

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

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HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
COURSE II

PAPER A2 ENGLISH LITERATURE 1100-1530

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TRINITY TERM 2011

Wednesday, 25 May, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Time Allowed – Three hours

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Answer *three* 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.

1. 'The period conventionally referred to as "medieval" in fact comprises a sequence of literary and intellectual renaissances'.

EITHER (a) Assess the adequacy, or otherwise, of the terms 'medieval' AND/OR 'Renaissance' as ways of describing literature in the period covered by this paper;

OR (b) What seem to you to constitute the most significant rupture(s) in the period of literary history covered by this paper?

2. EITHER (a) Discuss some aspects of the importance of multilingualism AND/OR translation to literary creativity during this period;

OR (b) 'A decision to write in the vernacular during this period is not an instance of democratisation but rather a decision to exclude, to write only for the coterie, the local, or at best the regional audience'.

3. What are the limits AND/OR merits of didacticism in literature of this period?

4. What do you consider the most distinctive use(s) of prose in writing from this period?

5. Discuss the extent to which writing from this period reveals 'a society anxiously, innovatively, and opportunistically transacting social changes, and therefore invested in recreating and forgetting its own complex histories' (CHRISTINE CHISM).

6. 'All medieval texts refer to other texts in one way or another; all medieval texts recreate other texts in one way or another. What seems peculiar about fifteenth-century critical discourse is the frequency [...] with which it calls attention to its status as creative response' (LOUISE O. FRADENBURG). Discuss any aspect of this quotation that interests you.

7. 'Yes... I like... I like their... their illogicality... their burning illogicality... that flame... that flame... Which consumes all our filthy logic' (SAMUEL BECKETT on mystical writers).

8. How and why does drama AND/OR any other kind of literature from this period defamiliarise religious AND/OR moral teachings?

9. 'The lyrics and shorter poems are in many ways the glory of late medieval English Literature.' (DOUGLAS GRAY).

10. I xall now stere hys mynde  
To þat syne made me a fende;  
Pryde, wyche ys ageyn kynde  
And of synnys hede.

(Lucyfer in *Wisdom*).

Discuss some of the dangers AND/OR opportunities presented by learning, argument or curiosity in writing from this period.

11. ' & so he red it ouyr be-forn þis creatur euery word, sche sum-tym helping where ony difficulte was' (*The Book of Margery Kempe*).

Discuss any ONE of the following in literature from this period: the relationship(s) between scribe and author; the purposes of life-writing; uses of the first-person narrator.

12. Discuss the importance of the material conditions of production (e.g. manuscript, print, performance) for our understanding of literature from this period.

13. 'The primary motivating force for dreaming is not psychological but physiological.... with little or no primary ideational, volitional, or emotional content.' (HOBSON AND McCARLEY). Discuss with reference to some literary uses of dream in this period.

14. 'Our engagement as readers is not with the hero and other characters as individuals, with motives and desires of their own, but as representative actors in the high drama of chivalry.'  
(DEREK PEARSALL on Chrétien de Troyes.)

15. 'It is a feature of medieval alliterative poetry that it treats of topics that are learned and sophisticated, but presents them in a way that will have wide appeal.'  
(THORLAC TURVILLE-PETRE)

16. 'The dialectic between an inward subjectivity and an external world that alienates it from both itself and its divine source provides the fundamental economy of the medieval idea of selfhood.' (LEE PATTERSON). Discuss changing notions of history in the period in the light of this claim.

17. 'Religious and moral problems to which there are sides but no solutions stood at the intellectual centre of the age'. (ERIC STANLEY on *The Owl and the Nightingale*)  
Discuss some of the applications of dialogue and/or debate in this period.

18. How do writers of this period use animals AND/OR other aspects of the natural world to explore their preoccupations?

19. 'When I read Chaucer I am tossed to and fro between rich and racy imitations of the speech of taverns on the one hand, and, on the other, the heights of a newly discovered poetic diction.' (C.S. LEWIS)

Discuss the poetics of any work or works in the period of this paper in the light of this claim.

20. 'We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time' (T.S. ELIOT, 'Little Gidding').

Discuss the implications of this quotation for the engagements of medieval writers with any ONE OR TWO of the following: the exotic; the supernatural; the pagan; religious visions; theological questions.