

DENB 2406

**SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION**

---

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2007**

**COURSE II**

**PAPER A3 (b) CHAUCER, LANGLAND AND GOWER**

---

**TRINITY TERM 2007**

**Wednesday 16 May 9.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.**

**Time allowed – Two hours**

---

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

You may write on Langland or Gower or on both of them in comparison with each other or on either or both of them in comparison to Chaucer.

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

Answer *one* question. You should pay careful attention in your answer to the precise terms of the quotations and questions.

You may write on Langland or Gower or on both of them in comparison with each other or on either or both of them in comparison to Chaucer.

1. Skeat called *Piers Plowman* "a true autobiography". Write on the use of the first person in Langland *and/or* Gower, making a comparison with Chaucer if you wish.
2. "It is tempting to see the A, B and C texts of *Piers Plowman* as reflecting the life of Langland himself: a bold, youthful first attempt; a mature, considered revision, and finally, intellectual decline". Do you agree? (You may address any part(s) of this statement.)
3. "The work is of very uneven poetical quality, and there is no disguising the fact that even by the standards of its time, it is formless. Langland was as unsystematic an artist as he was a theologian. At its best, however, it offers some of the finest religious visionary poetry in English" (W.T.H. Jackson). Discuss. (You may engage with any one or more of these judgements).
4. "A balance between love and reason may be achievable, but that cannot quiet Gower's uneasiness about the moral corrosiveness of sexuality" (Hugh White). Do you agree?
5. How important is it to read the *Confessio Amantis* in the context of Gower's other works?
6. "Kindly Chaucer" and "Moral Gower": would you make a case for changing round these epithets?
7. "Modern literary critics regularly compare *Piers* with Chaucer's poetry, seeing a natural affinity, perhaps even direct influence, between two of the greatest Ricardian poets" (David Benson). Are they justified in this?
8. "Gower shows himself much more willing than either Chaucer or Langland to offer traditional social values and obligations as an antidote to the evils that concern all three poets." (Winthrop Wetherbee) Discuss.

9. "Medieval writers of personification allegory saw nothing incongruous about introducing symbols into their work" (R.W.Frank). Write on the interplay of allegory and symbol in the work of Langland *and/or* Gower.
10. Write on *any one or two* of the following: just deserts; vengeance; violence; anger; hypocrisy; deceit, honesty; truth.