

Friday 27 May 2022: 12pm - Saturday 28 May 2022: 12pm

Part II Paper 14

AMERICAN LITERATURE

Answer **Section A** and **two** questions from **Section B**.

At least one of your answers in Section B must include substantial discussion of **two or more** authors.

In questions where a quotation is attributed, candidates are not obliged to refer to that author in their answer unless specifically required to do so.

*Do **not** use 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.

Illegible handwriting may place candidates at a disadvantage.

*Write your **number**, not your name, on the cover sheet of **each** section booklet.*

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 (eg Arial or Calibri); should be 1.5 or double-spaced; and should be submitted as a word-processed document (in .docx or .rtf format).

SECTION A

1. Write a comparative essay on **any two** of the following passages, discussing points of literary and historical interest raised by them. You may, if you wish, make reference to writing beyond the period 1835-1865. Passages (f) and (h) are complete poems; all the other passages are extracts from longer works.

(a)

He brought me, at length, after creeping and winding through innumerable narrow passages, to an iron-bound box, such as is used sometimes for packing fine earthenware. It was nearly four feet high, and full six long, but very narrow. Two large empty oil-casks lay on the top of it, and above these, again, a vast quantity of straw matting, piled up as high as the floor of the cabin. In every other direction around was wedged as closely as possible, even up to the ceiling, a complete chaos of almost every species of ship-furniture, together with a heterogeneous medley of crates, hampers, barrels, and bales, so that it seemed a matter no less than miraculous that we had discovered any passage at all to the box. I afterward found that Augustus had purposely arranged the stowage in this hold with a view to affording me a thorough concealment, having had only one assistant in the labour, a man not going out in the brig. 5

My companion now showed me that one of the ends of the box could be removed at pleasure. He slipped it aside and displayed the interior, at which I was excessively amused. A mattress from one of the cabin berths covered the whole of its bottom, and it contained almost every article of mere comfort which could be crowded into so small a space, allowing me, at the same time, sufficient room for my accommodation, either in a sitting position or lying at full length. Among other things, there were some books, pen, ink, and paper, three blankets, a large jug full of water, a keg of sea-biscuit, three or four immense Bologna sausages, an enormous ham, a cold leg of roast mutton, and half a dozen bottles of cordials and liqueurs. I proceeded immediately to take possession of my little apartment, and this with feelings of higher satisfaction, I am sure, than any monarch ever experienced upon entering a new palace. Augustus now pointed out to me the method of fastening the open end of the box, and then, holding the taper close to the deck, showed me a piece of dark whiplcord lying along it. This, he said, extended from my hiding-place throughout all the necessary windings among the lumber, to a nail which was driven into the deck of the hold, immediately beneath the trapdoor leading into his stateroom. By means of this cord I should be enabled readily to trace my way out without his guidance, provided any unlooked-for accident should render such a step necessary. 10 15 20 25

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, 1838

(b)

It strikes the European traveller, at the first burst of the scenery of America on his eye, that the New World of Columbus is also a new world from the hand of the Creator. In comparison with the old countries of Europe, the vegetation is so wondrously lavish, the outlines and minor features struck out with so bold a freshness, and the lakes and rivers so even in their fulness and flow, yet so vast and powerful, that he may well imagine it an Eden newly sprung from the ocean. The Minerva-like birth of the republic of the United States, its sudden rise to independence, wealth, and power, and its continued and marvellous increase in population and prosperity, strike him with the same surprise, and leave the same impression of a new scale of existence, and a fresher and faster law of growth and accomplishment. 5

[...] 10

He who journeys here, if he would not have the eternal succession of lovely natural objects —

‘Lie like a load on the weary eye,’¹

must feed his imagination on the *future*. The American does so. His mind, as he tracks the broad rivers of his own country, is perpetually reaching forward. Instead of looking through a valley, which has presented the same aspect for hundreds of years—in which live lords and tenants, whose hearths have been surrounded by the same names through ages of tranquil descent, and whose fields have never changed landmark or mode of culture since the memory of man, he sees a valley laden down like a harvest waggon with a virgin vegetation, untrodden and luxuriant; and his first thought is of the villages that will soon sparkle on the hill-sides, the axes that will ring from the woodlands, and the mills, bridges, canals, and railroads, that will span and border the stream that now runs through sedge and wild-flowers. The towns he passes through on his route are not recognizable by prints done by artists long ago dead, with houses of low-browed architecture, and immemorial trees; but a town which has perhaps doubled its inhabitants and dwellings since he last saw it, and will again double them before he returns. Instead of inquiring into its antiquity, he sits over the fire with his paper and pencil, and calculates what the population will be in ten years, how far they will spread, what the value of the neighbouring land will become, and whether the stock of some canal or railroad that seems more visionary than Symmes’s expedition to the centre of the earth², will, in consequence, be a good investment. He looks upon all external objects as exponents of the future. In Europe they are only exponents of the past. 15 20 25 30

NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS, *American Scenery*, 1840

¹ A slight misquoting of a line from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’.

² In the 1810s and 1820s, Captain John C Symmes lobbied for funding to go to the Arctic to find a hole that would lead to the centre of the earth.

(c)

In a great metropolis like this, nothing is more observable than the infinite varieties of character. Almost without effort, one may happen to find himself, in the course of a few days, beside the Catholic kneeling before the Cross, the Mohammedan bowing to the East, the Jew veiled before the ark of the testimony, the Baptist walking into the water, the Quaker keeping his head covered in the presence of dignitaries and solemnities of all sorts, and the Mormon quoting from the Golden Book³ which he has never seen. 5

More, perhaps, than any other city, except Paris or New Orleans, this is a place of rapid fluctuation, and never-ceasing change. A large portion of the population are like mute actors, who tramp across the stage in pantomime or pageant, and are seen no more. The enterprising, the curious, the reckless, and the criminal, flock hither from all quarters of the world, as to a common centre, whence they can diverge at pleasure. Where men are little known, they are imperfectly restrained; therefore, great numbers here live with somewhat of that wild license which prevails in times of pestilence. Life is a reckless game, and death is a business transaction. Warehouses of ready-made coffins, stand beside warehouses of ready-made clothing, and the shroud is sold with spangled opera-dresses. Nay, you may chance to see exposed at sheriffs' sales, in public squares, piles of coffins, like nests of boxes, one within another, with a hole bored in the topmost lid to sustain the red flag of the auctioneer, who stands by, describing their conveniences and merits, with all the exaggerating eloquence of his tricky trade. 10 15

There is something impressive, even to painfulness, in this dense crowding of human existence, this mercantile familiarity with death. It has sometimes forced upon me, for a few moments, an appalling night-mare sensation of vanishing identity; as if I were but an unknown, unnoticed, and unseparated drop in the great ocean of human existence; as if the uncomfortable old theory were true, and we were but portions of a Great Mundane Soul, to which we ultimately return, to be swallowed up in its infinity. But such ideas I expel at once, like phantasms of evil, which indeed they are. [...] 20 25

You will, at least, my dear friend, give these letters the credit of being utterly unpremeditated; for Flibbertigibbet⁴ himself never moved with more unexpected and incoherent variety. I have wandered almost as far from my starting point, as Saturn's ring is from Mercury; but I will return to the varieties in New-York. Among them I often meet a tall Scotsman, with sandy hair and high cheek bones—a regular Sawney⁵, with tartan plaid and bagpipe. And where do you guess he most frequently plies his poetic trade? Why, in the slaughter-houses! of which a hundred or more send forth their polluted breath into the atmosphere of this swarming city hive! There, if you are curious to witness incongruities, you may almost any day see grunting pigs or bleating lambs, with throats cut to the tune of Highland May, or Bonny Doon, or Lochaber No More. 30 35

LYDIA MARIA CHILD, Letter X, in the 'Letters from New York' series,
first published in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 21, 1841

³ *The Book of Mormon*, also known as the Golden Book, was published in 1830.

⁴ Flibbertigibbet was the name of an impish child in Walter Scott's 1821 novel *Kenilworth*.

⁵ Sawney was a derogatory nickname for a Scot.

(d)

One day, while I was at work, and my thoughts were eagerly feasting upon the idea of freedom, I felt my soul called out to heaven to breathe a prayer to Almighty God. I prayed fervently that he who seeth in secret and knew the inmost desires of my heart, would lend me his aid in bursting my fetters asunder, and in restoring me to the possession of those rights, of which men had robbed me; when the idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself up in a box, and getting myself conveyed as dry goods to a free state. 5

Being now satisfied that this was the plan for me, I went to my friend Dr. Smith and, having acquainted him with it, we agreed to have it put at once into execution not however without calculating the chances of danger with which it was attended; but buoyed up by the prospect of freedom and increased hatred to slavery I was willing to dare even death itself rather than endure any longer the clanking of those galling chains. It being still necessary to have the assistance of the store-keeper, to see that the box was kept in its right position on its passage, I then went to let him know my intention, but he said although he was willing to serve me in any way he could, he did not think I could live in a box for so long a time as would be necessary to convey me to Philadelphia, but as I had already made up my mind, he consented to accompany me and keep the box right all the way. 10 15

My next object was to procure a box, and with the assistance of a carpenter that was very soon accomplished, and taken to the place where the packing was to be performed. In the mean time the storekeeper had written to a friend in Philadelphia, but as no answer had arrived, we resolved to carry out our purpose as best we could. It was deemed necessary that I should get permission to be absent from my work for a few days, in order to keep down suspicion until I had once fairly started on the road to liberty; and as I had then a gathered finger I thought that would form a very good excuse for obtaining leave of absence; but when I showed it to one everseer, Mr. Allen, he told me it was not so bad as to prevent me from working, so with a view of making it bad enough, I got Dr. Smith to procure for me some oil of vitriol in order to drop a little of this on it, but in my hurry I dropped rather much and made it worse than there was any occasion for, in fact it was very soon eaten in to the bone, and on presenting it again to Mr. Allen I obtained the permission required, with the advice that I should go home and get a poultice of flax-meal to it, and keep it well poulticed until it got better. I took him instantly at his word and went off directly to the store-keeper who had by this time received an answer from his friend in Philadelphia, and had obtained permission to address the box to him, this friend in that city, arranging to call for it as soon as it should arrive. There being no time to be lost, the store-keeper, Dr. Smith, and myself, agreed to meet next morning at four o'clock, in order to get the box ready for the express train. The box which I had procured was three feet one inch wide, two feet six inches high, and two feet wide: and on the morning of the 29th day of March, 1849, I went into the box--having previously bored three gimlet holes opposite my face, for air, and provided myself with a bladder of water, both for the purpose of quenching my thirst and for wetting my face, should I feel getting faint. I took the gimlet also with me, in order that I might bore more holes if I found I had not sufficient air. Being thus equipped for the battle of liberty, my friends nailed down the lid and had me conveyed to the Express Office, which was about a mile distant from the place where I was packed. 20 25 30 35 40 45

Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself, 1851

(e)

Enter CATO, in disguise, R.

Cato: I wonder if dis is me? By golly, I is free as a frog. But maybe I is mistaken; maybe dis ain't me. Cato, is dis you? Yes, seer. Well, now it is me, an' I em a free man. But, stop! I muss change my name, kase ole massa might foller me, and somebody might tell him dat dey seed Cato; so I'll change my name, and den he won't know me ef he sees me. Now, what shall I call myself? I'm now in a suspectable part of de country, an' I muss have a suspectable name. Ah! I'll call myself Alexander Washington Napoleon Pompey Cæsar. Dar, now, dat's a good long, suspectable name, and every body will suspect me. Let me see; I wonder ef I can't make up a song on my escape? I'll try. 5

AIR "Dearest Mae." 10

Now, freemen, listen to my song, a story I'll relate,
It happened in de valley of de ole Kentucky State:
Dey marched me out into de fiel', at every break of day,
And work me dar till late sunset, widout a cent of pay.

Dey work me all de day,
Widout a bit of pay, 15
And thought, because dey fed me well,
I would not run away.

Massa gave me his ole coat, an' thought I'd happy be,
But I had my eye on de North Star, an' thought of liberty;
Ole massa lock de door, an' den he went to sleep, 20
I dress myself in his bess clothes, an' jump into de street.

Dey work me all de day,
Widout a bit of pay,
So I took my flight, in the middle of de night,
When de sun was gone away. 25

Sed I, dis chile's a freeman now, he'll be a slave no more;
I travell'd faster all dat night, dan I ever did before.
I came up to a farmer's house, jest at de break of day,
And saw a white man standin' dar, sed he, "You are a runaway."
—Dey work me all de day, &c. 30

I tole him I had left de whip, an' bayin' of de hound,
To find a place where man is man, ef sich dar can be found;
Dat I had heard, in Canada, dat all mankind are free,
An' dat I was going dar in search of liberty.
—Dey work me all de day, &c. 35

I've not committed any crime, why should I run away?
Oh! shame upon your laws, dat drive me off to Canada.
You loudly boast of liberty, an' say your State is free,
But if I tarry in your midst, will you protect me?
—Dey work me all de day, &c.

Exit, L.

WILLIAM WELLS BROWN, *The Escape: A Leap for Freedom*, published 1858

(f)

*To my Maternal Grand-father on hearing his descent from Chippewa ancestors
misrepresented*

Rise bravest chief! of the mark of the noble deer,
 With eagle glance,
 Resume thy lance, 5
And wield again thy warlike spear!
 The foes of thy line,
 With coward design,
Have dared with black envy to garble the truth,
And stain with a falsehood thy valorous youth. 10

They say when a child, thou wert ta'en from the Sioux,
 And with impotent aim,
 To lessen thy fame
Thy warlike lineage basely abuse;
 For they know that our band, 15
 Tread a far distant land,
And thou noble chieftain art nerveless and dead,
Thy bow all unstrung, and thy proud spirit fled.

Can the sports of thy youth, or thy deeds ever fade?
 Or those e'er forget, 20
 Who are mortal men yet,
The scenes where so bravely thou'st lifted the blade,
 Who have fought by thy side,
 And remember thy pride,
When rushing to battle, with valour and ire, 25
Thou saw'st the fell foes of thy nation expire?

Can the warrior forget how sublimely you rose?
 Like a star in the west,
 When the sun's sink to rest,
That shines in bright splendour to dazzle our foes? 30
 Thy arm and thy yell,
 Once the tale could repel
Which slander invented, and minions detail,
And still shall thy actions refute the false tale.

Rest thou, noblest chief! in thy dark house of clay, 35
 Thy deeds and thy name,
 Thy child's child shall proclaim,
And make the dark forests resound with the lay;
 Though thy spirit has fled,
 To the hills of the dead, 40
Yet thy name shall be held in my heart's warmest core,
And cherish'd till valour and love be no more.

JANE JOHNSON SCHOOLCRAFT, 'Invocation', 1860

(g)

By and by there was a little stir on the staircase and in the passage-way, and in lounged a tall, loose-jointed figure, of an exaggerated Yankee port and demeanor, whom (as being about the homeliest man I ever saw, yet by no means repulsive or disagreeable) it was impossible not to recognize as Uncle Abe.

Unquestionably, Western man though he be, and Kentuckian by birth, President Lincoln is the essential representative of all Yankees, and the veritable specimen, physically, of what the world seems determined to regard as our characteristic qualities. It is the strangest and yet the fittest thing in the jumble of human vicissitudes, that he, out of so many millions, unlooked for, unselected by any intelligible process that could be based upon his genuine qualities, unknown to those who chose him, and unsuspected of what endowments may adapt him for his tremendous responsibility, should have found the way open for him to fling his lank personality into the chair of state,— where, I presume, it was his first impulse to throw his legs on the council-table, and tell the Cabinet Ministers a story. There is no describing his lengthy awkwardness, nor the uncouthness of his movement; and yet it seemed as if I had been in the habit of seeing him daily, and had shaken hands with him a thousand times in some village street; so true was he to the aspect of the pattern American, though with a certain extravagance which, possibly, I exaggerated still further by the delighted eagerness with which I took it in. If put to guess his calling and livelihood, I should have taken him for a country schoolmaster as soon as anything else. He was dressed in a rusty black frock-coat and pantaloons, unbrushed, and worn so faithfully that the suit had adapted itself to the curves and angularities of his figure, and had grown to be an outer skin of the man. He had shabby slippers on his feet. His hair was black, still unmixed with gray, stiff, somewhat bushy, and had apparently been acquainted with neither brush nor comb that morning, after the disarrangement of the pillow; and as to a night-cap, Uncle Abe probably knows nothing of such effeminacies. His complexion is dark and sallow, betokening, I fear, an insalubrious atmosphere around the White House; he has thick black eyebrows and an impending brow; his nose is large, and the lines about his mouth are very strongly defined.

The whole physiognomy is as coarse a one as you would meet anywhere in the length and breadth of the States; but, withal, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely sagacity, that seems weighted with rich results of village experience. A great deal of native sense; no bookish cultivation, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, sly,— at least, endowed with a sort of tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would impel him, I think, to take an antagonist in flank rather than to make a bull-run at him right in front. But, on the whole, I like this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely human sympathies that warmed it; and, for my small share in the matter, would as lief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, 'Chiefly About War Matters', originally published anonymously as 'by a Peaceable Man', 1862

(h)

Crown his blood-stained pillow
With a victor's palm;
Life's receding billow
Leaves eternal calm.

At the feet Almighty 5
Lay this gift sincere;
Of a purpose weighty,
And a record clear.

With deliverance freighted
Was this passive hand, 10
And this heard, high-fated,
Would with love command.

Let him rest serenely
In a Nation's care.
Where her waters queenly 15
Make the West more fair.

In the greenest meadow
That the prairies show,
Let his marble shadow
Give all men to know: 20

'Our First Hero, living,
Made his country free;
Heed the Second's giving,
Death for Liberty.'

JULIA WARD HOWE, 'Crown His Blood-Stained Pillow', 1865

SECTION B

Answer **two** questions. **At least one** of your answers in this section must include substantial discussion of **two or more** authors.

2. ...where the Mississippi stream
By forests shaded now runs weeping on
Nations shall grow and states not less in fame
Than Greece and Rome of old...
PHILIP FRENEAU, 'A Poem, on the Rising Glory of America' (1771)
How have American writers imagined empire?
3. In 1837 Ralph Waldo Emerson identified 'the literature of the poor . . . the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life' as the 'topics of the time'.
Write on the representation of any **one** of those topics in American literature. You need not restrict your answer to Emerson's time.
4. At the National Museum of the American Indian,
68 percent of the collection is from the U.S.
I am doing my best to not become a museum
Of myself.
NATALIE DÍAZ, 'American Arithmetic' (2018)
Use these lines as the starting point for an essay on Native American writing from any period.
5. See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—see, the
numberless factories,
See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among them superior
judges, philosophers, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,
See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me well-beloved [...]
WALT WHITMAN, 'Starting from Paumanok' (1860)
Consider the attention American literature has paid to work **and/or** its avoidance.
6. The opening sentence of Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925) reads
'We need only realise our parents, remember our grandparents and know
ourselves and our history is complete.'
Consider the importance of completion **and/or** incompleteness for any works of American literature.
7. 'Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question [...] How does it feel to
be a problem?' (W.E.B. DU BOIS, 1903)
What answers do African American writers offer?
8. 'There is a constant barrier between the reader and his consciousness of
immediate contact with the world.' (WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, 1923)
Consider some ways in which American writing tries to break through that barrier.

18. 'In this world of outrageous, shameless wealth squatting, hulking, preening before the dispossessed, the very idea of "plenty" as Utopian ought to make us tremble.' (TONI MORRISON, 1997).
What does American literature have to say about the idea of 'plenty'?
19. 'How do we refresh our language? [...] It's so weird! We still call people black and white?' (BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS, 2016).
Consider any American writing that has tried to refresh the language.
20. '...daughter complain mother is not supportive. We do not have this word in Chinese, *supportive*.' (GISH JEN, 1999).
What part does multilingualism play in American literature?
21. 'Unlike the marriage plot, the trauma plot does not direct our curiosity toward the future ... but back into the past' (PARUL SEHGAL, 2021).
Write about any **one** of American fiction's paradigmatic plots.
22. 'I happen to live in a region, as do we all.' (EUDORA WELTY, 1972)
'I see myself more and more as an American writer, not just in the national but in the hemispheric sense.' (JULIA ALVAREZ, 2017)
How useful are the concepts of region **and/or** hemisphere in considering writing from the United States?
23. 'I am going to stick my neck out and just say it: science fiction will never be Literature with a capital "L".' (SVEN BIRKETS, 2003).
Make the case for any form of U.S. writing that has been said to fall outside the category of Literature.

END OF PAPER