

**Mongane Wally Serote**  
**City Johannesburg**  
**Some questions to challenge you!**

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Mongane Wally Serote was born in Sophiatown in 1944. He grew up during the violent days of the apartheid era and was arrested on a few occasions, even serving nine months in solitary confinement in 1969 for an unspecified "crime", but was finally released without any charges being brought against him.

The poet was also under "house arrest" for three years, i.e. he was made a prisoner in his own house and forbidden to leave the grounds for whatever reason. Indeed, if a person was "banned" or placed under house arrest, there was no recourse to law. One could not challenge it -- nor did the banning authorities have to prove anything or even produce any evidence whatever to justify their decision.

In 1974 Serote was awarded the Fulbright scholarship which enabled him to study Fine Arts at the Columbia University in New York. He returned to South Africa in 1979 but chose to go into self-exile in Botswana, returning to South Africa only in 1990 with the collapse of the apartheid system. He would serve in the first post-apartheid parliament. He is renowned for his poetry, although he has also written short stories and a couple of novels. His work has won him several awards.

1. "This way I salute you:

My hand pulses to my back trousers pocket  
Or into my inner jacket pocket  
For my pass, my life,  
Jo'burg City."

- Contrast the way in which the poet salutes the city with a real salute. (4)
- What was a pass? Why does the poet refer to it as "my life"? (4)
- Comment on the use of the word "pulses". (4)
- Why would the poet have carried his pass in his "back trousers pocket"? (4)

2. "My hand like a starved snake rears my pockets

For my thin, ever lean wallet,  
While my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger."

- One textbook refers to the expression "like a starved snake" as a metaphor. Is this correct? (4)
- What similarities are there between a hand and a starved snake? (2)
- Was it necessary to speak of the snake as "starved"? (4)
- Comment on the expression, "my stomach groans a friendly smile to hunger". (4)

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