

RETURN THE QUESTION SHEETS TO THE PROCTOR ALONG WITH YOUR
EXAM BOOKLET

Spring 2014

M.A. EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH (PART 1)

You will be given 30 minutes to read the exam carefully, choose your questions, and begin planning your three essays. After this time you will be asked to devote three hours to write three essays. Write on one, and only one, question from each section. Follow the instructions carefully, but feel free to introduce additional knowledge and examples relevant to the question. Remember that the best academic essays advance a specific argument supported with specific details.

SECTION A

1. Fantasy writer and Medievalist, J.R.R. Tolkien, was quite severe in his judgment of *MacBeth* and asserted,
Drama has, of its very nature, already attempted a kind of bogus, or shall I say at least substitute, magic: the visible and audible presentation of imaginary men in a story. That is in itself an attempt to counterfeit the magician's wand. To introduce, even with mechanical success, into this quasi-magical secondary world a further fantasy or magic is to demand, as it were, an inner or tertiary world. It is a world too much.
Use three works from the pre-1800 period—one of which must be a Classical play and one must be a Renaissance play—to analyze the efficacy of the representation of the magical or supernatural in drama. In your judgment, how do the conventions of the stage support or undercut the representations of fantastic elements?
2. In epic and other forms of narrative poetry women often play the role of temptresses who use their guile to threaten the hero's completion of his journey. At the same time, the feminine often personifies the object of a hero's quest. Discuss these two problematic aspects of representations of women in at least three epic or narrative poems from the Classical, Medieval, and/or Early Modern periods.
3. Scholars such as Bradin Cormack and Andrew Zurcher have written on how 16th-century literature reflects contemporary concerns with issues of legal language, sovereignty, and of course, justice. Compare one early modern text, one medieval, and one classical text to construct a thesis on how issues of the law and justice are represented. Please analyze texts that specifically represent legal mechanisms such as trials and royal decrees (avoiding the more vague questions of right and wrong that would cover just about any kind of literature). How do these representations depict man-made law? Is it represented ultimately as a flawed or a just system?

SECTION B

1. To what extent do authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries manage to satisfy Horace's dictum that the function of art is to delight and instruct? Consider the degree to which at least three writers from this period strive to fulfill Horace's dual purpose, weighing carefully the tension (real or potential) between the need to please and the need to teach. For example, do any of the authors you have chosen blur the line between titillation and moral instruction?
2. In his 20th-century introduction to Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747), Angus Ross asserts that the character Lovelace seems to see his abduction of the title character as part of a Restoration comedy while Clarissa styles herself as a heroine in a tragedy, "even appearing in the heroine's white costume of the tragic stage." Explore characters from three works of pre-1800 literature that seem to have crossed over from other genres, time periods, or cultural traditions (i.e. Classical figures showing up in Christian narrative or vice versa). To what extent does their presence evoke a metatextual discourse about genre? That is, does this anomaly cause one to question or support the validity of genre boundaries? You do not have to discuss *Clarissa* but you do need to analyze at least one novel.
3. After 1492, the European presence in far off colonies or new realms of exploration became a popular source for literary inspiration. Compare and contrast three texts of your own choosing (plays, poems, or prose) from the 1492-1800 period that specifically thematize the impact of the "new" world. You should consider the nature of the "new" land and the potential it represents both as a literary device for the authors and as a site of escape or exile for the protagonists of the texts.

SECTION C

Write an essay analyzing the ways in which the following poem uses poetic and rhetorical devices—including word choice, figures of speech, imagery, rhythm, and other formal elements to shape its meaning.

“Love”

By George Herbert

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”:
 Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
 “My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
 So I did sit and eat.