




Province of the  
**EASTERN CAPE**  
 EDUCATION

**DIRECTORATE SENIOR CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT (SEN-FET)**

**HOME SCHOOLING SELF-STUDY WORKSHEET**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	English HL	<b>GRADE</b>	10	<b>DATE</b>	16.07.2020
<b>TOPIC</b>	Poem: Reapers in a mieliefeld by <b><u>Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali</u></b>	<b>TERM 1 REVISION</b>	(Please tick) √	<b>TERM 3 CONTENT</b>	(Please tick)
<b>TIME ALLOCATION</b>	50 Minutes	<b><u>TIPS TO KEEP HEALTHY</u></b>			
<b>INSTRUCTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the following pages there is a poem and questions for a Reading Practice Activity.</li> <li>Answer all the questions in your <b>OWN WORDS</b>, unless you are asked for a quotation.</li> <li>Mark your answers for <b>ALL</b> of the questions.</li> <li>Read the <b>NOTES ON CONTENT</b> at the bottom to assist you with the general approach to questions.</li> </ul>	 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>WASH YOUR HANDS</b> thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Alternatively, use hand sanitizer with an alcohol content of at least 60%.</li> <li><b>PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING</b> – keep a distance of 1m away from other people.</li> <li><b>PRACTISE GOOD RESPIRATORY HYGIENE:</b> cough or sneeze into your elbow or tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately after use.</li> <li><b>TRY NOT TO TOUCH YOUR FACE.</b> The virus can be transferred from your hands to your nose, mouth and eyes. It can then enter your body and make you sick.</li> <li><b>STAY AT HOME.</b></li> </ol>			

## Poetry

## Grade 10 HL

Literary features/terms	Explanations
<b>Figurative meaning</b>	Words or phrases used in a non – literal way to create a desired effect; associative or connotative meaning; representational Literary texts often make concentrated use of figurative language (e.g. simile, personification, metaphor)
<b>Literal meaning</b>	The plainest, most direct meaning that can be attributed to words Things / people / places / elements / characters/ persons ideas / incidents / episodes / experiences
<b>Mood</b>	Atmosphere or emotion in written texts; it shows the feeling or the frame of mind of the characters; it also refers to the atmosphere produced by visual, audio or multi – media texts Words that describe mood: fanciful, melancholy, frightening, mysterious, frustrating, romantic, gloomy, sentimental, happy, sorrowful, joyful, suspenseful The mood can be many different things, e.g. a feeling of love / doom. / fear / pride; an atmosphere of chaos. / peace Examples of MOODS include: suspenseful, joyful, depressing, excited, anxious, angry, sad, tense, lonely, suspicious, frightened, disgusted
<b>Theme and message</b>	The central / main idea or ideas of a literary text; a text may contain several themes and these may not be explicit or obvious themes related to love, death, war, or peace Examples of common themes include: growing up or the search for one's identity; significant life events like birth, marriage, death; overcoming ...
<b>Imagery</b>	Words, phrases, and sentences which create images in our minds, such as similes, metaphors, personification; verbal expression of a sensory detail e.g. sight, sound, smell, taste and touch – language that appeals to the seven senses

### **Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali- Biography**

Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali was born in Kwabhanya, which falls within what is now Kwazulu-Natal, in 1940. After completing secondary school he studied by correspondence, getting a diploma with the Premier School of Journalism and Authorship. He worked as a messenger in Johannesburg, drawing on his observations of the city to write the poems that became his first collection, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*. It is one of the best-selling poetry books in South African history. Although he wrote his poetry in the 1970s and 1980s, its focus on oppression and experiences of black life under racial capitalism means that it captures many dynamics which are central to how South Africa has historically worked. These were already well established before the formal arrival of Apartheid, and include systems of cheap migrant labour on farms and in mines, and white ownership of land and the economy.

### **About the poet – Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali**

- South African poet and teacher. He was born in 1940.
- His poetry deals mostly with the devastating effects of life under Apartheid.

#### **Reapers in a Mieliefield : Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali**

Faces furrowed and wet with sweat,  
Bags tied to their wasp waists,  
women reapers bend mielie stalks,  
break cobs in rustling sheaths,  
toss them in the bags 5  
and move through row upon row of maize.

Behind them, like a desert tanker,  
a dust-raising tractor  
pulls a trailer,  
driven by a pipe-puffing man 10  
flashing tobacco-stained teeth  
as yellow as the harvested grain.

He stops to pick up bags loaded by thick-limbed labourers  
In vests baked  
brown with dust. 15

The sun lashes  
the workers with a red-hot rod;  
they stop for a while  
to wipe a brine-bathed  
brow 20  
and drink from battered cans  
bubbling with malty “maheu”

Thirst is slaked in seconds,  
Men jerk bags like feather cushions  
And women become prancing wild mares;  
soon the day’s work will be done  
and the reapers will rest in their kraals.

#### **Glossary:**

Furrowed	deeply wrinkled
Sheaths	casings
Tanker	truck used to transport goods
Brine	salty water
Maheu	mielie meal gruel, slightly fermented and drunk cold
Slaked	quenched
Kraals	enclosures/village

### **About the poem:**

- The poem has 29 lines
- The poem is written in free verse – there is not set rhythm or rhyme.
- The enjambed lines allow for a free flow of ideas as the difficult working conditions of the labourers are described.
- The five stanzas are rich with sound devices and many similes and metaphors.
- The word choice (diction) has a negative connotation and implies harshness, inhumane treatment and slavery

### **Tone and Mood:**

- It is oppressive and hints at slavery. It is illustrated by the description of the conditions under which the labourers work.

### **Theme:**

- The poet highlights the harsh working conditions of labourers. He describes the suffering of the workers through the monotonous routine, the sweat and exhaustion that comes with this kind of manual labour.

### **Analysis:**

- Mtshali points out the harsh conditions under which many labourers work.
- He records the suffering of the workers as he evokes the tedium, sweat and exhaustion of this kind of manual labour.
- The workers lives are hard- they work hard in hot, dry and dusty conditions.
- They are treated almost as animals.
- The poem describes their work –it does not really comment on the situation.
- It still leaves the readers with an understanding of the way the workers are seen as unimportant and how their lives are almost completely all about hard labour.

# Line-by-line analysis

## Reapers in a mieliefield

## Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali

Alliteration  
Assonance

A negative connotation suggesting concentration and hard labour

wrinkled

Where the mielies are stored

1. Faces furrowed and wet with sweat,

Repetition of the 'e' sound emphasizes how hard the labourers are working

2. Bags tied to their wasp waists,

It is a physically demanding job.

3. women reapers bend mielie stalks,

4. break cobs in rustling sheaths,

onomatopia

Alliteration & metaphor emphasizes their thin wrists - underfed - horrible work conditions & the poor treatment they receive

5. toss them in the bags

The action of picking mielies is described 'row upon row' which creates a sense of monotony.

6. and move through row upon row of maize.

Repetition

The tractor blows up dust- ties in with the idea of the desert tanker  
Emphasizes the dry and hot conditions- like a desert

Simile

7. Behind them, like a desert tanker

8. a dust-raising tractor

9. pulls a trailer,

alliteration

10. driven by a pipe-puffing man

- The farmer - in charge & drives tractor while the labourers do all the hard work.  
- The farmer is part of the machine- he does not do the real physical labour/ like a robot, no sympathy

simile

11. flashing tobacco-stained teeth

12. as yellow as the harvested grain.

13. He stops to pick up bags loaded by thick-

- Thick-limbed (have well-build arms) because of the hard labour they perform every day.  
- They wear vests because of the extreme heat.

14. limbed labourers

alliteration

15. in vests baked

16. brown with dust.

- The workers are working in the blazing sun. EXTREMELY HOT!!!  
- The sun is personified 'lashes the workers'  
- This image suggests the cruel condition under which the labourers work.  
- 'red hot rod' indicates how hot it is in the sun- has connotations of being painful.

17. The sun lashes

18. the workers with a red-hot rod;

19. they stop for a while

20. To wipe a brine-bathed

21. brow

22. and drink from battered cans

- They take a break  
- 'bribed-bathed brow'- (sweat)- alliteration which speaks to the hot conditions they are working in and how hard they are working.  
- They 'drink from bitter cans'- they are also battered by the hard labour they have to endure.  
- 'battered cans' highlights the fact that they are poor- they do not have neat shiny flasks.  
- 'maheu' - fermented maize drink

onomatopia

23. bubbling with malty 'maheu'

Personification  
Alliteration  
assonance

alliteration

simile

metaphor

24. Thirst is slaked in seconds,

25. Men jerk bags like feather cushions

26. and women become prancing wild

27. mares;

Female horses

28. soon the day's work will be done

29. and the reapers will rest in their kraals.

- The labourers have quenched their thirst

- The men are strong from doing hard labour and can easily lift the heavy bags.
- Women are compared to 'prancing wild mares'- they look forward to the end of the day. Excited.
- 'the reapers will rest in their kraals'- their homes were often referred to as 'kraals', a 'kraal' is also an enclosure where cattle is kept.
- It could imply that the workers are dehumanised and compared to cattle.

**Glossary:**

Furrowed

deeply wrinkled

Sheaths

casings

Tanker

truck used to transport goods

Brine

salty water

Maheu

mielie meal gruel, slightly fermented and drunk cold

Slaked

quenched

Kraals

enclosures/village

Read the poem above and answer the questions that follow.

A: Essay Question [10]

B: Contextual Questions [10]

**A. Essay question**

In **'Reapers in the Mielifield'**, Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali points out the harsh conditions under which the reapers work.

With close reference to diction, imagery and tone, discuss how the above statement is reflected in the poem. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 150-200 words. [10]

**B. Contextual questions**

1. What are the labourers doing? (1)

---

---

---

---

2. Are the weather conditions conducive for what they are doing? Give reasons for your answer. (2)

---

---

---

---

---

3. Discuss how the personification in stanza 4 contributes to our understanding of the labourers' working conditions. (2)

---

---

---

---

---

4. In the last stanza, the poet states that after a break the 'Men jerk bags like feather cushions.

4.1 Identify the figure of speech. (1)

---

---

4.2 Explain how the figure of speech mentioned above illustrates the effects of the break. (2)

---

---

---

---

5. Does the poet succeed in conveying the extreme working conditions of the workers? Discuss your view. (2)

---

---

---

**TOTAL: 10 MARKS**



## SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTION- MEMO

The harsh conditions under which the reapers work.

The following points can be included:

### Introduction

In this poem the poet points out the harsh conditions under which many labourers work. He faithfully records the suffering of the workers as he evokes the tedium, the sweat and exhaustion of this kind of manual labour.

- The speaker mentions that the labourers are women.
- They are doing a very laborious job under very hot and difficult conditions.
- One can also assume that they are poorly paid.
- Their practised action of picking mielies is described → a sense of monotony is created by this description.

### Diction: Choice of words

-The men working in the fields are thick-limbed (have well-built arms) because of the hard labour they perform every day.

They are 'earthy' people

They wear vests because of the extreme heat and they are caked with dirt from their labour.

- Furrowed-
- dust-raising,

### Imagery: figurative language

- Alliteration: faces furrowed: This is a negative image that suggests deep concentration and hard work is taking place.
- 'furrowed' → wrinkled
- wasp waists: 'wasp waists' refers to the fact that the reapers are women and could also possibly imply that they are underfed → this speaks to the horrible conditions under which they work and the poor treatment that they receive.
- emphasizes the women's large posteriors → also implies a reference to their femininity'
- the reapers will rest in their kraals' → although their homes were often referred to as 'kraals', a 'kraal' is also an enclosure where cattle is kept.
- One could imply that the workers are dehumanised and compared to cattle.

### Other examples

-pipe-puffing, baked brown, brime-bathed brow, battered cans bubbling, slaked in seconds, day's work will be done, reapers will rest

- Simile: 'like a desert tanker'- The tractor blows up dust → ties in with the idea of the desert tanker
- 'like feather cushions
- Metaphors:

- Assonance: 'wet with sweat'  
The repetition of the 'e' sound which aids the internal rhyme of the poem and also emphasizes how hard the labourers are working.
- Personification: The sun is personified 'lashes the workers'. The workers are working in the blazing sun. This image also suggests the cruel conditions under which the labourers work.

'red hot rod' → indicates how hot it is out in the sun → has connotations of being painful.

**Tone: the voice in the poem helps to reveal the mood of the poem**

### **Mood**

- The mood is oppressive and this is illustrated by the description of the conditions under which the labourers work.

### **SAMPLE CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS- MEMO**

1. What are the labourers doing?  
**They are harvesting mealies** (1)
2. Are the weather conditions conducive for what they are doing? Give reasons for your answer. (2)

**The sun is very hot. '...lashes the workers with a red-hot rod.' This means the sun is unbearable as a result the labourers have to constantly wipe the sweat on their faces**

3. Discuss how the personification in stanza 4 contributes to our understanding of the labourers' working conditions. (2)

**The sun is personified as a slave driver or prison warden who carries a red-hot rod which he uses to lash the workers to force them to keep working. This image evokes extreme pain and suffering. The conditions they work under are dreadful**

4. In the last stanza, the poet states that after a break the 'Men jerk bags like feather cushions. (1)

4.1 Identify the figure of speech.

**Simile**

- 4.2 Explain how the figure of speech mentioned above illustrates the effects of the break. (2)

**Heavy bags which contain mealies become as light as bags which contain feathers. This shows the renewed energy the men have as a result of the break.**

5. Does the poet succeed in conveying the extreme working conditions of the workers? Discuss your view. (2)

**The poet does convey the extreme working conditions of these workers. The work is physically demanding. We know this because he describes their faces as furrowed and the exertion makes them wet with sweat. It is also very dusty work. Their vests are baked/ brown with dust. We also know that the sun beats down on them mercilessly. The sun lashes/ the workers with/ a red-hot rod**

**TOTAL [10]**