and the heavy-handed policies of the British, the Boers or Afrikaners undertook the Great Trek of 1835, searching for new hunting and grazing grounds. The Great Trek, considered a turning point in 19th-century Afrikaner history, saw over 14,000 Boers permanently relocate from the Cape Colony to Natal and gain access to areas past the Orange and the Vaal rivers for the first time after years of Xhosa blockage. However, there were difficulties and carnage involved in this immigration to Natal and the Highveld.

The Battle of Blood River, also known as the Battle of Ncome River, took place in 1838 between the residing Zulus led by King Dingane and the migrating Boers, resulting in significant deaths on both sides, while capitalising on a tactically advantageous position next to the Ncome river. Andries Pretorius led the Boers to a significant victory and they went on to form the Republic of Natal with Pietermaritzburg as its capital. The Boers' evacuation of the Cape did not satisfy the British appetite for more land and when the British rejected the concept of the Boers establishing an independent state, they invaded Natal in 1843, plundering the country. The Transvaal and Orange Free State were the next destinations for the worn-out and broken Boers.

Anglo-Boer Wars

The internecine Anglo-Boer wars of 1880-1881 and 1899-1902 marked the height of hostilities between the British Empire and the Boers or Afrikaners residing in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The British moved aggressively, denying other European rivals the opportunity, to seize control of these valuable mineral resources as a result of the discovery of enormous amounts of gold and diamond in those areas, notably in Witwatersrand and Kimberley.

The first Anglo-Boer War, also known as the Transvaal War, took place between December 1880 and March 1881. It was distinguished by the British forces resounding defeat because they failed to recognise the Boers' superior military strategy and use of guerrilla warfare. The first Anglo-Boer War, along with the socio-economic effects of the discovery of enormous natural reserves of gold and diamonds, the ensuing industrialisation of South Africa and these ideological shifts, altered the nature of conflict. Instead of pursuing greater territorial expansion, conflicting parties now vie for control over vast natural deposits of precious metals and gems.

Through the cunning, vile Bonaparte Blenkins character, Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) presents a subjective impression of these developments and the way they materialise, demonstrating how imperial melodrama can be unimaginably powerful in influencing racial discourse. The approach taken by Schreiner in *The Story of an African Farm* is significant as a much-needed course correction for several literary trends of the era, which were prone to leaving out Africa or enfeebling focus on Africa. The novel quite obviously zooms in on Africa as the target for literary and ideological reflection. One of the earliest literary answers to positivism, Schreiner's book criticises and rejects it as rationality that not only disproves superstition but also calls into question the validity of subjective reason.

Bessie Head, Alex La Guma, Eugène Marais and other authors later discussed changes to the positivist worldview and their effects in their literary works. Between October 1899 and May 1902, the second Anglo-Boer conflict, often known as the South African War, pitted the British Empire against the combined Boers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, as well as volunteer squadrons from Australia, New Zealand, India and Canada. Additional help for the British forces came from certain native South African allies, including battalions from Cape Colony and Natal. Sadly, however, the British and the Boers or Afrikaners infamously united against the black and non-white South Africans when the war ended in May 1902 with the surrender of the Boers, who were physically and mentally worn out by Lord Kitchener's atrocious tactics (like Boer concentration camps and scorched earth policy). The blacks and non-whites were suffocated by this treacherous alliance and the economic reforms of the late 19th century that encouraged mining of the enormous diamond and gold reserves. Historical studies like Bill Nasson's *Abraham Esau's War* (1991) and Solomon Plaatje's *Mafeking Diary* provide first-hand accounts of the condition and contribution of blacks in the Anglo-Boer War.

The build-up of systematic exclusion, denial of rights, deprivation and racial subjugation led to the prolonged and historic 20th century struggle for the blacks and non-whites to mould their distinct identity, be accepted and treated with dignity, as-well-as secure democratic representation. Poems by Krune Mqhayi, Herbert Dhlomo, David Darlow, Frank Templeton Prince, Benedict Vilakzai, Guy Butler and others eulogise the intrepid champions of resistance against colonial usurpation of land and property between 1790 and 1906.