

ENGLISH LITERATURE I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

You may answer on any literature written in English

1. Write about style in any Old English prose text(s) of your choice.
2. How should we interpret the first-person speakers of Anglo-Saxon lyrics and laments?
3. Is medieval comic writing cruel?
4. 'Everyone knows what the female complaint is: women live for love, and love is the gift that keeps on taking' (LAUREN BERLANT). Write about women's complaints in medieval literature.
5. Is it anachronistic to think of *The Canterbury Tales* as a set of dramatic monologues?
6. How do we hear God in medieval spiritual writing?
7. 'Only in translation had it been shown that prose could be an instrument of artistic expression.' Do you agree with this assessment of early Tudor literature?
8. 'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Celebrate lust in early modern literature.
9. Do characters in city comedies get their comeuppance?
10. 'Ingenuous Melancholy, I implore / Thy grave assistance: take thy gloomy seat, / Enthroned thee in my blood' (JOHN MARSTON). How sincere was early modern satire?
11. 'The imagination reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities' (SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE). Discuss in relation to a Metaphysical poet or poets.

12. 'We have a double scripture. There is the external scripture of the written word, and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit which he, according to God's promise, has engraved upon the hearts of believers' (JOHN MILTON). Discuss with reference to early modern ideas about imitation and/or poetic licence.
13. How necessary was misogyny to Restoration poetry?
14. 'I love to pour out all myself, as plain / As downright *Shippen*, or old *Montagne*' (ALEXANDER POPE). Discuss the use of personae in early eighteenth-century satire.
15. Are pastorals always ironic?
16. Did the way readers related to fictional characters change during the eighteenth century?
17. 'That indulgence we offered to the foibles of a supposed antiquity, we can by no means extend to a false tale in a cultivated period of learning' (*MONTHLY REVIEW*, 1764). How did the Enlightenment censor itself?
18. 'The moment I am re-kindled, I am all generosity' (LAURENCE STERNE). Write about the relationship between sentiment and the erotic.
19. Should history-writing be considered a literary art?
20. 'Mr. Fox's fall, and Mr. Pitt's rise, may not improperly be compared to the excommunication of Satan' (*MORNING HERALD*, 1782). How has Milton been politicised?
21. Write about topographies and locations in any gothic novel(s) of your choice.
22. What did the Romantics find in romance literature?
23. How did the rise of celebrity culture affect nineteenth-century literary production?
24. 'It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides' (JANE AUSTEN). Was Austen a moralist?
25. What was folk culture used for during the Romantic period?
26. Make a critical case for any work of literature from the 1830s.

27. 'Do not Books still accomplish *miracles*, as *Runes* were fabled to do?' (THOMAS CARLYLE). What, if anything, was Victorian devotional literature seeking to achieve?
28. Write about formal innovation in nineteenth-century poetry.
29. 'Zola has tried to build in brick and mortar inside the covers of a book; he is quite sure that the soul is a nervous fluid, which he is quite sure some man of science is about to catch for us' (ARTHUR SYMONS). Defend realism.
30. 'My lily feet are soiled with mud, / With scarlet mud which tells a tale' (CHRISTINA ROSSETTI). Discuss representations of the 'fallen woman' in Victorian literature.
31. "'Heavens, / I think I should be almost popular / If this went on!' – I ripped my verses up' (ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING). What was wrong with popularity?
32. 'What had this man done? What secret remorse was rankling at his heart? what fever was boiling in him, that he should see all the world blood-shot?' (WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, of Jonathan Swift). What can we learn from Victorian criticism?
33. How does anxiety about imperial decline manifest in late nineteenth-century literature?
34. Was there anything to the Georgians?
35. 'Pangolins, hornbills, pitchers, catchers, do not pry or prey – or prolong the conversation; do not make us self-conscious; look their best in caring least' (MARIANNE MOORE). What did animals mean to Modernist poets?
36. 'These separate moments of being were embedded in many more moments of non-being. I have already forgotten what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea. A great part of every day is not lived consciously' (VIRGINIA WOOLF). Discuss the relationship between moments of 'being' and 'non-being' in the Modernist novel.
37. 'Chesterton never achieves a great poem because his poems are compilations of statements not intensely felt but only intensely meant' (HUGH KENNER). Write on the relationship between feeling and meaning in twentieth-century poetry. (You can focus on a single poem if you want.)

38. Write about the representation of food or eating in any text(s) of your choice.
39. 'We are determined or compelled to take sides. The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do' (NANCY CUNARD). How did politics impact style in the literature of the 1930s?
40. 'Composition on the subject of decomposition' (PIOTR RAWICZ, a Ukrainian Holocaust survivor). Is this a fair description of twentieth-century war literature?
41. Can modern sonnets be more than exercises in pastiche?
42. 'The best future for the study of sexuality will be a queer model that proposes contingency instead of certainty' (ROBERT MARTIN). Discuss with reference to an author or authors of your choice.
43. 'I'm writing about the Caribbean experience in Britain, black people's experience in Britain. Why should I try and do so in the rarefied language of English poetry?' (LINTON KWESI JOHNSON). Discuss.
44. Has there been any great writing on ecological crisis?
45. 'Modern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees' (EDWARD SAID). Would you agree?
46. Will longform television come to be considered the primary storytelling art of the early twenty-first century?
47. Is 'world literature' often more about the world and less about literature?
48. 'Without families, you don't get stories' (BART VAN ES). How does contemporary literature represent families?
49. 'I feel like a painting, / like a Victorian woman sent to be by the sea with her ailments, / which isn't not what's happening' (CATHERINE COHEN). What is pandemic literature?
50. 'Make up a story. For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light' (TONI MORRISON). Go on, give us one.

ENGLISH LITERATURE II

Candidates should answer **Section A** and **TWO** questions from **Section B**

Note that Section A is compulsory. In Section B you may answer in relation to literature written in languages other than English if you wish.

Section A

1. Compare the following two passages in any way you like.

a) extract from 'Fra Lippo Lippi'

However, you're my man, you've seen the world
– The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises, – and God made it all!
– For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you say.
But why not do as well as say, – paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works – paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already – nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her – (which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted – better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that –
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,

Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank – it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

(ROBERT BROWNING)

b) extract from *Cymbeline*

IACHIMO:

Cytherea,

How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! fresh lily,
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!
But kiss: one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,
How dearly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus; the flame of the taper
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,
To see the enclosed lights, now canopied
Under these windows, white and azure lac'd
With blue of heaven's own tinct. But my design,
To note the chamber: I will write all down:
Such and such pictures; there the window; such
Th' adornment of her bed; the arras, figures,
Why, such and such; and the contents o' the story.
Ah! but some natural notes about her body,
Above ten thousand meaner moveables
Would testify, to enrich mine inventory.
O sleep! thou ape of death, lie dull upon her;
And be her senses but as a monument
Thus in a chapel lying. [...]

On her left breast

A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
I' the bottom of a cowslip: here's a voucher;
Stronger than ever law could make: this secret
Will force him think I have pick'd the lock and ta'en
The treasure of her honour. No more. To what end?
Why should I write this down, that's riveted,
Screw'd to my memory? She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus; here the leaf's turn'd down
Where Philomel gave up. I have enough:
To the trunk again, and shut the spring of it.

(WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE)

[OVER]

Section B

2. 'It isn't just that everyone now has a story; it's that everyone *is* a story. Who you are is the narrative you recount about yourself.' Discuss.
3. 'Second thoughts, they say, are best' (JOHN DRYDEN). Defend first drafts.
4. 'Here's the funny thing about literary criticism: it hates its own times, only realizing their worth twenty years later' (ZADIE SMITH). Discuss.
5. 'Ignorance and superstition are the parents of imagination.' Would you agree?
6. How literary should the study of literature be?
7. What's so great about ambiguity?
8. 'Look here on Breton's work, the master print, / Where such perfections to the life do rise; / If they seem wry to such as look asquint, / The fault's not in the object, but their eyes' (BEN JONSON). Are readers at fault for looking at texts 'asquint'?
9. When does editing do harm?
10. Write about the relationship between market conditions and literary production in a period of your choice.
11. 'Have women a special sensibility? No. The sensibility of a Virginia Woolf, for instance. It's her own, it's uniquely hers. Not because she is a "female" but because she is, or was, Virginia Woolf' (JOYCE CAROL OATES). Should an author's gender identity matter to our understanding of their work?
12. 'Oh starry starry night! This is how / I want to die' (ANNE SEXTON). What are ekphrastic poems about?
13. What can the circulation of manuscripts tell us about literary culture?
14. 'My female friends, whose tender hearts / Have better learned to act their parts, / Receive the news in *doleful dumps*, / "The Dean is dead, (*pray what is trumps?*)"' (JONATHAN SWIFT). How have writers imagined their own ends?
15. 'The sole raison d'être of a novel is to discover what only the novel can discover' (MILAN KUNDERA). Really?

16. Should essays know where they're going?
17. 'Surprise has been one of the most important means of poetic effect since Homer' (T.S. ELIOT). Write about the use of surprise by a poet or poets of your choice.
18. Discuss any aspect of the relationship between postcolonial literature and canonicity.
19. Is literary history a dying discipline?
20. 'How might a man reorder his conduct if he could be assured that the worth of a perception, a memory, a supposition, was enhanced rather than diminished by its being inexplicable to others?' (GERALD MURNANE). How does literature negotiate the inexplicable?
21. Is 'lived experience' a valid category for understanding a work of literature?
22. Should we still have poets laureate?
23. 'Much of what passes for political analysis of historically canonical works is nothing more than the passing of moral judgment on them' (JOHN GUILLORY). Do you agree?
24. Is hyperbole the worst thing ever?
25. How dirty can a work of art really be?
26. 'Need a break from modern times? Dive into these period movies packed with amazing costumes, plenty of drama and quite a bit of history' (NETFLIX). Are historical novels pure escapism?
27. What can allegories be used for in secular literature?
28. 'If it be egotism to imply and twine with his own identity the griefs and affections of another – making himself many, or reducing many unto himself – then is the skilful novelist, who all along brings in his hero, or heroine, speaking of themselves, the greatest egotist of all' (CHARLES LAMB). Discuss.
29. Can literary censorship prove fruitful?
30. 'Their conformist programme, which defined poems as "the words on the page", proved a two-dimensional concept-cage.' Do you agree with this assessment of New Criticism?

31. Rescue a forgotten author from obscurity.
32. What does the 'archive' mean in the context of the Global South?
33. 'Elegant extracts, Anthologies, are sickly things. The splendid bouquet decays into unsavoury trash, and as trash is thrown away' (FRANCIS PALGRAVE). Defend excerpting AND/OR abridgement.
34. Write about the effects of half-rhymes, pararhymes, self-rhymes and all strange rhymes.
35. What can a short story do that other genres cannot?
36. 'Some of the most potent conceptions of Englishness have been constructed by alien outsiders' (PAUL GILROY). Write with reference to any author(s) of your choice.
37. Is interdisciplinary scholarship necessarily a good thing?
38. 'One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. English is the language of our intellectual makeup – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional makeup. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians' (RAJA RAO). Write on any aspect of the relationship between translation and literary style.
39. Can works of literature be open to endless re-interpretation?
40. Has the turn towards affect taken away the political edge of literary studies?
41. Write about double or split identity in immigrant fiction.
42. 'In Chaucer's hands, one can imagine, the material would be treated comically, with moments of bawdy: after appropriately ironic apologies for *cherlish speche* or vulgarity, we might even expect to have the lady's *queynte*, the gamekeeper's *sely thinge*, the great pleasure of their *swyving* referred to without circumlocution' (J.M. COETZEE on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*). Rewrite any text or passage of your choice in the manner of Chaucer.

43. Write on any **ONE** of the following topics: antisemitism; boats; commas; the devil; Exit, pursued by a bear; foreigners; gimmicks; homelessness; intentionality; jouissance; kingliness; loucheness; mess; the Nordic; organicism; perversity; quantum; risk; Sapphics; thresholds; the unspeakable; villanelles; wildernesses; xenophobia; you; zany.