

## ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English*

1. Why should people want to write about dragons?
2. ‘Caedmon’s songs and his poems were so beautiful to hear, that his teachers themselves wrote and learned at his mouth. He sang first about the creation of the world and about the origin of mankind and all of the history of Genesis’ (THE VENERABLE BEDE). What was the relationship between orality and literacy in Anglo-Saxon literature?
3. ‘They sang then and played to please the hero, / Words and music for their warrior prince, / Harp tunes and tales of adventure: / There were high times on the hall benches / And the king’s poet performed his part’ (*BEOWULF*, trans. SEAMUS HEANEY). What does Anglo-Saxon poetry tell us about Anglo-Saxon poetry?
4. How far do regional identities shape English writing? You may limit your answer to any period of roughly fifty years.
5. What would medieval English literature have looked like if France had never existed?
6. ‘Spirituality is a highly localized phenomenon, emerging within specific groups and in particular places in response to particular needs’. Discuss.
7. Would it make a difference if we knew who the *Gawain* poet was?
8. ‘The spaces and institutions in which Chaucer lived and worked, and the places that he visited, shaped him as a person and as a poet’ (MARION TURNER). Discuss.
9. What do the variant versions of *Piers Plowman* tell us about the poem?

[OVER]

10. What does allegory offer a poet that realist narrative does not?
11. 'Chivalry was always more a set of questions than a code'. Discuss.
12. 'I pray Almyty God that this booke com not but to the hands of them that will be His faithfull lovers, and to those that will submitt them to the feith of Holy Church, and obey the holesom understondying and teching of the men that be of vertuous life, sadde age, and profound lerning' (JULIAN OF NORWICH). How do medieval writers manage their afterlife?
13. What's lost in reading a manuscript poet in print? (You may restrict your answer to one poet).
14. How useful is it to think of English writing from any period as 'European'?
15. 'The Reformation did not immediately arrive at its meridian, and though day was gradually encreasing upon us, the goblins of witchcraft still continued to hover in the twilight.' (SAMUEL JOHNSON). Is there a case for goblins?
16. 'And may not I presume a little farther, to shewe the reasonableness of this word *Vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or Prophet, and say that the holy Davids Psalms are a divine Poeme?' (SIR PHILIP SIDNEY). Discuss.
17. What is courtly about court poetry?
18. What were Spenser's failures?
19. Why did Shakespeare happen when he did? Or is that an intrinsically stupid question?
20. 'Shakespeare's early history plays became rich repositories of structural paradigms for his later works' (EMRYS JONES). Discuss.
21. Did commonplacing have as great an influence on literary culture in the early modern period as is often claimed?

[OVER]

22. Who was the grandest translator of them all?
23. 'Desire my Readers to give me the same priviledge to discourse in natural Philosophy, as Scholers have in schooles, which I have heard speak freely, and boldly, without being condemned for Atheisme' (MARGARET CAVENDISH). Discuss.
24. 'All I ask, is the privilege for my masculine part, the poet in me' (APHRA BEHN). Discuss.
25. Can false beliefs about the world be a good thing for writers?
26. Is it a problem for a religious poet to have an awareness of sin without actually having experienced it?
27. Was Milton a destructive influence?
28. 'Did Milton's prose, O Charles! thy death defend? / A furious foe unconscious proves a friend. / On Milton's verse did Bentley comment? Know, / A weak officious friend becomes a foe' (ALEXANDER POPE). Discuss one or both of these couplets.
29. Mock the heroic.
30. Try to take the dry out of Dryden.
31. Consider the role of dialect in any work or works of fiction.
32. Did the emergence of copyright make a significant difference to the concept of authorship?
33. 'For if these popular bards were confessedly revered and admired in those very countries which the Anglo-Saxons inhabited before their removal into Britain, can we do otherwise than conclude that men of this order accompanied such tribes as migrated hither?' (THOMAS PERCY). Discuss the relationship between national mythologies and poetry in the later eighteenth century.

[OVER]

34. Be gothic.
35. 'Blah blah blah get married'. Are early English novels much more than this?
36. 'Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.' (JANE AUSTEN). Discuss in relation to Jane Austen or any other novelist.
37. 'True genius vindicates to itself an exemption from all regard to whatever has gone before' (PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY to LORD BYRON). Discuss.
38. 'It would not reduce Dickens's politics absurdly to say that he was for circulation and against stoppage' (DAVID TROTTER). Do you agree?
39. 'As realism proposes to give us fictions about how things really were, a space naturally opens up within that mode to tell us how things might have been but were not' (ANDREW H. MILLER). Discuss in relation to the nineteenth-century novel.
40. What effect did the decline in spiritual orthodoxy have on nineteenth-century literature?
41. 'American writers, it seems to me, have demonstrated both the advantages and drawbacks involved in America's brave and exhilarating apostasy from history' (TONY TANNER). Do you agree?
42. 'The war has used up words; they have weakened, they have deteriorated like motor car tires, with a loss of expression through increase of limpness, that may well make us wonder what ghosts will be left to walk' (HENRY JAMES). Was James right about the impact that the First World War would have on literary language?
43. 'The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre.' (RALPH WALDO EMERSON). Discuss in relation to Emerson or any other writer or writers.

[OVER]

44. 'We, the people, must redeem / and make America again.' (LANGSTON HUGHES).  
Has a poet ever made American democracy great again?
45. What are the alternatives to thinking about writing in English from outside the British Isles as 'post-colonial'?
46. 'Modernism' has lost its capital letter, becoming variously late, long and twinned with an infinite variety of supplementary terms' (GILL PLAIN). To what extent is it useful to view twentieth-century literature in terms of the advent, zenith, and aftermath of 'modernism'?
47. 'A rude, popular literature of the romantic possibilities of the modern city was bound to arise. It has arisen in the popular detective stories, as rough and refreshing as the ballads of Robin Hood' (G.K. CHESTERTON). Discuss.
48. Why did the Spanish Civil War have such a big influence on English writers?
49. 'The first thing a socialist writer has to realize is that there is no value in the emotions, the spiritual writhings, started in him by the sight, smell and touch of poverty.'  
(STORM JAMESON). Are emotions a distraction for socialist literature?
50. 'Out of Ireland have we come. / Great hatred, little room, / Maimed us at the start'  
(W.B. YEATS). Discuss in relation to any writer or writers.
51. 'Literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber. We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist.' (FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI).  
Discuss.
52. 'There is no place for the Blitz in human experience; it apparently cannot make a place of its own. It will have no literature' (ELIZABETH BOWEN). Discuss.
53. 'The novel's painful question is: what have we done to our children?' (PENELOPE FITZGERALD). How did postwar fiction wrestle with burdensome inheritances?

[OVER]

54. 'South African literature is a literature in bondage. It is a less-than-fully-human literature. It is exactly the kind of literature you would expect people to write from prison' (J. M. COETZEE). Discuss in relation to any anglophone writing from outside the UK.
55. 'Colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism' (AIMÉ CÉSAIRE). Discuss.
56. In what ways has film influenced contemporary fiction?
57. 'In digital technologies language is lifted off the page and therefore able to be poured into so many different forms and really be moulded and sculpted in a way that wasn't possible before' (KENNETH GOLDSMITH). Discuss.
58. 'Are memoirs now courageously speaking hitherto unspeakable things, things that we have held in silence precisely because we have refused to accept them as part of knowledge? Or is their speech in such cases culpable, compounding the original trespass with unseemly disclosure?' (PAUL JOHN EAKIN). Answer with reference to contemporary life-writing.

**September 2022**

**Fellowship Examination  
All Souls College**

## 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) *The Mower to the Glow-Worms*

Ye living lamps, by whose dear light  
The nightingale does sit so late,  
And studying all the summer night,  
Her matchless songs does meditate;

Ye country comets, that portend 5  
No war nor prince's funeral,  
Shining unto no higher end  
Than to presage the grass's fall;

Ye glow-worms, whose officious flame 10  
To wand'ring mowers shows the way,  
That in the night have lost their aim,  
And after foolish fires do stray;

Your courteous lights in vain you waste,  
Since Juliana here is come,  
For she my mind hath so displac'd 15  
That I shall never find my home.

(ANDREW MARVELL)

[OVER]



b) *The Poets light but Lamps*

The Poets light but Lamps —  
Themselves — go out —  
The Wicks they stimulate  
If vital Light

Inhere as do the Suns — 5  
Each Age a Lens  
Disseminating their  
Circumference —

(EMILY DICKINSON)

**Section B**

2. Should children's fiction be wicked?
3. 'Metaphor shares a nature with a riddle'. Discuss.
4. What value does philology have for literary criticism?
5. 'I was forced to reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words in which scarce any meaning is retained' (SAMUEL JOHNSON, Preface to his *Dictionary*). How should dictionaries use illustrative quotations and how should critics use dictionaries?
6. 'It is just as arbitrary to draw your boundary of inquiry at the author-publisher collaboration as it is to draw it around only the author itself'. Discuss.
7. 'No text is self-identical. Variation is the invariant rule of the textual condition' (JEROME MCGANN). Discuss.

8. Does rhyme always mess with reason?
9. Is performance history intrinsically banal?
10. Can writers make themselves canonical?
11. 'Fiction is about what happens next; lyric is about what happens now' (JONATHAN CULLER). Discuss.
12. Imagine that one work of fiction was never written. How would that change things?
13. Make a case either for or against reading literature politically.
14. '[T]he worst is not / So long as we can say "This is the worst"' (SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*). Do you agree?
15. 'We can think of characters as being like persons without scanting or short-changing their aesthetic properties' (RITA FELSKI). Discuss.
16. 'Designed to disappoint'. Discuss this view of the short story.
17. Are there unconscious intentions in literature?
18. 'There is no original or primary gender a drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original' (JUDITH BUTLER). Discuss.
19. 'Why shouldn't there be a Nigerian or West African English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way?' (GABRIEL OKARA). Discuss.
20. Why is the Indian Ocean the setting of so much recent fiction?
21. 'The history of Africa is both beautifully and tragically chaotic and African stories should, and do, reflect this' (SIPHIWE GLORIA NDLOVU). Discuss.

[OVER]

22. 'The problem with speculative fiction is that it so often seems to think it knows what its ideas are.' Discuss.
23. 'Literature represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses' (JULIA KRISTEVA). Discuss.
24. 'My books don't make good films. Film companies think they will, but they don't' (GRAHAM GREENE). Defend an onscreen adaptation of a literary work.
25. 'What I feel for you can't be conveyed in phrasal combinations; It either screams out loud or stays painfully silent but I promise — it beats words. It beats worlds' (KATHERINE MANSFIELD). Discuss.
26. 'I must tell stories as if the world were a living, single entity, constantly forming before our eyes, and as if we were a small and at the same time powerful part of it' (OLGA TOKARCZUK). Discuss.
27. Describe a hanging in the style of P.G. Wodehouse **AND/OR** Gertrude Stein.
28. Should literary critics take themselves less seriously?
29. 'If poetry can terrify people by hideous fictions, painting can do as much by depicting the same things in action' (LEONARDO DA VINCI). Compare poetry with painting.
30. 'Who gives a fuck about the Oxford comma?' (VAMPIRE WEEKEND). Consider minutiae of punctuation in the light of this comment.
31. Proust or Joyce?
32. 'If you ignore the noise then you lose part of the meaning' (KAMAU BRATHWAITE). Discuss.
33. In what ways can archaeological discoveries influence the interpretation of literary texts?

34. Who should win the next Nobel Prize for Literature and why?
35. 'I just don't get what the fuck half the shit is that you're listening to / Do you have any idea how much I hate this choppy flow / Everyone copies though? Probably no'  
(EMINEM). Discuss.
36. 'Nothing is my *last word* about anything' (HENRY JAMES). Discuss literary last words.
37. Discuss the literary treatment of **ONE** of the following:

androgyny; bathos; cosmetics; deliberation; elocution; flashbacks; geography; hooks;  
insanity; justification; knights; lying; mountains; neverlands; optimism; phallogocentricity;  
questions; robots; stupidity; telegrams; unmentionability; venereal disease; walking;  
xenophobia; yellow; zephyrs

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1. 'The fact that many of the surviving Irish tales show some remarkable resemblances to themes, stories and even names in the sagas of the Indian *Vedas*, written in Sanskrit at the start of the first millennium BC, shows just how ancient they may be' (PETER BERRESFORD ELLIS). Discuss ancientness or influence in Old English literature.
2. How epic is *Beowulf*?
3. 'So he gathered together all the true and kindly people that he knew, and he dressed them in armour, and he made them knights, and taught them his idea, and set them down, at a Round Table' (T. H. WHITE, *The Once and Future King*). Discuss idealism in medieval literature.
4. 'Marguerite Porete offers an amazing account of a soul in some such condition: "Such a soul ... swims in the sea of joy—that is in the sea of delights flowing and streaming from the Divinity, and she feels no joy for she herself is joy, and swims and floats in joy without feeling any joy because she inhabits Joy and Joy inhabits her"' (ANNE CARSON). Discuss pantheism **AND/OR** ecstasy in medieval literature.
5. What do fabliaux tell us about the medieval sense of humour?
6. Chivalry or humanism?
7. 'Wyatt wrote brilliantly about being stuck' (NICOLA SHULMAN). How did courtiers deal with being stuck?
8. What influence did classical epic exert on Renaissance literature?
9. Write an intellectual biography of Shakespeare.
10. 'What of Herbert's metric? Poetry has been said to be the result of a metre-making argument. This is what sometimes we miss in this poet' (R. S. THOMAS). Discuss argument-making in seventeenth-century poetry.
11. Explore the interaction of religion and politics in women's writing during the seventeenth century.
12. 'I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall' (JOHN MILTON, *Paradise Lost*). Discuss the idea of free will in *Paradise Lost*.
13. Discuss the presentation of **EITHER** 'wit' **OR** 'judgement' on the Restoration stage.
14. What was formally innovative about the novel during the eighteenth century?
15. 'Post-Augustan' or 'pre-Romantic'? Or neither?

[OVER]

16. '[O]n Sunday last Engels said: "Oh, we all knew Shelley by heart then"' (ELEANOR MARX). What is the link between Romanticism and revolution?
  17. 'Byron's romanticism, it must be confessed, was only half sincere' (BERTRAND RUSSELL). Write about sincerity or insincerity in Romantic-period poetry.
  18. 'Disingenuousness and double-dealing seemed to meet him at every turn' (JANE AUSTEN, *Emma*). Are Austen's novels disingenuous?
  19. 'We see in splendid drawing-rooms the GREAT Squeeze in and then squeeze out again in state! As far removed from comfort as from mirth, The dullest, HOTTEST, COLDEST beings on earth.'
- (PIERCE EGAN, *Life in London*). Discuss Regency literature of social critique.
20. 'Paradoxically, whenever a writer in Wiltshire or County Antrim or Inverness-shire asserted the individuality of a local story or historical monument, he was inadvertently contributing to a collective sense of the importance of particular places' (FIONA STAFFORD, *Local Attachments*). Write about ideas of locality in Victorian literature.
  21. 'All actual heroes are essential men, / And all men possible heroes: every age, / Heroic in proportions' (ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh*). Discuss conceptions of heroism **AND/OR** masculinity in nineteenth-century poetry.
  22. What was transcendental about Transcendentalism?
  23. 'You may, perhaps, be surprised at my saying this; perhaps surprised at my implying that war itself can be right, or necessary, or noble at all' (JOHN RUSKIN). Discuss literary attitudes to war in the hundred years before 1914.
  24. Write about representations of homosexuality in turn-of-the-century literature.
  25. '[T]he opinion that Beethoven is comprehensible and Schoenberg incomprehensible is an objective illusion' (THEODOR ADORNO). Discuss in relation to the modernist novel.
  26. How did literary moralists deal with the tragedies of the twentieth century?
  27. 'I would never write about someone that forced me to write at a lower register than what I can write' (MARTIN AMIS). Discuss.
  28. 'I hadn't meant to go grave robbing with Richard Dawkins / but he can be very persuasive. "Do you believe in God?" / he asked. "I don't know," I said. He said, "Right, so get / in the car."' (SIMON ARMITAGE, 'The Experience'). Can poetry and science get along? Answer with reference to any contemporary literature.
  29. 'If we are to foster the kind of intelligent critical culture required to combat the effects of populism in politics, we must stop celebrating amateurism and ignorance in our poetry' (REBECCA WATTS). Does uncritical valorization do more harm than good?
  30. 'Shakespeare's naturalism in fact leads to extravagant license and improbability (Lear leaping off Dover Cliff)' (GEORGE STEINER, *The Death of Tragedy*). When critics are

as thoughtful as George Steiner, is it missing the point to complain about their minor errors?

31. '[Oedipa] looked around, spooked at the sunlight pouring in all the windows, as if she had been trapped at the centre of some intricate crystal, and said, "My God"' (THOMAS PYNCHON, *The Crying of Lot 49*). Discuss wonder in contemporary literature.
32. 'Because this is capitalism / your fantasy of being CEO / has come true. The company is yours. / And you are riding towards Yonkers / alone' (ZOHAR ATKINS). Write about the literary presentation of anti-capitalism.

## 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 passages in any way you like:

- a) [...] With set jaw they are fighting,  
fighting, fighting,—some we love whom we know,  
some we love but know not—that  
hearts may feel and not be numb.  
It cures me; or am I what 5  
I can't believe in? Some
- in snow, some on crags, some in quicksands,  
little by little, much by much, they  
are fighting fighting fighting that where  
there was death there may 10  
be life. 'When a man is prey to anger,  
he is moved by outside things; when he holds  
his ground in patience patience  
patience, that is action or  
beauty,' the soldier's defense 15  
and hardest armor for
- the fight. The world's an orphans' home. Shall  
we never have peace without sorrow?  
without pleas of the dying for  
help that won't come? O 20  
quiet form upon the dust, I cannot  
look and yet I must. If these great patient  
dyings—all these agonies  
and wound bearings and bloodshed—  
can teach us how to live, these 25  
dyings were not wasted.
- Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron  
iron is iron till it is rust.  
There never was a war that was  
not inward; I must 30  
fight till I have conquered in myself what  
causes war, but I would not believe it.  
I inwardly did nothing.  
O Iscariot-like crime!  
Beauty is everlasting 35  
and dust is for a time.

(from MARIANNE MOORE, 'In Distrust of Merits')

- b) [...] “Observe a pompion-twine afloat;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song 5  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul?”  
 “Why that’s precise the error Squarcialupe”  
 (Hazarded Naddo) “finds; ‘the man can’t stoop 10  
 To sing us out,’ quoth he, ‘a mere romance;  
 He’d fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects’ rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith.’ Now, you’re a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher; why introduce 15  
 Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use  
 In poetry—which still must be, to strike,  
 Based upon common sense; there’s nothing like  
 Appealing to our nature! what beside  
 Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried 20  
 In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!  
 ‘The man,’ said we, ‘tells his own joys and woes:  
 We’ll trust him.’ Would you have your songs endure?  
 Build on the human heart!—why, to be sure  
 Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs, 25  
 Ours, every one’s, the healthy heart one cares  
 To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
 That’s father of ... nay, go yourself that length,  
 Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
 When they have got their calm! And is it true, 30  
 Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?  
 Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe  
 Too deeply for poetic purposes:

(from ROBERT BROWNING, *Sordello*)

## Section B

2. 'There is no more reason for languages to change than there is for automobiles to add fins one year and remove them the next, for jackets to have three buttons one year and two the next' (PAUL POSTAL). Do you agree?
3. 'Pope has disguised him in foppery, and Cowper has stripped him naked' (ROBERT SOUTHEY on Homer). What do you think is the most apt metaphor for literary translation?
4. 'The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its audience.' Would you agree?
5. Does reading a ballad rather than singing it miss the point?
6. 'I mean to be heavy' (GERTRUDE STEIN). How have women writers represented the relationship between the body and the intellect?
7. 'Thou yard, three-quarters, half-yard, quarter, nail, / Thou flea, thou nit, thou winter-cricket thou!' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Write about the relationship between poetry and ordinary speech. You don't have to mention Shakespeare.
8. Discuss the differences between propaganda, public relations and political literature.
9. Are literary genres discovered or made?
10. Make a case for the literary significance of a particular bookseller, printer or periodical of your choice.
11. 'Our charge against anthologies is that they have robbed the poetry-reading publics of self-respect' (LAURA RIDING and ROBERT GRAVES). Defend anthologies.
12. What is or was the Sublime?
13. 'She'd really rather it all kept going, water in the taps, whales in the oceans' (OLIVIA LAING, *Crudo*). Discuss the representation of crisis in the work of one or more writers.
14. What do manuscript miscellanies teach us about medieval or early modern literary culture?
15. 'Chiming then to me, with exquisite consent, as I melted away, his oily balsamic injection, mixing deliciously with the sluices in flow from me, sheathed and blunted all the stings of pleasure' (JOHN CLELAND, *Fanny Hill*). Is all writing about sex bad?
16. What might an intersectional novel look like? Feel free to try writing your own.
17. 'Contemporaries would likely have had no idea that they were living in the great age of satire' (ASHLEY MARSHALL on the long eighteenth century). Should we get rid of literary period labels?

18. Are there differences between intentionality in the moral sphere and intentionality in the artistic sphere?
19. 'I ought not to read any thing of the Novel kind only what are called *good* Books' (LADY DOROTHY BRADSHAIGH). Why have novels been considered immoral?
20. Can literary rivalries be productive?
21. 'they were asked to tweet-review the play for a fee and all expenses paid [...] soon there'll be no need for proper critics, the so-called "experts" who've been running the show since forever' (BERNARDINE EVARISTO, *Girl, Woman, Other*). Has social media enabled new forms of literary criticism?
22. Is parody disrespectful?
23. 'There is an intrinsic absurdity in making current literature a subject of academic study, and the student who wants a tutor's assistance in reading the works of his own contemporaries might as well ask for a nurse's assistance in blowing his own nose' (C.S. LEWIS). Discuss.
24. Write about the representation of illness in the work of a writer or writers of your choice.
25. 'Blessed be all metrical rules that / forbid automatic responses, / force us to have second thoughts, / free from the fetters of Self' (W.H. AUDEN). Discuss.
26. What might follow the material turn?
27. Does consideration of a writer's personality have a place in literary criticism?
28. Should literary texts be minimally or maximally edited?
29. Write a lampoon.
30. Discuss the literary treatment of any **ONE** of the following topics:  
 Antipathy; bastards; [the] closet; disgust; ecstasy; farrago; gallantry; hedge-funds; insularity; joy; kissing; lassitude; misadventure; *négritude*; oddness; pandemics; quintessence; raillery; sundering; titillation; unimportance; virago; wandering; xeroxes; yesterday; zephyrs.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English*

1. Why should we still read *Beowulf*?
2. ‘Chaucer’s life and his poetry were embedded in and determined by a world of international trade, manuscript exchange, multilingual creativity, and the movement of things and ideas across ever-changing borders’ (MARION TURNER). Discuss.
3. Does *Piers Plowman* have a central argument?
4. Why was the fable so popular in medieval England?
5. ‘Medieval science inherited from Antiquity a number of different theories purporting to explain why the course of human life runs as it does’ (J. A. BURROW). Discuss in relation to any medieval literary work.
6. Was Shakespeare obsessed with money?
7. ‘Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow’ (SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet 106). Write on any body part or parts with reference to literature of any period.
8. a) ‘As figures be the instruments of ornament in every language, so be they also in a sort of abuses, or rather trespasses, in speech, because they pass the ordinary limits of common utterance, and be occupied of purpose to deceive the ear and also the mind, drawing it from plainness and simplicity to a certain doubleness, whereby our talk is the more guileful and abusing’ (GEORGE PUTTENHAM, *The Arte of English Poesie*). Write on the ‘doubleness’ of language in Renaissance drama.

**OR**

- b)        ‘“Pericles: Where were you born?  
              And wherefore called Marina?  
              Marina:                Called Marina  
              For I was born at sea.”’

The science of language would suggest that Pericles’s words, like Marina’s just quoted, are “models” of an underlying reality. Our experience in the theatre is that they *are* reality’ (ANNE BARTON). Is language the main reality of theatre?

9. ‘Book history and cultural history have placed translations at the centre of a highly intricate nexus of authors, translators (including intermediary translators), paratext-writers, editors and correctors, censors, printers, booksellers, patrons and readers—so intricate, indeed, that it sometimes seems as if each translation has its own distinctive “culture”’ (WARREN BOUTCHER). Discuss.

[OVER]

10. 'Women's Tongues are as sharp as two-edged Swords, and wound as much, when they are anger'd' (MARGARET CAVENDISH). Discuss in relation to the work of one or more women writing before 1780.
11. 'The central problem of Milton's poetic career, as of his life, is that of service' (GORDON TESKEY). Do you agree?
12. Why was Grub Street despised? Should it have been?
13. Why write political poetry when you can just write a political treatise? Answer in relation to the poetry of any war, civil or uncivil.
14. 'And I may safely say it of this present age, that if we were not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets' (JOHN DRYDEN). Was he right?
15. Write about seriousness in the work of Jonathan Swift or Daniel Defoe or both.
16. 'The art of travelling is only a branch of the art of thinking' (MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT). Discuss the relation between travel and thought with reference to literature of any period.
17. 'Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die' (*Manfred*, BYRON). Write about **EITHER** death **OR** difficulty in the work of any one or more Romantic writers.
18. 'Art is a Representation of reality—a representation which, inasmuch as it is not the thing itself, but only represents it, must necessarily be limited by the nature of its medium' (GEORGE HENRY LEWES). Discuss the limits and possibilities of realism.
19. 'Perversion was (and remains) a concept bound up with insurrection' (JONATHAN DOLLIMORE). Do you agree?
20. 'The novels continue to live their own wonderful internal life' (E. M. FORSTER). How important is the world of facts to the 'internal life' of Victorian fiction?
21. In 1942, T. S. Eliot gave a radio talk on Tennyson entitled 'The Voice of his Time'.  
a) How might you support or contest this characterization of Tennyson? **OR** b) Discuss the role of 'voice' in poetry.
22. 'How then do we read *Kim* if we are to remember always that the book, is, after all, a novel, that there is more than one history in it to be remembered, that the imperial experience, while often regarded as exclusively political, was also an experience that entered into cultural and aesthetic life as well?' (EDWARD SAID). Discuss with reference to any text of your choice.
23. 'True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many—well really, that's what it looks like coming to—hundreds of selves?' (KATHERINE MANSFIELD). Were the modernists better than their precursors in exploring the multiplicity of the 'self'?
24. 'And I was jealous of her writing ... the only writing I have ever been jealous of' (VIRGINIA WOOLF, on Katherine Mansfield). Write on literary friendships, or jealousies, or both.

25. 'In a time of global concepts, [John] Betjeman insists on the little, the forgotten, the unprofitable, the obscure; the privately-printed book of poems, the chapel behind the Corn Exchange, the local watercolours in the museum (open 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.)' (PHILIP LARKIN). Defend 'parochialism'.
26. Ted Hughes or Sylvia Plath?
27. What gives Beckett hope?
28. 'One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. ... We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians' (RAJA RAO). Discuss with reference to any work of Anglophone literature.
29. 'Visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty, the sigh of History dissolves' (DEREK WALCOTT). Use this quotation as a starting-point to write about landscape in literature.
30. 'The short story', noted Elizabeth Bowen in 1944, 'is a young art: as we now know it, it is the child of this century'. What literary genre for you is the child of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
31. 'At his coterie's gatherings, Kafka was well known for laughing out loud during the readings of his tales—and being the only one to do so' (MALYNNE STERNSTEIN). What present-day stories do you think would have made Kafka laugh?
32. 'If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it' (TONI MORRISON). Write a review of such a book.

## 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 passages in any way you like:

a) 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death'

I know that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above;  
Those that I fight I do not hate,  
Those that I guard I do not love;  
My country is Kiltartan Cross, 5  
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,  
No likely end could bring them loss  
Or leave them happier than before.  
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,  
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds, 10  
A lonely impulse of delight  
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;  
I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
The years to come seemed waste of breath,  
A waste of breath the years behind 15  
In balance with this life, this death.

(W. B. YEATS, written in 1918)

b) Suddenly Mrs. Coates looked up into the sky. The sound of an aeroplane bored ominously into the ears of the crowd. There it was coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which curled and twisted, actually writing something! making letters in the sky! Everyone looked up.

Dropping dead down the aeroplane soared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, 5  
sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it went, out fluttered behind it a thick  
ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters.  
But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie  
still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the  
aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a 10  
K, an E, a Y perhaps?

"Glaxo," said Mrs. Coates in a strained, awe-stricken voice, gazing straight up,  
and her baby, lying stiff and white in her arms, gazed straight up.

"Kreemo," murmured Mrs. Bletchley, like a sleep-walker. With his hat held 15  
out perfectly still in his hand, Mr. Bowley gazed straight up. All down the  
Mall people were standing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the  
whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first  
one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in  
this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there  
among the gulls. 20

The aeroplane turned and raced and swooped exactly where it liked, swiftly, freely, like a skater—

“That’s an E,” said Mrs. Bletchley—or a dancer—

“It’s toffee,” murmured Mr. Bowley—(and the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it), and shutting off the smoke, away and away it rushed, and the smoke faded and assembled itself round the broad white shapes of the clouds. 25

It had gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was—a mission of the greatest importance. Then suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the aeroplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent’s Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another—but what word was it writing? 30 35

(from VIRGINIA WOOLF, *Mrs Dalloway*, 1925)

## Section B

2. How English is 'English literature'? You may choose to focus on a particular author or period.
3. 'The life of the body plays much more of a part in contemporary biographical narratives. ... Masturbation, dental work, body odour, menstruation, gonorrhoea, addictions and sexual preferences are all permissible subjects' (HERMIONE LEE). Is biography inherently 'vulgar'?
4. What does the sonnet form do that nothing else can?
5. Is manuscript study just for nerds?
6. Should writers trust editors?
7. 'Your page stands against you and says to you that you are a thief' (MARTIAL, *Epigrams*). **EITHER** a) Write about the impact of copyright law on literature **OR** b) Examine the lines between allusion, imitation and theft.
8. a) 'Wholly in heavenly things my mind is set' (JOHN DONNE). Could a poem do this?

### OR

- b) 'Had I but served my God with half the zeal/ I served my King, he would not have in my age/ Have left me naked to mine enemies. Farewell, the hope of Court!' (SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII*). Write about the tension between heavenly and worldly things in the work of any one or more writers.
9. 'For almost three thousand years, revenge has been a central preoccupation of European literature. Sophocles and Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Byron, Calderon, Toni Morrison, John Ford—writers as ideologically various as they are historically disparate—have explored the same subject with similar passion, complexity, and concern' (JOHN KERRIGAN). In the light of this comment, examine two works from different periods or cultures.
10. Discuss the role of women as literary or cultural agents in early modern Europe.
11. 'It would have already been impossible for Hansel and Gretel to walk more than four miles through any English wood without bursting back out into open fields. The landscape of fairy tales is symbolic' (MARINA WARNER). Discuss.
12. 'To deprive the bourgeoisie not of its art but of its concept of art, this is the precondition of a revolutionary argument' (PIERRE MACHEREY). Do you agree?
13. 'In art, don't you see, there is no *first* person' (OSCAR WILDE to André Gide). Don't you see?
14. 'A poem is never finished; it is only abandoned' (PAUL VALÉRY). Discuss.
15. 'Even his [R. W. Chapman's] textual criticism helps. Observe his brilliant solution of the second of the two difficulties quoted above. He has noticed that in the original

edition of *Pride and Prejudice* the words “When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?” began a line, and he suggests that the printer failed to indent them, and, in consequence, they are not Kitty’s words at all, but her father’s’ (E. M. FORSTER). Does textual criticism really help?

16. How useful is queer theory as a way of understanding a particular writer or literary culture?
17. ‘I was drawn to people who seem to have been born defeated or profoundly lost’ (PENELOPE FITZGERALD). Discuss.
18. ‘Without families, you don’t get stories’ (BART VAN ES). Discuss, in relation to one or more novels.
19. ‘Nothing can be more slightly defined than the line of demarcation between sanity and insanity’ (*The Times*, 22 July, 1854). Discuss.
20. ‘Moral questions could be defined as questions to which there are no answers’ (JOHN CAREY). Discuss morality in the work of any two or more writers.
21. ‘Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire’ (ROLAND BARTHES). Discuss.
22. ‘I have dedicated this book [*Promises, Promises: Literature and Psychoanalysis*] to the two people [Brian Worthington and John Carey] who changed my life by the way they taught me literature at school and university; and who taught me more about psychoanalysis without ever mentioning it, than many of my psychoanalytic teachers did by mentioning nothing else’ (ADAM PHILLIPS).
  - a) How can literature teach us about psychoanalysis? **OR** b) Can psychoanalysis teach us anything about literature?
23. When does a poem become a ‘war poem’?
24. Can literary texts be performed just in the mind?
25. What is the ‘affective turn’ in literary criticism, and is it a good turn?
26. ‘Yet it is too easy to describe the work of these very different [nineteenth-century] women as a women’s tradition based on a full frontal attack on oppression’ (ISOBEL ARMSTRONG).
  - a) How useful is the idea of a ‘women’s tradition’ in literature and, if so, on what should it be based?

**OR**

- b) Does the idea of a ‘women’s tradition’ help to enrich or diminish the meaning of individual poems?

27. 'What postcolonialism fails to recognise is that what counts as "marginal" in relation to the West has often been central and foundational in the non-West. Thus, while it may be revolutionary to teach Gandhi as political theory in the Anglo-American academy, he is, and has always been, canonical in India' (LEELA GANDHI). Can we ever get rid of the canon and will it be a good thing?
28. 'You see a gangster, I see insecurity' (DAVID OROBOSA OMOREGIE). Write on point of view in contemporary fiction.
29. Discuss the literary treatment of any **ONE** of the following topics:
- Authority; boasts; class; disability; extinction; fantasy; gossip; households; islands; jocularly; kudos; law; mess; nightmares; opulence; populism; quiet; rot; satire; testimony; underworld; *vive la France*; wrong; xenofemism; Yahoos; zeal.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English*

1. Would it help to know where and when *Beowulf* was composed?
2. 'English writing around the first millennium might readily be described as a literature of trauma' (LAURA ASHE). Discuss.
3. What is the significance of locality in medieval English writing?
4. Write a medieval dream vision.
5. What did it mean to be English in 1390? Or Scottish? Or Welsh?
6. What did the Black Death do for literature?
7. What kinds of things can be learned from reading poetry in manuscript? You may limit yourself to one period or manuscript if you wish.
8. Is early Tudor poetry a form of political advice?
9. Does the occasionality of early sixteenth-century drama make it unreadable now?
10. 'Whatever else humanism is, it is emphatically not a movement towards freedom and expansion. It is the impulse of men who feel themselves simple, rustic, and immature, towards sophistication, urbanity, and ripeness' (C. S. LEWIS). Discuss.
11. When and why does satirical prose flourish?
12. 'And then I asked him, how many women he had seen, go into the pulpit and preach. He said, he never saw none' (ANNE ASKEW). Write about any aspect of women and religion in the light of this quotation.
13. 'The copying out of truth, then, is but the plain ground; the descant and, consequently, sweetness of music is the poet's delightful ornament and fiction' (WILLIAM SCOTT). Discuss.
14. Why have sonnets been very popular during certain literary periods? You may limit yourself to the discussion of one period.
15. 'When we write about "Shakespeare's reading" we are designating a practice as much as all the books he consulted. It was a practice in which he was caught up, involving many more agents than he, but one which also—whether or not it was done pen in hand (and much of the time it probably was)—led readily into writing' (JOHN KERRIGAN). Discuss.

16. What kind of relationships do you find between acting companies and the plays they put on in the early modern period?
17. 'All things are prepared for the journey, all now merry, contented, nothing amisse; greife forsaken, sadnes cast off, Pamphilia is the Queene of all content; Amphilanthus joying worthily in her; And' (LADY MARY WROTH). Why are so many romances incomplete?
18. 'The King James Bible is the most important book in English.' Do you agree? If not, which book would you nominate?
19. 'In all Civil Dissentions, when they break into open hostilities, the War of the Pen is allowed to accompany that of the Sword, and every one is in a maner obliged with his Tongue, as well as Hand, to serve and assist the side which he engages in' (ABRAHAM COWLEY). Discuss.
20. 'We dare not take from men's inventive brains' (LUCY HUTCHINSON). Discuss.
21. How does theological argument influence any aspect of literary activity?
22. What, if anything, can reception history bring to our understanding of Milton?
23. 'I tremble at the inconveniencies attending so great a journey, with a numerous family, and a little infant hanging at the breast. However, I endeavour, upon this occasion, to do, as I have hitherto done in all the odd turns of my life; turn them, if I can, to my diversion' (LADY WORTLEY MONTAGU). Discuss either travel or letter writing in the light of this quotation.
24. Can mock-heroic make a serious point?
25. Write about the relationship between plot and narrative in any eighteenth-century novel(s) of your choice.
26. 'He never spoke out' (MATTHEW ARNOLD on THOMAS GRAY). Do eighteenth-century poets say what they mean?
27. Was Gothic just a fad?
28. Why is Jane Austen remembered while many of her contemporaries are not?
29. 'Every Author, so far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is enjoyed' (WILLIAM WORDSWORTH). Discuss.
30. 'Who would write, who had anything better to do?' (LORD BYRON). Discuss.
31. 'I who have written much in prose and verse / For others' uses, will write now for mine' (ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh*). Discuss interiority in nineteenth-century poetry.
32. Defend doggerel.

33. 'The essential secret is the motive force of Henry James's tales' (TZVETAN TODOROV). Discuss in relation to James or any other writer.
34. 'I am the wine and bread. / I keep the law, / I hold the mysteries true' (H.D.). Where's God in modernist poetry?
35. '*Thirty seconds before end of speech lamplight begins to fail*' (SAMUEL BECKETT). Discuss the role of stage directions in drama.
36. 'Walking thus, hour after hour, the senses keyed, one walks the flesh transparent. But no metaphor, transparent, or light as air, is adequate. The body is not made negligible, but paramount. Flesh is not annihilated but fulfilled. One is not bodiless, but essential body' (NAN SHEPHERD). Discuss writing about the natural world in the light of this quotation.
37. 'X/Self is ... a Calibanization of what I have read, the things that informed my growth in terms of ideas' (EDWARD KAMAU BRATHWAITE). Discuss any aspect of Caribbean writing in the light of this remark.
38. 'In the broad sense, as a processing of everything one hears or witnesses, all fiction is autobiographical - imagination ground through the mill of memory' (ROHINTON MISTRY). Discuss.
39. 'A warm afternoon in early spring, New York City. We went to the Chelsea Hotel to fuck' (MAGGIE NELSON). Is literature always ultimately about sex?
40. 'Publication of a book is always a bit of a non-event. It doesn't happen anywhere in space and time that you can get hold of or inhabit. Sending the book to friends by mail is charming but imaginary. Reviews may or may not dribble in but anyway by then you're writing the next thing' (ANNE CARSON). Discuss.
41. 'Explain how poetry | pursues the human like the smitten moon | above the weeping, laughing earth; how we | make prayers of it' (CAROL ANN DUFFY). Go on.
42. Which present-day writer do you think is most overrated or underrated, and why?



## 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 B

2. 'In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful' (WALTER BENJAMIN). Discuss.
3. 'It is not necessary for good translators to be good poets' (PAUL DE MAN). Discuss.
4. 'Genres, like biological species, have a relatively circumscribed existence both in space and in time' (ALASTAIR FOWLER). Discuss.
5. Write an essay on any aspect of the relationship between law and literature.
6. Are great works of literature always transgressive?
7. Do poets need poetics?
8. 'A man's most vivid and sensuous experience is inevitably bound up with the language that he actually speaks' (F.R. LEAVIS). Should we have got rid of poetic diction earlier?
9. Does fiction thrive on disaster?
10. 'Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard' (HELÈNE CIXOUS). Discuss.
11. Should we value Young Adult fiction as much as we do any other kind of fiction?
12. 'The analytic situation is the only place explicitly provided for in the social contract in which we are allowed to talk about the wounds we have suffered and to search for possible new identities and new ways of talking about ourselves' (JULIA KRISTEVA). Discuss.
13. 'When a poem rhymes, when a form generates itself, when a metre provokes consciousness into new postures, it is already on the side of life' (SEAMUS HEANEY). Discuss.
14. 'Consider gender as *a corporeal style*, an "act," as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "*performative*" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning' (JUDITH BUTLER). Discuss.
15. 'Parody is one of the major forms of modern self-reflexivity; it is a form of inter-art discourse' (LINDA HUTCHEON). Discuss.
16. What's in a name?
17. 'Both the modern novel and the detective novel are centred around the same formal problem—the *impossibility of telling a story in a linear consistent way*' (SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK). Discuss.
18. Does literary biography have a place in literary criticism?

19. Consider the positive or negative influence of editors in relation to any text or texts.
20. Would we be as interested in manuscripts if more of them had survived?
21. What can we learn from anthologies?
22. 'Deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth' (PHILIP LARKIN). Is subject matter irrelevant for poetry?
23. 'I think that I shall never see / A poem as lovely as a tree' (JOYCE KILMER). Discuss.
24. 'For romantic art the lyric is as it were the elementary fundamental characteristic' (HEGEL). Discuss.
25. Are we beyond writing epics?
26. Why aren't jokes literature?
27. 'I have a foolish habit of reading periodicals, and it seems to me that most modern criticism is perfectly valueless' (OSCAR WILDE). Have things improved?
28. 'Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself' (MARY SHELLEY). Discuss.
29. Could computers ever write poems as well as humans do?
30. How might twenty-first-century writers combat the shorter attention-spans of their readers?
31. What would the work of an 'unoriginal genius' look like?
32. 'Short stories are journeys you can make to the far side of the universe and still be back in time for dinner' (NEIL GAIMAN). Discuss.
33. 'Fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?' (J.R.R. TOLKIEN). Discuss.
34. Can tragedy transcend time?
35. "But it isn't easy", said Pooh. "Because Poetry and Hums aren't things which you get, they're things which get you. And all you can do is go where they can find you" (A.A. MILNE). Was Pooh right?
36. Discuss the literary treatment of **ONE** of the following:  
aspirations; biodiversity; cold; dragons; expression; food; ghosts; health; illusions; jealousy; kings; liminality; migration; newness; observation; philosophy; questions; revision; ships; time; unmentionables; veracity; welfare; xenotext; zeugma.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English*

1. 'All the titles and most of the familiar layout of Old English verse are editorial' (JONATHAN WILCOX). Is this a problem?
2. 'It is far more constructive to read Bede as representative of a quite foreign community, distant and strange, whose thought world should be approached with caution' (NICHOLAS HIGHAM). Discuss, with reference to Bede **OR** another Anglo-Saxon writer.
3. What can Lydgate tell us about Chaucer, **AND/OR** vice versa?
4. Write about temptation in medieval literature.
5. Is the only justice we find in fabliaux the poetic variety?
6. 'When we have seen what an allegory signifies, we are always tempted to attend to the signification in the abstract and throw aside the allegorical imagery as something which has now done its work. But this is not the way to read an allegory' (C.S. LEWIS). Discuss.
7. Is it anachronistic to talk about medieval narrators as self-conscious?
8. What explains the abiding European fascination with King Arthur?
9. Write about the dialogue as a medieval literary form.
10. Could we have had metaphysical poetry without Wyatt?
11. 'Twice or thrice had I loved thee / Before I knew thy face or name' (JOHN DONNE). Is Donne sincere?
12. Write about the relationship between actors and playwrights in early modern theatre.
13. 'For never was a story of more woe' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Romeo and Juliet*). Can dramatic tragedy sometimes be read as dramatic comedy?
14. Write about the significance of **ANY ONE** literary patron.
15. 'Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging' (BEN JONSON). Write about metre in the work of **ONE OR MORE** poet(s).
16. Is all literature written during the Civil War political by nature?

[OVER]

17. '[Wit] involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible' (T.S. ELIOT on Andrew Marvell). Discuss.
18. 'The school which existed till lately since the restoration of Charles the 2d, was rather a school of wit and ethics in verse, than anything else' (LEIGH HUNT). Is this a fair description of the poetry of the long eighteenth century?
19. Did the Ancients or the Moderns have the right idea?
20. 'Our Forefathers looked upon Nature with more Reverence and Horrour, before the World was enlightened by Learning and Philosophy, and loved to astonish themselves with the Apprehensions of Witchcraft, Prodigies, Charms and Enchantments' (JOSEPH ADDISON). Why were eighteenth-century writers fascinated by the primitive?
21. 'They consist of fourteen lines, and appear to me no improper vehicle for a single sentiment' (CHARLOTTE SMITH). What, if anything, was distinctive about the sonnet in the Romantic period?
22. Wordsworth or Coleridge?
23. Would we think about the course of literary history differently if Shelley, Byron and Keats had not all died young?
24. 'Mills and Boon written by a genius' (P.D. JAMES). Is this a fair assessment of Jane Austen?
25. 'No language is too strong to condemn the mixed vileness and childishness of depicting the spurious passions of a putrescent imagination, the unnamed lusts of sated wontons, as if they were the crown of character and their enjoyment the great glory of human life' (JOHN MORLEY on Algernon Charles Swinburne). Defend a transgressive Victorian writer of your choice.
26. '[Henry James] had reached a stage at which the click of a Remington typewriter acted as a positive spur. He found it more difficult to compose to the music of any other make. During the fortnight when the Remington was out of order he dictated to an Oliver typewriter with evident discomfort, and he found it almost impossibly disconcerting to speak to something that made no responsive sound at all' (THEODORA BOSANQUET, James's amanuensis). Write about how methods of composition affect style.
27. 'Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends' (PAUL FUSSELL). Discuss in relation to any literature of the Great War.
28. 'I haven't that 'reality' gift. I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, distrusting reality – its cheapness' (VIRGINIA WOOLF). Discuss.
29. '[Samuel Beckett] has written a play in which nothing happens, twice' (VIVIAN MERCIER). Discuss with reference to **ONE OR MORE** twentieth-century playwright(s).

30. 'Wrote (?) (Made) five sonnets tonight, by taking one line from each of a group of poems, at random, going from first to last poem then back again until 12 lines, then making the final couplet from any 2 poems, in the group, one line at random from each. Wrote by ear, and automatically. Very interesting results' (TED BERRIGAN). Can cutting and pasting produce an original work of literature?
31. What does pastoral look like in the post-war novel?
32. Whose next work – of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama, screenwriting or any other written genre – are you most looking forward to reading?

## 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. Write a critical comparison of **ANY TWO** of the following passages:

- a) Processionals in the exemplary cave,  
Benediction of shadows. Pomfret. London.  
The voice fragrant with mannered humility,  
With an equable contempt for this world,  
'In honorem Trinitatis'. Crash. The head 5  
Struck down into a meaty conduit of blood.  
So these dispose themselves to receive each  
Pentecostal blow from axe or seraph,  
Spattering block-straw with mortal residue.  
Psalteries whine through the empyrean. Fire 10  
Flares in the pit, ghosting upon stone  
Creatures of such rampant state, vacuous  
Ceremony of possession, restless  
Habitation, no man's dwelling-place.

(GEOFFREY HILL)

- b) Then, before he shoulde say his prayers, because the morning was sharpe,  
the sheriff offered him to bring him downe off the scaffold to warme him  
by a fire. No, good Mr Sheriff (said he) lett us dispatche; for within this  
quarter of this hower mine ague will come upon me, and if I be not dead 5  
before then mine enemies will saye that I quake for feare. So he made a most  
divine and admirable prayer, and then he rose up, clapped his hands and  
saide, Nowe I am going to god. He then bid the hangman to shewe him his  
axe, which having poized in his hand, he felte upon the edge, saying, here is a  
medicin will cure me of all my diseases, and so delivered it the hangman  
again. Then he putt off his gowne, untrussed himselfe, and put off his 10  
band and doublett, and most gracefully took his leave at all 4. sides of the  
Scaffold. Laying his head downe the block, he was angry with the  
hangman that would have blindfolded his eyes, saying you thinke I feare  
the shadow of the axe, when I fear not the axe itselfe. And so when he sould  
holde up his handes saying his last prayer he bad him strike. Many other 15  
circumstances, and pointes of substance there were bothe before and at  
the time of his execution, which were very memorable; but nowe mine  
other occasions will not suffer me to recount all.

(JOHN PORY)

[OVER]

c) Anne's arm shakes as she raises it to lift off her hood. It comes easily, no fumbling; he thinks, it cannot have been pinned. Her hair is gathered in a silk net at the nape of her neck and she shakes it out, gathers up the strands, raising her hands above her head, coiling it; she holds it with one hand, and one of the women gives her a linen cap. She pulls it on. You would not think it would hold her hair, but it does; she must have rehearsed with it. But now she looks about as if for direction. She lifts the cap half off her head, puts it back. She does not know what to do, he sees she does not know if she should tie the cap's string beneath her chin—whether it will hold without fastening or whether she has time to make a knot and how many heartbeats she has left in the world. The executioner steps out and he can see—he is very close—Anne's eyes focus on him. The Frenchman bobs to his knees to ask pardon. It is a formality and his knees barely graze the straw. He has motioned Anne to kneel, and as she does so he steps away, as if he does not want contact even with her clothes. At arm's length, he holds out a folded cloth to one of the women, and raises a hand to his eyes to show her what he means. He hopes it is Lady Kingston who takes the blindfold; whoever it is, she is adept, but a small sound comes from Anne as her world darkens. Her lips move in prayer. The Frenchman waves the women back. They retreat; they kneel, one of them almost sinks to the ground and is propped up by the others; despite the veils one can see their hands, their helpless bare hands, as they draw their own skirts about them, as if they were making themselves small, making themselves safe. The queen is alone now, as alone as she has ever been in her life. She says, Christ have mercy, Jesus have mercy, Christ receive my soul. She raises one arm, again her fingers go to the coif, and he thinks, put your arm down, for God's sake put your arm down, and he could not will it more if—the executioner calls out sharply, 'Get me the sword.' The blinded head whips around. The man is behind Anne, she is misdirected, she does not sense him. There is a groan, one single sound from the whole crowd. Then a silence, and into that silence, a sharp sigh or a sound like a whistle through a keyhole: the body exsanguinates, and its flat little presence becomes a puddle of gore.

(HILARY MANTEL)

[OVER]

## Section B

1. JAMES BOSWELL: 'Then, Sir, what is poetry?'  
SAMUEL JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not.'  
Have there been any satisfactory positive definitions?
2. 'That is not what I meant, at all; that is not it, at all' (T.S. ELIOT). Does it matter what was meant?
3. 'The epistolary novel, despite the prestige of Richardson and Rousseau, was obviously a technical dead end' (ELAINE SHOWALTER). Why use the epistolary form?
4. Why do poets imitate?
5. '...the full, the monstrous demonstration that Tennyson was not Tennysonian' (HENRY JAMES). Do authors make good celebrities? **OR** Who was the greatest self-publicist in literary history?
6. Write about the relationship between literature and the law.
7. 'What's that coming over the hill? A white, middle-class Englishman! A Lone Enraptured Male' (KATHLEEN JAMIE on the 'new nature writing'). Is contemporary writing gendered?
8. Is there poetry in propaganda?
9. 'Genre classifications are empirical, not logical. They are historical assumptions constructed by authors, audiences, and critics in order to serve communicative and aesthetic purposes' (RALPH COHEN). Discuss.
10. 'One book walking along in prose, can be read publicly by the brothers in the church...the other running with the muse of poetry, your pupils can read over and over again in their rooms' (ALCUIN). Do different reading traditions produce different kinds of text?
11. Is dividing literature into historical periods helpful?
12. 'Big words on small matters' (WILLIAM COWPER). Is there anything more to mock-heroic?
13. 'You know there is £10 more at least to be received of you for the play. We desire you to lend us £5 of that...without which we cannot be bailed till this be dispatched' (PHILIP MASSINGER, from debtors' prison). Write about the relationship between literature and money.
14. 'There are no noble subjects or ignoble subjects; from the standpoint of pure Art one might almost establish the axiom that there is no such thing as subject, style in itself being an absolute manner of seeing things' (GUSTAVE FLAUBERT). Do you agree?
15. Is book history a sub-discipline of literary studies or something else entirely?

16. ‘‘Reader’ is an optimistic term; there are so many cheaper ways of getting something out of writing that the arduous and inward act such a word should imply’ (ADRIAN POOLE). Discuss.
17. ‘Bottom, thou art translated!’ (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Write about transformation in the work of **TWO OR MORE** writers of your choice.
18. What consequences does Internet piracy have for print culture?
19. ‘By far the greater part of the archive through which knowledge about the so-called Third World is generated in the metropolises has traditionally been and continues to be assembled within institutions of research and explication’ (AIJAZ AHMAD). Discuss.
20. Do editors equivocate too much?
21. Every US president since Kennedy has had a poet read at his inauguration. Does it matter that Trump did not?
22. ‘One of the things that makes paranoia possible is that interpretations can seldom be disproved, even if they are such as no person in his sane sense would accept’ (F.E. SPARSHOTT). Are there limits?
23. Why study an author’s juvenilia?
24. ‘To operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination’ (JUDITH BUTLER). Write about power **AND/OR** sex in the work of **ONE OR MORE** female writer(s).
25. ‘Well, Arthur, I mean to be famous’ (ALFRED TENNYSON). Do poets always want fame?
26. Are utopias satires?
27. Who do you think is the most overrated poet? **OR** Who do you think is the most underrated?
28. Are there any serious works about dragons? If not, write one.
29. Discuss literary representations of **ANY ONE** of the following:  
arguments; boys; cursing; dilettantes; entropy; fraud; gossip; hedonism; idiocy; jazz; knowledge; Lucifer; modesty; nonsense; ostracism; prudery; Quakers; rap; slovenliness; typhus; unzipping; Vikings; whining; xenophobia; yearning; zoology.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

*You may answer on any literature written in English*

1. Why should Anglo-Saxon writing be regarded as part of English literature?
2. How Italian was Chaucer?
3. ‘The medieval world was innocent of our profound concern for tension.’ (D.W. ROBERTSON) Discuss.
4. ‘Clerkes kenne me that crist is in alle places  
Ac I saw hym nevere soothly but as myself in a Mirour.’ (WILLIAM LANGLAND)  
Discuss in relation to Langland or any other author or authors.
5. ‘The Renaissance invented the Middle Ages in order to define itself: the Enlightenment perpetuated them in order to admire itself; and the Romantics revived them in order to escape from themselves.’ (BRIAN STOCK) Discuss.
6. ‘In our eagerness to make the Renaissance relevant to the Modern, have we not been precipitous in identifying it as the onset of the Modern?’ (MARGRETA DE GRAZIA)  
Discuss.
7. Did Shakespeare revise *King Lear*?
8. ‘Shakespeare was aware of and not indifferent to the readerly (or literary) reception of his plays (in print and, conceivably, manuscript); he and many of his contemporaries considered his printed plays as more than discardable ephemera.’ (LUKAS ERNE)  
Discuss.
9. ‘It seems to me that translating from one language to another, unless it is from Greek and Latin, the queens of all languages, is like looking at Flemish tapestries from the wrong side, for although the figures are visible, they are covered by threads that obscure them.’ (CERVANTES) Discuss.
10. Was Milton a heretic?
11. ‘Had I had a fancy, I durst not have exercised it here; for I tremble to think of turning Scripture into a romance.’ (LUCY HUTCHINSON) Discuss.
12. Are ‘literature’ and ‘worship’ convergent or divergent concepts?
13. Can we understand Restoration literature without knowing about court culture?
14. ‘There are many grievous excesses which Law does not reach. Satire supplies, in some measure, the defects of Law in creating a Tribunal of its own.’ (WILLIAM COMBE) How true is this of eighteenth-century satire?

[OVER]

15. Was Shakespeare an eighteenth-century invention?
16. ‘Where [Homer’s] Diction is bold and lofty, let us raise ours as high as we can; but where it is plain and humble, we ought not to be deterr’d from imitating him by the fear of incurring the Censure of a meer *English Critick*.’ (ALEXANDER POPE) Discuss in relation to Pope’s Homer or any other translation.
17. ‘Eighteenth-century pastoral poetry [was] characterised by an extreme reluctance to mention the practical aspects of rural life.’ (JOHN BARRELL) Is this fair?
18. ‘Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. The *rules* of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production.’ (SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE) Discuss.
19. ‘The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.’ (WILLIAM WORDSWORTH) Discuss.
20. ‘The great literature of the years immediately after 1817 – what is normally designated the era of the younger Romantics – discovers a great nineteenth-century preoccupation: the necessity of historical change, but also and more particularly the damage done to individuals by that process.’ (MARILYN BUTLER) Discuss.
21. ‘Do you suppose that I could have any intention but to giggle and make giggle?’ (LORD BYRON) How serious was he?
22. Was the rise of the novel really a middle-class phenomenon?
23. ‘The dissolution of the self began to gain ground as a prominent theme in art and literature only after the middle of the nineteenth century.’ (JACOB KORG) Discuss.
24. Write a dialogue on poetry between Henry James and Alfred, Lord Tennyson.
25. ‘Literary “Irishness” is every bit as complex a concept as literary “Englishness”.’ Discuss.
26. ‘Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves.’ (JAMES JOYCE) Discuss.
27. ‘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 Conrad **OR ANY OTHER** writer.
28. ‘If I turn my attention from man to nations, I note that here too there is great danger; that colonial enterprise is to the modern world what Roman imperialism was to the ancient world: the prelude to Disaster and the forerunner of Catastrophe.’ (AIMÉ CÉSAIRE) Discuss.
29. Is there a modernist philosophy?

30. 'Every story you tell to a child is a whole kit of blueprints for dealing with himself and for dealing with his own imagination.' (TED HUGHES) Discuss.
31. Have twentieth-century futurist narratives been proved right?
32. 'Given its global dominance it is surprising that the United States of America has not had a more radical influence on literature in English.' Discuss.
33. What will the canon of twenty-first century English literature look like from the perspective of the twenty-second century?

## 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. Write a critical comparison of the following passages:

a) Doc was collecting marine animals in the Great Tide Pool on the tip of the Peninsula. It is a fabulous place: when the tide is in, a wave-churned basin, creamy with foam, whipped by the combers that roll in from the whistling buoy on the reef. But when the tide goes out the little water world becomes quiet and lovely. The sea is very clear and the bottom becomes fantastic with hurrying, fighting, feeding, breeding animals. Crabs rush from frond to frond of the waving algae. Starfish squat over mussels and limpets, attach their million little suckers and then slowly lift with incredible power until the prey is broken from the rock. And then the starfish stomach comes out and envelops its food. Orange and speckled and fluted nudibranchs slide gracefully over the rocks, their skirts waving like the dresses of Spanish dancers. And black eels poke their heads out of crevices and wait for prey. The snapping shrimps with their trigger claws pop loudly. The lovely, colored world is glassed over. Hermit crabs like frantic children scamper on the bottom sand. And now one, finding an empty snail shell he likes better than his own, creeps out, exposing his soft body to the enemy for a moment, and then pops into the new shell. A wave breaks over the barrier, and churns the glassy water for a moment and mixes bubbles into the pool, and then it clears and is tranquil and lovely and murderous again. Here a crab tears a leg from his brother. The anemones expand like soft and brilliant flowers, inviting any tired and perplexed animal to lie for a moment in their arms, and when some small crab or little tide-pool Johnnie accepts the green and purple invitation, the petals whip in, the stinging cells shoot tiny narcotic needles into the prey and it grows weak and perhaps sleepy while the searing caustic digestive acids melt its body down.

(JOHN STEINBECK)

b) There were barnacles that marked the edges of oceans. Late scramblers on the rocks could feel their calcic ridges stoving sharply underfoot. The wet rocks glittered beneath and in the wind they smelled of verdigris. The barnacles fused in vermiculate settlements. For their whole lives they cleaved, and in turn the fragile rock cleaved to them. Volcanoes and thimbles and strange constellations. Together they mapped distant cities and willed the sea to overtake them. And when the russet tide came they opened themselves like

[OVER]

unfamiliar lovers. The whole thing some actinic  
principle: a forest grew up in a second, to grace a  
world where the sun was a watery lamp. Where  
none had been before, white mouths frilled softly 15  
in the current and squat armour issued forth the  
unlikeliest of cilia: transparent, lightly haired,  
cherishing each updraft as, feathered, they moved  
with it. They only existed for that half-sunk terrain.  
And as they briefly lived, those tender quills wrote 20  
of their mystery.

(SARAH HOWE)

[OVER]

## Section B

1. Does book history need putting back into its (now slightly foxed) box?
2. 'Every living Language, like the perspiring Bodies of living Creatures, is in perpetual motion and alteration.' (RICHARD BENTLEY) Discuss.
3. Is reading a text necessarily a creative act?
4. Take a forgotten author and explain a) why he or she has been forgotten; and b) why he or she should not have been.
5. 'Why flourish'd verse in great *Augustus*' reign?  
He and Mecaenas lov'd the Muse's strain.' (JOHN GAY) Discuss.
6. 'Before going about putting a certain example to the test, I shall attempt to formulate, in a manner as elliptical, economical, and formal as possible, what I shall call the law of the law of genre. It is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy.' (JACQUES DERRIDA) Discuss.
7. 'An irony has no point unless it is true, in some degree, in both senses. The fundamental impulse of irony is to score off both the arguments that have been puzzling you, both sets of sympathies in your mind, both sorts of fool who will hear you.' (WILLIAM EMPSON) Discuss.
8. Is it time we just got over epic?
9. Did Cervantes invent the novel?
10. 'When you talk of rectifying Mistakes not from Manuscripts, but by Sagacity and happy guessing, I own I pity *Milton*, and every other Author who runs the same Fate; and by falling into the Hands of a Critick, lose his own Beauties through the Corrector's want of Taste.' (ANON., *Bentley Depos'd*) Is 'Sagacity' in editors all bad?
11. 'I wanted to continue to write as I always had, and I have tried very hard not to write a poem I previously wouldn't have written.' (CAROL ANN DUFFY) Discuss in relation to any poet(s) laureate of your choosing.
12. 'Philology is the handmaid of the historical disciplines.' (E. R. CURTIUS) Discuss
13. 'Every time I open my mouth, I'm insinuating myself into some conversation which preexists me and to which my contribution is only a rustle of echoes – on paper, which is where we all must live.' (DENISE RILEY) Discuss.
14. 'Storytellers are a threat. They threaten all champions of control, they frighten usurpers of the right-to-freedom of the human spirit – in state, in church or mosque, in party congress, in the university or wherever.' (CHINUA ACHEBE) Discuss.
15. 'The humorous is an imaginary terrain where moral judgment is suspended.' (MILAN KUNDERA) Discuss.

16. 'We congratulate parrots on their adroit mimicry; why should we not congratulate authors for theirs?' Discuss.
17. What role have institutions played in the development of English literature?
18. **EITHER** a) Is literary history old hat? **OR** b) Should advocates of the historical understanding of texts be more aware of their own historicity?
19. 'Denouncing the universe has never seemed to me a sensible thing for a poem to do.' (WILLIAM EMPSON) Discuss.
20. Is it wicked to play literary games with gender?
21. Is there a place for aesthetic appreciation within literary criticism?
22. 'We live in an unprecedented inescapability from clichés. All around us is a rising tide of them; we shall drown and no one will save us.' (CHRISTOPHER RICKS) Discuss
23. What can be done with stanzaic form?
24. 'Too tum tum at a stretch.' (EZRA POUND) Should meter be more or less tum tum?
25. Is plot really just a means of structuring a reader's desire?
26. Is political reading necessarily reductive reading?
27. Write an allegory.
28. Is English literature at its best when it is most un-English?
29. How has the representation in literature of **ANY ONE** of the following changed over time? Discuss with reference to an author or authors of your choosing.

anthologies; bathos; caste; dogs; expectation; fantasies; geography; Helicon; imagism; jests; kissing; letters; masculinities; nonsense; optimism; plot; questions; relationships; starships; tea; underworlds; vehicles; wandering; xenia; yesteryear; zaniness.