

Field Examination
Canadian Literature
Spring 2003

INSTRUCTIONS

This examination consists of two parts:

- Part A: Canadian literature and literary criticism
- Part B: The Candidate's specialized list

You will answer **two questions from Part A** and **one question from Part B**.
All questions are of equal value.

In the examination as a whole, do not extensively discuss the same writer more than once.

The examination is four hours long.

Part A: Choose two questions. At least one of the writers you discuss in this part must be from the pre-1920 period.

1. To what ends have Canadian writers “used and abused” genre (Hutcheon)? In your answer refer to at least three authors.
2. In a 2001 article, Russell Brown argued for a reconsideration of thematic criticism, rightly noting that for several years the response to this critical paradigm among Canadian critics has been hostile. Trace the debates about thematic criticism, referring to the work of at least three critics, and assess its possibilities and limitations as a methodology.
3. Analyze the tension between pastoral and anti-pastoral impulses in Canadian literature. In your answer, refer to the work of at least three authors and take your examples from at least two different genres.
4. In 1893, John George Bourinot observed that “historical literature” had long been the focus of “earnest and industrious study” by writers in Canada. Why were and are so many writers in Canada preoccupied with history? Answer with reference to three creative works of at least two different genres.
5. From Oucanasta in *Wacousta* to the extinct indigenous peoples in Al Purdy’s poem “Lament for the Dorsets,” writers in Canada have engaged with indigenous cultures. How and why do they do so? Answer with reference to at least three authors (from any cultural group), chosen from at least two different periods.

Part B: Choose one question.

1. In the “Conclusion” to the 1965 edition of a *Literary History of Canada*, Northrop Frye noted that “A striking fact about Canadian poetry is the number of poets who have turned to narrative forms . . . rather than lyrical ones.” Does Frye’s observation still hold true? In your answer, refer to the work of at least three writers from your list.
2. According to Geoffrey Hartman, trauma is the event that may be registered in language but not explained. How do three writers on your list struggle to represent trauma?
3. How do three writers on your list respond to Standard English in their work?
4. Responding to Eli Mandel’s query “When do language and place become identical?” Smaro Kamboureli argues that “the generic structure of many Canadian long poems” is particularly suited to engage with the question. How do long poems in Canada bring language and place closer to one another? Answer with reference to at least three writers in addition to Kamboureli.