

Humanities 202.150 Spring 2018 – Midterm Exam
Instructor: Titilayo Akanke

Due Date: Saturday March 17, 2018

Instructions: *Provide in-depth written responses to each of the questions. Exams should be typed, double-spaced, using font size 12, font style Times New Roman. Submit your hard copy in class on March 17, 2018, and upload your completed exam to the Blackboard Discussion Board link before midnight on that date. Questions are worth eleven points each.*

***Othello* by William Shakespeare**

1. Describe the tragic flaw (or flaws) that lead to Othello's demise. Without those flaws, how might the outcome of the story be different?
2. Discuss the role of symbolism in Shakespeare's *Othello*. What symbolic value does the handkerchief have? How does it propel the action, precipitate the dramatic crisis, and help to further highlight the themes of love and jealousy in the play? What other symbols are present; or what other possibilities for symbolism exist? What another item (or items) could serve a similar dramatic purpose or enhance the story?
3. What motivates Iago's behavior? Discuss whether or not it is possible for a person to be maliciously evil without cause or motive? What are some characteristics about Iago that might make you understand or empathize with him? Compare Iago to a character in another literary work, play, movie, or real life person that you know or have known. What are the similarities and what differences? How did the person's life progress?
4. Language is a critical aspect of Shakespeare's *Othello* that supports and enhances the overall value of the work. Explain the following passages and/or expressions:
 - a) Brabantio: "O thou art thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?
Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her;
If she in chains of magic were not bound,
Whether a maid, so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage that she shunned
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, t' incur a general mock
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou—to fear, not to delight . . .
That thou hast practiced on her with foul charms . . ." (Shakespeare 12).
 - b) Duke: "Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (Shakespeare 23).
 - c) Iago: "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy?
It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger; . . ." (Shakespeare 58).

(Additional questions on other side of page.)

- d) Othello: "Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof,
Or by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my waked wrath" . . . (Shakespeare 65).

***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe**

5. Of the many characters that Achebe introduces, other than Okonkwo, describe two that you find interesting or compelling and explain why you selected them.
6. Discuss the function, cultural value, and symbolism of the yam in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Cite two passages (with correct parenthetical citation) from the novel in which the value of the yam is expressed.
7. Why does Achebe use proverbs, folktales, and fables throughout the novel? Select two proverbs, quote them and explain their meanings. Give a synopsis of one folktale or fable and explain its meaning.
8. Describe in detail, at least four traditional cultural practices, rituals, ceremonies, beliefs and/or norms practiced by the people of Okonkwo's Umuofia and their neighboring clans. (Since you have already discussed the use of yams, proverbs, folktales and fables, do use include these concepts in this response)
9. Explain this expression offered by a village elder in the homeland of Okonkwo's mother: "Mother is supreme" (Achebe 77). In addressing Okonkwo's sadness about being banished to his mother's homeland, what does the elder say? Does the elder's explanation support or contradict the role of women in the African societies of the era. Explain your response.