

Part IB, Paper 6

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ITS CONTEXTS, 1660-1870

Answer **three** questions.

*You should demonstrate substantial knowledge of literature from both **before** and **after** 1784. By 'substantial knowledge' is meant the equivalent of one question or about a third of your script as a whole.*

Do not present the same material twice, either in this paper or in the examination as a whole.
Irrelevant answers, or answers only tenuously related to the question, will be penalised.
In the case of handwritten scripts, Illegible handwriting may place candidates at a disadvantage.
*Include your **number**, not your name, on submitted scripts.*

All papers that would usually have been sat as three-hour 'closed-book' and invigilated exams will now be sat online as 'open-book open-web' exams within a 24-hour window. There will be no restrictions on referring during the assessment to books and other materials, whether on paper, online, or in computer files. There will be a word-count range of 800-1200 per essay, which is intended to approximate to the amount that can be written by hand under normal examination conditions. For papers which include a 'Section A' made up of multiple parts, the word-count for a candidate's responses to Section A as a whole must be within the range of 800–1200 words.

Examination responses should conform to the following presentation requirements: they should be in minimum 12pt type; should use a sans serif typeface (e.g. Arial or Calibri); should be 1.5 or double-spaced; and should be submitted as a word-processed document (in .docx or .pdf format).

1. 'argument
Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles ...'

(JOHN MILTON, 1667)

Discuss how any writing in the period rethinks, without abandoning, the heroic.
2. 'Gulliver can be seen as the ideal colonial subject, unquestioningly seeing himself and those
of his kind as inferior to the more "civilized" race.'

(KATARZYNA BARTOZYNSKA)

Discuss travel writing in relation to given cultural presuppositions or starting-points.
3. 'Though I don't remember all I wrote, yet I know I wrote my Heart; and that is not deceitful.'

(SAMUEL RICHARDSON, 1740)

What might make writing the heart a difficult project?
4. 'GREAT. Applied to a thing, signifies bigness; when to a man, often littleness, or meanness.'

(HENRY FIELDING, 1752)

Discuss what writing in this period makes of the shifting or plural signification of words.
5. 'Do you then mistake a crowd for society? I know not two things more opposite. How little
society is there to be found in what you call the world?'

(SARAH SCOTT, 1762)

Discuss the imagination of alternative societies in this period.
6. 'For the eighteenth century, as for the Renaissance, things could still be interpreted as
intertwined with persons, objects with subjects.'

(CYNTHIA SUNDBERG WALL)

Discuss any writing in which this is strikingly true, or strikingly called into question.
7. 'The novel form is in essence a question mark.'

(SYLVIA WYNTER)

Discuss the relation between form and questioning in any prose writing in the period.
8. 'Women poets were conscious of the extent to which they could both take advantage of and
be limited by their culture's association of women with sensibility.'

(ADELA PINCH)

Discuss this both/and in the construction of femininity. Your answer need not address
women poets, but may take in writing of all kinds.

9. 'A good comedy, by the passions being exhausted, is at present the most difficult of all compositions, if it represents mankind in its present state of civilised society.'

(HORACE WALPOLE, probably in 1780s)

Are comedy and civilised society necessarily at odds? (You need not refer to drama.)

10. 'The timidity of the English character threw a veil over me, you could not penetrate. You have forced me to emerge in some measure from my natural reserve, and to throw off the veil that hid me.'

(HANNAH COWLEY, 1782)

How does writing in the period address the relation between ideas of manifest 'character' and ideas of what is 'natural'?

11. 'But come, ye souls who feel for human woe,
Tho' drest in savage guise!'

(ANN YEARSLEY, 'On the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade', 1788)

What compromises are involved in, or representational challenges faced by, the literature of abolition?

12. 'There is no employment which the human mind will with so much avidity pursue, as the discovery of concealed passion.'

(JOANNA BAILLIE, 1798)

How does writing in the period understand, appeal to, or negotiate with, such avidity?

13. 'It will perhaps appear to them ['readers of superior judgment'], that wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity.'

(WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 'Advertisement' to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798)

Discuss any writing which brings together 'low descent' as a matter of class or status and as a matter of linguistic register, indecorum, or bathos.

14. 'The age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever.'

(EDMUND BURKE, 1790)

How does post-Revolutionary literature reflect, or respond to, this idea?

15. 'Mr Burke should recollect that he is writing History, and not Plays.'

(THOMAS PAINE, 1791)

Can a line be drawn between creative work and historical, biographical, or documentary writing? Does such a distinction matter?

16. 'The pleasure experienced by her [Charlotte Smith's] readers must be greatly diminished, by the reflection that so cultivated a mind should feel the pressure of real sorrows, amidst the rich and beautiful effusions of imagination!'

(MARY ROBINSON, 1797)

Discuss the interplay between biographical considerations and imaginative effects.

17. 'It was the fate of all the first generation Romantics to watch themselves decorating their own cells.'

(GREGORY DART)

Discuss how any writing in the period covered by this paper engages with the experience of confinement or constraint.

18. 'Natural Objects always did & now do Weaken deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me. Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature.'

(WILLIAM BLAKE, marginal annotation c.1810 to Wordsworth's title:
Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening the Imagination)

Discuss the relation of imagination to natural objects in any relevant writing.

19. 'Tis hard to venture where our betters fail,
Or lend fresh interest to a twice-told tale.'

(BYRON, 'Hints from Horace', 1811, a reworking of Horace's *Art of Poetry*)

What does literary imitation, parody, quotation, or translation make of this problem?

20. 'Because they were fond of reading, she fancied them satirical: perhaps without exactly knowing what it was to be satirical; but *that* did not signify. It was censure in common use, and easily given.'

(JANE AUSTEN, 1811)

Why might satire be hard to pin down or be sure about?

21. 'Yes; in those fragments, though by time defaced,
And rude insensate conquerors, yet remains
All that may charm th'enlighten'd eye of taste,
On shores where still inspiring freedom reigns.'

(FELICIA HEMANS, on the Elgin Marbles, 1817)

What, if anything, does the sense of loss contribute to visions of antiquity or time past?

22. 'Mr. Shelley strives to overturn all established creeds and systems, but this is in him an effect of constitution. He runs before the most extravagant opinions; but this is because he is held back by none of the merely mechanical checks of sympathy and habit.'

(WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1822)

How does freedom of thought stand in relation to 'sympathy and habit' in any relevant writing in the period?

23. 'Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavouring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action.'

(JOHN STUART MILL, 1833)

Is this distinction between 'poetry' and 'eloquence' (as applied to two kinds of poetry, if you prefer, or any other modes of writing) critically helpful?

24. 'What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent.'

(WALT WHITMAN, 1855)

Discuss any writing that might claim to repudiate morality.

25. 'One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted'.

(EMILY DICKINSON, c.1860)

If the tropes of the Gothic are metaphorical, what do they signify?

26. 'Whether or not they know it, Dickens's characters are nothing less than the tics, stammers, and convulsive gestures of that sprawling, filthy, neglected, and exceedingly frustrated giant called population.'

(NANCY ARMSTRONG)

Discuss any fiction whose concern is as much with a people or a nation as with individual characters.

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