

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

London in Literature

COURSE CODE : ENGLN29

DATE : 10-MAY-05

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, television and song, and the term 'author' to include makers of films or television programmes, and authors of song lyrics. Unless otherwise specified, each answer may be confined 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. Christopher Hibbert writes of medieval London:

The countryman who entered the town was astounded by the size of the place, its noise and bustle ... the screech and rattle of carts across the cobbles and through the ruts of mud, the regular chiming of innumerable church bells ... the cries of the chapmen and the hawkers selling cherries or peascods, hot sheep's feet or mackerel, pies and pasties and 'rushes, faire and grene'.

Either: (a) Explore how Hibbert's evocation compares to the depiction of London in medieval literature.

Or: (b) Explore how the sounds of London have been deployed in the literature of any period or periods.

2. The prologues and epilogues of Renaissance city comedies and of Restoration comedies often present the plays as holding a mirror up to their audiences. Can we look to either of these genres for realistic representations of contemporary London life?

3. So poetry, which is in Oxford made
An art, in London only is a trade.

(John Dryden)

Have any author or authors ever written favourably about the influence of the London book trade on literature?

4. There are among the Londoners so many nations differing in manners, customs, and religions, that the inhabitants themselves don't know a quarter of 'em.

(Tom Brown, 1700)

Consider some ways in which any author or authors have tried to convey the hybrid nature of London.

5. 'Haphazard, laborious professions, undertaken alongside occasional begging, amounted to what may be called an "economy of makeshift"' (Freya Johnston on eighteenth-century London). How is this 'economy of makeshift' represented in the London literature of any period or periods?

TURN OVER

6. James Boswell recorded in 1763 that he went to St James's Park and

picked up a whore ... a young Shropshire girl, only seventeen, very well looked ...
Poor being, she has a sad time of it!

What range of emotions do you find in literature about sex in London?

7. Ladies are said to go a-shopping, when, in the forenoon, sick of themselves, they order the coach, and drive from shop to shop.

This quotation from 1764 is the earliest example given in *The Oxford English Dictionary* of the verb 'to shop', meaning 'To visit a shop or shops for the purpose of making purchases, or examining the contents'. What part has shopping played in the literature of London?

8. I have hardly time to breathe – only just this, the houses and streets are not quite so superb as I expected.

(Fanny Burney, *Evelina*)

Either: (a) Write on expectation and disillusionment in any literature about London.

Or: (b) How have any author or authors depicted first impressions of London as seen through the eyes of a newcomer?

9. In the late eighteenth century the builder James Burton proposed to erect in the area around Mecklenburgh and Brunswick Squares

all classes of building from the first class down to houses of twenty-five pound per annum, without the lower classes interfering with and diminishing the character of those above them.

How have the boundaries between rich and poor areas, and transgressions of those boundaries, featured in literature about London?

10. For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

If there was 'nought lovely' in London, why did Romantic authors write so much about it? You may confine your answer to one author.

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11. 'A playhouse is a school of humanity ... where a thousand hearts beat in unison' (William Hazlitt). How have theatre-going, or cinema-going, or both, featured in the literature of London?
12. A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing.

(Friedrich Engels)

Discuss some ways in which the experience of feeling disoriented or claustrophobic in London has been depicted.

13. The inhabitants appeared to have a propensity to throw any little trifles they were not in want of, into the road: which not only made it rank and sloppy, but untidy too, on account of the cabbage-leaves. The refuse was not wholly vegetable either, for I myself saw a shoe, a doubled-up saucepan, a black bonnet, and an umbrella, in various stages of decomposition, as I was looking out for the number I wanted.

(Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*)

Consider ways in which London's untidiness has inspired the work of Dickens, or any other author.

14. 'All reputations are quickly made on the banks of the Thames and as quickly lost' (Chateaubriand). Discuss the treatment of reputation or gossip in some London literature.
15. Serene and unafraid of solitude,
I worked the short days out, – and watched the sun
On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons . . .
Push out through fog with his dilated disk,
And startle the slant roofs and chimney-pots
With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw
Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog
Involve the passive city, strangle it
Alive, and draw it off into the void,
Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as if a sponge
Had wiped out London, – or as noon and night
Had clapped together and utterly struck out
The intermediate time, undoing themselves
In the act. Your city poets see such things.

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*)

Compare the work of any two city poets.

TURN OVER

16. In 1864 *The Times* reported that the execution of a murderer was attended by the 'incorrigible dregs' of London, 'sharpers, thieves, gamblers, betting men, the outsiders of the boxing ring ... the rakings of cheap singing halls and billiard rooms'. In what ways has the literature of London been enriched by such 'incorrigible dregs'?
17. By the mid-nineteenth century 52,000 funerals per year were taking place in London, and Thomas Willson planned a pyramid taller than St Paul's to accommodate 5,167,104 dead Londoners. How have any author or authors been inspired by the idea of London as a city of the dead?
18. 'The City is of Night, but not of Sleep' (James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*). Consider ways in which the nocturnal city has been depicted.
19. She walked along the Strand and across Trafalgar Square, and by the Haymarket to Piccadilly, and so through dignified squares and palatial alleys to Oxford Street; and her mind was divided between a speculative treatment of employment on the one hand, and breezes – zephyr breezes – of the keenest appreciation for London, on the other.

(H.G. Wells, *Ann Veronica*)

How have any author or authors depicted the opportunities or the dangers of London for women of different classes?

20. The people of London, having developed a technique of living in the face of repeated danger, now accept the preposterous, and what was so recently the incredible, as the normal background of existence.

(H.V. Morton, 1941)

How have any author or authors dealt with the preposterous and the incredible in the literature of London disasters?

21. I had on precisely my full teenage drag that would enrage him – the grey pointed alligator casuals, the pink neon pair of ankle crêpe nylon-stretch, my Cambridge blue glove-fit jeans, a vertical-striped happy shirt revealing my lucky neck-charm on its chain, and the Roman-cut short-arse jacket.

(Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners*)

Write about the role of either adolescence, or clothes, or both, in the literature of London.

22. Hanif Kureishi has made a film called *London Kills Me*. Discuss the murderousness of London.

CONTINUED

23. I go out to the centre of this city, this dying mechanized city, and in the window of a print shop I see a picture of the city of other times: sheep, say, in Soho Square. Just for an instant I long to be transported into that scene, and at the same time I am overwhelmed by the absurdity of the wish and all the loss that it implies.

(V.S. Naipaul)

Discuss some ways in which works about London have depicted either the relationship between the past and the present or that between the city and the country.

24. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy contends that London's black culture derives more from urban black America than from London itself. Do you agree?

25. All my books have quite a lot about buildings. This happens to be a preoccupation of mine. I love inventing buildings and describing them. I'm interested in the atmosphere of buildings.

(Alan Hollinghurst)

Write on the importance of buildings, either invented, or real, or both, in the literature of London.

26. 'He stood schizophrenic, one foot in Bengal and one in Willesden' (Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*). How have any author or authors conveyed the immigrant experience of London?

27. The road has become the business, while the river, emptied of everything except landfill barges and cheerless pleasure craft, is a backdrop to computer-enhanced heritage and development scams. The Thames is a false memory, constantly referred to in terms of its back story: the Globe Theatre (faked), madeover power stations, blacking factories and tanneries reinvented as luxury apartments, self-governing islands with top dollar security. You see the river but it isn't there.

(Iain Sinclair)

Compare and contrast the depiction of the river in works from at least two different periods.

28. I don't think London bears any resemblance to England. It's a right crummy place without London. I think if England didn't have London, it'd be a fucking dump.

(Hanif Kureishi)

Write about London as an idealised destination in some literature you have encountered.

29. How have any author or authors depicted the secret underworlds of London?

TURN OVER

30. London has been compared to a theatre (by Richard Mulcaster), to a monster (by John Ruskin), and to a pub (by Martin Amis), among other things. Consider how some comparisons have been used in representations of the city.
31. Write an essay on one of the following as they feature in the literature of London: railway stations, children, suburbia, fairs, parks, Cockneys, royal ceremonies, clubs.

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