

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE - 27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: MAY-JUNE 2023**

**VI SEMESTER B.A TEP**

**THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES:TS 6122**

**Time- 2½ hrs Max Marks- 70**

**Instructions:**

1. **This paper is for students of III B.A Theatre and Performance Studies.**
2. **The paper has THREE SECTIONS and THREE printed pages.**
3. **You will lose marks for exceeding the word limit.**
4. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**
5. **Read the following excerpt from ‘Americas Debt to the Language of Black Americans’ by Jim Haskins and Hugh F. and answer the questions below.**

It is in American drama that the black dialect first comes to the fore with any regularity or relevance. At least ten plays written before 1800 show this influence. The dialect in these plays was not written according to any literary tradition or formula. There can be little doubt that most of the black characters were drawn from life and that their speech is a crude, occasionally distorted, duplication of the sounds which the playwrights thought they had heard. There is very little consistency of spelling or syntax, even within the same play, but such variations are understandable. Not until much later did written black dialect assume literary conventionality. And uniformity was genuinely impossible in the eighteenth century; many slaves had only recently been brought from Africa and were struggling to learn English despite the interferences that their various languages produced.

Many of the black language influences upon the American language have gone unrecognized because they have been slow and subtle. Many also have gone unrecognized because they were originally introduced by whites as conscious imitations of blacks to achieve humor or local color. The vital and increasing influence of black words and forms upon American slang need not be assumed. It obviously exists in the speech of those whites who “dig” jazz, in that of whites who are associated with those who “dig” jazz, and in that of those young whites disillusioned with the dominant American culture who have absorbed the language of the black subculture. This language has been used by the young both as a defense mechanism and as an articulation of the revolutionary spirit, reasons that stand in sharp contrast to the original, slanderous imitation of the slaves’ speech by white slaveholders or the “black-face” “black-talk” of white minstrels. Of course, vestiges of the original smirking use remain, but in most instances the usage is open, respectful, and conscious of the alternatives to the dominant culture intrinsic in black life and black language. But more important than this influence are the unconscious uses of black slang throughout the country and the open, conscious imitation of blacks.

Perhaps the most widely used slang form traceable to black origins is the term O.K. Attempts to trace the term to English, German, French, Finnish, Greek, and Choctaw sources have met with little success. O.K. can be shown to derive from similar expressions in a number of African languages and to have been used in black Jamaican English more than twenty years before its use by whites in New England.

Some of the other “Americanisms” that appear to have an African or probably African origin are jazz, jitter and jitter-bug, hep (or hip), banjo, boogie-woogie, jam (as in jam session), jive, to goose, to bug someone, to lam (go), to dig (to understand or appreciate), uh-huh and uh-uh (for yes and no), ofay and honkie (names for the white man), cocktail, guy, and bogus. Many such words are direct-loan words from Africa; others are metamorphosed African words; and still others are direct translations. Among the most interesting forms are those that express concepts oppositioned to the standard English usage: such as bad meaning good; hard having a positive connotation; kill to mean affect strongly, to fascinate; love letter to mean a bullet; and murder to express approval of something excellent. The source of these forms is not African; it is distinctly Afro-American, born of the need of blacks to change or “negate” the negative concept of blackness.

Black jazz musicians were chiefly responsible for many black language influences upon American slang. They originated the vernacular of what is perhaps the most original and revolutionary art form in North America. Black music per se may be said to occupy that unique position. The United States consumes a great deal of music, but as yet has not produced nearly so much as it consumes. Unlike most other nations, it does not have a wealth of native music. The only native music it can boast is black music, but America has not yet accepted that simple truth. Black music is the closest America has to folk music and as such black music is —or should be —as important to American musical culture as it is to the spiritual existence of blacks. Black language has exerted a strong influence upon the literature, informal language, and music of white America, not to mention the actual psyche of white America. It would behoove white America to realize this influence if it is ever in mature awareness to know itself.

1. **Answer ANY FOUR of the following questions in 100-150 words each. (4x10=40)**
2. By bringing music, language, and theatre together; the writer makes an attempt to return a structure of history to black artists. How does this alter your view of the American history of theatre and music?
3. How might the reader place Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* in the larger context of American theatre? How is it able to reclaim power over language, and the theatre arts? Explain using references from the play.
4. Pick a word you found intriguing from Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* and examine its usage in the play in light of the extract above.
5. What can an upcoming Indian Playwright learn from this extract about art and appropriation?
6. Do you believe that Indian artists must exercise caution while telling somebody else’s story? Give reasons.
7. **Read the following extract from *Ruined* and answer the questions below.**

MAMA. (With contempt.) Love. What’s the point in all this shit? Love is too fragile a

sentiment for out here. Think about what happens to the things we “love.” It isn’t worth it.

Love. It is a poisonous word. It will cost us more than it returns. Don’t you think? It’ll be an

unnecessary burden for people like us. And it’ll eventually strangle us!

CHRISTIAN. Do you hear what you’re saying?

MAMA. It’s the truth. Deal with it!

CHRISTIAN. Hm . . . Why do I bother. If you can’t put it in a scale it is nothing, right?!

Pardon me. (Christian, flustered by her response, walks to the door.)

MAMA. Where are you going?!. (Mama watches suddenly panicked.) Hey! You heard me.

Don’t be a baby. (Christian stops before exiting.)

CHRISTIAN. We joke. It’s fun. But honestly. I’m worn bare. I’ve been driving this route a

long time and I’m getting to the age where I’d like to sleep in the same bed every night. I

need familiar company, food that is predictable, conversation that is too easy. If you don’t

know what I am talking about, then I’ll go. But, please, I’d like to have the truth . . . why

not us? (A moment. Mama says nothing. Christian starts to leave, but her words catch

him – )

MAMA. (With surprising vulnerability.) I’m ruined. (Louder.) I’m ruined. (He absorbs her

words.)

1. **Answer the following questions in 150-200 words each. (2x15=30)**
2. Why is Mama’s vulnerability surprising in the last line? What does this detail tell us about how the playwright perceives this character?
3. Examine the word ‘suddenly’ as it appears in the extract above. How must an actor demonstrate this word on stage? Is it possible to convey suddenness to an audience that isn’t familiar with the play? Explain.

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