

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For the following qualifications :-

B.A.

The Modern Period II (1930 to the present day)

COURSE CODE : ENGLN14

DATE : 14-MAY-02

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 hours

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TURN OVER

Answer three questions, one from Section A and two from Section B. In Section B 'work' and 'works' include drama and film as well as fiction and other varieties of prose and poetry; 'authors' includes those producing works in all these forms; and 'the period' means 'since 1930'. If an author of the period produced significant works before the period, you may discuss those works, but should base your answer on works produced within the period.

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

SECTION A

1. The poet Marianne Moore wrote to her friend Elizabeth Bishop: 'I do feel that tentativeness and interiorizing are your danger as well as your strength.' Do you agree with Moore's assessment?
2. For me a work of fiction exists only in so far as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm.

(Vladimir Nabokov)

Do Nabokov's fictions afford the reader this kind of aesthetic bliss? You may confine your answer to Lolita, if you wish.

3. Fascinated by frames, by the borders between things, Welles was inclined to give the audience a jolt when the movie moves from one scene to another.

(Barbara Leaming on Citizen Kane)

Consider the importance of frames and borders in Citizen Kane (and any of Welles's other films, if you wish).

4. 'One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness' (Harold Pinter). How useful is this comment as an approach to Pinter's plays?

SECTION B

5. The private life and the emotions are facts like any others, and one cannot understand the public life of action without them.

(W.H. Auden)

Discuss the relation between the private and the public in any work or works of the period.

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6. 'The style must change, according to what the writer is trying to tell' (William Faulkner). How useful is Faulkner's formula for understanding his or any other novelist's work?
7. Literary crime serves as an ambiguous mirror of values, reflecting both our overt commitments to certain principles of morality and order and our hidden resentments and animosity against such principles.

(John Cawelti)

Discuss, with reference to at least two works of the period.

8. The gentleness of English civilization is perhaps its most marked characteristic...It is a land where the bus conductors are good tempered and the policemen carry no revolvers.

(George Orwell)

To what extent does writing about England in the period confirm or contradict Orwell's statement?

9. 'You could write all the ideas of all the movies, mine included, on the head of a pin', said Orson Welles once. 'It is not a form in which ideas are very fecund, you know.' Do you agree?
10. To what extent do generic differences (between fiction, film and drama, for example) prevent generalisations about postwar British comedy?
11. Following the Second World War, the American playwright's task was somehow to equip Mr. Zero with personal identity and significance.

(Irving Wardle)

How did American postwar playwrights manage this task?

12. 'Every writer thinks he is a realist' (Alain Robbe-Grillet). Is realism a useful concept in understanding the literature of the period?
13. Make a case for the success of at least two novels of the period which you would regard as experimental.
14. Allen Ginsberg stated that he was against prose and poetry which was 'all arty and by inherited rule and no surprises no new invention'. Write on his work, or that of any other writer or writers of the period, in the light of this statement.
15. Leslie Fiedler wrote of the discovery by authors of the period 'of what any street-corner loafer knows: "In America violence is idiomatic; in America violence is daily"'. Write about authorial discoveries and explorations of idiomatic and daily American violence.

CONTINUED

16. 'Millat stood schizophrenic, one foot in Bengal and one in Willesden' (Zadie Smith, White Teeth). Consider how Zadie Smith, or any other author of the period, explores the 'schizophrenic' experience of multicultural life.
17. 'To me nothing's interesting unless it's slightly shocking' (Kathy Acker). Write about the aesthetic interest of shock in at least two works of the period.
18. 'Once upon a time "it was and it was not so", as the old stories used to say' (Salman Rushdie). Consider the importance of 'the old stories' for some fiction of the period.
19. Some people take sex like it was a constitutional exercise, some people take it as a conflict. Some people have to mix it up with a lot of talk, explaining and arguing and declaiming, and some people take it like it was all hatred and cruelty.

(Stevie Smith)

Write about some of the ways in which authors of the period reflect attitudes to sex.

20. In a recent interview Seamus Heaney remarked that: 'The sureness of a literary voice may derive from a set of convictions and attitudes which include some that are dismaying.' With reference to the work of one or more poets, discuss Heaney's remark.
21. 'For his poetry is anything but literary' (John Ashbery on Frank O'Hara). Assess the work of any poet or poets about whom this claim might justifiably be made.
22. Thomas Pynchon distinguishes paranoia, where everything connects, from what he calls anti-paranoia, 'where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long'. How useful is this distinction in describing some works of the period?
23. Malcolm Bradbury noted that novelists of the period have found 'voices for expressing...the narcissism of twentieth-century selfhood with its greedy lusts and overstimulated desires - the world of posthistorical tackiness'. Write about some of the ways in which a novelist or novelists gave voice to such aspects of the period.
24. Simone de Beauvoir said that the adolescent girl 'is too much divided against herself to join battle against the world'. With reference to at least two works of the period, write an essay on adolescent battles, male or female.

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25. There's nobody to say what you should do or how to do it...
You haven't any history and there are no expectations of you
except the ones you yourself create.

(Angela Carter, Nights at the Circus)

In the light of this quotation, discuss some women's writing of
the period.

26. Defining 'postmodernism', Chris Baldick notes that 'the term is
notoriously ambiguous, implying either that modernism has been
superseded or that it has continued into a new phase'. Does this
ambiguity characterise some of the works you would call 'postmodern'?
27. With reference to more than one work of the period, make a case
for the vitality of one or more of the following: parody, pastiche,
satire, biography, e-poetry, the short story, the song lyric, the
essay.
28. With reference to one or more author or authors of the period, write
on the treatment of one or more of the following topics: food, class,
crowds, interiors, aggression, the suburbs, nostalgia.
29. 'Oh Mama, can this really be the end?' (Bob Dylan). Discuss tendencies
towards apocalypse in some works of the period.

END OF PAPER