

## ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions.

1. Write about the representation of **EITHER** a lost past **OR** ghosts in Old English poetry.
2. How much more Anglo-Saxon literature might there be?
3. 'Of hire delit or joies oon the leeste / Were impossible to my wit to seye' (GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *Troilus and Criseyde*). How did medieval poets write about sex?
4. How important was the miscellany to medieval literary production?
5. 'Clerkes kenne me that Crist is in alle places: / Ac I seigh hym nevere soothly but as myself in a mirour' (WILLIAM LANGLAND, *Piers Plowman*). Discuss in relation to Langland **AND/OR** another writer.
6. Discuss the use of rhyme royal in any poem(s) of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
7. How did the early modern elegy do its work?
8. 'There is always the *potential* for tragedy, but we know it will not happen.' Is this a fair description of Shakespeare's late romances?
9. Why were Jacobean revenge tragedies so violent?
10. 'There is scarce any word that is not made *equivocal* by divers contextures of speech, or by diversity of pronunciation and gesture' (THOMAS HOBBS). Discuss.
11. Write about the influence of natural philosophy on prose fictions of the seventeenth century.
12. 'That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary' (JOHN MILTON). Discuss in relation to Milton's work.
13. 'Like the devil, Rochester could cite scripture to his purpose, and, like the devil, he was a believer' (GERMAINE GREER). How irreligious was Restoration literature?

14. 'Flow'rs, and grass, and I and all, / Will in one common ruin fall' (ANDREW MARVELL, 'The Mower'). What happened to the pastoral during the seventeenth century?
15. 'No Learning ever was bestow'd on me; / My Life was always spent in Drudgery' (MARY COLLIER, 'The Woman's Labour'). Write about the intersection of class and gender in early modern literature.
16. 'Satirists were just big exaggerators.' Is this fair?
17. 'If I swing by the string, / I shall hear the bell ring, / And then there's an end of poor Jenny' (DANIEL DEFOE, *Moll Flanders*). How did eighteenth-century writers represent crime and punishment?
18. 'Devereux Foster's being ruined by his vanity is extremely good; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a "vortex of Dissipation". I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression; – it is such thorough novel slang' (JANE AUSTEN to her niece). Was the Gothic novel slangy?
19. Why were literary hoaxes so successful during the late eighteenth century?
20. 'And if I laugh at any mortal thing, / 'Tis that I may not weep' (LORD BYRON, *Don Juan*). Write about the seriocomic in Byron or another Romantic poet.
21. Discuss the relationship between eccentricity and the literary essay.
22. How did Italian literature and culture influence Romantic-period writing?
23. 'Few writers can have been less disturbed in the psyche than Elizabeth Gaskell, and the fact suggests the uncomfortable old cliché that virtue and good writing hardly ever go together' (JOHN BAYLEY). Discuss in relation to Gaskell **AND/OR** another Victorian novelist.
24. 'An assault on the stronghold of marriage' (MARGARET OLIPHANT on Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*). Write about the representation of marriage in Thomas Hardy **AND/OR** D.H. Lawrence.
25. 'Sadness made one "interesting". It was a mark of refinement, of sensibility, to be sad. That is, to be powerless' (SUSAN SONTAG). Discuss in relation to decadent literature.
26. Was there a philosophy of literary modernism?

27. Edward Thomas or Dylan Thomas?
28. 'Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society' (FRANK O'CONNOR). Discuss.
29. 'Some bomb-ripped buildings looked like the ruins of ancient castles until, at closer view, the wallpapers of various quite normal rooms would be visible, room above room, exposed, as on a stage, with one wall missing' (MURIEL SPARK, *The Girls of Slender Means*). Discuss defamiliarisation in postwar writing.
30. 'and for / Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem / Just long enough to settle hats and say / *I nearly died*, / A dozen marriages got underway' (PHILIP LARKIN, 'The Whitsun Weddings'). How do twentieth-century poets play with tone?
31. 'How exquisitely human was the wish for permanent happiness and how thin human imagination became trying to achieve it' (TONI MORRISON). Take this any way you want.
32. 'Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticisms of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked' (CHINUA ACHEBE). Discuss in relation to any writer of empire.
33. 'In poems, thinking is made visible not only to instruct but also to delight; it must enter somehow into the imaginative and linguistic fusion engaged in by the poem' (HELEN VENDLER). How does twentieth-century American poetry think?
34. 'Visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty, the sigh of History dissolves' (DEREK WALCOTT). Discuss with reference to colonial or post-colonial literature.
35. Is the obsession with self-revelation in contemporary fiction a good thing?
36. In 1942, T.S. Eliot gave a talk on Tennyson entitled 'The Voice of his Time'. Which writer would you consider the voice of our time?

## ENGLISH LITERATURE II

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

### SECTION A

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

- a) Over the still world, a bird calls  
waking solitary among black boughs.

You wanted to be born; I let you be born.  
When has my grief ever gotten  
in the way of your pleasure?

Plunging ahead  
into the dark and light at the same time  
eager for sensation

as though you were some new thing, wanting  
to express yourselves

all brilliance, all vivacity

never thinking  
this would cost you anything,  
never imagining the sound of my voice  
as anything but part of you—

you won't hear it in the other world,  
not clearly again,  
not in birdcall or human cry,

not the clear sound, only  
persistent echoing  
in all sound that means good-bye, good-bye—

the one continuous line  
that binds us to each other.

(LOUISE GLÜCK)

b) Márgarét, áre you gríeving  
Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
Leáves like the things of man, you  
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
Ah! ás the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
And yet you will weep and know why.  
Now no matter, child, the name:  
Sórror's spríngs áre the same.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
It is the blight man was born for,  
It is Margaret you mourn for.

(GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS)

## SECTION B

2. 'A poem is never finished, only abandoned' (PAUL VALÉRY). How would you be able to tell?
3. 'Why is it that critics are so quick off the mark to interrogate, unmask, expose, subvert, unravel, demystify, destabilize, take issue, and take umbrage?' (RITA FELSKI). What she said.
4. 'Let England be Sir Philip Sidney, Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Harrington, Swift, Wordsworth; and never let the names of Darwin, Johnson, Hume, *fur* it over' (SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE). How has English Literature been enlisted to construct Englishness?
5. 'It marked none the less a prodigious thrill, a thrill that represented sudden dismay, no doubt, but also represented, and with the selfsame throb, the strangest, the most joyous, possibly the next minute almost the proudest, duplication of consciousness' (HENRY JAMES). What's in a thrill?
6. Do writers make good self-publicists?
7. 'An awareness of the fragility of the natural order in an age of machines requires re-imaginings of nature' (AMITAV GHOSH). Is realist fiction up to the task?
8. Make the case for the literary significance of a critical review or magazine (it can be contemporary if you wish).
9. 'The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty: it takes from one thing to add to another' (WILLIAM HAZLITT). Discuss.
10. What does feminine rhyme do?
11. 'He evidently uses our novels as a sort of storehouse, from which he draws unobserved whatever odd bit of furniture strikes his fancy for his own pompous edifice' (MARIA PORTER of Sir Walter Scott). Can literary theft be justifiable?
12. What is the 'affective turn' and is it a good one to take?
13. Can a literary work be at once orientalist and anticolonial?

14. 'Glamour ... cannot be manufactured. Not real glamour; it's based on femininity' (MARILYN MONROE). Discuss in relation to literary glamour.
15. Are characters bourgeois constructs?
16. 'The printed text is cinematic before the invention of cinema' (SUSAN STEWART). How?
17. Write about the innovative use of parentheses.
18. 'I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time' (MICHEL FOUCAULT). Discuss in relation to the novel.
19. Is the correction of historical wrongs the task of literary criticism?
20. 'When they evacuated they had all their baggage animals they couldn't take off with them so they just broke their forelegs and dumped them into the shallow water. All those mules with their forelegs broken pushed over into the shallow water. It was all a pleasant business' (ERNEST HEMINGWAY). How can atrocities be made sense of?
21. 'The humorous is an imaginary terrain where moral judgement is suspended' (MILAN KUNDERA). Do you agree?
22. Why is close reading making a comeback?
23. 'During the autumn of 1954 I'd worked in Regent's Park Zoo, and got to know a particular jaguar. It lived in a 'transit' cage near the kitchen window at which I stood for most of the day washing up' (TED HUGHES on the writing of his poem 'The Jaguar'). Is it helpful to know a work's composition history?
24. *Ut pictura poesis* ('as painting is, so is poetry'). Is it?
25. Can tragedy transcend cultural difference?
26. 'To read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold' (SAIDIYA HARTMAN). Write about archives in contexts where conventional historical sources are absent.
27. Celebrate beauty in twenty-first-century literature.

28. 'Interpretation is not (as most people assume) an absolute value, a gesture of mind situated in some timeless realm of capabilities. Interpretation must itself be evaluated' (SUSAN SONTAG, *Against Interpretation*). Must it?
29. Is detective fiction as much the work of readers as of writers?
30. 'Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused' (SIGMUND FREUD). Write about the art of retrospection.
31. 'Worldmaking in its richest sense is poesis' (DEBJANI GANGULY). Discuss.
32. Why are body parts so vital to life-writing?
33. 'Endings are elusive, middles are nowhere to be found, but worst of all is to begin, to begin, to begin' (DONALD BARTHELME). Make a case for the best opener in literature.
34. 'Believing writing is freedom. / This is as far as my English goes' (HERIBERTO YÉPEZ). What could this mean?
35. 'Every word may be defined, & every thing may be measured, but enough cannot be measured nor defined it changeth every yeare' (HENRY SMITH). When is enough enough?
36. 'It was fun to say that I liked something refined and cruel, but under the fun was an impatient yank of boredom and under that was indignation and pain' (MARY GAITSKILL). How much fun is masochism?
37. Write about any **ONE** of the following in relation to literature: amnesia; breath; coteries; dourness; emptiness; farragos; gospel; heathenism; immunity; janitors; kinship; leftovers; magnification; neurasthenia; obduracy; parties; queens; routine; slugabeds; thresholds; universities; vacuousness; wish-fulfilment; Xanadu; yesteryear; zero.