

DENB 2401
DEML 2401

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2010

COURSE II

PAPER A1 ENGLISH LITERATURE 600-1100

TRINITY TERM 2010

Tuesday, 18 May, 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer *three* questions. Except where specified, themes can be applied to any work or works of your choice. 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.

1. 'Touching up something that was already there is almost the characteristically medieval method of composition' (C.S. LEWIS).
Where in Old English literature would you discern such 'touching up' and what in your opinion constitutes its most important features?
2. Assess the use of the Bible made by any Old English writer. [You should NOT write on *Exodus* in response to this question]
3. 'The chief characteristics [of Old English literature] are its immense diversity and interest; its intellectual and social importance' (P. PULSIANO and E. TREHARNE).
Make a case for the 'intellectual and social importance' of Old English literature.
4. Does Old English literature present any interesting or distinctive constructions of gender?
5. Saga me hu wæs crist acenned of Maria his meder: ic þe secge, ðurh þæt swiðre breost. (*Adrian and Ritheus*)

EITHER

(a) Assess the literary functions of the marvellous in Old English literature.

OR

(b) Write on myths of origin in Old English literature.

6. 'The chiefs fight for victory, the followers for their chief' (TACITUS).
7. 'Ungloomy Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Poetry' (J.I. YOUNG).
Are there any, and what attracts the poets to gloom?
8. Forst sceal freosan, fyr wudu meltan,
eorþe growan.

(*Maxims I*)

What wisdom is to be found in Old English wisdom literature?

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9. 'Old English poets were artists, sophisticated in the use of their conventions, who organized their material according to formal patterns' (N.D. ISAACS).
What principles of organisation govern the poets' arrangement of their material?
10. 'The real subject of this book is war-in-dialogue and dialogue-in-war' (W. PARKS).
Examine verbal duelling in Old English poetry.
11. Discuss the use of rhetoric in any ONE Old English text.
12. Write on EITHER apposition OR *paronomasia* as a feature of the style of any ONE Old English text.
13. 'Metrical studies of ancient poetry have at least two immediate aims, the establishment of the text and the recovery of the pleasure inherent in verse' (J.C. POPE).
Have metrical studies of Old English poetry achieved these ambitions? You may, if you wish, confine your answer to ONE of these two aims.
14. EITHER (a) 'Oral epic, at least at the unmatched level of Homer, can display some of the supposedly distinctive subtleties of written poetry' (G.S. KIRK).
Discuss with reference to *Beowulf*.

OR (b) 'The very first thing that strikes one in reading the *Mabinogion* is how evidently the medieval story teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret' (M. ARNOLD). Discuss the *Beowulf*-poet's representation of the heathen Germanic past.
15. 'There is little in *Elene* which can be shown to be original' (P.O.E. GRADON).
EITHER
(a) Examine the conventionality of Old English religious narrative poetry.

OR
(b) Discuss the relationship between any ONE Old English hagiographical text and its source.

16. Her Cynewulf benam Sigebryht his rices ond Westseaxna wiotan for unryhtum dædum.

EITHER

- (a) What does the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tell us of the attitudes of its authors to what they record?

OR (b) Characterise the representation of kingship in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

17. 'It seems quite impossible that [the Old English *Orosius*, *Boethius* and *Soliloquies*] as we have them could have been produced by one and the same man' (J. BATELY).

What does knowledge of authorship contribute to our understanding of Old English texts?

18. '*The Catholic Homilies* represent Ælfric's first, and in many ways, most ambitious undertaking, and he continued revising and reissuing them to the end of his life'.

EITHER

- (a) What in your view is 'ambitious' about Ælfric's writing?

OR

- (b) Examine the role of revision in Ælfric's writing.

19. 'A homily is an elaboration of a text, a sermon an elaboration of some subject' (D. BETHURUM).

20. Discuss the *literary* significance of EITHER compilation OR interpolation for our understanding of Old English literature.