

## ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English.*

1. 'hand-to-hand / is how it will be, a life-and-death / fight with the fiend. Whichever one death fells / must deem it a just judgement by God' (BEOWULF trans. Seamus Heaney). What is the religion of *Beowulf* and is it translatable?
2. 'Ic eom wundorlicu wiht; ne mæg word spreca, / mældan for monnum, þeah ic muþ hæbbe, / wide wombe ... / Ic wæs on ceole ond mines cnosles ma.' ('I am a curious creature; I cannot speak words, / declaim before me, though I have a mouth, / a wide belly ... / I was on a ship with more of my kind.') What are Anglo-Saxon riddles about?
3. 'What stiringe þat þu felist of þi flesh or of þe fende, pleasunt or peynful, bitter or sweete, likyng or dredful, gladsum or sorrowful, þat wold drawe downe þi þou tezte and þi desire fro þe loue of Ihesu to worldly vanite' (WALTER HILTON). Discuss the nature of opposition in the medieval period.
4. 'The Wife of Bath is the first ordinary woman in English literature' (MARION TURNER). Discuss.
5. Is 'Middle English' a good way of describing whatever it is that it purports to describe?
6. 'But after my makynge wryte more trewe; / So oft adaye I mot thy werk renewe, / It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape, / And al is thorough thy negligence and rape' (GEOFFREY CHAUCER). Is the relationship between medieval poets and scribes always adversarial?
7. Did Langland have a theological position?
8. 'There would he at Christmas-tide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the

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players beside' (WILLIAM ROPER on Thomas More). What does this tell us about More, or household drama, or both?

9. 'The book of psalms belongs with Petrarch's *Rime sparse* as a master text through which the writers of the Renaissance tested their capacities, not only as worshippers and theologians but as poets and critics' (ROLAND GREENE). Discuss.
10. Explore any relationship between lyric and narrative in early modern writing.
11. How much of Shakespeare didn't Shakespeare write, and does it matter?
12. 'Must I be Subject and Spectator too? / Or were the Sufferings and Sins too few / To be sustain'd by me, perform'd by you?' (KATHERINE PHILLIPS). Discuss the role(s) of women in the early modern period.
13. 'For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright, / Who art as black as hell, as dark as night' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Discuss **EITHER** blackness **OR** swearing in the light of this quotation.
14. Discuss the impact of voyages outside Europe on any text or texts from the early modern period.
15. 'Be comforted. / Let's make us medicines of our great revenge / To cure this deadly grief' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Was revenge the cure, or in need of one?
16. 'He would have sold his part of Paradise / For ready money' (BEN JONSON). Explore relationships between different economies of value in early modern writing.
17. 'And should I at your harmless innocence / Melt, as I doe, yet public reason just, / Honour and Empire with revenge enlarg'd, / By conquering this new World, compels me now / To do what else though damnd I should abhorre' (JOHN MILTON). Explore attitudes to conquest in one or more text in the light of this quotation.
18. What did Greece **OR** Rome **OR** Italy **OR** France **OR** Spain do for any writer or writers?

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19. 'Laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly' (THOMAS HOBBS). Discuss.
20. 'A tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace' (T. S. ELIOT). Does this description fit any poet in the early modern period?
21. When and why do you think the novel began?
22. 'In a word, Madam, you have seized my heart, and I dare tell you, I am your *Negro Slave*. You startle at this expression, Madam; but I love to be sincere' (JULIUS SOUBISE). Discuss power relations **OR** sincerity in the light of this quotation.
23. Does satire depend on strange conjunctions?
24. 'No author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good-breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself' (LAURENCE STERNE). Discuss in relation to Sterne **OR** any other novelist.
25. 'From the crowded theatre to the sick chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dullness, and the pain, there is but one step' (WILLIAM HAZLITT). Discuss.
26. 'The poem will please if it is lively — if it is stupid it will fail — but I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing' (LORD BYRON to his publisher John Murray). Discuss revision **AND/OR** censorship in the light of this quotation.
27. 'Poetry Fetter'd, Fetters the Human Race' (WILLIAM BLAKE). Discuss in relation to Blake **OR** any other poet.
28. 'Unlike our founding (sacred) texts, childhood as some kind of authentic or authenticating origin—or legitimating creation myth—is remarkably impoverished' (ADAM PHILLIPS). Discuss in relation to **EITHER** the Romantics **OR** children's literature.

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29. What good came of the Gothic? Apart from vampires, that is. Oh and maybe Frankenstein's monster.
30. 'Women are now so highly cultivated, and political subjects are at present of so much importance, of such high interest, you can hardly expect, Helen, that you, as a rational being, can satisfy yourself with the common namby-pamby little missy phrase, "ladies have nothing to do with politics"' (MARIA EDGEWORTH). Discuss.
31. How does any **ONE** innovation in media (e.g. newspapers, telegrams, cinema, letters) influence the representation of narrative time in any period?
32. 'Thus while I tell the truth about loobies, my reader's imagination need not be entirely excluded from an occupation with lords' (GEORGE ELIOT). Discuss representations of low-life characters in the light of this quotation.
33. 'Clothes are our friends, or our foes all the days of our life; they control our very health, to say nothing of our worldly credit' (H. R. HAWEIS). Discuss.
34. 'One has only to skim those old forgotten novels and listen to the tone of voice in which they are written to divine that the writer was meeting criticism; she was saying this by way of aggression, or that by way of conciliation' (VIRGINIA WOOLF). Discuss.
35. 'He leaned above me, thinking that I slept / And could not hear him; but I heard him say, / "Poor child, poor child": and as he turned away / Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept' (CHRISTINA ROSETTI). Discuss representations of death in the light of this quotation.
36. 'The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder' (FREDERICK DOUGLASS). Are slave narratives powerful?
37. 'Victorian women poets represent poetry as a humanizing agent in a society where economic and social hierarchies are increasingly being defined in terms of scientific explanations of the natural world' (HELEN GROTH). Discuss.

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38. 'In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of nature learning how to write' (MARCUS CLARKE). Are colonial frontiers 'weird'?
39. 'I am tired too soon; I could have danced down hours two years gone hence and felt no wearier' (A. C. SWINBURNE). What were the literary energies of ennui?
40. 'It is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it. I can assure my reader, that Walden has a reasonably tight bottom' (HENRY DAVID THOREAU). What is it about men and wanting to get to the bottom of things?
41. Pick a single year and explain why you think it matters for literary history.
42. 'He is an old-fashioned letter-writer, the essence of the old fashion of letter-writing lying, as with true essay-writing, in the dexterous availing oneself of accident and circumstance, in the prosecution of deeper lines of observation' (WALTER PATER). Is dexterity the defining quality of **EITHER** the epistolary **OR** essay form?
43. 'Her hand the thigh's tense surface leaves, / Falling inward. Not even sleep / Dare invalidate the deep, / Universal pleasure sex / Must unto itself annex—' (MICHAEL FIELD). How do queer authors annex sex?
44. Could Decadent writing ever be entirely without Orientalism?
45. 'To speak of poetry as "a spoken art," may seem, in this age of printing, a misnomer; and it is just because of such a point of view that the essential kinship of poetry and music is so often lost sight of' (AMY LOWELL). Discuss.
46. 'What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystergods gaggin fishy-gods! Brékkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek! Kóax Kóax Kóax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quaouauh!' (JAMES JOYCE). Do modernist writers sometimes try too hard?
47. 'We see only the symbol as a subjective expression: as an expression of ourselves. That makes us so sickly when we deal with the old symbols' (D. H. LAWRENCE). What did the Modernists make of symbols?


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48. 'It was a fool's errand.... To undertake to go to the German school and teach ... to be going there ... with nothing to give' (DOROTHY RICHARDSON). Did gaps in consciousness get filled in by the unconscious?
49. 'Nehru had to go to England to discover India. Things are clear only when looked at from a distance' (A. K. RAMANUJAN). Discuss how colonial or post-colonial writers see from a distance.
50. 'I was thinking "I'm nineteen and I've got to go on living and living and living"' (JEAN RHYS). What happened to the *Bildungsroman* in the modern period?
51. 'You could not help being impressed by so much activity, even though you knew it was the activity of Satan' (UPTON SINCLAIR). Is outrage an effective way to represent capitalist activity?
52. 'MEG: What are the cornflakes like, Stanley?  
STANLEY: Horrible.  
MEG: Those flakes? Those lovely flakes? You're a liar, a little liar. They're refreshing. It says so. For people when they get up late' (HAROLD PINTER). Discuss either Pinter **OR** theatrical dialogue in the light of this quotation.
53. 'This task of painting the American soul within the framework of a novel has seldom been attempted, and has never been accomplished further than very partially—in the production of a few outlines' (JOHN WILLIAM DE FOREST). Discuss.
54. 'This is a book that makes me think not merely that poets are shits, but that I really hate left-wing people' (A. N. WILSON). Is there a case for expressing strong personal reactions to books?
55. 'And either I am nobody, or I am a nation' (DEREK WALCOTT). Discuss in relation to Walcott **OR** any other writer.
56. 'He said: I made the *Iliad* from such / A local row. Gods make their own importance' (PATRICK KAVANAGH). Why has regionalism become so significant in modern writing?

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57. 'The technical perfecting of a poem is an act of atonement, in the radical etymological sense — an act of at-one-ment, a setting at one, a bringing into concord, a reconciling, a uniting in harmony' (GEOFFREY HILL). Discuss in relation to any poet or poets.
58. "'Listen you goddamn shitface assbung,'" I [Toulouse Lautrec] announce, "you've got to fuck me. If you don't fuck me, I'm going to blow up every rat scum tenement in Montmartre'" (KATHY ACKER). Did punk deserve to die?
59. Discuss the work of one living poet whom you think will be read in a century's time by more than four people.
60. 'I dipped the same spoon a quarter deep into Grandmama's pear preserves and put the whole spoon in my mouth. I did it again and again until the jar of peanut butter was gone' (KIESE LAYMON). Spill your guts about consumption.
61. 'Her mind was only a lonely mansion for the stories of extinction' (ALEXIS WRIGHT). Can Indigenous writers escape catastrophe?
62. Why has narrative become suspect?
63. 'I cited my book's many unoriginal traits: its episodic structure, its banal storyline tracing the alienation of the individual in late capitalism, and more' (ANNA MOSCHOVAKIS). Can contemporary fiction get away with complaining of its own banality? +
- 64.

 **You**  
write me a haiku about oysters

 **ChatGPT**  
Pearls in shells unseen,  
Ocean's treasure, hidden deep,  
Oysters hold secrets.

Is it thumbs up or thumbs down for the literary future of AI?

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## ENGLISH LITERATURE II

Candidates should answer Section A and **TWO** questions from Section B

*Note that Section A is compulsory. In Section B you may answer in relation to literature written in languages other than English if you wish.*

### Section A

1. Compare the following two poems in any way you like.

- a) Small *Atomes* of themselves a *World* may make,  
As being subtle, and of every shape:  
And as they dance about, fit places finde,  
Such *Formes* as best agree, make every kinde.  
For when we build a house of Bricke, and Stone, 5  
We lay them even, every one by one:  
And when we finde a gap that's big, or small,  
We seeke out Stones, to fit that place withall.  
For when not fit, too big, or little be,  
They fall away, and cannot stay we see. 10  
So *Atomes*, as they dance, finde places fit,  
They there remaine, lye close, and fast will sticke.  
Those that unfit, the rest that rove about,  
Do never leave, untill they thrust them out.  
Thus by their severall *Motions*, and their *Formes*, 15  
As severall work-men serve each others turnes.  
And thus, by chance, may a *New World* create:  
Or else predestined to worke my Fate.

(MARGARET CAVENDISH)

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- b) The eagerness of objects to be what we are afraid to do

cannot help but move us Is  
this willingness to be a motive

in us what we reject? The  
really stupid things, I mean

5

a can of coffee, a 35¢ ear  
ring, a handful of hair, what

do these things do to us? We  
come into the room, the windows

10

are empty, the sun is weak  
and slippery on the ice      And a

sob comes, simply because it is  
coldest of the things we know

(FRANK O'HARA)

## Section B

2. Why does tragedy give pleasure?
3. What would a global understanding of English literature look like?

4. 'We have done with the genres, or literary kinds. Their history is inseparably bound up with that of the classical rules' (JOEL SPINGARN). Discuss.
5. 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money' (SAMUEL JOHNSON). Discuss.
6. 'For the character must be unique and at the same time must rise to the level of a category. He must have enough individuality to remain irreplaceable, and enough generality to become universal' (ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET). Discuss.
7. Has contemporary criticism lost sight of the beautiful?
8. To what extent is literary culture dependent on literary journals?
9. 'It isn't much fun to analyse American pop culture anymore' (MAGGIE NELSON). Discuss.
10. 'One should open one's eyes and take a new look at cruelty' (FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE). Discuss.
11. 'We want our artists to remain as they were when we first loved them. But our artists want to move' (ZADIE SMITH). Discuss.
12. 'Critique cuts into a work at a judicious angle in order to expose its hidden interests and agendas, wielding the scalpel of "context" to reprimand "text"' (RITA FELSKI). Discuss.
13. 'Walt Whitman does not *seriously* incite the eagle of liberty to soar' (J. L. AUSTIN). Discuss.
14. 'Literature is a form of communication which tends in part to convert itself into an object of contemplation' (GÉRARD GENETTE). Discuss.
15. 'We cannot speak of a relation of literature to reality with respect to lyric poetry in the same sense that one can speak of such a relation with respect to narrative or dramatic literature' (KÄTE HAMBURGER). Discuss.
16. How invisible should editors be?

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17. 'You cannot be a meat-eater and properly read J. M. Coetzee.' Do readers' and authors' tastes have to align?
18. How material is a text?
19. Would literature be better if the author were dead?
20. 'As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation' (ADAM SMITH). Discuss.
21. Do short stories *seek* to be unsatisfying?
22. 'There are all kinds of sophisticated readings of *Heart of Darkness*, and there are some people who will not be persuaded there is anything wrong with it. But all that I'm really demanding, I'm not simply putting it, I'm demanding that my reading stand beside these other readings' (CHINUA ACHEBE). How can aesthetic and political readings stand side by side?
23. 'The highest criticism is that which reveals in the work of Art what the artist had not put there' (OSCAR WILDE). Discuss.
24. 'The old superstition about fiction being "wicked" has doubtless died out in England; but the spirit of it lingers in a certain oblique regard directed toward any story which does not more or less admit that it is only a joke' (HENRY JAMES). Discuss.
25. Make a case for the particular value of a single figure of speech (e.g. metaphor, epizeuxis, paronomasia, metalepsis).
26. 'They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented' (KARL MARX). Discuss in relation to any 'they'.
27. Can performance history tell us more than that some kinds of evidence survive and some do not?
28. 'The pain was a pyramid made of a diamond; it was an intense light; it was the hottest fire, the coldest chill, the highest peak, the fastest force, the furthest reach, the newest time' (JEAN STAFFORD). Does writing about pain need to go to extremes?

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29. 'The gay past contains silence and fear as well as Whitman's poems and Shakespeare's sonnets, and this may be why it is so easy to find a gay subtext in Kafka's novels and stories' (COLM TÓIBÍN). Discuss in relation to Kafka **OR** any other author.
30. What is a chapter?
31. Take a literary -ism (e.g. Romanticism, Naturalism, Expressionism, Realism, Modernism) and explore its critical value and/or shortcomings.
32. 'To those of us who remained committed mainly to the exploration of moral distinctions and ambiguities, the feminist analysis may have seemed a particularly narrow and cracked determinism' (JOAN DIDION). Discuss **EITHER** commitment **OR** dissent in the light of this quotation.
33. 'Irony implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain' (HENRY JAMES). Discuss.
34. 'Narrative form follows a rhythm; it is the synthesis of a meter beating time in regular periods and of accent modifying the length or amplitude of certain of those periods' (JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD). Discuss.
35. 'Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts' (JUDITH BUTLER). Discuss.
36. 'Labour has a kind of creating power, bringing into existence something of real value, which had before no being, and consequently no owner; the property of which must therefore reside in the person who gave it existence' (WILLIAM ENFIELD). Discuss.
37. Write a manifesto against literary manifestos.
38. Invent a contronym and explain why we need it.
39. 'Emotions are about *something*, not everything, while moods, if they are about anything, seem to be about nearly everything' (ANNETTE BAIER). Discuss.

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40. 'Translators can never take full account of the fact that people think differently in different languages.' Discuss.
41. 'From where I stand, the roof looks almost new – / Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't' (PHILIP LARKIN). What is the literary value of ignorance?
42. 'Once you've bought a novel in your pyjamas, there's no turning back' (RICHARD POWERS). Discuss.
43. 'The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways' (JAMES BALDWIN). Discuss.
44. 'Judgment entails a suspension of democracy. For example, the millions of people who made *The Apprentice* a massively popular work will want to know why some other work—*Madame Bovary*, perhaps—is better, freer, more truly art' (MICHAEL M. CLUNE). Is aesthetic judgment inherently anti-democratic?
45. Write about any **ONE** of the following in relation to literature: Africa; barbarity; celibacy; determination; elevation; farce; gestures; hospitality; imagination; jeremiads; kenosis; lemmatization; macaronic; never-neverland; optimism; property; queens; recognition; stanzas; transgression; unmentionability; vanity; war; xanthic; youth; zoomorphism.