

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2010

COURSE II

PAPER A3 (b) CHAUCER, LANGLAND AND GOWER

TRINITY TERM 2010

Friday 21 May, 9.30am to 11.30am

Time allowed – Two hours

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 with Chaucer.

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

1. '*Piers Plowman* is deeply rooted in the immediate material and economic realities of fourteenth-century English life and is at the same time a poem which concerns cosmology and spiritual reality in the largest sense' (THOMAS D. HILL).
EITHER
(a) Discuss some aspects of this description.

OR
(b) Discuss ways in which Chaucer and/or Langland and/or Gower balance social and spiritual preoccupations.
 2. 'A luxuriantly argued contribution to one thread of the endless discussion about the laity, the world and the possibilities for reform and salvation, as well as a curiously detached reviewer of its own results' (NICHOLAS WATSON).
Examine either the 'luxuriance' OR the 'detachment' here attributed to *Piers Plowman*.
 3. 'The poem proceeds not in linear fashion but by a series of zig-zags' (JOHN CHAMBERLIN).
Is this a helpful way of describing the structure of *Piers Plowman*?
 4. '*Piers Plowman* contains long passages of sense – excellence of matter and meaning – which only rarely deviate into poetry' (A.C. SPEARING).
How valid do you find this poetry / sense dichotomy in relation to Langland?
 5. 'This is myrke thyng for me', quod Y, 'and for many another' (*Piers Plowman C Version*).
How does Langland's poetry deal with the great mysteries of Christianity (such as the Incarnation or the Trinity), and with what success?
 6. 'To se moche and suffre moore, certes', quod I, 'is Dowel' ([*moche*] *al C-text*).
- EITHER
- (a) Examine the relation between 'seeing' and 'suffering' in *Piers Plowman*
 - (b) OR
Analyse ONE OR TWO C Version alterations of B that you find especially significant.
7. Discuss the treatment of ONE of the following themes in Langland and/or Gower, and/or Chaucer: Nature (or *Kynde*); human freedom and divine foreknowledge; religious hypocrisy; wealth.

