

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

This copy of the Examination MUST BE RETURNED with the Blue Books.

NAME: _____

PLEDGE: _____

The Examination should be written in **FOUR** separate Blue Books:

Book 1: Sections I and II

Book 2: Section III, Parts A, B, C, and D **only**

Book 3: Section III, Parts E, F, G, and H **only**

Book 4: Sections IV and V

**DO NOT REMOVE THIS EXAMINATION FROM THE EXAMINATION
ROOM.**

I. Identify or define briefly any TEN of the following. (10 minutes)

- A. epiphany
- B. gothic novel
- C. First Folio
- D. Fugitive Movement
- E. iambic pentameter
- F. mock epic
- G. parataxis
- H. picaresque
- I. epistolary novel
- J. mimicry
- K. Sir Gawain
- L. Philomela
- M. Colley Cibber
- N. Patroclus
- O. Restoration Period
- P. James Boswell
- Q. carpe diem
- R. Paolo and Francesca
- S. stream of consciousness
- T. villanelle
- U. dramatic irony
- V. pathetic fallacy
- W. Blackfriars
- X. The Great Vowel Shift
- Y. pastoral elegy
- Z. mystery play

II. Comment fully on any FIVE of the following passages, giving the author's name and full title of the work, discussing any notable features of diction or poetic device, and showing how the passage in question contributes to an understanding of the whole work from which it is taken. (50 minutes)

- A. Grieve not, wise king! Better it is
for every man to avenge his friend
than mourn overmuch. Each of us must come
to the end of his life: let him who may
win fame before death. That is the best
memorial for a man after he is gone.
- B. Lo, he that leet hymselfen so konnyng,
And scorned hem that Loves peynes dryen,
Was ful unwar that Love hadde his dwellynge
Withinne the subtile* stremes of hire yen**;
That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,
Right with hire look, the spirit in his herte:
Blissed be Love, that kan thus folk converte!
- * delicate / **eyes
- C. Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, alas! I may no more.
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that furthest cometh behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer; but as she fleeth afore,
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain:
And graven in diamonds, in letters plain
There is written her fair neck round about:
'Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am,
And wild to hold, though I seem tame.'
- D. If we say that we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us.
Why then belike we must sin,
And so consequently die.
Ay, we must die an everlasting death.
What doctrine call you this? *Che serà, sera*,
"What will be, shall be?" Divinity, adieu!

- E. Two households, both alike in dignity,
 In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
 The which if you with patient ears attend,
 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
- F. Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
 Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
 That if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open, and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd,
 I cried to dream again.
- G. Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
 Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
 Late school-boys and sour prentices,
 Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
 Call country ants to harvest offices;
 Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
- H. ...[T]ime may come when men
 With Angels may participate, and find
 No inconvenient Diet, nor too light Fare:
 And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
 Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit,
 Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend
 Ethereal, as wee, or may at choice
 Here or in Heav'nly Paradises dwell;
 If ye be found obedient, and retain
- (cont'd. on next page)

Unalterably firm his love entire
Whose progeny you are. Meanwhile enjoy
Your fill what happiness this happy state
Can comprehend, incapable of more.

- I. I can remember the time when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is other ways with me. When all are fast about me, and no eye open, but His who ever waketh, my thoughts are upon things past, upon the awful dispensation of the Lord towards us, upon His wonderful power and might, in carrying of us through so many difficulties, in returning us in safety, and suffering none to hurt us.
- J. See the poor Remnants of these slighted Hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev'n thy Rapine spares:
These, in two sable Ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new Beauties to the snowie Neck.
The Sister-Lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its Fellow's Fate foresees its own;
Uncurl'd it hangs, the fatal Sheers demands;
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious Hands.
Oh hadst thou, Cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any Hairs but these!
- K. Thus all these little Difficulties were made easy, and we liv'd together with the greatest Kindness and Comfort imaginable; we are now grown Old: I am come back to *England*, being almost seventy Years of Age, my Husband sixty eight, having perform'd much more than the limited Terms of my Transportation: And now notwithstanding all the Fatigues, and all the Miseries we have both gone thro', we are both in good Heart and Health; my Husband remain'd there sometime after me to settle our Affairs, and at first I had intended to go back to him, but at his desire I alter'd that Resolution, and he is come over to *England* also, where we resolve to spend the Remainder of our Years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives we have lived.
- L. The ancient poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive. And particularly they studied the Genius of each city and country, placing it under its mental deity. Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of and enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects. Thus began Priesthood. Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things. Thus men forgot that all deities reside in the human breast.

- M. Darkling I listen; and for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain —
 To thy high requiem become a sod.
- N. “It is a poor conclusion, is it not,” he observed, having brooded a while on the scene he had just witnessed. “An absurd termination to my violent exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready, and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten me—now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives—I could do it; and none could hinder me—But where is the use? I don’t care for striking, I can’t take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time, only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case—I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.
- O. “All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?”
- P. For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
 And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,
 Showed me the high, white star of Truth,
 There bade me gaze, and there aspire.
 Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:
 What dost thou in this living tomb?
 Forgive me, masters of the mind!
 At whose behest I long ago
 So much unlearnt, so much resigned —
- I come not here to be your foe!
 I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
 To curse and to deny your truth;
- Not as their friend, or child, I speak!
 But as, on some far northern strand,

(cont’d. on next page)

Thinking of his own gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone —
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Q. There is a pain—so utter—
 It swallows substance up—
 Then covers the Abyss with Trance—
 So Memory can step
 Around—across—upon it—
 As one within a Swoon—
 Goes safely—where an open eye—
 Would drop Him—Bone by Bone.

R. A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

S. O when may it suffice?
 That is Heaven's part, our part
 To murmur name upon name,
 As a mother names her child
 When sleep at last has come
 On limbs that had run wild.
 What is it but nightfall?
 No, no, not night but death;
 Was it needless death after all?

T. “You mean she was no kin to you, no kin to you at all, that there was actually one Southern Bayard or Guinevere who was no kin to you? then what did she die for?” and that not ___’s first time, nobody’s first time in Cambridge since September: *Tell about the South. What’s it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all*

U. We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness.
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always –
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of things shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

V. “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me.”

W. But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
And the child draws another inscrutable house.

- X. Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning:
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking
And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.

- Y. I used to think to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place--the picture of it--stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened.

- Z.
- And how do you find the place?
 - The natives are alright.
 - Friendly?
 - Tractable.
 - Not a teeny-weeny bit restless?
 - Well, a teeny-weeny bit restless.
 - One might even say difficult?
 - Indeed one might be tempted to say, difficult.
 - But do you manage to cope?
 - Yes, indeed I do. I have a rather faithful ox called Amusa.
 - He's loyal?
 - Absolutely.
 - Lay down his life for you what?
 - Without a moment's thought.
 - Had one like that once. Trust him with my life.
 - Mostly of course they are liars.
 - Never known a native to tell the truth.

III. For Section III, you will need TWO blue books. Essays for A, B, C, and D should be written in the first blue book; essays for E, F, G, and H should be written in the other. Write on any FIVE of the following sections. As much as possible, base your discussions on your memory of specific passages. (100 minutes)

A) Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.

1. Chaucer scholars often suggest that Chaucer presents himself, and many of his characters, ironically. Argue for or against this suggestion, using at least two examples from Chaucer's works.
2. Select narrators of dream visions from two different works (by authors other than Chaucer) and comment critically on how, from within the frame of the poem, each rationalizes (in verse) his authority to report what he says he saw.

B) Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.

1. Explore the possibility or impossibility of redemption in any two plays by Shakespeare, making sure to go beyond plot summary to discuss poetic representation.
2. Discuss the symbolic significance of weddings or lack of them taking place in two plays by Shakespeare.

C) Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.

1. Discuss two works of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century English literature that transform the expectations of the genre in which they work.
2. Discuss the ways in which two sixteenth- or seventeenth-century English love poets make "one little room an everywhere."

D) Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.

1. To what degree is it accurate to characterize the literature of the Restoration and eighteenth century as a defense of the humanities against the "new science"? Consider two different writers as you frame your response.
2. For what larger purpose do satirists of the Restoration and eighteenth century choose actual public figures as their targets? Consider the depiction of individuals in works by two different satirists.

E) Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.

1. Discuss two works of nineteenth-century British literature that advance (explicitly or implicitly) a theory of education.

2. Discuss two works of nineteenth-century British literature in which a character demonstrates a moral stance that places him or her in conflict with the social establishment.

F) *Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.*

1. American fiction-writers of the 19th century frequently made a distinction between two forms of fictional prose narrative, the Novel and the Romance. Explain the distinction and elucidate it by discussing in two works from the period, one that you consider a novel and the other representing the romance.
2. Consider the themes of captivity and liberation in American Literature before 1900.

G) *Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.*

1. How do two American 20th- or 21st-century authors use landscape (environment, weather, seasons) to symbolize psychological or moral aspects of character?
2. The twentieth century was an age of unprecedentedly destructive wars. Discuss two American works from the modern period that refer to the experience, or the effects, of war.

H) *Write on either (1) or (2) for this section.*

1. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Caliban says to Prospero and Miranda, "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse." Write an essay on two works of non-American literature written after 1900 in which language is used as a tool of oppression.
2. Compare the significance of travel or migration in two works of non-American literature written after 1900.

Sections IV and V should be written in a separate blue book.

IV. Please write a detailed and coherent essay on any ONE of the following topics (20 minutes)

1. Explore the representation of evil or sin in works from two different literary periods, make sure to note the way in which details support each author's purpose.
2. Choose works from two different literary periods that focus on the problem of death and comment on how each author resolves that problem.
3. The time and place of publication can have a bearing on how the role of the author is conceptualized and appreciated, no less than how we judge and assess the work itself. Discuss the circumstances surrounding the first appearance of any two works of literature from different periods, and comment on the original reception and later critical assessment.
4. Drawing on two works from different literary periods, discuss the significance of work or vocation for a central character.
5. Discuss the representation of melancholy in two works of literature representing two different literary periods.
6. Compare the importance of hospitality in *The Iliad* or *The Divine Comedy* and one other work of literature.
7. Using the work of at least two writers from different literary periods, discuss the implications of Judith Butler's contention that gender is a social construction that regularly conceals its genesis. In what ways does this claim help one become a better (more critical and perspicacious) reader and interpreter of specific works of literature?

V. Write an interpretive essay on the following poem. (50 minutes)

Belmont Overture (Poem of Eight A.M.)

It's about settling down and settling in
and trying not to settle for,

about three miles from the urban core,
where the not-quite-wild bald turkey, looking so lost

and inquisitive next to the stop for the 74,
peers into the roseless rosebush, up at the pointless oar

hung above one townhouse's swept steps, and the U.S.
and floral and nautical flags flaunt their calm semaphore.

Walking past them, today, with our stroller, we note as we pass
the wreath of real twigs on our next-door neighbor's door

and beside it another, not sold in any store,
made of pipecleaners and plastic oak leaves. It looks like a nest,

something Nathan could put together, with the rest
of his preschool class.

When we go out, we have learned to bring sunscreen,
and insect repellent, and pretzel sticks, and Aquafor,

in case all the shrubs scratch the kids. We mean
it when we say we like it; we feel sure

it's a safe place, and once we feel safe, it's our nature
to say we're unsatisfied, and pretend to seek more.