

**MWANGAZA SECONDARY SCHOOL
APRIL HOLIDAY ASSIGNMENT 2014
FORM 4 ENGLISH**

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

“Sympathy”

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass.
And the river flows like a stream of grass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its petals steals-
I know what the caged birds feels!

I know why the caged bird beats its wings
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he rather would be on the branch a – swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting-
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bossom sore,
When he beats his bars and would be free;
It is not a song of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart’s deep core,
But a plea that upward to heaven he fings –
I know why the caged bird sings!

(Adapted from the poem by Laurence Donbar in ‘American Negro Poetry’ edited by ArnaBomtemps. New York: Hill and Waug 1974)

Questions

- (a) Explain briefly what the poem is about. (3 marks)
- (b) What does the poet focus on in each of the three stanzas? (6 marks)
- (c) How would you describe the persona’s feelings towards the caged bird? (4 marks)
- (d) What can we infer about the persona’s own experiences? (3 marks)
- (e) Identify a simile in the first stanza and explain why it is used. (2 marks)
- (f) Explain the meaning of the following lines:
 - (i) And the faint perfume from the petals steals. (1 mark)
- (g) Supply another suitable title for this poem. (1 mark)