



BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

1995

**COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE**

DISTINCTION COURSE

(50 Marks)

*Time allowed—Three hours
(Plus 5 minutes' reading time)*

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Attempt **THREE** questions, **ONE** from each Section.
- Question 1 is **COMPULSORY**.
- All questions are of equal value.
- Do **NOT** use substantially the same material in more than one answer.
- Answer each question in a *separate* Writing Booklet.
- You may ask for extra Writing Booklets if you need them.

SECTION I

QUESTION 1. This question is **COMPULSORY**.

The following four passages are translations of the same section of the Old English epic *Beowulf* (circa eighth century AD). The poem was composed in alliterative unrhymed verse with a break ('caesura') in the middle of each line.

Read the four passages below carefully and answer the questions that follow.

TRANSLATION 1

Thus the noble warriors lived in pleasure and plenty, until a fiend in hell began to contrive malice. The grim spirit was called Grendel, a famous march-stepper, who held the moors, the fen, and the fastness. The hapless creature sojourned for a space in the sea monsters' home after the Creator had condemned him. The eternal Lord avenged the murder on the race of Cain, because he slew Abel. He did not rejoice in that feud. He, the Lord, drove him far from mankind for that crime. Thence sprang all evil spawn, ogres and elves and sea monsters, giants too, who struggled long time against God. He paid them requital for that.

He went then when night fell to visit the high house, to see how the Ring-Danes had disposed themselves in it after the beer banquet. Then he found therein the band of chieftains slumbering after the feast; they knew not sorrow, the misery of men, aught of misfortune. Straightway he was ready, grim and greedy, fierce and furious; and seized thirty thanes on their couches. Thence he departed homewards again, exulting in booty, to find out his dwelling with his fill of slaughter.

R.K. GORDON, 1954

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 2

So the company of men led a careless life,
all was well with them: until One began
to encompass evil, an enemy from hell.
Grendel they called this cruel spirit,
the fell and fen his fastness was,
the march his haunt. This unhappy being
had long lived in the land of monsters
since the Creator cast them out
as kindred of Cain. For that killing of Abel
the eternal Lord took vengeance.
There was no joy of that feud: far from mankind
God drove him out for his deed of shame!
From Cain came down all kinds misbegotten
—ogres and elves and evil shades—
as also the Giants, who joined in long
wars with God. He gave them their reward.

With the coming of night came Grendel also,
sought the great house and how the Ring-Danes
held their hall when the horn had gone round.
He found in Heorot the force of nobles
slept after supper, sorrow forgotten,
the condition of men. Maddening with rage,
he struck quickly, creature of evil:
grim and greedy, he grasped on their pallets
thirty warriors, and away he was out of there,
thrilled with his catch: carried off homeward
his glut of slaughter, sought his own halls.

M. ALEXANDER, 1973

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 3

Thus the brave warriors lived in hall-joys,
 blissfully prospering, until a certain one
 began to do evil, an enemy from Hell.
 That murderous spirit was named Grendel,
 huge moor-stalker who held the wasteland,
 fens, and marshes; unblessed, unhappy,
 he dwelt for a time in the lair of monsters
 after the Creator had outlawed, condemned them
 as kinsmen of Cain—for that murder God
 the Eternal took vengeance, when Cain killed Abel.
 No joy that kin-slaughter; the Lord drove him out,
 far from mankind, for that unclean killing.
 From him sprang every misbegotten thing,
 monsters and elves and the walking dead,
 and also those giants who fought against God
 time and again; He paid them back in full.
 When night came on, Grendel came too,
 to look round the hall and see how the Ring-Danes,
 after their beer-feast, had ranged themselves there.
 Inside he found the company of nobles
 asleep after banquet—they knew no sorrow,
 man's sad lot. The unholy spirit,
 fierce and ravenous, soon found his war-fury,
 savage and reckless, and snatched up thirty
 of the sleeping thanes. From there he returned
 to his home in the darkness, exulting in plunder,
 took his slaughtered feast of men to his lair.

H.D. CHICKERING JR, 1977

TRANSLATION 4

—Thus ever the clansmen revelled and spent all of their days in mirth
 Till one on a sudden 'gan fashion a deed of murder fell,
 Grendel the grisly rover, a fiend from the gates of hell,
 Who in might had ranged the borders, and in moor-fens made his lair,
 And awhile in the hold of the giants had harboured in despair
 When God flung them forth. His vengeance had the Lord Eternal ta'en
 On Cain's kin for Abel's murder, of which deed he gat no gain,
 For by dint of that crime God drave him to wander far from man:
 And sithence he begat all monsters, ay of him the brood began
 Of kobbolds and alps and jotuns, huge horrors of land and sea,
 That strove with God for a season, till he paid them all their fee.

Now forth on foray sped Grendel, to mark at the evening's fall
 How the Danes when the beer was drunken took their ease in the towering hall,
 And aslumber he found the athlings within when the banquet was o'er;
 No thought had they taken of sorrow, that woundeth man's spirit sore.
 But all ready now was the hell-sprite, ay, eager and fierce and fain,
 And thirty he clutched as they slumbered, each one a goodly thegn,
 And blithe at heart of his booty, he turned him home once more,
 And sped to his lair, and of slaughter his fill with him he bore.

A. STRONG, 1925

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

Using THREE of the preceding passages:

- (a) what are the principal differences in the use of language in the three translations you are discussing?
- (b) what are the effects of these differences?

SECTION II

Attempt ONE question.

Answer *EITHER* on two or three longer works *OR* on one longer work *and* four or five poem extracts.

Your answer must make reference to works from more than one module.

EITHER

QUESTION 2

Literature is always involved in comparing the real and the ideal.

To what extent is this true of the literature you have studied in this course?

OR

QUESTION 3

Prose writers achieve their ends by elaborating and exploring, poets extract the essence.

Discuss some of the implications of this statement in a comparison of some prose and some poetry.

OR

QUESTION 4

‘The proper study of mankind is man.’—ALEXANDER POPE, *Essay on Man*

Write an essay disagreeing with this statement.

OR

QUESTION 5

Literature challenges the norms of the society in which it is written.

Construct an argument about this claim, referring to texts that confirm and/or refute it.

SECTION III

Attempt ONE question.

EITHER

QUESTION 6. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

So much that is enduring in nineteenth-century literature is about unhappiness, failure, and evil; so little about joy, achievement, and goodness.

How do you account for this? Refer to AT LEAST TWO novels from this module.

OR

QUESTION 7. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence . . .’

JAMES JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Compare and contrast the presence or absence of ‘the artist’ in AT LEAST TWO novels from this module.

OR

QUESTION 8. Poetry and Religious Experience

What exactly is ‘religious poetry’?

OR

QUESTION 9. Poetry and Religious Experience

You have adorned the heights with springs, from which you send down secret torrents to water the plain of our hearts that they may yield a harvest of wheat and wine and oil, that we need not sweat in vain to seek our bread, but seeking we may find, finding we may eat, and that we may taste Your sweetness, Lord.

My soul, my arid soul, a sterile and fruitless soul, thirsts for the sweet drops of this rain, that it may see that heavenly bread which feeds the angels and which infants suck, that I may taste in my soul that divine food . . .

ST AELRED OF RIEVAULX, *The Mirror of Love*, mid-twelfth century

Use the above quotation as a starting point to analyse how some of the literature of religious experience in this module uses the language of the senses to express the yearnings of the spirit.

OR

Please turn over

QUESTION 10. Satiric Voices

‘Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.’

JONATHAN SWIFT

Does one’s appreciation of satire rely on one’s belief that one is not at fault?

Discuss this question with reference to THREE works from this module.

OR

QUESTION 11. Satiric Voices**A RATIONAL ANTHEM**

My country, ’tis of thee,
Sweet land of felony,
Of thee I sing—
Land where my fathers fried
Young witches and applied
Whips to the Quaker’s hide
And made him spring.

My knavish country, thee,
Land where the thief is free,
Thy laws I love;
I love thy thieving bills
That tap the people’s tills;
I love thy mob whose will’s
All laws above.

Let Federal employees
And rings rob all they please,
The whole year long.
Let office-holders make
Their piles and judges rake
Our coin. For Jesus’ sake,
Let’s *all* go wrong!

AMBROSE BIERCE, 1842–1913

In what ways is this poem satirical?

OR

QUESTION 12. Post-Colonial Voices

How may the life of the individual, in post-colonial writing, be said to reflect the spiritual life of the nation? Answer with reference to TWO or THREE post-colonial works.

OR

QUESTION 13. Post-Colonial Voices

‘In post-colonial writing, it is not so much what is seen and told that is new, but the angle from which it is seen and the voice in which it is told.’

Do you agree? Support your answer with close reference to TWO or THREE post-colonial works