

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2004

COURSE II

PAPER A3 (a) CHAUCER

Thursday, 20 May 2004, 9.30 am to 12.30 pm

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer *two* questions. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the quotations and questions.

Do *not* turn over until told that you may do so

Answer two questions. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the quotations and questions.

1. 'Metre is straitened by laws, but prose roams along a freer way, for the public road of prose admits here and there wagons and carts whereas the narrow path of verse does not allow of things so inelegant' (GEOFFREY DE VINSANF, *Poetria Nova*). Discuss Chaucer's prose writings OR the interaction between prose and verse in his works OR his use of different verse forms.

2. Go litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
 Ther God this makere yet, er that he dye,
 So sende might to make in some comedy!
 (*Troilus and Criseyde*, V. 1786-8).

Explore Chaucer's knowledge and use of any ONE OR TWO literary genres.

3. Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit
 For to undo hyt at the fulle.
 (*Book of the Duchess*, 898-9).

Assess the impact of linguistic self-consciousness AND/OR multi-lingual awareness in AT LEAST TWO of Chaucer's works.

4. But for he useth thynges for to make
 Hym rekketh noht of what matere he take.
 (Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, F Text, 364-5).

EITHER (a) How would you characterise Chaucer's relationship to his sources in one or more of his works?

OR (b) Analyse Chaucer's attitude to literary authority as illustrated by his relationship to and use of previous works of literature.

5. Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shall it fynde. (*The Legend of Dido*, 1367).
Discuss Chaucer's Ovidianism, with reference to *The Legend of Good Women* and at least one other work.

6. 'Right in his cherles termes wol I speke' (Prologue to *The Reeve's Tale*, 3917).
Discuss the implications of this comment for our assessment of narrative voices in *The Canterbury Tales*.

7. 'In the boke of Troylus the answer to thy question mayste thou lerne' ('Love' speaking in THOMAS USK, *The Testament of Love*, c. 1387).
What questions do you think *Troilus and Criseyde* is asking OR answering?

8. 'Writers with any claim to courtliness or gentility [...] are alert to the meanings of gestures and glances, and they expect their readers also to have an eye for such things' (JOHN BURROW).

How important is non-verbal communication in ANY TWO of Chaucer's works?

9. 'It is not sufficient for poets to be superficial humanists; but they must be exquisite artists and curious universal scholars' (GABRIEL HARVEY, praising Chaucer and Lydgate, after 1574). Which of these labels can most justly be applied to Chaucer, and why?

10. To descryue the disposicioun
Of al poetis be old ordynaunce, -
Thei shold be quiet fro worldli mocioun,
And it sequester out of ther remembraunce,
Fare compotent vnto ther sustenaunce,
Drynk wyn among to quike ther diligence,
Support of princes to fynde hem ther dispence.

(JOHN LYDGATE, *The Fall of Princes*, III, 3837-42).

Discuss the treatment of ONE of the following themes and issues in Chaucer's works:

- (a) 'the disposicioun of al poetis' and/or the role and status of the poet;
- (b) 'worldli mocioun' and/or politics;
- (c) 'remembraunce';
- (d) wine;
- (e) 'support of princes' and patronage.

11. 'Suffering produces biography' (JAMES SIMPSON).

Consider this claim with reference to AT LEAST TWO of Chaucer's works.

12. 'His *Canterbury Tales* contain in them almost the same argument that is handled in [Greek and Roman] comedies [...]; but herein they differ: the comedy writers do all follow and borrow one from another. Chaucer's device in his *Canterbury* pilgrimage is merely his own. His drift is to touch all sorts of men and to discover all vices of that age' (SIR FRANCIS BEAUMONT, letter to Thomas Speght, June 1597).

Use any part of this comment as the starting point for an analysis of the style, method and effects of AT LEAST TWO of *The Canterbury Tales*.

13. Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;
And eek men shal not maken ernest of game.

(Prologue to *The Miller's Tale*, 3185-6).

EITHER (a) Discuss the role of the reader in ONE OR MORE works by Chaucer.

OR (b) Discuss authorial effacement as a narrative strategy in ONE OR MORE works by Chaucer.

14. 'But the worst of having no judgement is that one never misses it' (A.E. HOUSMAN, *Preface to Manilius*).

Explore the effects and consequences of lack of judgement in AT LEAST TWO works by Chaucer.

15. '... a confus'd mass of Thoughts, tumbling over one another in the Dark: when the Fancy was yet in its first work, moving the Sleeping Images of Things Towards the Light' (JOHN DRYDEN). How, and with what effect, does Chaucer explore the processes of the creative imagination? You may, if you wish, restrict your answer to *The House of Fame*.

16. Make a case for the importance of one of the following terms for our understanding of ONE OR MORE of Chaucer's works:

- (a) 'tydings';
- (b) 'sorwe';
- (c) 'gentillesse';
- (d) 'song';
- (e) 'manhede';
- (f) 'femininitee'.