

LIRA TOWN COLLEGE

S.6 MID-TERM EXAMS 2011
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

P310 / 1 (PROSE AND POETRY)

TIME: 3 HRS

Answer all the questions from the three sections.

SECTION I

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

ARROW OF GOD

When the discussion began again someone suggested that they should go to the elders of Umuaro and tell them that they could no longer work on the white man's road. But as speaker after speaker revealed the implications of such a step it lost all support. Moses told them that the white man would reply by taking all their leaders to prison at Okperi.

'You all know how friendly we are with Okperi. Do you think that any Umuaro man who goes to prison there will come back alive? But that apart, do you forget that this is the month of planting? Do you want to grow this year's crops in the prison house in a land where your fathers owe a cow? I speak as your elder brother. I have traveled in Olu and I have traveled in Igbo, and I can tell you that there is no escape from the white man. He has come. When suffering knocks at your door and you say there is no seat left for him, he tells you not to worry because he has brought his own stool. The white man is like that. Before any of you here was old enough to tie a cloth between the legs I saw with my own eyes what the white man did to Abame. Then I knew there was no escape. As daylight chases away darkness so will the white man drive away all our customs. I know that as I say it now it passes by your ears, but it will happen. The white man has power which comes from the true God and it burns like fire. This is the God about whom we preach every eighth day

Unachukwu's opponents were now shouting that it was a meeting of an age group that they had not assembled to join with him in chewing the seed of foolishness which they called their new religion.

'We are talking about the white man's road.' said a voice above the others.

'Yes, we are talking about the white man's road. But when the roof and walls of a house fall in, the ceiling is not left standing. The white man, the new religion, the soldiers, the new road – they are all part of the same thing. The white man has a gun, a matchet, a bow and carries fire in his mouth. He does not fight with one weapon alone.'

Nweke Ukpaka spoke next. 'What a man does not know is greater than he. Those of us who want Unachukwu to go away forget that none of us can say come in the white man's language. We should listen to his advice. If we go to our elders and tell them that we shall no longer work on the white man's road, what do we expect them to do? Will our fathers take up hoes and machetes and go out to work themselves while we sit at home? I know that many of us want to fight the white man. But only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hands. The white man is like a hot soup and we must take him slowly-slowly from the edged of the bowl'

This extract takes us to the angry meeting of an age group somewhere in Igboland, Eastern Nigeria, in the early 1920s during the period of colonial rule. An age group consists of young men who were born during the same year.

(Adapted from Chinua Achebe)

Questions

1. What are the names of the two towns? Are they on good terms with each other? Support your answer by reference to the text.
2. What is the question under discussion?
3. State the two objections which were raised to Moses Unachukwu's presence at the meeting. Give one good reason why he was allowed to say.
4. What is the mood of the meeting?
5. What is Moses Unachukwu's attitude?
6. What is Nkweke Ukpaka's attitude?
7. Explain the nonfigurative meaning of the following proverbs:
 - a. 'when suffering knocks at your door and you say there is no seat left for him, he tells you not to worry because he has brought his own stool'
 - b. 'The white man is like a hot soup and we must take him slowly-slowly from the edges of the bowl.'

Name the figure of speech used in each one.

SECTION II

DANDA

This was the main object of the meeting. Nwokeke was not sure that his authority was complete. There was a small margin of uncertainty which he needed to clarify. The loyalty which people still owed to the Udeji house must be severed.

At first there were discreet murmurs. People were not yet sure which side to take.

At last Okelekwu rose. And one could sense a stir of expectation in the kindred. Okelekwu was one of the great speakers of the *umunna*. He was not a renter. He didn't shout, he hadn't an impressive manner or delivery. He spoke quietly, smoothly, like a clear stream murmuring confidently on its way. He began with three choice proverbs all so perfectly appropriate to the matter that the *umunna* marveled again at the man's virtuosity. Then he rolled on, relaxed, an artist, unfolding the pleats of the garment of speech with a sure hand. At the end the men nodded with pleasure. True, it was difficult indeed to decide for whose cause he had been, he may or may not have edged slightly to Arab's side. No-one could be sure. But did it matter? He had entertained them as they had seldom been entertained. The *umunna* sighed. They had eaten bitter leaf of rare palate.

A small wispy herdsman next rose. He must tell the *umunna* the truth. Okelekwu had said all he himself had wanted to say. 'He has taken words from my mouth and I have nothing more to say.'

'Sit down then,' shouted many who were ready with their own speeches. 'But,' continued the herdsman, 'there is just one small bit – very small bit – which I wish to add.'

'Add it then,' *Umunna* faces were skeptical.

The herdsman did not add that small bit. He spent a long time trying to, but at the end had not quite succeeded. He said point by point what Okelekwu had said though of course he did not say it quite so well.

They talked. Everybody talked. The discussion had started when the sun was in the middle. Now that same sun had almost reached the door of his home but still the *umunna* talked. Many people repeated themselves when they got the chance.

This is a rather satiric account of a meeting, a gathering of Igbo kindred to settle some important matter. In Arrow of God (No. 36), we see another such meeting from a more serious point of view.

Umunna: extended family, kindred.

1. Explain in your own words, 'unfolding the pleats of the garment of speech with a sure hand'.
What figure of speech is this?

2. Explain in non-figurative language ‘the sun had almost reached the door of his home’.
3. ‘But did it matter?’ What does ‘it’ refer to here? What is your own opinion about whether ‘it’ matters or not?
4. Explain the following phrases used in the passage:
 - a. margin of uncertainty
which side to take
people repeated themselves
a stir of expectation.
5. What is humorous in this passage?

SECTION III

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow:

Conquerors, by Henry Treece

By sundown we come to a hidden village
Where all the air was still
And no sound met our tired ears, save
For the sorry drip of rain from blackened trees
And the melancholy song of swinging gates.
Then through a broken pane some of us saw
A dead bird in a rusting cage, still
Pressing his thin tattered breast against the bars
His beak wide open. And
As we hurried through the weed-grown street
A gaunt dog started up from some dark place
And shambled off on legs as thin as sticks
Into the wood, to die at least in peace.
No one had told us victory was like this:
Not one of us would have eaten bread
Before he filled the mouth of the grey child
That sprawled, stiff as stone, before the shattered door.
There was not one of us who did not think of home.

Questions:

1. Comment on the atmosphere of the poem. How is it built up?
2. Discuss the effectiveness of the use of imagery in the poem.
3. Explain how the situation in the poem is ironical.
4. How does the form of the poem help to build the atmosphere and to convey the message in the poem?