

**Ph.D. Field Examination  
in  
Canadian Literature**

**May 1995**

**Instructions:**

Answer one question from each section. Questions are of equal value. In each question you should focus on three writers, although you may choose to include references to other writers to supplement your discussion. Do not write extensively on the same work more than once.

**Section 1** is composed of questions that address the "early," pre-1920 portion of the reading list.

**Section 2** is composed of questions that address the "modern," post-1920 portion of the list.

**Section 3** is composed of questions of a broader thematic, historical, or theoretical interest.

**Time:** 4 hours

## Section 1

1. The political, cultural, and economic relations between Great Britain as the "mother country" and Canada as her colony are staged--either explicitly or implicitly--in much writing of the pre-1920 period. Analyze the ways these relations are represented in at least three works from this period.
2. Northrop Frye once wrote that "The literary in Canada is often only an incidental quality of writings which, like those of many of the early explorers, are as innocent of literary intention as a mating loon. Even when it is literature in its orthodox genres of poetry and fiction, it is more significantly studied as part of Canadian life than as part of an autonomous world of literature." Explore the relevance (or irrelevance) of Frye's comments to a selection of at least three writers from the "early" period.
3. Discuss the construction of the autobiographical subject or voice in at least three early Canadian narratives.

## Section 2

1. In *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon argues that "today's metafiction--those novels that, by definition, are self-referential or auto-representational--suggest that the mimetic connection between art and life (by which we still seem to want to define the novel genre) has changed." Evaluate this statement, considering it in relation to at least three Canadian novels of the "modern" period.
2. Even when it is not technically "concrete poetry," "modern" Canadian writing often emphasizes the "concrete" or material qualities of language, experimenting with typography, the use of space, and other visual elements. Comment on the significance of this emphasis in the work of at least three poets. (You may discuss concrete poets, if you wish.)
3. How do elements of performance and production contribute to the meaning of plays? Consider the role of stage space, props, costume, make-up, and other theatrical devices in at least three plays from the reading list.

### Section 3

1. A contemporary Canadian writer has said: "Tragedy is my topic. Comedy is my strategy." Discuss the work of three writers who treat serious subjects using techniques of comedy. What do they accomplish with comedy that they perhaps couldn't without it? Is there anything particularly Canadian about their approach?
2. Drawing on the work of at least three critics, theorists or literary historians, consider the role of nationalism or issues of nationhood in Canadian literary criticism.
3. Discuss the representation of Native characters or aspects of Native culture in the work of at least three writers on the reading list. In your answer, include some consideration of the ideological implications of these portrayals.