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

MA ENGLISH – III SEMESTER

SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2021

(Examination conducted in March 2022)

**EN DE 9418 World Literatures – III**

**Time 1.5 HOURS MAX. MARKS 35**

**This Question Paper Contains THREE Printed Pages and THREE Parts**

**SECTION A**

**I. Read the following excerpt from a book on African literature published in 2000. Answer ANY ONE of the questions that follow in about 150 words: (1x10=10)**

African literature first gained world renown in the 1950s and '60s, in large part because of World War II. The racism of the Axis powers before and during this war raised global consciousness about subject peoples everywhere. In Africa, members of colonized societies had put their lives on the line for the Allies against Germany and Italy, and those nations' racist pretensions to superiority. Now, in the post-war period, Africans refused to tolerate the racism that still raged on their own home ground. From Ghana in West Africa, to Algeria in North Africa, Kenya in East Africa, and Zimbabwe in southern Africa, nationalist leaders organized independence movements or fought life-and-death guerrilla campaigns to wrest themselves free from European domination. One after another, the groups achieved their goal, in some cases at horrific costs. In Kenya, the death toll climbed to 20,000; in Zimbabwe, to 30,000; in Algeria, to more than one million. Often the struggle called for enormous sacrifice, but it was a heady time nonetheless, one full of promise as well as uncertainty about what lay ahead and how Africans could best define themselves in the contemporary world. For nearly 70 years, since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Africa's rich array of ethnic groups had suffered an era of intensified colonial rule. European powers vied for control of the continent, then often brutally imposed their colonial policies and cultures on its peoples.

In the process, older, African political systems and ways of life were disrupted or undermined, a course of events that in many cases did severe damage to separate African senses of identity. As the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe explains, the decades of European rule had an amnesic effect on Africa. They swept its peoples "out of the current of their history into somebody else's history," transformed them from major into minor players in their own lands, turned their saga into the saga of alien races in Africa, and obliterated "the real history that had been going on since the millennia ... especially because it was not written down" (Conversations with Chinua Achebe [Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997], 157). The reference here is to a rich foundation of oral literature— of proverb, song, folktale, and legend—that preceded the European invasions and has survived to the present day. In the early 1200s, poet-historians in the empire of Mali, for example, told and retold the story of their origins, the Epic of Son-Jam (or Sunjata), which in the 1950s found its way onto paper, the core of the story remarkably preserved for 700 years.

*(*Source: *World Literature and Its Times - Profiles of Notable Literary Works and the Historical Events That Influenced Them* VOLUME 2. *African Literature and Its Time)*

1. Examine the comment by Achebe quoted here and elaborate on it by referring to your own readings in literature from Africa written in English?
2. What is the significance of the reference made in the excerpt to oral traditions? To what extent can World Literature benefit from translations of oral texts from cultures that have no written script?

**SECTION B**

**II. Answer ANY TWO of the following in about 150 to 200 words each: (2x10=20)**

1. By labelling as racist a key text by Conrad, who had been considered one of the fiercest critics of colonialism among European writers, Achebe surprised many. How does Achebe seek to convince us that Conrad was just as racist in his view of Africans as the more overtly bigoted Western writers?

1. Discuss any one text from South Africa that critiques the Apartheid system and comment on the literary strategy employed for the purpose.

1. What picture of middle-class life in post-colonial Nigeria do you find in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*.

**SECTION C**

**III. Answer the following question in 150 words: (5 marks)**

1. Respond critically to the lyrics of this song from the Caribbean as performed by the Jamaican-American singer, Harry Belafonte.

**"Haiti Cherie"**

Haiti Cherie says, Haiti is my beloved land

Oh, I never knew that I have to leave you to understand

Just how much I miss the gallant Citadel\*

Where days long ago, brave men served this country well

Where sun is bright or evening with soft moonlight

Shading tree, Creole maiden for company

A gentle breeze, a warm caress if you please

Work, laughter and play, yes, we'll always be this way

Haiti Cherie, now I've returned to your soil so dear

Let me hear again, the things that give music to my ear

The lone shepherd's horn that welcomes the rising morn

When roads overflow as crowds to iron market go

Where sun is bright or evening with soft moonlight

Shading tree, Creole maiden for company

A gentle breeze, a warm caress if you please

Work, laughter and play, yes, we'll always be this way

The Citadel: A hilltop fortress commissioned in 1805 by Haitian revolutionary Henri Christophe, and built by tens of thousands of former slaves, who liberated themselves by revolting against the French colonial masters, the Citadel was the linchpin of the newly independent Haiti's defensive strategy against potential French incursion.