THE WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

TEST DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, PLOT 16/18 IJAIYE ROAD, OGBA
PRIVATE MAIL BAG NO. 1076, YABA, LAGOS

HARMONIZED LIST OF LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH TEXTS FOR THE WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION (WASSCE) 2026-2030

TYPE OF TEXT	SELECTED TEXT
SHAKESPEAREAN TEXT	**Antony and Cleopatra**
AFRICAN PROSE	**1. Pede Hollist : *So the Path Does not Die*** **2. Elma Shaw : *Redemption Road***
NON-AFRICAN PROSE	**1. Harper Lee : *To Kill a Mocking Bird*** **2. Susanne Bellefeuille : *Path of Lucas: The Journey He Endured***
AFRICAN DRAMA	**1. Bosede Ademilua- Afolayan : *Once Upon an Elephant*** **2. Efua Sutherland : *The Marriage of Anansewa***
NON-AFRICAN DRAMA	**1. J. D. Priestley : *An Inspector Calls*** **2. Robert Bolt : *A Man for all Seasons***
AFRICAN POETRY	**1. Gabriel Okara : *Once Upon a Time*** **2. Elizabeth L. A. Kamara : *New Tongue*** **3. Wole Soyinka : *Night*** **4. Niyi Osundare : *Not my Business*** **5. S.O.H. Afriyie–Vidza : *Hearty Garlands*** **6. Syl Cheney-Coker : *The Breast of The Sea***
NON-AFRICAN POETRY	**1. Lord Byron : *She Walks in Beauty*** **2. Geoffrey Chaucer : *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (shortened)** ***3.* Seamus Heaney : *Digging*** **4. Maya Angelou : *Still I Rise*** ***5.* Fleur Adcock : *The Telephone Call*** ***6.* Wilfred Wilson Gipson : *The Stone***

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LIST OF PRESCRIBED POEMS FOR LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH (2026-2030)

AFRICAN POETRY

1. Gabriel Okara – *Once Upon a Time*

Once upon a time, son,
they used to laugh with their hearts
and laugh with their eyes:
but now they only laugh with their teeth,
while their ice-block-cold eyes
search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed
they used to shake hands with their hearts:
but that's gone, son.
Now they shake hands without hearts
while their left hands search
my empty pockets.

'Feel at home!' 'Come again':
they say, and when I come
again and feel
at home, once, twice,
there will be no thrice-
for then I find doors shut on me.

So I have learned many things, son.
I have learned to wear many faces
like dresses – home face,
office face, street face, host face,
cocktail face, with all their conforming smiles
like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned too
to laugh with only my teeth

and shake hands without my heart.
I have also learned to say, 'Goodbye',
when I mean 'Good-riddance':
to say 'Glad to meet you',
without being glad; and to say 'It's been
nice talking to you', after being bored.

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But believe me, son.
I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you. I want
to unlearn all these muting things.
Most of all, I want to relearn
how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror
shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

So show me, son,
how to laugh; show me how
I used to laugh and smile
once upon a time when I was like you.

2. Elizabeth L. A. Kamara – *New Tongue*

They speak in a new tongue
And dance new dances
Minds battered into new modes and shapes
Their eyes revel in the wonder of the new
Embraced and bound hearts with impregnable chains
The old songs as disregarded dreams
Remnants of a past.
Ties of family and friendship
Loosened, broken, burnt
The ashes strewn into the bottomless sea
As fishes swim by
Careless of the loss
Mindful of where they dare
A new generation
Careless of bonds
Of family
Of tradition
Of heritage
They care not
Nor revere the old
Their minds turn inwards
Only inwards
Like the insides of clothes
That marry the bodies of mankind

No room for elders
No,
Not even on the edge of their minds
Their ears blocked to the old tongue
And ways of doing things

Glorying in their newness of a borrowed tongue and culture
Every man
For himself

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By himself
Of himself
A strange coldness descending like snow covered mountain
Or like bathing at the back of the house
On a rainy July day
The gusts of wind falling trees
Carting roofs away
Tugging skirts
And swirling debris in the air

The borrowed shoes dance
Their borrowed minds parted the red sea long ago
They hang the last lock on their culture
And glide into the future
Without a backward glance.

3. Wole Soyinka – ***Night***

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my brow.
I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds,
to dare.
Exacerbation from your subtle plough.
Woman as a clam, on the sea's crescent.
I saw your jealous eye quench the sea's
Fluorescence, dance on the pulse incessant
Of the waves. And I stood, drained
Submitting like the sands, blood and brine
Coursing to the roots. Night, you rained
Serrated shadows through dank leaves
Till, bathed in warm suffusion of your dappled cells
Sensations pained me, faceless, silent as night thieves.
Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth
I must hear none! These misted cells will yet
Undo me; naked, unbidden, at Night's muted birth.

4. Niyi Osundare – *Not my Business*

They picked Akanni up one morning
Beat him soft like clay
And stuffed him down the belly
Of a waiting jeep.

What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

They came one night
Booted the whole house awake
And dragged Danladi out,
Then off to a lengthy absence.

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What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

Chinwe went to work one day
Only to find her job was gone:
No query, no warning, no probe –
Just one neat sack for a stainless record.

What business of mine is it
So long they don't take the yam
From my savouring mouth?

And then one evening
As I sat down to eat my yam
A knock on the door froze my hungry hand.

The jeep was waiting on my bewildered lawn
Waiting, waiting in its usual silence.

5. S.O.H. Afriyie –Vidza – ***Hearty garlands***

For a person who has lived as long
And one who, as well, has done much
As you
Life's whole process blooms into stark beauty
And failures give no trite, crippling regrets

Yet. On occasion, shamed, horrid green-eyed
Envy fights benign Felicitation exclusively couched
For you
By us who won't be left out of today's joy
And must send you warn hearty birthday garlands

You must, you wondrous mentor of rouges like us,
Receive copious blessings today; d stay well blessed
To you
Age eighty-five is life's smiley, cloudless dawn
It is the gainful twilight of fulfilled dreams

Hope now nods in contented concert with spent desires
Now restful Hope neither nags nor raves nor rants
At you
But your heart sits on garlanded satis shores
Looking out to sea for health delivering vessels

From the subdued heights of your lofty conquered toils
And from flights of vanquished steps, at five and eighty,
Must you
Watch us strive and beat your mahogany chest in pride
You must shake your own hands like iroko agama

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March on, old boy, do, and clinch yonder untamed gain
For yon lies mop-up work and higher tasks still
By you
To be accomplished; then must you hear trumpet sound
That to a guru must blow solo musical bravo

As you give yourself a cozy comfy treat today
Reclining in reminiscing and fondling a lingering smile
Could you
A certain style of locomotion all your own recall,
Best and aptly but simply dubbed ‘poetic walking’?

6. Syl Cheney– Coker – *The Breast of the Sea*

After our bloody century, the sea will groan
under its weight, somewhere between breasts and anus.
Filled with toxins, her belly will not yield new islands
even though the orphans of East Timor wish it so.
The sea is only capable of so much history:
Noah's monologue, the Middle Passage's cargoes,
Darwin's examination of the turtle's shit,
the remains of the Titanic, and a diver's story
about how the coelacanth was recaptured.
Anything else is only a fractured chela
we cannot preserve, once the sea's belly
has washed itself clean of our century's blight.
Throbbing, the sea's breasts will console some orphans,
but Sierra Leone won't be worth a raped woman's cry,
despite her broken back, this shredded garment,
her hands swimming like horrors of red corals.
But do you, O Sea, long-suffering mistress,
have the balm to heal the wound of her children,
hand to foot the axe, alluvial river flowing into you?

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NON-AFRICAN POETRY

1. **Lord Byron – *She Walks in Beauty***

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

2. **Geoffrey Chaucer – *The Nun's Priest's Tale***

Once, long ago, there dwelt a poor old widow
In a small cottage, by a little meadow
Beside a grove and standing in a dale.
This widow-woman of whom I tell my tale
Since the sad day when last she was a wife
Had led a very patient, simple life.
Little she had in capital or rent.
But still, by making do with what God sent.
She kept herself and her two daughters going.
Three hefty sows - no more - were all her showing.
Three cows as well; there was a sheep called Molly.
Sooty her hall, her kitchen melancholy,
And there she ate full many a slender meal;
There was no sauce piquante to spice her veal,
No dainty morsel ever passed her throat,
According to her cloth she cut her coat.
Repletion never left her in disquiet
And all her physic was a temperate diet,
Hard work for exercise and heart's content.
And rich man's gout did nothing to prevent

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Her dancing, apoplexy struck her not;
She drank no wine, nor white, nor red had got.
Her board was mostly served with white and black,
Milk and brown bread, in which she found no lack;
Broiled bacon or an egg or two were common,
She was in fact a sort of dairy-woman.
She had a yard that was enclosed about
By a stockade and a dry ditch without,
In which she kept a cock called Chanticleer.
In all the land for crowing he'd no peer;
His voice was jollier than the organ blowing
In church on Sundays, he was great at crowing.
Far, far more regular than any clock
Or abbey bell the crowing of this cock.
The equinoctial wheel and its position*
At each ascent he knew by intuition;
At every hour - fifteen degrees of movement -
He crowed so well there could be no improvement.
His comb was redder than fine coral, tall
And battlemented like a castle wall,
His bill was black and shone as bright as jet,
Like azure were his legs and they were set
On azure toes with nails of lily white,
Like burnished gold his feathers, flaming bright.
This gentlecock was master in some measure
Of seven hens, all there to do his pleasure.
They were his sisters and his paramours,
Coloured like him in all particulars;
She with the loveliest dyes upon her throat
Was known as gracious Lady Pertelote.
Courteous she was, discreet and debonair,
Companionable too, and took such care
In her deportment, since she was seven days old
She held the heart of Chanticleer controlled,
Locked up securely in her every limb;
what a happiness his love to him!
And such a joy it was to hear them sing,
As when the glorious sun began to spring.
In sweet accord, My Love is far from land*
- For in those far off days I understand
All birds and animals could speak and sing.

(shortened)

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3. **Seamus Heaney – *Digging***

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper.
He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

4. Maya Angelou – *Still I Rise*

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

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Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
’Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
‘Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

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5. Fleur Adcock – *The Telephone Call*

They asked me ‘Are you sitting down?
Right? This is Universal Lotteries’,
they said. ‘You’ve won the top prize,
the Ultra-super Global Special.

What would you do with a million pounds?
Or, actually, with more than a million –
not that it makes a lot of difference
once you’re a millionaire.’ And they laughed.

‘Are you OK?’ they asked – ‘Still there?
Come on, now, tell us, how does it feel?’
I said ‘I just…I can’t believe it!’
They said ‘That’s what they all say.
What else? Go on, tell us about it.’
I said ‘I feel the top of my head
has floated off, out through the window,
revolving like a flying saucer.’
That’s unusual’ they said. ‘Go on.’
I said ‘I’m finding it hard to talk.
My throat’s gone dry, my nose is tingling.
I think I’m going to sneeze – or cry.’
‘That’s right’ they said, ‘don’t be ashamed
of giving way to your emotions.
It isn’t every day you hear
you’re going to get a million pounds.

Relax, now, have a little cry;
we’ll give you a moment…’ ‘Hang on!’ I said.
‘I haven’t bought a lottery ticket
for years and years. And what did you say
the company’s called?’ They laughed again.
‘Not to worry about a ticket.
We’re Universal. We operate
A retrospective Chances Module.

Nearly everyone’s bought a ticket
in some lottery or another,
once at least. We buy up the files,
feed the names into our computer,
and see who the lucky person is.’
‘Well, that’s incredible’ I said.
‘It’s marvelous. I still can’t quite…
I’ll believe it when I see the cheque.’

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‘Oh,’ they said, ‘there’s no cheque.’
‘But the money?’ ‘We don’t deal in money.
Experiences are what we deal in.
You’ve had a great experience, right?
Exciting? Something you’ll remember?
That’s your prize. So congratulations
from all of us at Universal.
Have a nice day!’ And the line went dead.

6. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson – *The Stone*

“And will you cut a stone for him,
To set above his head?
And will you cut a stone for him—
A stone for him?" she said.

Three days before, a splintered rock
Had struck her lover dead—
Had struck him in the quarry dead,
Where, careless of a warning call,
He loitered, while the shot was fired—
A lively stripling, brave and tall,
And sure of all his heart desired . . .
A flash, a shock,
A rumbling fall . . .
And, broken 'neath the broken rock,
A lifeless heap, with face of clay,
And still as any stone he lay,
With eyes that saw the end of all.

I went to break the news to her:
And I could hear my own heart beat
With dread of what my lips might say;
But some poor fool had sped before;
And, flinging wide her father's door,
Had blurted out the news to her,
Had struck her lover dead for her,
Had struck the girl's heart dead in her,
Had struck life, lifeless, at a word,
And dropped it at her feet:
Then hurried on his witless way,
Scarce knowing she had heard.

And when I came, she stood alone—
A woman, turned to stone:
And, though no word at all she said,

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I knew that all was known.

Because her heart was dead,
She did not sigh nor moan.
His mother wept:
She could not weep.
Her lover slept:
She could not sleep.
Three days, three nights,
She did not stir:
Three days, three nights,
Were one to her,
Who never closed her eyes
From sunset to sunrise,
From dawn to evenfall—
Her tearless, staring eyes,
That, seeing naught, saw all.

The fourth night when I came from work,
I found her at my door.
"And will you cut a stone for him?"
She said: and spoke no more:
But followed me, as I went in,
And sank upon a chair;
And fixed her grey eyes on my face,
With still, unseeing stare.
And, as she waited patiently,
I could not bear to feel
Those still, grey eyes that followed me,
Those eyes that plucked the heart from me,
Those eyes that sucked the breath from me
And curdled the warm blood in me,
Those eyes that cut me to the bone,
And cut my marrow like cold steel.

And so I rose and sought a stone;
And cut it smooth and square:
And, as I worked, she sat and watched,
Beside me, in her chair.
Night after night, by candlelight,
I cut her lover's name:
Night after night, so still and white,
And like a ghost she came;
And sat beside me, in her chair,
And watched with eyes aflame.

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She eyed each stroke,
And hardly stirred:
she never spoke
A single word:
And not a sound or murmur broke
The quiet, save the mallet stroke.

With still eyes ever on my hands,
With eyes that seemed to burn my hands,
My wincing, overwearied hands,
She watched, with bloodless lips apart,
And silent, indrawn breath:
And every stroke my chisel cut,
Death cut still deeper in her heart:
The two of us were chiselling,
Together, I and Death.

And when at length my job was done,
And I had laid the mallet by,
As if, at last, her peace were won,
She breathed his name, and, with a sigh,
Passed slowly through the open door:
And never crossed my threshold more.

Next night I laboured late, alone,
To cut her name upon the stone.

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