

English Literature Admissions Test

4501/11

Wednesday 4 November 2015

1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions to Candidates

Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.

A separate 8-page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

Write your name, date of birth and Centre number in the spaces provided on the answer booklet. Please write very clearly, preferably in black ink.

You should allow at least 30 minutes for reading this question paper, making notes and preparing your answer.

At the end of the examination, you must hand in both your answer booklet and this question paper. Any rough notes or plans that you make should be written only in your answer booklet.

No texts, dictionaries or sources of reference may be brought into the examination.



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This paper consists of 8 printed pages and 4 blank pages.



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Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes.

You should spend at least 30 minutes reading and annotating the passages and in preparing your answer.

The following poems and extracts from longer prose and prose texts are all linked by the theme of memory. They are arranged chronologically by date of publication. Read all the material carefully, and then complete the task below.

- (a) 'Memory, a Poem' (1733), a poem by Laetitia Pilkington *page 4*
- (b) 'The Poplar-Field' (1784), a poem by William Cowper *page 5*
- (c) From *Roundabout Papers* (1860-61), magazine articles *page 6*
by William Makepeace Thackeray
- (d) From *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), a play by *page 7*
Edward Albee
- (e) 'Poetry Failure' (2002), a poem by Mark Halliday *page 8*
- (f) From *Ancient Light* (2012), a novel by John Banville *page 9*

Task:

Select two or three of the passages (a) to (f) and compare and contrast them in any ways that seem interesting to you, paying particular attention to distinctive features of structure, language and style. In your introduction, indicate *briefly* what you intend to explore or illustrate through close reading of your chosen passages.

This task is designed to assess your responsiveness to unfamiliar literary material and your skills in close reading. Marks are not awarded for references to other texts or authors you have studied.

(a) 'Memory, a Poem' (1733), a poem by Laetitia Pilkington

IN what recesses of the brain
 Does this amazing power remain,
 By which all knowledge we attain?

5 What art thou, Memory? What tongue can tell,
 What curious artist trace thy hidden cell,
 Wherein ten thousand different objects dwell?

Surprising storehouse! in whose narrow womb
 All things, the past, the present, and to come,
 Find ample space, and large and mighty room.

10 O falsely deemed the foe of sacred wit!
 Thou, who the nurse and guardian art of it,
 Laying it up till season due and fit.

Then proud the wond'rous treasure to produce,
 As understanding points it, to conduce
 15 Either to entertainment, or to use.

Nor love nor holy friendship, without thee,
 Could ever of the least duration be;
 Nor gratitude, nor truth, nor piety.

Where thou art not, the cheerless human mind
 20 Is one vast void, all darksome, sad and blind;
 No trace of anything remains behind.

The sacred stores of learning all are thine;
 'Tis only thou record'st the faithful line;
 'Tis thou mak'st human-kind almost divine.

25 And when at length we quit this mortal scene,
 Thou still shalt with our tender friends remain,
 And time and death shall strike at thee in vain.

Lord, let me so this wond'rous gift employ,
 It may a fountain be of endless joy,
 30 Which time, or accident, may ne'er destroy.

Still let my faithful Memory impart,
 And deep engrave it on my grateful heart,
 How just, and good, and excellent Thou art.

(b) 'The Poplar-Field' (1784), a poem by William Cowper.

THE Poplars are fell'd, farewell to the shade
 And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade,
 The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
 Nor Ouse¹ on his bosom their image receives.

- 5 Twelve years have elapsed since I last took a view
 Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew,
 And now in the grass behold they are laid,
 And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade!

- The black-bird has fled to another retreat
 10 Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
 And the scene where his melody charm'd me before,
 Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

- My fugitive years are all hasting away,
 And I must e'er long lie as lowly as they,
 15 With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head
 E'er another such grove shall arise in its stead.

- 'Tis a sight to engage me if anything can
 To muse on the perishing pleasures of Man;
 Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
 20 Have a Being less durable even than he.

¹ A river; there are several rivers in England named the Ouse.

(c) From *Roundabout Papers* (1860-61), magazine articles by William Makepeace Thackeray.

When I come to look at a place which I have visited any time these twenty or thirty years, I recall not the place merely, but the sensations I had at first seeing it, and which are quite different to my feelings to-day. That first day at Calais; the voices of the women crying out at night, as the vessel came alongside the pier; the supper at Quillacq's and the flavour of the cutlets and wine; the red-calico canopy under which I slept; the tiled floor, and the fresh smell of the sheets; the wonderful postilion in his jack-boots and pigtail;—all return with perfect clearness to my mind, and I am seeing them, and not the objects which are actually under my eyes. Here is Calais. Yonder is that commissioner I have known this score of years. Here are the women screaming and hustling over the baggage; the people at the passport-barrier who take your papers. My good people, I hardly see you. You no more interest me than a dozen orange-women in Covent-Garden, or a shop book-keeper in Oxford Street. But you make me think of a time when you were indeed wonderful to behold—when the little French soldiers wore white cockades in their shakos—when the diligence was forty hours going to Paris; and the great-booted postilion, as surveyed by youthful eyes from the coupé, with his *jurons*, his ends of rope for the harness, and his clubbed pigtail, was a wonderful being, and productive of endless amusement. You young folks don't remember the apple-girls who used to follow the diligence up the hill beyond Boulogne, and the delights of the jolly road? In making continental journeys with young folks, an oldster may be very quiet, and, to outward appearance, melancholy; but really he has gone back to the days of his youth, and he is seventeen or eighteen years of age (as the case may be), and is amusing himself with all his might. He is noting the horses as they come squealing out of the post-house yard at midnight; he is enjoying the delicious meals at Beauvais and Amiens, and quaffing *ad libitum*¹ the rich table-d'hôte wine²; he is hail-fellow with the conductor, and alive to all the incidents of the road. A man can be alive in 1860 and 1830 at the same time, don't you see? Bodily, I may be in 1860, inert, silent, torpid; but in the spirit I am walking about in 1828, let us say;—in a blue dress-coat and brass buttons, a sweet figured silk waistcoat (which I button round a slim waist with perfect ease), looking at beautiful beings with gigot sleeves and tea-tray hats under the golden chestnuts of the Tuileries, or round the Place Vendome, where the *drapeau blanc*³ is floating from the statueless column. Shall we go and dine at "Bombarda's," near the "Hotel Breteuil," or at the "Cafe Virginie?"—Away! "Bombarda's" and the "Hotel Breteuil" have been pulled down ever so long. They knocked down the poor old Virginia Coffee-house last year. My spirit goes and dines there. My body, perhaps, is seated with ever so many people in a railway-carriage, and no wonder my companions find me dull and silent.

1. *ad libitum* – *freely*

2. *table-d'hôte* – *table wine, house wine*

3. *drapeau blanc* – *white flag*

(d) From *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), a play by Edward Albee

Starting "GEORGE: Uh..bourbon *is* right
NICK: uh...yes, bourbon"

Ending "GEORGE: Oh yes, And I'm told that for these thirty years he has....not...
uttered...one... sound.
[*A rather long silence: five seconds, please.*]"

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(e) **'Poetry Failure' (2002), a poem by Mark Halliday**

Starting "For example, I wrote my first poem in 1976 about being in the Vermont house after my mother's death; she died the year before;"

Ending "And my father and Kimbo and me just going 'Yeah' or 'In a minute' because this was all just life."

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(f) From *Ancient Light* (2012), a novel by John Banville

Starting “Billy Gray was my best friend and I fell in love with his mother.”

Ending “The items of flotsam that I choose to salvage from the general wreckage—and what is a life but a gradual shipwreck?—may take on an aspect of inevitability when I put them on display in their glass showcases, but they are random; representative, perhaps, perhaps compellingly so, but random nonetheless.”

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