

University of Durham

EXAMINATION PAPER

date

May/June 2011

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description

LITERATURE OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD – LEVEL 3

Time allowed: 3 hours

Instructions: THIS IS A CLOSED BOOK EXAMINATION. YOU ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BRING ANY TEXTS INTO THIS EXAMINATION.

Answer THREE questions, ONE from Section A, ONE from Section B, and ONE from EITHER Section. Reference must be made to AT LEAST FOUR authors overall. DO NOT use substantially the same material in different answers, or in any other Final Honours papers or equivalents.

SECTION A

(Questions 1-11 are open questions to be answered with reference to any appropriate writers.)

1. 'When we use [Romanticism] to refer to a literary movement or school...does it have, or can we give it, a satisfactory definition?' (Michael Ferber). Discuss with reference to AT LEAST TWO writers of the period.
2. 'Romantic literature affirms imaginative possibilities, even as it confronts suffering and misery.' Discuss with reference to AT LEAST TWO writers of the period.
3. 'Central to what's original about Romantic poetry is its capacity to breathe new life into traditional genres (such as elegy, epic, lyric, song, the sonnet, the ballad, the narrative poem).' Consider this statement in relation to AT LEAST TWO poets of the Romantic period. You may focus on a single genre, if you wish, or you may range more widely.
4. 'Without stay or prop / But my own weak mortality, I bore / The load of this eternal quietude' (Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion*). Taking these lines as a starting-point, examine the role of the writer AND/OR isolation AND/OR past cultures AND/OR mortality in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
5. Examine the treatment of politics AND/OR revolutionary thought AND/OR history in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
6. With reference to the work of AT LEAST TWO writers, consider the view that much Romantic literature questions what Wordsworth refers to as 'our own pre-established codes of decision' (Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798).
7. 'And they conversed together...' (Blake, *Jerusalem*). In what ways does the work of ONE writer of the Romantic period engage with the work of ONE OR MORE writers of the same period.
8. 'My dearest sister, now *be* serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know every thing that I am to know, without delay. Will you tell me how long you have loved him?'
'It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley' (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*).
Taking this quotation as a general starting-point, consider the significance of seriousness AND/OR disclosure AND/OR property AND/OR marriage in the prose of any AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
9. 'To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower' (Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence'). In the light of this quotation, explore the relationship between the ordinary and the visionary in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.

CONTINUED

10. Examine ways in which the family AND/OR the community are represented in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
11. '...a far hour shall wreak, / The deep prophetic fullness of this verse' (Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV). Reflect on the ways in which ONE OR MORE writers from 1830 to the present day has responded to the work of ONE OR MORE writers of the Romantic period.

SECTION B

(Questions 12-23 are on individual writers.)

12. EITHER

- (a) Is it more appropriate to think of Blake as a poet who asks compelling and often troubling questions than as one who provides answers? You may write on Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* AND/OR his other works; you may refer to Blake's illustrations if you wish.

OR

- (b) 'Opposition is true Friendship' (Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). Discuss. You may write on Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* AND/OR his other works; you may refer to Blake's illustrations if you wish.

13. EITHER

- (a) Examine 'the division between thought and emotion' (Barbara Hardy) in the fiction AND/OR non-fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft.

OR

- (b) 'The emphasis on work, on earned distinctions rather than those of inherited wealth and rank, and the stress on duty and morality, links Wollstonecraft with the long middle-class cultural revolution against aristocratic values' (Chris Jones). Examine the fiction AND/OR non-fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft in the light of this claim.

CONTINUED

14. EITHER

- (a) 'And I'm afraid that you expect / Some tale will be related' (Wordsworth, 'Simon Lee'). Using this quotation as a starting-point, examine the nature and effect of narrative in Wordsworth's poetry.

OR

- (b) '[Poetry's] object is truth ... not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion' (Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)). Discuss the content and style of Wordsworth's poetry in the light of this comment. You may concentrate on *The Prelude*, OR you may range more widely.

15. EITHER

- (a) 'Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure' (Coleridge, 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'). To what extent, and in what ways, does Coleridge's poetry uphold AND/OR undermine this sentiment?

OR

- (b) 'And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms / Come trembling back, unite...' (Coleridge, Preface to 'Kubla Khan'). In the light of this quotation, examine the relationship between the fragmentary and the unitary in Coleridge's poetry.

16. EITHER

- (a) 'Generally speaking, the female character is developed through the medium of affection ... it is the heart that awakens the mind in woman' (Letitia Landon). Does your reading of the work of ONE OR MORE women poets of the Romantic period lead you to support this view?

OR

- (b) 'And is there glory from the heavens departed?' (Felicia Hemans, 'The Lost Pleiad'). Examine the relationship between nature and loss in the work of ONE OR MORE women poets of the Romantic period.

CONTINUED

17. EITHER

- (a) 'Boundaries between good and evil, health and perversity, crime and punishment, truth and deception, inside and outside dissolve' (Judith Halberstam). To what extent is this statement true of Gothic fiction in the Romantic period?

OR

- (b) 'Tabooed objects are those to which we summon up not a simple emotional reaction but a dialectical one in which the mind oscillates between attraction and repulsion, worship and condemnation' (David Punter). Consider this statement in relation to the Gothic fiction of the Romantic period.

18. EITHER

- (a) '[Maria Edgeworth] was the first novelist to find an effective means of representing in fiction the subjugation of the individual to social forces' (Seamus Deane). Consider this statement in relation to Edgeworth's fiction.

OR

- (b) Explore the representation of domesticity in Maria Edgeworth's fiction.

19. EITHER

- (a) 'There are no ideal couples, no instant understandings, no shapely resolutions' (Susan Morgan). To what extent do you agree with this assessment of Austen's fiction?

OR

- (b) 'If there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure' (Marianne in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*). Taking this quotation as a starting-point, consider Austen's treatment of 'acting wrong' AND/OR her use of irony.

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20. EITHER

- (a) Discuss the view that 'the reader of Byron's [poetry] is asked to accept the illusion of an unmediated expression of feeling and thought' (Jerome McGann). You may write on any area of his work.

OR

- (b) 'Byron is too dazzlingly mercurial ever to be pinned down to a single position.' Discuss. You may restrict your answer to *Don Juan*, if you wish, or you may range more widely.

21. EITHER

- (a) 'A questioning and yet affirmative poet.' Use this description as a point of departure for a discussion of the themes and techniques in Shelley's poetry.

OR

- (b) 'I am the eye with which the Universe / Beholds itself' (Shelley, 'Song of Apollo'). Taking these lines as a point of departure, discuss the treatment of subjectivity AND/OR self-consciousness in Shelley's poetry.

22. EITHER

- (a) How central to Keats's poetry is the struggle to reconcile imaginative vision with tragic reality?

OR

- (b) 'For Keats, the genre of romance is fraught with enchantment, danger, tension, and complexity.' Discuss.

23. EITHER

- (a) 'No one has said to me, *Believe this, do that, say what we would have you*; no one has come between me and my free-will; I have breathed the very air of truth and independence' (Hazlitt). Taking this quotation as a general starting-point, examine Hazlitt's conception of the role of the critic.

OR

- (b) Hazlitt entitled one of his collections of essays *The Plain Speaker*. How would you characterise the style of his writing?

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page number

7

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8

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