

2020 British Literature Exam

Short Answer/Analysis

30%

Answer **two** of the following questions. Answers should be 1-2 paragraphs (about half a page per question). Remember to use MLA in text references for any secondary material you use, as well as for the primary texts themselves. Please also include a Works Cited at the end of this section.

1. Explain what Romanticism means, and back up your claims with examples from texts on the syllabus.
2. Who is the most interesting character in *Othello*, and why? Make sure you include a quotation by or about them.
3. What was your favourite sonnet on the syllabus? Comment on aspects of its style, form and content. (Style means 'literary techniques', form means 'what kind of poem is it?', and content 'means what is it about?')

Key

Possible grades: A, B, C, D, E, F

Two questions should be answered.

Answers should be fluently and academically written and correctly use MLA referencing. See syllabus below for choice of texts (sonnets listed in week 36). Obviously poems discussed in question 3 need to be sonnets. Answers are graded according to clarity, fluency, accuracy, and correct referencing. Academic sources such as the Norton Anthology are preferred, but all sources are allowed. (If the student cites poor source material it can contribute to a lower grade.)

- 1: Students should show an understanding of the approximate time period of British Romanticism and significant aspects of the movement, such as nature, imagination, and the sublime, and connect these appropriately with a text from the syllabus. (See reading plan below for acceptable Romantic poems. *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard may also be an option.)
2. Students should ideally show they understand the character they choose and their role in the play. They should provide and discuss an appropriate quotation, referenced correctly. More fluent and complex answers get higher grades.
3. Obviously the poem chosen needs to be a sonnet on the syllabus, see week 36, below. The student should show an understanding of the form of the sonnet – 14 lines of iambic pentameter, Shakespearean (with a couplet at the end) or Petrarchan (octave and sestet). The best answers will discuss the content of the poem in an interesting way and connect the content with a consideration of the form.

Essay (70%)

Make sure your essay has an introduction (including a thesis statement), a body and a conclusion, uses MLA in text references, and has a Works Cited. There is no set length for the essay, but make sure it is a complete essay that makes an argument. Around five paragraphs is ok, but it can be longer. Quality is more important than quantity. All sources that you quote or use ideas from MUST

be cited. Quality sources such as the *Norton Anthology* are best. Articles from newspapers and library websites are better than Wikipedia or websites aimed at literature students. The most important thing is that you cite everything you use, to avoid plagiarism.

Answer **one** of the following questions:

1. Why are parties or social gatherings often significant in Modernist literature? Discuss in reference to **one or more** of the following texts: *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, "The Garden Party" by Katherine Mansfield, and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot.
2. "My father still reads the dictionary every day.
He says your life depends on your power to master words."
How does Tony Harrison's poem "V" interrogate the power – and the powerlessness – of words? Quote specific passages from the poem (available on Canvas) to back up your arguments. (In the Works Cited just write the author's name, the poem's title, Canvas Room British Literature, 2020.)
3. In "A Modest Proposal", Jonathan Swift writes through a "persona". Why does he do this? What do we know about the "character" or "persona" proposing these solutions? Can we trust him? What effect does the persona have on the other techniques used in the essay? Use quotations from the essay to back up your arguments. Remember to include a thesis statement that clearly states your main argument (and isn't a question).

Key

Possible grades: A, B, C, D, E, F

As specified above: The essay needs to have a title, an introduction including a thesis statement, and a conclusion. It needs to make a convincing argument, and quote directly from the primary texts. Correct MLA style should be used. Any secondary sources used should also be referenced. As with the short answer question, academic sources such as the Norton Anthology are preferred, but all sources are allowed.

The essay should be at least five paragraphs long. Language, structure, and depth of analysis are all important. Good essays will use relevant quotations in intelligent ways, which display a broader understanding of the texts as a whole, and contribute to a coherent argument.

1. The essay must display an understanding of modernism as well as the primary text chosen. The best essays will probably compare more one primary text, but one primary text is ok as well.
2. Could discuss: class differences, the role of poetry, the role of graffiti, differences in how the skinhead and Harrison use language, swear words in poetry. There are lots of great passages from the poem that address the theme of language – the best essays will discuss a few of them.
3. The essay needs to be structured around the concept of the 'persona'. The best essays will discuss how the persona RELATES to the other techniques used in the essay, rather than just listing them all. Watch out for plagiarism on this one – the internet is full of student essays about 'A Modest Proposal'.

British Literature Syllabus/Reading Plan

Week 34, Introductions

William Wordsworth, "I wondered lonely as a cloud", p. 177, Dorothy Wordsworth, from "The Grassmere Journals", pp. 240-43

Ted Hughes, "Daffodils" (provided)

Week 35, Medieval Literature

Bede and Caedmon's Hymn, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, pp. 29-31

"Lanval", Marie de France, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, pp. 121-134

John McCormick, Contemporary Britain, Chapter 1, Historical Context, especially pp. 7-13.

Take a look at the following, don't worry about reading them in too much detail but take note of what the language looks like:

Beowulf, translated by Seamus Heaney, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, first few pages

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, pp. 135-147 (lines 1-490)

Geoffrey Chaucer, "The General Prologue" (lines 1-18), *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, p. 194

Week 36, Renaissance Literature and Sonnets

William Shakespeare, Sonnets 18 (pp. 556) and 130 (p. 565) (As well as the introduction to William Shakespeare and sonnets, pp. 550-553)

John Donne, Holy Sonnet 10 (Death be not proud), Vol 1, p. 710

Christina Rossetti, 'In an Artist's Studio', Vol 2, p. 860

Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'As Kingfishers catch fire', Vol 2, p. 879

Wilfred Owen, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', Vol 2, p. 1118

Background: Introduction to the Sixteenth Century (Vol 1, pp. 359-390)

Week 37, Othello

William Shakespeare, Othello, *The Norton Anthology* Vol 1, pp. 567-654

Plus Introduction to the Sixteenth Century (Vol 1, pp. 359-390)

Week 38, Romantic Poetry (all in Vol 2)

William Wordsworth, "Composed on Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802", p. 188

George Gordon, Lord Byron, "She Walks in Beauty", p. 318, "Darkness" pp. 320-21.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Kubla Kahn', p. 274 and 'Frost at Midnight', p. 292

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias', p. 395

Introduction to the Romantic Period, pp. 3-28

Week 39, Arcadia

Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* – note – you need to buy this separately from the bookshop unless you have an old version of the Norton Anthology!

Week 41, York Online Study Week

Week 42, Irish Week

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal", *The Norton Anthology* Vol. 1, pp. 1199-1205.

Seamus Heaney, "Punishment", *The Norton Anthology* Vol. 2, pp. 1469-74.

Week 43, The Victorian Era: *Great Expectations*

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

Week 44, Modernist Literature

Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", pp. 1172-1177

Katherine Mansfield, "The Garden Party", pp. 1356-1366

T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", p. 1322

Week 45, Modernist Literature Continued

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", pp. 1172-1177

Week 46, Class in Britain and "V"

Tony Harrison, 'V' (provided)