

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

London in Literature

COURSE CODE : ENGLN29

DATE : 13-MAY-04

TIME : 14.30

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

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. How does Chaucer's city come to be so evasive, so difficult to imagine, when the Chaucerian countryside is so powerful?

(David Wallace)

Are medieval writers interested in imagining London?

2. A fit decorum must be kept, the court
Distinguished from the city.

(Massinger, *The City Madam*, 1632)

Are the conflicting interests of the commercial and the landowning classes the essential theme of city comedy?

3. London is a shop, a law-court, a record-office and scientific bureau, inviting to strangers; a sanctuary to refugees of every political and religious opinion; and such a city that almost every active man, in any nation, finds himself at one time or other forced to visit it.

(Emerson, *English Traits*, 1856)

Use this quotation as the starting point for an essay on some works, from any period, about being a stranger in London.

4. It is said that when James I threatened to punish London by removing his Court, the Lord Mayor replied 'that in removing his royal presence from his lieges, they hoped he would leave them the Thames'. Write on the significance of the river in representations of London.
5. Discuss some works in which characters are hunted, followed, or tracked in London.

TURN OVER

6. The atmosphere with its magnificent mystifications, which flatters and superfuses, makes everything brown, rich, vague, magnifies distances and minimizes details.

(Henry James, *Journal*, 1888, of London fog)

Consider the uses made by authors of London weather.

7. The tyrant on the throne
Is the morning and evening press.

(John Davidson, *Fleet Street Eclogues*)

Write on this 'tyranny' as it has been represented in some works set in London.

8. Discuss some of the different techniques for 'reading' the streets of London which you have encountered in London literature.
9. Jonathan Wild, London's leading criminal in the first part of the eighteenth century, was also its leading police informer and 'thief-taker'. Write on criminal duality, or any other kind of duality, as depicted in works set in London.
10. Sewage and other kinds of waste and waste disposal are recurrent themes in the literature of London. Which authors in your opinion have made the most compelling use of this material?
11. Alas for me! What prospect can I find
To raise poetic ardour in my mind?
Where'er around I cast my wand'ring eyes,
Long burning rows of fetid bricks arise,
And nauseous dunghills swell in mould'ring heaps.

(Charles Jenner, 1772)

Discuss how any one or more poets reconciled the urban and the poetic.

12. No city in the spacious universe
Boasts of religion more, or minds it less.

(Defoe, 'Reformation of Manners', 1702)

Write on some of the ways in which London's various religions have figured in its literature. You may confine your answer to works from one period.

CONTINUED

13. The noise & crakling & thunder of the impetuous flames, the shrieking of Women & children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses & churches, was like an hideous storme . . . near two whole mile in length and one in bredth. . . . Thus I left it this afternoone burning, a resemblance of Sodome or the last day. . . *London* was, but is no more.

(John Evelyn, *Diary*, 3 September 1666)

Write an essay on literary responses to one or more of London's disasters.

14. This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D:
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold

(Samuel Johnson, 'London', 1738)

How much variety have you found in the attitudes to materialism in the London literature you have studied? You should refer to works from at least two periods.

15. Thence away to the Strand to my bookseller's, and there stayed an hour and bought that idle, roguish book, 'L'escholle des Filles'; which I have bought in plain binding (avoiding the buying of it better bound) because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found.

(Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 8 February 1668)

Examine the treatment of sexual temptation, or pornography, or both, in Pepys's *Diary*, Boswell's *London Journal* or any other work of London literature you have studied.

16. The novelty of the scene, however, joined to the general air of gaiety diffused throughout the company, shortly lessened her embarrassment; and, after being somewhat familiarized to the abruptness with which the masks approached her, and the freedom with which they looked at or addressed her, the first confusion of her situation subsided, and in her curiosity to watch others, she ceased to observe how much she was watched herself.

(Frances Burney, *Cecilia*, 1782, Book 2, Chapter 3, 'A Masquerade')

Write an essay on the significance of disguise in the literature of London.

TURN OVER

17. Either: (a) I wandered about for five days, and took the first convenient opportunity of returning to a place where, if there is not much happiness, there is, at least, such a diversity of good and evil, that slight vexations do not fix upon the heart.

(Johnson, quoted in Boswell, *Life of Johnson*)

Boswell's footnote to this sentence reads: 'This a very just account of the relief which London affords to melancholy minds.' Write an essay on London's powers of consolation.

- Or: (b) Write on one or more of the following emotions as you have found them associated with life in particular districts of London, or particular London occupations: boredom, frustration, anxiety, loneliness, despair, fear.
18. If I should say that this is a visible summons to us all to thankfulness . . . perhaps it may be thought by some . . . preaching a sermon instead of writing a history, making myself a teacher, instead of giving my observations of things . . .

(Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*)

How far does *A Journal of the Plague Year* moralize its subject matter?

19. Johnson's *Life of Savage* is the story of an individual writer's failure; what larger themes emerge from his treatment of his friend's career?
20. Either: (a) Compare Dickens's representation of London with that of another nineteenth-century writer.
- Or: (b) Write on the combination, or opposition, of fantasy and social realism in Dickens's portrayal of London.
21. How important was Bloomsbury to the 'Bloomsbury Group'?
22. The film was intended both to portray London as it is and, at the same time, to reconstruct it, to re-imagine it.

(Patrick Keiller on *London*)

Write on the representation of London in film, or in any other genre, in the light of this quotation.

CONTINUED

23. Write on one or more of the following as you have found them represented in works set in London: music, dance, theatre, street entertainment, fairs, markets, restaurants, shops.
24. Compare any documentary treatment with any fictional treatment of one or two of the following aspects of life in London: crime, poverty, high society, race, politics, sport.
25. Compare any documentary treatment with any fictional treatment of one of the following: the Gordon Riots, the Blitz, 'Swinging London', 'Cool Britannia'.
26. What trends do you see in contemporary literature about London?

END OF PAPER