

PART 7 WAR AND PEACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

33. *On Exhaustion over a lack of Understanding* – Ameera Conrad (NEP)

1. *There is a lack of understanding by the previous and present governments about the depth of hurt the apartheid system and the governing systems prior to apartheid caused people. Conrad feels that those who suffered under previous governments need to be more fully acknowledged for what they went through.*

It could be argued that both groups have a lack of understanding to greater or lesser degrees. This is probably due to lack of communication. The poet feels that people whom suffered during the apartheid regime have not been given enough time to grieve, nor been sufficiently understood.

The lack of understanding probably also springs largely from the fact that many people do not want to deal with what makes them uncomfortable. Many governments “do something”, for example the TRC hearings, to little effect and wipe their hands of situation. The problem is never really fully dealt with.

2. *Conrad is referring to the post-apartheid government or ordinary people telling previously discriminated against people to “move on”.*

It shows that: Previously discriminated-against people have been left with deep emotional and psychological scars, whilst post-apartheid government or ordinary people don't understand these scars or never experienced what the people went through.

3. *They are reminded about the past every day because they can see it in the buildings, statues and so on, from the past.*
4. *It points towards situation that exists in our country. A relatively small group of people expect or feel that those who suffered during apartheid should “get over it”, while the small group of people does not understand the depth of pain that some still live with today (as they never had to experience what those who suffered experienced).*

Conrad implies that the TRC hearings were not enough to remove the pain of people who have suffered in the course of our history. She implies that they were mostly for the show of it rather than a meaningful healing opportunity.

5. *The poet is thinking about the oppressors and oppressed of the past. Her remembrance is not a positive one as is with some of the other poems in the anthology. This is intended as a discussion question to stimulate candidate's thinking about the anthology as a whole.*

34. *Fire Works*– croc E moses (FAL)

1. *As a noun: it refers to the fireworks that are lit in celebration of New Year's Eve, the opening of the season, and so on. As a verb: it refers the fact that fire does a good job in burning things down.*

2. *These words suggest that something is about to happen. Writing the verbs in their present participle form creates a sense of urgency.*
3. *A revolution which “grows” or goes forth slowly, but surely. A tree grows very slowly and a daily observer would not really notice the growth, however, the observer may then suddenly realise one day how tall the tree has become and how much it has grown. Similarly, the revolution “grows” slowly and has a snowball effect.*

35. Heritage Day – Roshila Nair (HL&FAL)

- 1.1 *We celebrate the day to pay tribute to our rich diversity of beliefs and traditions as a Rainbow Nation.*
- 1.2 *The title seems quite ironic as the poem does not paint a pretty picture of what is happening in our country. Ideally, we would like a nation coming together to celebrate our diversity, listening to South African music, eating more traditional South African food, whilst our children are looked after in the spirit of Ubuntu. In reality, we are left with the legacy of our crooked past which has led to children being forced to steal, dysfunctional public works and so on.*
2. *Only the “previously oppressed” are in the city centre. Heritage Day is for all South African to come together. This suggests that Nair believes the “us and them” mentality still hangs within the atmosphere of our country. It would suggest that the legacy of apartheid is that there is alive. People are still labelled and cycles of poverty, which were purveyed by the past, are still a reality for many.*
3. *“dysfunctional”, “solemnly”, “brutish”*
4. *They are supposed to be celebrating diversity, freedom and unity, yet they are celebrating it in the presence of a statue that commemorates the past.*
- 5.1. *The statue is of a general, so the statue would probably commemorate a general that fought for control of South Africa.*
- 5.2. *The statue honours a war general who probably fought, as a hero, in a war, whilst the national holiday rejoices in the fact apartheid is over.*
- 6.1. *Candidates will vary in opinion. Yes, it shows that there is a blur in traditions. No, why is the Muslim woman not selling Muslim food? Is she not proud of her culture?*
- 6.2. *This is a very open-ended discussion question, which will get students thinking. There are quite a few messages that the poet is trying to convey including the fact that Nair seems to believe that the aftermath of apartheid is still a reality. There is a comment on South Africans losing touch with their cultures as they celebrate with “global songs” and a Muslim woman serve Chinese food.*
- 7.1. **These lines contain a very painful story. Explain why the story is so painful.**
Firstly, the fact that a child has to steal to survive is terrible. This method of torture seems very similar to methods used in the apartheid era. Added to which, his younger brother is made to watch. What kind of society allows this? If we nod this incident off, surely we need to re-evaluate why we are not particularly shocked by this story.
- 7.2. **These lines bring up the question: is the struggle really (ever) over? What is your opinion?**
Again, this question should spark a lively debate. It is important for candidates to substantiate their statements. A point without a reason is pointless.

8. You may want to draw two columns and come up with points for and against remembering the past.

It is tricky to solidify this answer in a memo. Some question you may want to ask students are:

- *What will we gain or lose from remembering the past?*
- *What if we do not remember the past?*
- *Have South Africans remembered the past sufficiently?*

36. An Unforgiving poem – Roshila Nair (NEP)

1. Definition: not willing forgive or excuse people's faults or wrongdoings.

2. Line seven sums up that the old woman's pain is still real even though her son was murdered "many years ago". Look at these lines in the context of the theme: "we will remember them" and discuss.

This is a group discussion question. Learners will vary in response. It may be useful to get a scribe to jot down opinion on the board.

3. One can talk about tragedy, they can never fully define emotion. In these lines words are described as big and lonely suggesting the saying: "talk is cheap".

37. War Triptych: Love, Silence, Glory – Gabeba Baderoon (NEP)

1.1. It is set in a room. A mother is sitting with her daughter's body while the "washer of bodies" prepares her body for her funeral.

1.2. She is devastated. She drops her prayer beads and is surely overcome by grief as the washer sings a prayer. The word "fell" might indicate that the mother do not have the energy to hold them or perhaps that she feels that she can no longer pray or do her "slow accounting" to come to grips with the situation.

2. He seems to be in a state of shock and disbelief.

3. We tend to forget bad things in life. Horror stories of wars merge into tales of heroism where those that passed away are held up as heroes. Thus, the remembrance of war gets romanticised.

4. This is intended to stimulate a group discussion. Brainstorm or even conduct an internet search if you have the resources.

38. Remember – Don Mattera (HL&FAL)

1. He has one request. The title can be seen as a request. Because the title consists of one word, it puts emphasis on the word.

2. He does not believe that he will live to see a society that is free and without its malevolence.

3.1. He longs to experience a country that is free from prejudice, emotional pain and unfair laws.

3.2. Probably not realistic, but hopefully so. Prejudice, and even hatred, happens in every country. Perhaps if all South Africans had equality in terms of education, housing and health care, it would be easier to forget about the past's pain and move forward towards a brighter future.

4. He means that once he has been roused from death and seen his fill of change, he warns his children not to be scared if his spirit crumples to dust again.

5.1. "[L]ong-awaited" and "finally".

5.2. His soul will rest when his country is free from inequality and unrest.

6. Poignant.

39. In Memoriam Fallen Patriots – Mzi Mahola (HL and FAL)

- 1. These are places where many people died during the Apartheid era. He mentions the places because, like other Memorials, the fallen in the struggle must be acknowledged. The poet is trying to gather together some kind of communal tribute to those Eastern Cape people who fell before the casspurs of the oppressor.*
- 2. Discuss this point. You may feel as Siegfried Sassoon did, that the Memorial is inadequate recompense for the sacrifice of so many.*
- 3. ESSAY: BOTH HL AND FAL MIGHT EXPECT AN ESSAY QUESTION LIKE THIS ONE: While Mahola's poem might have a distinctly South African bias; there is a very similar thread in the three poems mentioned. All three poems are prescribed for both FAL and HL.*

40. Where are they? – Mzi Mahola (NEP)

As this poem is intended for enrichment and is not examinable, candidates might briefly discuss the question about MziMahola's reasons for writing the poem: In the poem the speaker addresses an older man, possibly a respected elder, commenting on the loss of old values. Mahola may feel strongly that moral codes have been corrupted by a politicised youth. Whatever the motives for vandalising schools, the speaker is saddened to find his own school in rural Lushington in poor repair, and no longer the place of learning the speaker remembers.

The speaker's view of his school in Lushington may have been romanticised when seen through the lens of passing time, but the reader is given the distinct impression that learning and tradition are important to the speaker/the poet.

41. Everything has changed (except graves) – Mzi Mahola (NEP)

1. He goes to visit a graveyard where he remarks on the changes. Visitors to the graveyard give the impression of the place as an equalizer of persons. The speaker is taken aback that white visitors come to tend the graves of relatives. They seem to him to be out of place, yet he acknowledges the contribution made by all these groups of people.

2. The speaker notes the change to the D.R. church and the falling away of the fences that divided cultures. He shows a kindly acceptance of change.

42. Battle songs of the King Tshaka – Traditional (HL&FAL)

1. War cries help to hype up soldiers and give them courage.

2.1. Defiant and determined.

2.2. They are confident, have clear ideas about what their orders are and only expect to be victorious.

3. They act as a cohesive unit. They are resolute in their actions and seem to expect a positive outcome.

4. This stanza speaks of vigilante activity as Qolwane is accused of lying and hating his fellow men. The army has set out to obtain vengeance. Do you agree with vigilante activity in today's times?

This is intended as a group discussion question. Perhaps a debate on this topic would help candidates – time allowing, of course.

5. Chanting Qolwane's crimes would enlist anger for him as his actions have harmed the whole tribe.

6. This is a discussion question. Perhaps it would be fun for the students to chant this together a few times and then open this discussion.

43. Lament for a Warrior – Traditional Sotho (HL&FAL)

1.1. Lament as a verb means to express regret or disappointment about something. Synonyms include: Bewail, deplore and rue amongst others. It has the connotation that the pain over the warrior is immense.

1.2. Using the term "warrior" makes the man sound like a hero and experienced, skilled soldier.

2.2. She feels devastated. It seems that she feels a little guilty that she could not save him.

2.3. Her feelings are probably justified; it seems that she has great love for her, possibly, younger brother.

2.4. It seems that she feels very protective over him as he "belonged" to his mother and sister.

2.5. She wishes that he was still alive and that the worst thing that could happen to him is tripping over a stone.

3.1. Answers will vary, but there is a certain beauty in the chorus of women singing and being concerned about his soul.

3.2. They ask for confirmation that his souls has been "sent" to their ancestors.

3.3. Line ten, which says: "all of them, all gone."

3.4. They cannot give the soldiers proper burials as they were killed and left on the field.

3.5. The image gives the idea that the earth will take care of the dead body and that they will be born to the soil once the body is decomposed.

44. Leader Remember – Gcina Mhlophe (HL&FAL)

1. Nelson Mandela

2.1. Line four, which says that Mandela fought for his freedom “[a]nd that of your people”.

2.2. Mhlophe is suggesting that the “oppressor man” is petty and childish in his behaviour.

2.3. The poet fails to mention a trial or hearing thus suggesting that the Leader was not given a proper or fair trial.

2.4. “[R]otten heart”

3.1. He was a fighter, a lover of freedom, determined, had a vision and had the ability to rise above his suffering and circumstances.

3.2. “In a cruel torture chamber/While your body lay on the cold cement floor”

3.3. She has great admiration, love and reverence for Leader.

4.1. She changes scenes to the heart of Africa. She taps into the soul of that which is larger than just a person and desires that the leader receives, or continues to demonstrate, the qualities of previous freedom fighters.

4.2. This is a discussion question which candidates can use to write an essay by applying the message to three or more poems in the anthology.

5.1. He is joyous, shows a determination to eagerly take on the task of bringing about freedom and equality. One could also say that he feels privileged to use his power for the good of all South Africans.

5.2. Honey is sticky and sweet. If bucketsful are poured over a person they too would be sticky and sweet and remain that way for some time. Just like the joy that washes over him would remain a long time.

5.3. “The pain that touched your soul/ Like a poisoned arrow/ Of wasted years and potential”

5.4. The last four line of this stanza reflect what Nelson Mandela once said: “It always seems impossible until it’s done.” Refer to your knowledge or look up everything Mandela had to do to achieve his “mammoth task”. Candidates should research the work and legacy of Mandela.

6.1. Many Black, Coloured, Indian or “other” lived on or under the breadline. In a country which is so rich in agricultural produce it seems absurd that this should happen.

6.2. Mandela and others could have started a civil war instead of facilitating a peaceful transition.

6.3. People who had suffered during apartheid lost their dignity, so there was a need for him to uplift these people. He had to deal with the abject poverty of many. He had millions of people put their faith in him, which was a great responsibility. He had to lead by example and keep the peace, while facing corruption, betrayal and deceit.

7.1. *She wishes him:*

- *peace in his heart*
- *good eyesight (probably in both a literal and figurative sense)*
- *wisdom/intelligence*
- *a great memory*

7.2. and 7.3. *Both of these are discussion questions. If time and energy allow, a debate about whether the fight is ever really over could be valuable.*

45. A Brighter Dawn for African Women – Gcina Mhlophe (NEP)

- 1. Throughout history “African Women” have been said to be doubly oppressed. Firstly, because of their skin colour and, secondly, because they are of the “weaker sex”.*
- 2. Students should mention or tabulate hardships that women in Africa endure today as well as a few decades ago. Do they think that the hardships have dissipated or increased?*
- 3. They are praised for being: optimistic even when things are difficult; they are grateful to be alive with their families; joyful; peace-loving and gentle protestors against war.*
- 4. They are also depicted as being nurturers; custodians of “old wisdoms” and untiring in their endeavours.*

46. A Young Man’s Thoughts before June the 16th -Fhazel Johennesse (HL&FAL)

- 1. Very likely the young speaker experienced the first June 16th protest rally; the speaker is young enough to speak fondly of an aching need for his mother, yet old enough to enjoy a Friday night beer binge with friends. He would probably be in his very early twenties, or any age from about seventeen. The poem is marked by a sense of urgency, even trepidation. These young protestors did not know what to expect. He is moved to write the poem for any number of reasons: perhaps a sense of occasion; perhaps stirred by feelings of mortality; perhaps out of a strong personal need to express his fears.*
- 2. The strongest evidence to suggest that the speaker has forebodings is the mention of a sunset “drenched in blood” and the repetition of the request for a sad song. While neither image specifically denotes the death of the speaker, the reader is aware, from the first line, of an atmosphere of unease that pervades. Added to which is the speaker’s request for a dirge-like song to mark this special quest.*
- 3. The sunset that is “drenched in blood” is evocative of the young people and children gunned down on that fateful day. The evening would literally have been marked by blood. However, sunsets are often red at night, denoting kindly weather ahead, perhaps better days to come, but bloodshed the next day seems imminent and unavoidable.*
- 4. THIS QUESTION HAS BEEN OFFERED AS THE KIND OF ESSAY CANDIDATES MIGHT EXPECT IN SECTION A. No memo is offered.*

47. *Ojay-Watcher* – Wally Serote (NEP)

- 1. As this poem was included for enrichment, and because it is an interesting and peculiarly obscure poem, you are invited to express what you think. There is no right or wrong answer.*
- 2. This is once again an open-ended question. On issues of race, is any poet, at any time, ever objective? This poem might lead to some impassioned discussion.*