QUESTION 1: POETRY – ESSAY QUESTION

Read the poem below and then answer the question that follows.

FIRST DAY AFTER THE WAR – Mazisi Kunene

1 We heard the songs of a wedding party.
2 We saw a soft light
3 Coiling round the young blades of grass
4 At first we hesitated, then we saw her footprints,
5 Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom!
6 She woke us up with a smile saying,
7 'What day is this that comes suddenly?'
8 We said, 'It is the first day after the war'.
9 Then without waiting we ran to the open space
10 Ululating to the mountains and the pathways
11 Calling people from all the circles of the earth.
12 We shook up the old man demanding a festival
13 We asked for all the first fruits of the season.
14 We held hands with a stranger
15 We shouted across the waterfalls
16 People came from all lands
17 It was the first day of peace.
18 We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon.

In 'First Day after the War', the speaker focuses on the celebration of new beginnings.

With close reference to diction, imagery and tone, critically discuss the validity of this statement.

Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 250–300 words (about ONE page).
SECTION A: POETRY

PRESCRIBED POETRY

QUESTION 1: POETRY – ESSAY QUESTION

'FIRST DAY AFTER THE WAR' – Mazisi Kunene

➢ Use the following points, among others, as a guideline to marking this question.
➢ Responses might differ, depending on the candidate's sensitivity to and understanding of the poem.

The poem is a celebration of the end of apartheid and of new beginnings.

➢ The poem deals with excitement and the desire to tell people about the dawn of a new era, which suggests a fresh start and is a symbol of hope and change.
➢ The wedding metaphor symbolises celebration. It is the beginning of a new life and a time of peace and harmony. The reference to the 'songs' at the 'wedding party' conveys joyous celebration.
➢ The allusion to freedom illustrates the lifting of the restrictions and oppression of the apartheid era. This is cause for jubilation.
➢ ‘Then without waiting we ran to the open space' conveys the people's excitement. Their joy is spontaneous, unrestrained and boundless. They erupt in celebration.
➢ The word, 'suddenly' suggests that the ending of oppression and subsequent unification are unexpected pleasures to be celebrated.
➢ The end of the war, together with the eradication of suffering, is met with great festivity and jubilation.
➢ Words like 'calling', 'shook', 'demanding' and 'shouted' are forceful. They convey the people's enthusiasm and determination to enjoy the occasion. They are unable to contain their joy, which is expressed in wild actions.
➢ The use of the onomatopoeic word, 'ululating' conveys the sound of the people's spontaneity and expression of ecstasy and elation. The word is associated with traditional forms of African celebration.
➢ The repetition of ‘we' emphasises the coming together of people who were previously divided. This is reinforced by their holding hands – a gesture of intimacy and comfort. There is a sense of harmony, ubuntu and accord. A common humanity is celebrated.
➢ Because of the celebratory mood, people demand the 'first fruits of the season'. The occasion is so great that only the best will do. It is also an expression of gratitude for blessings bestowed.
➢ The announcement of the advent of democracy is shared with all. The spirit is so infectious that people 'came from all the lands' to join the unification.
➢ Even the ancestors join the celebration. They are proud and 'travelling tall'.
➢ The tone initially is one of disbelief that oppression has come to an end, then restrained joy, followed by ecstatic celebration, jubilance and pride. The tone might also be celebratory/enthusiastic/excited.
➢ [A cogent 'Invalid' response is unlikely. However, treat all responses on their merits.]