

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

American Literature to 1890

COURSE CODE : ENGLN16

DATE : 23-MAY-05

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours 30 Minutes

Answer Question 1 and two other question.

Candidates are reminded that the period covered by the paper ends at 1890.

Candidates must not use substantially the same material in any two answers, whether on this paper or in other parts of the examination.

1. Write on one of the following passages, commenting on the passage itself and relating it to other writing you have studied for the course.

(a)

Oh the doleful sight that now was to behold at this house! "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he has made in the earth." Of thirty-seven persons who were in this one house, none escaped either present death, or a bitter captivity, save only one, who might say as he, "And I only am escaped alone to tell the News" (Job 1.15). There were twelve killed, some shot, some stabbed with their spears, some knocked down with their hatchets. When we are in prosperity, Oh the little that we think of such dreadful sights, and to see our dear friends, and relations lie bleeding out their heart-blood upon the ground. There was one who was chopped into the head with a hatchet, and stripped naked, and yet was crawling up and down. It is a solemn sight to see so many Christians lying in their blood, some here, and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves, all of them stripped naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting as if they would have torn our very hearts out; yet the Lord by His almighty power, preserved a number of us from death, for there were twenty-four of us taken alive and carried captive.

5

10

I had often before this said that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than taken alive, but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous beasts, than that moment to end my days; and that I may the better declare what happened to me during that grievous captivity, I shall particularly speak of the several removes we had up and down the wilderness.

15

20

(Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson*, 1682)

TURN OVER

(b)

While the diligent woodsmen were employed in this manner, Cora and Alice partook of that refreshment which duty required, much more than inclination prompted them, to accept. They then retired within the walls, and first offering up their thanksgivings for past mercies, and petitioning for a continuance of the Divine favour throughout the coming night, they laid their tender forms on the fragrant couch, and in spite of recollections and forebodings, soon sunk into those slumbers which nature so imperiously demanded, and which were sweetened by hopes for the morrow. Duncan had prepared himself to pass the night in watchfulness near them, just without the ruin; but the scout, perceiving his intention, pointed toward Chingachgook, as he coolly disposed his own person on the grass, and said—

“The eyes of a white man are too heavy and too blind for such a watch as this! The Mohican will be our sentinel, therefore let us sleep.”

“I proved myself a sluggard on my post during the past night,” said Heyward, and have less need of repose than you, who did more credit to the character of a soldier. Let all the party seek their rest, then, while I hold the guard.”

“If we lay among the white tents of the 60th, and in front of an enemy like the French, I could not ask for a better watchman,” returned the scout; “but in the darkness, and among the signs of the wilderness, your judgment would be like the folly of a child, and your vigilance thrown away. Do then, like Uncas and myself, sleep, and sleep in safety.”

Heyward perceived, in truth, that the younger Indian had thrown his form on the side of the hillock, while they were talking, like one who sought to make the most of the time allotted to rest, and that his example had been followed by David, whose voice literally ‘clove to his jaws’ with the fever of his wound, heightened, as it was, by their toilsome march. Unwilling to prolong a useless discussion, the young man affected to comply, by posting his back against the logs of the blockhouse, in a half-recumbent posture, though resolutely determined, in his own mind, not to close an eye until he had delivered his precious charge into the arms of Munro himself. Hawkeye, believing he had prevailed, soon fell asleep, and a silence as deep as the solitude in which they had found it, pervaded the retired spot.

(James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, 1826)

CONTINUED

(c)

“Alas, what a ruin has befallen thee!” said Hester, with the tears gushing in to her eyes. “Wilt thou die for very weakness? There is no other cause!”

“The judgment of God is on me,” answered the conscience-stricken priest. It is too mighty for me to struggle with!”

“Heaven would show mercy,” rejoined Hester, “hadst thou but the strength to take advantage of it.”

“Be thou strong for me!” answered he. “Advise me what to do.”

“Is the world then so narrow?” exclaimed Hester Prynne, fixing her deep eyes on the minister’s, and instinctively exercising a magnetic power over a spirit so shattered and subdued, that it could hardly hold itself erect. “Doth the universe lie within the compass of yonder town, which only a little time ago was but a leaf-strewn desert, as lonely as his around us? Whither leads yonder forest-track? Backward to the settlement, thou sayest! Yes; but onward, too! Deeper it goes, and deeper, into the wilderness, less plainly to be seen at every step; until, some few miles hence, the yellow leaves will show no vestige of the white man’s tread. There thou art free! So brief a journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched, to one where thou mayest still be happy! Is there no shade enough in all this boundless forest to hide thy heart from the gaze of Roger Chillingworth?”

(Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850)

TURN OVER

(d)

When Dr Flint learned that I was to be again a mother, he was exasperated beyond measure. He rushed from the house, and returned with a pair of shears. I had a fine head of hair; and he often railed about my pride of arranging it nicely. He cut every hair close to my head, storming and swearing all the time. I replied to some of his abuse, and he struck me. Some months before, he had pitched me down the stairs in a fit of passion; and the injury I received was so serious that I was unable to turn myself in bed for many days. He then said, "Linda, I swear by God I will never raise my hand against you again;" but I knew that he would forget his promise. 5

After he discovered my situation, he was like a restless spirit from the pit. He came every day; and I was subjected to such insults as no pen can describe. I would not describe them if I could; they were too low, too revolting. I tried to keep them from my grandmother's knowledge as much as I could. I knew she had enough to sadden her life, without having my troubles to bear. When she saw the doctor treat me with violence, and heard him utter oaths terrible enough to palsy a man's tongue, she could not always hold her peace. It was natural and motherlike that she should try to defend me; but it only made matters worse. 10 15

When they told me my new-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier then it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and suffering, and mortifications peculiarly their own. 20

Dr Flint had sworn that he would make me suffer, to my last day, for this new crime against *him*, as he called it; and as long as he had me in his power he kept his word.

(Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents In The Life of a Slave Girl*, 1858)

CONTINUED

(e)

Now, Bildad, like Peleg, and indeed many other Nantucketers, was a Quaker, the island having been originally settled by that sect; and to this day its inhabitants in general retain in an uncommon measure the peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of these same Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whalehunters. They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance. 5

So that there are instance among them of men, who, named with Scripture names – a singularly common fashion on the island – and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary and confiding breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language – that man makes one in a whole nation's census – a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies. Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half wilful over-ruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. For all men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidness. Be sure of this, O young ambition, all mortal greatness is but disease. 10 15 20

(Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 1851)

TURN OVER

(f)

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift, 5
A few sands and dead leaves gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that amid all the blab whose echoes recoil upon me I have not
once had the least idea who or what I am, 10
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet untouch'd,
untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that
no man ever can, 15
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart upon me and
sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all

(Walt Whitman, 1860, 1881)

CONTINUED

2. Discuss the treatment of duplicity in any writing of the period.
3. Consider conflicts between authority and the individual conscience in the work of one or more Puritan writers.
4. Notwithstanding, within an hour after they tied him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him, but the King holding up the compass in his hand, they all laid down their bows and arrows, and in a triumphant manner led him to Orapaks, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used.

(John Smith, *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*)

Discuss representations of contact between native Americans and settlers in at least two works of the period.

5. Either: (a) Analyse the conventions of political discourse in some writing of the period.

Or: (b) Examine the use of persuasive language in Thomas Jefferson's writing.
6. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes.

(Hawthorne, 'Young Goodman Brown')

Explore representations of morality and vice in at least two works of the period.

7. Discuss ways in which one or more writers developed the genre of the short story.
8. Discuss the development of burlesque irony or romantic elements in Washington Irving's prose.
9. Write an essay on representations of the natural world in any writing of the period.

TURN OVER

10. As old plowmen and new men of the woods, as Europeans and new-made Indians, they contract the vices of both; they adopt the moroseness and ferocity of a native, without his mildness, or even his industry at home.

(J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, 'What Is An American?', 1782)

Write on different perceptions of the pioneer in the work of at least two writers.

11. Either: (a) Discuss the significance of disease and death in Poe's writing.
Or: (b) Compare and contrast Poe's work in two or more genres.
12. Discuss uses of superstition and the supernatural in the works of at least two writers of the period.
13. Either: (a) What is the importance of reading and writing in slave narratives?
Or: (b) Discuss the uses slave narratives make of existing literary conventions and genres.
14. Either: (a) How does *The Scarlet Letter* engage with the preoccupations of the mid-nineteenth century?
Or: (b) Consider the relationship between romance and realism in two or more works by Hawthorne.
15. Either: (a) One sees that the movement of the book *Moby-Dick*, which corresponds to the search of the Peaquot for the white whale, is irresistibly towards an ur-symbol where beginnings and ends flow together; and the movement concludes, as does the search, with the confrontation of Moby Dick.

(R.W.Short, 1959)

What then, is Moby Dick?

- Or: (b) Is it fair to say that Melville's work deals with the repression of the feminine in man? You may restrict your answer to *Moby-Dick*.
16. Either: (a) Discuss the relevance of gender in any writing about slavery.
Or: (b) Write an essay on the role of oratory or emotion in two or more works about slavery.

CONTINUED

17. Either: (a) 'Through me many long dumb voices, ... Through me forbidden voices' (Whitman, 'Song of Myself'). How effectively does Whitman represent the forbidden?

Or: (b) Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance.

(Whitman, 'Democratic Vistas', 1871)

How does Whitman's poetry conceive of democracy and nationality?

18. Either: (a) The highest flights to God, the most extravagant metaphors of the strange and remote, come back to a form of casuistry, to a moral dilemma of the experienced world.

(Allen Tate, 1954)

Write on the blend of abstraction and sensation in Emily Dickinson's poetry.

Or: (b) 'After great pain, a formal feeling comes' (Emily Dickinson). Discuss any aspects of Emily Dickinson's poems on pain that interest you.

19. It was in the cultural desert of Twain's native region that a distinctive American humour evolved, and with it a more fluent spirit of satire than seemed to be possible in the older states, where even disrespect was disposed to gravity.

(D.E.S. Maxwell, 1963)

Discuss the development of regional voice in any literature of the period.

20. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.

(Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*)

Write on civilization and nature in one or more works by Mark Twain.

TURN OVER

21. Richard Chase wrote that 'solipsism, self-regard and imprisonment within the self' are themes which have absorbed American novelists. Discuss the representation of self-image or loneliness in at least two works.

22. Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?

(Emerson, *Nature*, 1836)

What attitudes are shown towards the past in one or more works of the period?

23. Write on the establishing of an American literary tradition in any works of the period.

24. The negative side of the spectacle on which Hawthorne looked out ... might, indeed, be made almost ludicrous; one might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should be come a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities, nor public schools – no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class – no Epsom nor Ascot!

(Henry James, *Hawthorne*, 1879)

Do these comments fairly reflect the America portrayed by Hawthorne, James himself, or any other writer of the period?

25. 'Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist' (Emerson, 'Self-Reliance'). Write about the relationship between the individual and the community in the work of one or more writers.

26. Write an essay on the significance of one of the following in the work of any writer or writers you have studied for the course: classification, law and order, mob violence, propaganda, newspapers, weather, war, domesticity.

END OF PAPER