

Ph.D. Field Examination

Nineteenth-Century British Literature

*** SPECIALIZATION: 1790 - 1845 ***

May 2005

INSTRUCTIONS

This examination has three sections defined by time period:

Part A: 1790-1845

Part B: 1845-1900

Part C: 1790-1900

During the four hours of this examination, please answer ONE question from each of the three sections.

The question in your area of specialization is worth 40% of your total mark. The other two questions are each worth 30% of your total mark.

If you focus on a particular author in one question, you cannot focus on that author in any other question unless instructed otherwise. Your answers should have a clear thesis and demonstrate both familiarity with the texts themselves and knowledge of debates and issues in the field.

Section A: 1790-1845 (worth 40% of your total mark)

1. Robert Langbaum claims that one of the dominant modes of lyric poetry in the Romantic period is the “epiphanic,” that is, a sudden revelation, or a startling shift in perception, experience, or thought. Discuss the epiphanic in relation to the lyric poetry of **four** authors from the period. In addition to lyric poetry, you may (if you wish) choose **one** narrative or dramatic poem for purposes of comparison and contrast.

2. Cheap popular-print forms such as the ballad, the self-published book and pamphlet, the chapbook, and the newspaper article were key vectors for the dissemination of information and literature to increasing numbers of working-class and servant readers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Discuss the role of textual and visual elements or themes from one or more popular-print forms in the poetry of **four** authors from this period.

3. How does the movement of people, goods, and information within the Atlantic triangle of England, Africa, and the English colonies in Ireland and the Americas, shape or fail to shape the literature of this period? Discuss with reference to at least **four** writers.

Section B: 1845-1900 (worth 30% of your total mark)

1. A deep sense of outrage and indignation, often accompanied by the will to resist or protest, could be said to fuel the works of many of the writers of this period. Trace the sources of these convictions or attitudes--whether personal, political, social, economic, etc.--and examine their expression in the works of at least three authors. Consider at least one work of prose and one of poetry in your answer.

2. In her book on realism in the novel, Pam Morris claims that what makes the genre so robust is its unique combination of 1) a faithful representation of the inwardness of experience (inherited from the Romantic tradition) and 2) a faithful representation of outward reality (taken from the empiricist tradition of the Enlightenment). Discuss in relation to three novels. You must include at least one of the following in your answer: Bleak House, Vanity Fair, Middlemarch.

3. In what ways, if any, is Victorian literature a literature of queer sexualities? Discuss with reference to three writers from this period.

Section C: 1790-1900 (worth 30% of your total mark)

Note: In your answer to this section, you must focus on at least one author from the Section A Reading List (1790-1845) and at least one author from the Section B Reading List (1845-1900)

1. Trace the representation of British imperialism in the works of three writers from the period. Consider at least one work of prose and one of poetry in your answer.
2. Discuss the representation of the urban scene and urban life in the works of any three writers from the period. Consider at least one work of prose and one of poetry in your answer.
3. What, if any, are the continuities between romantic poetry (before 1845) and the Victorian novel (after 1845)? Discuss with reference to at least three authors, including at least one poet and one novelist.