

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

The Victorian Period

COURSE CODE : **ENGLN10**

DATE : **17–MAY–04**

TIME : **14.30**

TIME ALLOWED : **3 Hours**

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD

Answer three questions, one from Section A and two from Section B. You may write in Section B on set works not used in answering Section A. Questions in Section B must be answered with reference to at least two works.

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

SECTION A

1. 'Tennyson always shows a certain tendency to over-express any morbid thought or feeling he wishes to resist' (R.H. Hutton). Discuss.

2. F.R. Leavis, in *The Great Tradition* (1948), asserts that Thackeray

has (apart from some social history) nothing to offer the reader whose demand goes beyond the 'creation of characters' and so on ... For the reader it is merely a matter of going on and on; nothing has been done by the close to justify the space taken – except, of course, that time has been killed ... It will be fair enough to Thackeray if *Vanity Fair* is kept current as, in a minor way, a classic.

Is this 'fair enough'?

3. Her basic humanity, her lively Tolstoyan sense of individuals enmeshed in their society, transmute her philosophic view of life into a richly rewarding art.

(W.J. Harvey)

How do you see the relation between George Eliot's 'view of life' and her 'art' in *Middlemarch*?

4. 'It is a remarkable achievement to have kept the reader's sympathy throughout a snob's progress' (Humphry House). Comment on this evaluation of *Great Expectations*.
5. In the present novel, as in one or two others of this series which involve the question of matrimonial divergence, the immortal puzzle - given the man and woman, how to find a basis for their sexual relation - is left where it stood.

(Hardy, 'Preface' (1912) to the Wessex Edition of *The Woodlanders*)

Where does *The Mayor of Casterbridge* leave 'the immortal puzzle'?

6. 'None of the odd ones have been so great and none of the great ones so odd' (Henry James on Browning). Discuss.

SECTION B

7. In a world beset by intrusive detection and storytelling, identity perhaps inheres most essentially in what is secreted in the darkest, most disgraceful corner of the self.

(Peter Thoms on *Bleak House*)

Discuss the relation between detection and disgrace in the literature of the period.

8. The Victorian thinker Henry Sidgwick wrote that Tennyson's poetry moved him by evoking 'the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary for life'. Discuss the necessity of faith, or the impossibility of faith, or both, in the period.
9. On rereading *Wuthering Heights*, William Empson 'found it much more rawly and brutally about the degradation produced by the class system than I had remembered'. Write on the representation of 'the class system', or other hierarchies, in at least two novels by any of the Brontës.
10. J.S. Mill records in his biography that he reached 'a crisis in my mental history' when, as a politically reformist young man, he asked himself:

'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irresistible self-consciousness distinctly answered 'No!' At this my heart sank within me.

Write on the tension between social purposes and individual psychology in the writing of the period.

11. Lying asleep between the strokes of night
I saw my love lean over my sad bed,
Pale as the duskiest lily's leaf or head,
Smooth-skinned and dark, with bare throat made to bite.

(A.C. Swinburne, 'Love and Sleep')

Write an essay on some of the turns given to the subject of sex in the writing of the period.

12. Clear in these things I cannot see.
My head is burning, and a heat
Is in my skin which angers me.

(Matthew Arnold, 'The Sick King in Bokhara')

Discuss two or more Victorian representations of mental confusion or mental division.

13. Make a case for the artistic achievement of either sensation novels, or nonsense poetry, or children's books written in the period.
14. How does Hopkins explore the nature of beauty, or of suffering, or of both?
15. The factories gave forth lurid fires
 From pent-up hells within their breast;
 E'en Etna's burning wrath expires,
 But *man's* volcanoes never rest.

(Ernest Jones, 'The Factory Town', 1855)

Write on the relation between man and nature in Victorian literature.

16. Dickens remarks that 'the attraction of repulsion' is 'as much a law of our moral nature, as gravitation is in the structure of the visible world'. Apply the phrase to any two novels written in the period.
17. '*Art thou real, my ideal?*' (James Joyce, *Ulysses*). How is this question posed in the work of any Victorian writer?
18. 'The essence of humour is sensibility, warm, tender fellow feeling with all forms of existence' (Carlyle). How well does this describe the humour you have found in writing of the period?
19. Matthew Arnold's preface to his poem *Merope* speaks of

a state of feeling which it is the highest aim of tragedy to produce, a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate, and in the dispensations of human life.

What kinds of tragic feeling have you found in the Victorian literature you have read?

20. The life of a child is so brief, its impressions are so illusory and fugitive, that it is as difficult to record its history as it would be to design a morning cloud sailing before the wind.

(Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*, 1907)

Compare two Victorian representations of childhood.

21. How convincingly do the 'Condition of England novels' depict the condition of England?
22. 'To the modern spirit nothing is, or can be, rightly known except relatively under conditions' (Walter Pater, 1866). What have you found that strikes you as 'modern' in the writing of the period?
23. '*What I do is me*' (Hopkins). How do any Victorian writers link work and identity?

24. 'Rome disappoints me much' (Clough, *Amours de Voyage*). Is disappointment always a part of Victorian writings about Italy?
25. The true happiness and dignity of woman are to be sought, not in her exaltation to the level of man, but in a full appreciation of her inferiority and in the voluntary honour which every manly nature instinctively pays to the weaker vessel.

(Coventry Patmore)

Make Patmore's contention the starting-point for an essay on ideas about 'the true happiness and dignity of woman' in the period.

26. One fact is certain: in fiction there can be no intrinsically new thing at this stage of the world's history.

(Thomas Hardy, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', 1888)

What kinds of novelty have you found in the Victorian novel?

27. Beyond the tie of sex, there is hardly any link between them [Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti]. The one was eager for objective successes, full of rhetorical ardour, wide dramatic sympathy, and irrepressible vivacity of intellect; the other is subdued, restrained, withdrawn, rippling over with faultless music in a low key, introspective, melancholy, pensive.

(Edmund Gosse, 1875)

How persuasive do you find Gosse's comparison between the two poets, or his assessment of either?

28. Make a case for the interest of one of the following in the period: serialisation, parody, the dramatic monologue, the Victorian sage, the Victorian stage.
29. Consider the treatment of one of the following in at least two works of the period: empire, Ireland, church, parliament, provincial life, manners, fallen women, upright women.

END OF PAPER