

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For the following qualifications :-

B.A.

London in Literature

COURSE CODE : **ENGLN29**

DATE : **10-MAY-02**

TIME : **14.30**

TIME ALLOWED : **3 hours**

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TURN OVER

Answer three questions.

The terms 'literature' and 'literary', and 'work' or 'works' may be taken to include, where appropriate, film and song, and the term 'author' to include film directors and authors of song lyrics. Unless otherwise specified, you may, if you wish, confine your answers to the literature of a single period, or the work of a single author.

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

1. 'For lack of mony, I cold not spede' is the refrain of John Lydgate's ballade 'London Lackpenny' (c. 1400). With reference to one or more periods, discuss the treatment of this theme in London literature.

2.

Some come to take their ease
And sleep an act or two; but those, we fear,
W'have frighted with our trumpets; so, 'tis clear,
They'll say 'tis nought; others to hear the city
Abus'd extremely, and to cry 'That's witty!'
Which we have not done neither . . .

(Shakespeare, Epilogue to *Henry VIII*)

In what ways does Jacobean drama abuse or defend the city and its citizens?

3.

Sometimes I am seen thrusting my Head into a Round of Politicians at Will's, and listening with great Attention to the Narratives that are made in those little Circular Audiences. Sometimes I smoak a Pipe at Child's; and . . . overhear the Conversation of every Table in the Room. . . My Face is likewise very well known at the Grecian, the Cocoa-Tree, and in the Theatres both of Drury-Lane and the Haymarket. I have been taken for a Merchant upon the Exchange for above these ten Years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the Assembly of Stock-Jobbers at Jonathan's. . . . Thus I live in the world, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species . . .

(Addison, *The Spectator*, No 1, 1 March 1711)

Use this quotation as a starting point for an essay on urban identity in some of the literature you have read.

4.

Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts and blood,
Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,
Dead cats, and turnip tops, come tumbling down the flood.

(Swift, 'A Description of a City Shower')

Consider the literature inspired by London's waste.

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5. What prospects of renewal, or what other possibilities of hope, have authors found in the disasters visited on London by plague, fire, riot, rebellion or war? You may, if you wish, limit yourself to one relevant historical moment.
6. Discuss some of the ways in which writers have known and experienced London by the act of walking around it.

7. She went from Op'ra, park, assembly, play,
To morning walks, and pray'rs three hours a day

(Pope, 'Epistle to Miss Blount, on her leaving the Town')

How far is London represented as a field of opportunity for women, and how far as a place of peril?

8. Hogarth, a guilty pleasure in his eyes,
The place of executioner supplies:
See how he gloats, enjoys the sacred feast
And proves himself by cruelty a priest.

(Charles Churchill, 'An Epistle to William Hogarth')

What kinds of pleasure and what kinds of cruelty have you found in satires set in London?

9. Where finds philosophy her eagle eye
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact
With which she calculates, computes and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London.

(Cowper, *The Task*)

Is Cowper unusual in celebrating London as the centre of a community of intellectuals or scientists?

10. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth remembers seeing in the London of the mid-1790s:

The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
America, the hunter Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese
And Negro ladies in white muslin gowns.

What kinds of response to foreignness have you found in literary treatments of London?

11. 'Fanny was disposed to think the influence of London very much at war with all respectable attachments' (Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*). Austen was referring here to friendships and family relationships as well as romance. Does Fanny's view prevail among those who write about life in London?

CONTINUED

12. 'Earth has not anything to show more fair' (Wordsworth, 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802'). What do writers of the Romantic period find to celebrate in London?

13. At the top of the staircase was an old, disjointed, rickety, ill-favoured skylight, patched and mended in all kinds of ways, which . . . covered Todgers's up as if it were a sort of human cucumber-frame, and only people of a peculiar growth were reared there.

(Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*)

Has London generally been represented as deforming those who live in it?

14. I have been crushed under a sense of the mere magnitude of London – its inconceivable immensity – in such a way as to paralyse my mind for any appreciation of details.

(Henry James, 1869)

Describe ways in which authors have been crushed, or stimulated, by the magnitude of London.

15. In your studies of the London book trade, have you found any optimistic versions of the relation between literature and trade?

16. Discuss the ways in which one or more film-makers, or artists working in other visual media, have imagined London settings.

17. Terms such as 'underworld' and 'subculture' imply lowness. How have authors treated the relationship between subculture or underworld in London and what is found 'above' them?

18. And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green. . .
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading. . .

(William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise*)

[The Roman Catholic Church] may still exist when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.

(Lord Macaulay, 'Von Ranke')

Discuss the power of fantasies of London's past or of its future, or both.

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19. In that close corner where the roofs shrink down and cower together as if to hide the secrets from the handsome street hard by, there are such dark crimes, such miseries and horror, as could hardly be told in whispers.

(Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*)

“It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside. . . The pressure of public opinion can do in the town what the law cannot accomplish. There is no lane so vile that the scream of a tortured child, or the thud of a drunkard’s blow, does not beget sympathy . . .”

(Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Copper Beeches’)

Have crimes in London been depicted as characteristically secret or public?

20. ‘Yes, it was Bedford Park the vision came from – ’ (John Betjeman, ‘Narcissus’). Are London’s suburbs invariably treated comically in literature?

21. I wish I was a provincial poet,
Writing a lot about nature,
Whenever I thought about London poets,
I’d mutter darkly, ‘I hate yer.’

(Wendy Cope, ‘Pastoral’)

Have poets writing about London been affected by the idea that rural life is more elevating?

22. In the city we can change our identities at will, as Dickens triumphantly proved over and over again in his fiction; its discontinuity favours both instant heroes and instant villains impartially. The gaudy theatrical nature of city life tends constantly to melodrama.

(Jonathan Raban, *Soft City*)

Use this quotation as a starting point for an essay on the theatrical nature of London life.

23. ‘Sex and the City’: in what ways have any two authors separated by at least 100 years chosen to show a connection between the two?

24. According to the editor of *Granta*’s 1999 special issue on London,

For now there is a sense of optimism about London, and the gathering sense of a new London nationalism - the city as a cosmopolitan state.

Have you found confirmation of his contentions in the recent literature you know?

25. Compare and contrast literary treatments by two or more authors of any one of the following: the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the river Thames, the East End, the London Docks, public transport, parks, jails, theatres, clubs, pubs, churches, schools, hospitals, graveyards.

END OF PAPER