

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**

University of London

**EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS**

For The Following Qualification:–

*B.A.*

**Chaucer and his Literary Background**

**COURSE CODE : ENGLN01**

**DATE : 03-MAY-06**

**TIME : 10.00**

**TIME ALLOWED : 6 Hours**

Answer three questions: Question 1 or Question 2 (not both) and two other questions.

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

A plain text of Chaucer (Robinson's edition) is provided.

Candidates should note that the term 'work' in this paper can be applied to a part or parts of *The Canterbury Tales*. Answers addressing *The Canterbury Tales* as a 'work' need not discuss it in its entirety.

Between 1.00 p.m. and 1.45 p.m. candidates will be able, if they wish, to leave their desks to have lunch. The examination will finish at 4.00 p.m.

Candidates should not discuss the paper during the lunch break.

TURN OVER

1. Write about one of the following passages. You should include such explanations of the language, style and subject matter as seem important for a full appreciation of it.

(a)

This storie is seyde, nat for that wyves sholde  
 Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,  
 For it were inportable, though they wolde;  
 But for that every wight, in his degree, 1145  
 Sholde be constant in adversitee  
 As was Grisilde; therfore Petrak writeth  
 This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.

For, sith a womman was so pacient  
 Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte 1150  
 Receyven al in gree that God us sent;  
 For greet skile is, he preeve that he wroughte.  
 But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,  
 As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;  
 He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede, 1155

And suffreth us, as for oure exercise,  
 With sharpe scourges of adversitee  
 Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;  
 Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he,  
 Er we were born, knew al oure freletee; 1160  
 And for oure beste is al his governaunce.  
 Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go:  
 It were ful hard to fynde now-a-dayes  
 In al a toun Grisildis thre or two; 1165  
 For if that they were put to swiche assayes,  
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
 With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,  
 It wolde rather breste a-two than plye.

For which heere, for the Wyves love of  
 Bathe — 1170  
 Whos lyf and al hire secte God mayntene  
 In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe —  
 I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene,  
 Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene;  
 And lat us stynte of earnestful matere. 1175  
 Herkneth my song that seith in this manere:

*Lenvoy de Chaucer.*

Grisilde is deed, and eek hire pacience,  
 And bothe atones buried in Ytaille;  
 For which I crie in open audience,  
 No wedded man so hardy be t'assaille 1180  
 His wyves pacience in trust to fynde  
 Grisildis, for in certein he shal faille.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,  
 Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,  
 Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence 1185  
 To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille  
 As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,  
 Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!

Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,  
 But evere answereth at the countretaille. 1190  
 Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence,  
 But sharply taak on yow the governaille.  
 Emprinteth wel this lessoun in youre mynde,  
 For commune profit sith it may availle.

Ye archewyves, stondeh at defense, 1195  
 Syn ye be strong as is a greet camaille;  
 Ne suffreth nat that men yow doon offense.  
 And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,  
 Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde;  
 Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille. 1200

Ne dreed hem nat, doth hem no reverence,  
 For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,  
 The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence  
 Shal perce his brest, and eek his aventaille.  
 In jalousie I rede eek thou hym bynde, 1205  
 And thou shalt make hym couche as doth a  
 quaille.

If thou be fair, ther folk been in presence,  
 Shewe thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;  
 If thou be foul, be fre of thy dispence;  
 To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille;  
 Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde, 1211  
 And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge, and  
 waille!

*The Clerk's Tale*

CONTINUED

(b)

Tho gan I forth with hym to goon  
Out of the castel, soth to seye.  
Tho saugh y stonde in a valeye,  
Under the castel, faste by,  
An hous, that Domus Dedaly, 1920  
That Laboryntus cleped ys,  
Nas mad so wonderlych, ywis,  
Ne half so queyntelych ywrought.  
And ever mo, as swyft as thought,  
This queynte hous aboute wente, 1925  
That never mo hyt stille stente.  
And therout com so gret a noyse  
That, had hyt stonden upon Oyse,  
Men myghte hyt han herd esely  
To Rome, y trowe sikerly. 1930  
And the noyse which that I herde,  
For al the world, ryght so hyt ferde,  
As dooth the rowtynge of the ston  
That from th'engyn ys leten gon.  
And al thys hous of which y rede 1935  
Was mad of twigges, falwe, rede,  
And grene eke, and somme weren white,  
Swiche as men to these cages thwite,  
Or maken of these panyers,  
Or elles hottes or dossers; 1940  
That, for the swough and for the twygges,  
This hous was also ful of gygges,  
And also ful eke of chirkynges,  
And of many other werkynges;  
And eke this hous hath of entrees 1945  
As fele as of leves ben in trees  
In somer, whan they grene been;  
And on the roof men may yet seen  
A thousand holes, and wel moo,  
To leten wel the soun out goo. 1950  
And be day, in every tyde,  
Been al the dores opened wide,  
And by nyght, echon, unshette;  
Ne porter ther is noon to lette  
No maner tydynges in to pace. 1955  
Ne never rest is in that place  
That hit nys fild ful of tydynges,  
Other loude, or of whisprynges;  
And over alle the houses angles  
Ys ful of rounynges and of jangles 1960  
Of werres, of pes, of mariages,  
Of reste, of labour, of viages,  
Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,  
Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf,  
Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges, 1965  
Of hele, of seknesse, of bildynges,  
Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,  
Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes;  
Of dyvers transmutacions  
Of estats, and eke of regions; 1970  
Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,  
Of wit, of wynnynge, of folye;  
Of plente, and of gret famyne,  
Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;  
Of good or mys governement, 1975  
Of fyr, and of dyvers accident.

*The House of Fame*

2. Make a critical comparison of one of the following pairs of passages.

(a)

(i)

And for he was a knyght auntrous,  
He nolde slepen in noon hous,                   \*2100  
But liggen in his hoode;  
His brighte helm was his wonger,  
And by hym baiteth his dextrer  
Of herbes fyne and goode.

Hymself drank water of the well,                   915  
As dide the knyght sire Percyvell  
So worthy under wede,  
Til on a day —

Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas.

“Namooore of this, for Goddes dignitee,”  
Quod oure Hooste, “for thou makest me                   \*2110  
So wery of thy verray lewednesse  
That, also wisly God my soule blesse,  
Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche.  
Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!  
This may wel be rym dogerel,” quod he.                   925  
“Why so?” quod I, “why wiltow lette me  
Moore of my tale than another man,  
Syn that it is the beste rym I kan?”  
“By God,” quod he, “for pleyedly, at a word,  
Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord!  
Thou doost noght elles but despendest  
tyme.                   \*2121  
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme.  
Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,  
Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,  
In which ther be som murthe or som doc-  
tryne.”                   935  
“Gladly,” quod I, “by Goddes sweete pynel  
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose  
That oghte liken yow, as I suppose,  
Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.  
It is a moral tale vertuuous,                   \*2130  
Al be it told somtyme in sondry wyse  
Of sondry folk, as I shal yow devyse.

As thus: ye woot that every Evaungelist,  
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist,  
Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth;  
But nathelees hir sentence is al sooth,                   946  
And alle acorden as in hire sentence,  
Al be ther in hir tellyng difference.  
For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme  
seyn lesse,  
Whan they his pitous passioun expresse —  
I meene of Mark, Mathew, Luc, and  
John —                   \*2141  
But doutelees hir sentence is al oon.  
Therefore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,  
If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,  
As thus, though that I telle somewhat moore  
Of proverbes than ye han herd bifoore                   956  
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,  
To enforce with th’ effect of my mateere,  
And though I nat the same wordes seye  
As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye                   \*2150  
Blameth me nat; for, as in my sentence,  
Shul ye nowher fynden difference  
Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte  
After the which this murye tale I write.  
And therefore herkneth what that I shal seye,  
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye.”                   966

Explicit

CONTINUED

2. (a)

(ii)

And I prey yow that ye  
wole forbere now to do vengeance,/ in swich  
a manere that youre goode name may be kept  
and conserved,/ and that men mowe have  
cause and mateere to preyse yow of pitee and  
of mercy,/ and that ye have no cause to  
repente yow of thyng that ye doon./ 1865  
For Senec seith, 'He overcometh in an  
yvel manere that repenteth hym of his victo-  
rie.'/ Wherefore I pray yow, lat mercy been in  
youre herte,/ to th' effect and entente that  
God Almighty have mercy on yow in his laste  
juggement./ For Seint Jame seith in his Epistle:  
'Juggement withouten mercy shal be doon  
to hym that hath no mercy of another wight.'/  
Whanne Melibee hadde herd the grete skiles  
and resouns of dame Prudence, and hire  
wise informaciouns and techynges,/ his \*3060  
herte gan encline to the wil of his wif,  
considerynge hir trewe entente,/ and con-  
formed hym anon, and assented fully to werken  
after hir conseil;/ and thonked God, of whom  
procedeth al vertu and alle goodnesse, that  
hym sente a wyf of so greet discrecioun./ And  
whan the day cam that his adversaries sholde  
appieren in his presence,/ he spak unto  
hem ful goodly, and seyde in this wyse:/ 1875  
'Al be it so that of youre pride and heigh  
presumpcioun and folie, and of youre negli-  
gence and unkonnynges,/ ye have mysborn yow  
and trespassed unto me,/ yet for as muche as  
I see and biholde youre grete humylitee,/ and  
that ye been sory and repentant of youre  
giltes,/ it constreyneth me to doon yow  
grace and mercy./ Wherefore I receyve \*3070  
yow to my grace,/ and foryeve yow out-  
rely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that  
ye have doon agayn me and myne,/ to this  
effect and to this ende that God of his ende-  
les mercy/ wole at the tyme of oure diynges  
foryeven us oure giltes that we han trespassed  
to hym in this wrecched world./ For doute-  
les, if we be sory and repentant of the synnes  
and giltes which we han trespassed in  
the sighte of oure Lord God,/ he is so 1885  
free and so merciable/ that he wole for-  
yeven us oure giltes,/ and bryngen us to the  
blisse that nevere hath ende. Amen.

Heere is ended Chaucers Tale of Melibee and of Dame Prudence.

TURN OVER

2. (b)

## An A B C

(i)

### Incipit carmen secundum ordinem litterarum alphabeti.

Almighty and al merciable queene,  
To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,  
To have relees of sinne, of sorwe, and teene,  
Glorious virgine, of alle floures flour,  
To thee I flee, confounded in error. 5  
Help and releeve, thou mighti debonayre,  
Have mercy on my perilous langour!  
Venquished me hath my cruel adversaire.

Bountee so fix hath in thin herte his tente,  
That wel I wot thou wolt my socour bee; 10  
Thou canst not warne him that with good en-  
tente  
Axeth thin helpe, thin herte is ay so free.  
Thou art largesse of pleyn felicitee,  
Haven of refut, of quiete, and of reste.

Loo, how that theeves sevene chasen mee! 15  
Help, lady bright, er that my ship tobreste!

Comfort is noon but in yow, ladi deere;  
For, loo, my sinne and my confusioun,  
Which oughten not in thi presence appeere,  
Han take on me a greevous accioun 20  
Of verrey right and desperacioun;  
And, as bi right, thei mighten wel susteene  
That I were wurthi my dampnacioun,  
Nere merci of you, blisful hevене queene! 24

Dowte is ther noon, thou queen of misericorde,  
That thou n'art cause of grace and merci heere;  
God vouched sauf thurgh thee with us to ac-  
corde.

For, certes, Crystes blisful mooder deere,  
Were now the bowe bent in swich maneere  
As it was first, of justice and of ire, 30  
The rightful God nolde of no mercy heere;  
But thurgh thee han we grace, as we desire.

Evere hath myn hope of refut been in thee,  
For heer-biform ful ofte, in many a wyse,  
Hast thou to misericorde receyved me. 35  
But merci, ladi, at the grete assyse,  
Whan we shule come bifore the hye justyse!  
So litel fruit shal thanne in me be founde  
That, but thou er that day me wel chastyse,  
Of verrey right my werk wol me confounde.

Fleeinge, I flee for socour to thi tente 41  
Me for to hide from tempeste ful of dreede,  
Biseeching yow that ye you not absente,  
Thouh I be wikke. O help yit at this neede!  
Al have I ben a beste in wil and deede, 45  
Yit, ladi, thou me clothe with thi grace.  
Thin enemy and myn – ladi, tak heede! –  
Unto my deth in poynt is me to chace!

Glorious mayde and mooder, which that nevere  
Were bitter, neither in erthe nor in see, 50  
But ful of swetnesse and of merci evere,  
Help that my Fader be not wroth with me.  
Spek thou, for I ne dar not him ysee,  
So have I doon in erthe, allas the while!  
That certes, but if thou my socour bee, 55  
To stink eterne he wole my gost exile.

CONTINUED

2. (b)  
(ii)

The Prologe of the Prioresses Tale.

Domine dominus noster.

<p>“O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveil- lous Is in this large world ysprad,” quod she; “For nocht oonly thy laude precious      455 Parfourned is by men of dignitee, But by the mouth of children thy bountee Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.</p> <p>Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,      °1650 Of thee and of the white lylie flour Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway, To telle a storie I wol do my labour; Nat that I may encressen hir honour, For she herself is honour and the roote      465 Of bountee, next hir Sone, and soules boote.</p> <p>O mooder Mayde! o mayde Mooder free! O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte, That ravyshest down fro the Deitee,</p>	<p>Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in th’alighte,      °1660 Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte, Conceyved was the Fadres sapience, Help me to telle it in thy reverence!</p> <p>Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence, Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee,      475 Ther may no tonge expresse in no science; For somtyme, Lady, er men praye to thee, Thou goost biforn of thy benyngnytee, And getest us the lyght, of thy preyere, To gyden us unto thy Sone so deere.      °1670</p> <p>My konnyng is so wayk, o blisful Queene, For to declare thy grete worthynesse That I ne may the weighte nat susteene; But as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse, That kan unnethes any word expresse,      485 Right so fare I, and therefore I yow preye, Gydeh my song that I shal of yow seye.”</p>
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Explicit.

TURN OVER



3. 'Dream...is a form of intuition which, far from escaping from reality, lays bare its deeper structure' (A.C. Spearing). Discuss with reference to one or more of Chaucer's dream visions.
4. Consider the role of the dream guide in two or more of Chaucer's dream visions.
5. Comment on Chaucer's juxtaposing of sources in one or more of his dream visions, or in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

6. Either: (a) 'The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen...'

*(Troilus and Criseyde, I, 1)*

Is the *Book of Troilus* (as it is called in several manuscripts) more about Troilus than Criseyde?

- Or: (b) 'Go ravysse here! Ne kanstow nat, for shame?  
And other lat here out of towne fare,  
Or hold here stille, and leve thi nyce fare.

*(Troilus and Criseyde, IV, 530-2)*

How do you explain the passivity of Troilus in *Troilus and Criseyde*?

7. Ascry aros at scarmuch al withoute,  
And men criden in the strete

*(Troilus and Criseyde, II, 611-12)*

To what extent is *Troilus and Criseyde* an urban poem?

8. ... who may stoppen every wikked tonge,  
Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge?

*(Troilus and Criseyde, II, 804-5)*

Write an essay on Chaucer's interest in gossip or slander.

CONTINUED

9. For Paul Strohm, Chaucer's writings are

sites of unresolved contention ... in which there is no single truth or authoritative position from which to judge the competing discourses which are presented to us.

Discuss with reference to *The Canterbury Tales* or any other work or works by Chaucer.

10. Make a case for the thematic unity of the tales within Fragment III of *The Canterbury Tales*.

11. Either: (a) Discuss women's rights to or ownership of money in *The Merchant's Tale* and elsewhere in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Or: (b) In what ways does Chaucer include women among the implied audience for his poetry?

12. Compare the ways in which Chaucer characterizes male victims of adultery in two or more of *The Canterbury Tales*.

13. I wot myself best how y stonde

(*The House of Fame*, 1878)

Discuss Chaucer's representation of himself as a poet in his works.

14. Write an essay on Chaucer's interest in combining, adapting or juxtaposing genres in his writings.

15. Is the pilgrimage more in *The Canterbury Tales* than a means of bringing together narrators and stories?

16. The ascendent sothly, as wel in alle nativites as in questions and eleccions of tymes, is a thing which that these astrologiens gretly observen.

(*A Treatise on The Astrolabe*, II, 4)

How important is the casting of horoscopes to the protagonists of any of Chaucer's works?

TURN OVER

17. Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit!  
If ye wol any moore of it,  
To telle it wol I fonde.

(*Sir Thopas*, 888-90)

Comment on the use and handling of text-division in Chaucer's poems.

18. George P. Krapp characterizes Chaucer's prose as 'perfunctory', asking us to consider 'how little impressed he was with the possibilities of prose as an art of fine writing'. What is your view of Chaucer's artistry in one or more of his prose works?
19. At times in *The Clerk's Tale* and more commonly in *The Man of Law's Tale* and *The Physician's Tale*, according to Charles Muscatine, 'we can hear Chaucer squeezing it a bit hard, and falling into sentimentality'. Comment on Chaucer's handling of pathos in any of *The Canterbury Tales* in the light of this criticism.
20. How important is geographical location to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*?
21. Go, litel bok ...  
And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace  
Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.

(*Troilus and Criseyde*, V, 1786, 1791-2)

To what extent did Chaucer seem to see himself as following classical precedents of authorship?

22. For John Stevens the 'essential paradox of courtly love' is that 'an intensely private experience is made the ground of social well-being'. Discuss the relation between public and private in Chaucer's depiction of love in any one or more of his writings.
23. It has been said of Chaucer that religion is both nowhere and everywhere in his poetry. Discuss with reference to at least two of his works.
24. Discuss Chaucer's treatment of one or more of the following: lechery, gambling, drunkenness, rape.
25. How does Chaucer represent either racial or religious violence, or both, in his writings?

CONTINUED

26. 'Whereas the countryside in Chaucer is both mysterious and powerful, the city is notable chiefly by its absence' (David Wallace). Discuss Chaucer's treatment of either the country, or the city, or both, in the light of this remark.
27. Paul Zumthor has written of the 'circularity of song' in the Middle Ages. Discuss the function of repetition in Chaucer's short poems.
28.                               This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,  
                                          And heeld after the newe world the space.

*(The General Prologue, 175-6)*

What views of modernity do you find in Chaucer?

29. Wendell Holmes calls him 'rich, juicy, fragrant, russet-skinned old Chaucer' (1902). What epithets would you use and why?
30. What image or images of Chaucer do you find in any post-medieval adaptation of his writing?

END OF PAPER