



LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

9725/05

Paper 5 Women in Literature

3 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Paper

Set texts may be taken into the examination room. They may bear underlining or highlighting. Any kind of folding or flagging of pages in text (e.g. use of post-its, tape flags or paper clips) is not permitted.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name, class and question number on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Write your answer to each question on a fresh sheet of paper.
Do not use paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid on your work.

Answer **three** questions, one from each of Sections A, B and C.
You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten each of your answers **separately**.
All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

Section A

Answer one question in this section.

1

- Either (a)** Write a critical commentary on the following poem, relating it more generally to your reading on the theme of women in literature.

WHEN THE YOUNG HUSBAND...

When the young husband picked up his friend's pretty wife
in the taxi one block from her townhouse for their
first lunch together, in a hotel dining room
with a room key in his pocket,

midtown traffic gridlocked and was abruptly still. 5
For one moment before Klaxons started honking,
a prophetic voice spoke in his mind's ear despite
his pulse's erotic thudding:

"The misery you undertake this afternoon 10
will accompany you to the end of your lives.
She knew what she did, when she agreed to this lunch,
although she will not admit it;

and you've constructed your playlet a thousand times:
cocktails, an omelet, wine; the revelation 15
of a room key; the elevator rising as
the penis elevates; the skin

flushed, the door fumbled at, the handbag dropped; the first
kiss with open mouths, nakedness, swoon, thrust-and-catch;
endorphins followed by endearments; a brief nap; 20
another fit; restoration

of clothes, arrangements for another encounter,
the taxi back, and the furtive kiss of good-bye.
Then, by turn: tears, treachery, anger, betrayal;
marriages and houses destroyed;

small children abandoned and inconsolable, 25
their foursquare estates disestablished forever;
the unreadable advocates; the wretchedness
of passion outworn; anguished nights

sleepless in a bare room; whiskey, meth, cocaine; new
love, essayed in loneliness with miserable 30
strangers, that comforts nothing but skin; hours with sons
and daughters studious always

to maintain distrust; the daily desire to die
and the daily agony of the requirement 35
to survive, until only the quarrel endures."
Prophecy stopped; traffic started.

Donald Hall (1928 –)

Or (b) The following passage is taken from *The Age of Innocence* (1920) by Edith Wharton. Newland Archer, a wealthy young New York lawyer and May Welland, a lovely young high society woman, are newly married and have just returned from a wedding tour that included a trip to London. Write a critical commentary on the passage, relating it more generally to your reading on the theme of women in literature.

The Newland Archers were on their way home, after a three months' wedding-tour which May, in writing to her girl friends, vaguely summarised as "blissful."

They had not gone to the Italian Lakes: on reflection, Archer had not been able to picture his wife in that particular setting. Her own inclination (after a month with the Paris dressmakers) was for mountaineering in July and swimming in August. This plan they punctually fulfilled, spending July at Interlaken and Grindelwald, and August at a little place called Etretat, on the Normandy coast, which some one had recommended as quaint and quiet. Once or twice, in the mountains, Archer had pointed southward and said: "There's Italy"; and May, her feet in a gentian-bed, had smiled cheerfully, and replied: "It would be lovely to go there next winter, if only you didn't have to be in New York."

But in reality travelling interested her even less than he had expected. She regarded it (once her clothes were ordered) as merely an enlarged opportunity for walking, riding, swimming, and trying her hand at the fascinating new game of lawn tennis; and when they finally got back to London (where they were to spend a fortnight while he ordered *his* clothes) she no longer concealed the eagerness with which she looked forward to sailing.

In London nothing interested her but the theatres and the shops; and she found the theatres less exciting than the Paris cafes chantants where, under the blossoming horse-chestnuts of the Champs Elysees, she had had the novel experience of looking down from the restaurant terrace on an audience of "cocottes," and having her husband interpret to her as much of the songs as he thought suitable for bridal ears.

Archer had reverted to all his old inherited ideas about marriage. It was less trouble to conform with the tradition and treat May exactly as all his friends treated their wives than to try to put into practice the theories with which his untrammelled bachelorhood had dallied. There was no use in trying to emancipate a wife who had not the dimmest notion that she was not free; and he had long since discovered that May's only use of the liberty she supposed herself to possess would be to lay it on the altar of her wifely adoration. Her innate dignity would always keep her from making the gift abjectly; and a day might even come (as it once had) when she would find strength to take it altogether back if she thought she were doing it for his own good. But with a conception of marriage so uncomplicated and incurious as hers, such a crisis could be brought about only by something visibly outrageous in his own conduct; and the fineness of her feeling for him made that unthinkable. Whatever happened, he knew, she would always be loyal, gallant, and unresentful, and that pledged him to the practice of the same virtues.

All this tended to draw him back into his old habits of mind. If her simplicity had been the simplicity of pettiness he would have chafed and rebelled; but since the lines of her character, though so few, were on the same fine mould as her face, she became the tutelary divinity of all his old traditions and reverences.

Such qualities were scarcely of the kind to enliven foreign travel, though they made her so easy and pleasant a companion; but he saw at once how they would fall into place in their proper setting. He had no fear of being oppressed by them, for his artistic and intellectual life would go on, as it always had, outside the domestic circle and within it there would be nothing small and stifling - coming back to his wife would never be like entering a stuffy room after a tramp in the open. And when they had children the vacant corners in both their lives would be filled.

All these things went through his mind during their long slow drive from Mayfair to South Kensington.

Section B

Answer **one** question in this section, using two texts that you have studied.
The texts used in this section cannot be used in Section C.

2

Either (a) 'Men never did their own share.' (Germaine Greer)

Compare the ways **two** texts that you have studied present the roles of women in relation to men in the light of this comment.

Or (b) 'Where women characters are the central focus in works of literature, the only space through which knowledge or understanding is produced is across a narrow range of feminine experience – love, marriage, divorce and sex.'

How far do any **two** of the texts you have studied confirm or challenge this view?

Section C

Answer **one** question in this section, using one text that you have studied.
The text used in this section cannot be used for Section B.

THOMAS HARDY: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

6

Either (a) 'Tess's tragic flaw is her sexual nature.' How far do you agree?

Or (b) Discuss the ways in which symbols and images contribute to the novel as a moral protest against the prevailing conventions of Victorian society.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Taming of the Shrew*

10

Either (a) 'The audience's memory of Sly is essential for their appreciation and understanding of the development of the plot.'

Discuss how the Induction serves to comment on courtship and marriage in the larger context of the play.

Or (b) 'By this reckoning he is more shrew than she.' (Act 4, Scene 1)

How far do you agree with the view that Katherina is presented as a shrew in only the most superficial sense?

CARYL CHURCHILL: *Top Girls*

11

Either (a) How, and with what success, does Churchill use irony to engage the audience's response to women's situations in the play?

Or (b) 'I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.'

How successfully does Churchill present feminist concerns in the play?

Copyright acknowledgements:

Question 1a Donald Hall; The Atlantic Monthly; 1993.

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