



BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

2005

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

Comparative Literature

General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 3 hours
- Write using black or blue pen

Total marks – 50

- All questions are of equal value
- Attempt THREE questions, ONE from each section

Section I Pages 2–7

- Question 1 is COMPULSORY
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section II Page 9

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–5
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section III Pages 10–11

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 6–13
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section I

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Question 1. This question is **COMPULSORY**.

The FIVE extracts below are translations of lines 326–347 from Book 10 of Homer’s *Odyssey*. Using THREE of the extracts, write an essay showing the principal differences in the use of language in the three translations you are discussing AND what the effects of these differences are.

Context: *Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, is telling a friendly king the story of his danger-fraught travels home from the Trojan War. In this episode, Odysseus’ crew have been transformed into pigs by Circe, a powerful goddess and enchantress, whose island they were exploring. Going in search of his men, Odysseus encounters the god Hermes, whose wand or staff is his symbol as messenger of the gods. Hermes gives him a plant that will protect him from Circe’s enchantments. Odysseus draws his sword when she tries to transform him too. Seeing him immune to her spells, Circe realises who her visitor is and speaks:*

Question 1 continues on page 3

Question 1 (continued)

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* Argeiphontes [= slayer of Argus, a hundred-eyed giant creature] is another name for Hermes.

Question 1 continues on page 4

Question 1 (continued)

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* Ithacensian: ie, from Ithaca

** Ulysses – Latin version of the Greek ‘Odysseus’, the form favoured by many English poets.

Question 1 continues on page 5

Question 1 (continued)

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- * Ulysses – Latin version of the Greek ‘Odysseus’, the form favoured by many English poets.

Question 1 continues on page 6

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 4

“It bewilders me that you drank this drug and were not bewitched. Never has any other man resisted this drug, once he has drunk it and let it pass his lips. But you have an inner will that is proof against sorcery. You must surely be that man of wide-ranging spirit, Odysseus himself; the Radiant One of the golden wand has told me of you; he always said that Odysseus would come to me on his way from Troy in his dark and rapid vessel. But enough of this; sheathe your sword; then let us go to bed together, and embracing there, let us learn to trust in one another.”

So she spoke, but I answered her: “Circe, how can you ask me to show you gentleness? In this very house you have turned my comrades into swine, and now that you have me also here you ask me in your treacherousness to enter your room and lie with you, only that when I lie naked there you may rob me of courage and of manhood. Never, goddess, could I bring myself to lie with you unless you consented first to swear a great oath to plot no mischief to me henceforward.”

So I spoke, and she swore at once the thing I asked for. When Circe had uttered the due appointed words, I lay down at last in her sumptuous bed.

WALTER SHEWRING, 1980

Walter Shewring (trans), 1980, *Homer: The Odyssey*, Book 10.
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Question 1 continues on page 7

Question 1 (continued)

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* Hermes was the slayer of Argus, a hundred-eyed giant creature.

End of Question 1

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Section II

Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–5
Allow about 1 hour for this section

In Section II, your answer must make close reference to works from MORE THAN ONE MODULE.

Answer EITHER on TWO or THREE longer works, OR on ONE longer work and FOUR or FIVE poems or extracts.

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Question 2

‘Literature functions not to provide answers, but to remind us what questions should be asked.’

What do you think?

OR

Question 3

‘To read literally is to misread. It is not possible to consider the meaning of a work without considering its aesthetics. After all, it is a rhetorical structure that wants to shape your response.’

(Adapted from James Ley, *Australian Book Review*, April 2005)

An extract from James Ley’s essay ‘The Tyranny of the Literal’, which appeared in the April 2005 issue of *Australian Book Review* (a copy of which is available on request from ABR; see its website for details).

Discuss.

OR

Question 4

‘One view of literature is that it taps invisible energies, breaks down barriers and remakes our settled way of seeing.’

Discuss some of the implications of this statement.

OR

Question 5

‘Poets reflect; novelists argue; dramatists confront.’

How justifiable are the distinctions made in these sweeping statements?

Section III

Attempt ONE question from Questions 6–13

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Question 6 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Nineteenth-century novels put the human world under a microscope.’

Does this adequately represent the narrative method of nineteenth-century novels you have read?

Refer in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your answer.

OR

Question 7 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Maniacs, murderers and adulterers infest the novels of the nineteenth century. Why don’t the novelists focus on ordinary people?’

Assess the quotation as a comment on the focus of the nineteenth-century novelists you have studied.

Refer in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your answer.

OR

Question 8 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Religious experience can be expressed only through analogy and paradox.’

How valid is this statement?

Write EITHER on *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR on NO MORE THAN FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 9 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘The literature of religious experience reflects a yearning for the exhilaration of spiritual renewal.’

How?

Write EITHER on *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR on NO MORE THAN FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 10 — Satiric Voices

‘Satire maketh us to laugh at that whereat we should rather weep.’

Do the methods of satire weaken its criticisms?

Refer to at least THREE major works or TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 11 — Satiric Voices

‘Satire is essentially topical. The satire of another age can tell us very little about our own.’

Consider these claims with reference to at least THREE major works or TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 12 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘Post-colonial writing is not concerned with being but with becoming.’

Discuss the narrative structures of the texts you have read in relation to this statement.

Answer with reference to at least THREE major works or TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 13 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘Can post-colonial experience be truly expressed in the language of the colonisers?’

How is this question raised in and/or answered by the texts you have read?

Answer with reference to at least THREE major works or TWO major works and several short ones.

End of paper

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