

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MASTER OF ARTS ADMISSION TEST 2017

Paper I (for category II candidates only)

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Full marks 100

Complete both Part 1 and Part 2 in the same answer booklet. All questions are compulsory.

PART 1

Read with care the following passages and the multiple choice questions under them. Answers are labelled (a), (b), (c) or (d). Circle the letter next to the correct answer in each case. Illegible circles, crossings-out and double guesses will be disqualified. Each of the 30 multiple choice questions is worth two marks. $5 \times 6 \times 2 = 60$ marks

Passage A

Can we regard Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave* as a polemic against racism? This is a difficult question, and not just because the categories we are invoking are anachronistic. Aphra Behn was writing at the very beginning of Europe's engagement with organised slavery, when the dearth of indentured labour from England was beginning to cripple the sugar plantations of Surinam, necessitating the wholesale import of African slaves. The anti-Black rhetoric of the next century, so useful to the slavers in justifying their business, was yet to be invented. Even so, the toxic features of industrial slavery were already in place. In the novel we see the slave ships stuffed with bodies both dead and alive, the cruel floggings and hangings, the treatment of women as breeding machines to produce more capital goods for the economy. Yet we must remember that the first third of the novel takes place in Africa, where we see Prince Oroonoko's royal kith and kin betraying him into slavery. Close attention to the novel's categories shows that Behn's polarities are between strong and weak men, royal and common men, not between white and black. In this she agrees with Nietzsche on the inherent, mystical nature of nobility, depending more upon spiritual charisma that upon birth.

- A1. The categories the writer is invoking are anachronistic because
- They are too old and outdated to be used in this context
 - They are contemporary with the writer's own time.
 - They belong to a different time than the subject discussed.
 - They are contemporary with the subject.
- A2. Which of these reasons is cited by the writer to explain the usefulness of anti-Black rhetoric to slavers?
- It kept the Blacks in their place.
 - It gave the slavers moral sanction for their business.
 - It convinced White people that slavery was a good thing.
 - It made sure that the price of sugar remained high.
- A3. Why does the writer cite the first third of the novel?
- Because it proves that Aphra Behn visited Africa.
 - Because it shows White people being evil as well as Black people.
 - Because it establishes Oroonoko's princely descent.
 - Because it shows Black people selling their own family into slavery.

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

A4. Based on the evidence presented by this writer, which of these statements would you agree with?

- a. Aphra Behn believed in race distinctions
- b. Aphra Behn approved of colonialism.
- c. Aphra Behn venerated natural human nobility.
- d. Aphra Behn believed in human equality.

A5. According to the passage, which of these features of slavery does Aphra Behn describe?

- a. Slavery as a consequence of poverty
- b. Physical abuse of slaves
- c. Prohibition on religious instruction to slaves
- d. Slave rebellions

A6. The quality of 'spiritual charisma' as described by the writer depends on?

- a. Personality.
- b. Birth.
- c. Power.
- d. Wealth.

Passage B

Most critics regard Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* as one of his lighter works, and pass it up in order to concentrate on *Hard Times* or *Bleak House* for a more comprehensive view of the Dickensian universe. But I would like to argue that it is precisely the work's lightness that makes it repay study. In the fantasy form in which he chose to write this story, we see that Dickens is forced to make his moral presumptions more nakedly visible to his public. On the face of it, his morality is bland and unexceptionable, but let us look closer and see what Dickens is really saying. Scrooge is a man without joy, living only to amass wealth, and sacrificing all other values to his dour Puritan metaphysics. For him, all things unprofitable are 'humbug', and not the sweet kind either. It takes the gentle persuasion of friends and family, past and present, to change his mind. Yet how far does this change go? Scrooge does not abandon his core values of profit, trade, hard work and accumulation. He remains a stern taskmaster, only his attitude is now tempered with kindness and compassion. This is capitalism with a human face, and the modern invention of Public Relations departments can be seen as a wise response to the pre-Christmas Scrooge's unvarnished unpopularity. Our modern-day Scrooges have woken up to the real truth: Christmas is profitable, and therefore cannot be humbug.

B1. Which of these reasons does the author cite as the most compelling for her belief that *A Christmas Carol* repays study?

- a. It is about a man without joy.
- b. It is light.
- c. It is bland and unexceptionable.
- d. It displays his moral presumptions clearly.

B2. Based on the passage, which of these phrases would you say is closest to the meaning of 'humbug'?

- a. A large boiled sweet.
- b. Unprofitable activities.
- c. Nonsense designed to fool children into doing as they're told.
- d. Christmas.

B3. Which is the most likely reason why Scrooge fails to change his core values?

- a. He discovers Public Relations.

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

- b. He realises that Christmas is profitable.
- c. He does not give up capitalism.
- d. He bows to the wishes of friends and family.

- B4. Which of these phrases most accurately describes the writer's attitude to Dickens?
- a. The writer agrees with most of what Dickens has to say.
 - b. The writer feels that Dickens had a hidden agenda.
 - c. The writer disapproves of Dickens's worldview but considers him an innocent dupe.
 - d. The writer does not value either Dickens's opinions or his skills.

- B5. Which of these phrases helps to clarify the term 'capitalism with a human face'?
- a. Celebrity endorsements of products.
 - b. Capitalism without mechanization.
 - c. Advertising and public relations.
 - d. Capitalist ideas made to look more inviting than they actually are.

- B6. Which of these statements sums up the conclusion of the passage?
- a. Christmas is profitable because it is not humbug.
 - b. Charity begins with purchases, so Scrooge grows to like Christmas.
 - c. Capitalists now know how to sell Christmas.
 - d. Dickens did not know the real truth about Scrooge.

Passage C

Sexualities are as much in the head as in the body. Amy Bartholomew's poems in *Transformations* traces her transition from man to woman, often descending into painfully detailed physical and emotional descriptions. What makes her work unique are the musical rhythms she cleverly embeds in her work, such as the medical application letter set to a slow Creole rhythm in 'Doctor Please', or 'The Bossa Nova Hormone Riot' that follows it. Her use of humour to blunt the edge of the excruciating procedures she undergoes hides the real trauma that this transformation brings her. In 'Why?' she questions her own desire to change her body to suit her will. Why can't she think herself into womanhood, why must knives and needles be involved? There is ultimately no answer to this question, as she ruefully acknowledges. But finally, in 'This Sweet Stupid Masquerade', her new body is unveiled and she is 'delighted to be cured of both desire and despair'. Now there is nothing further she wants, not even love. This is the final irony of *Transformations*.

- C1. Which of these phrases accurately describes the relationship of the first sentence of this passage to the rest?
- a. The first sentence is not relevant or related to the passage.
 - b. The first sentence is relevant but the idea is not developed in the rest of the piece.
 - c. The first sentence is a teaser for the major theme of the passage.
 - d. The first sentence is a teaser but not relevant to the passage.
- C2. The role of rhythm in the poems discussed is best described as
- a. Essential to the theme and mood of the poems.
 - b. Not necessary for appreciating the poems.
 - c. Necessary for the humour of the poems.
 - d. A playful stylistic quirk.
- C3. Which of these courses would probably not feature Amy Bartholomew on its syllabus?
- a. Remaking the Poetic Subject.
 - b. Masculinity and the Body.
 - c. Nature and the Natural in Poetry.

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

d. Sado-Masochism in Literature.

C4. 'Now there is nothing further that she wants, not even love.' The writer of the passage regards this as ironic. Which of these would you say is the most compelling reason for the writer's opinion?

- a. The poet is narcissistic.
- b. The poet is satisfied with her changed body.
- c. The poet's transformation does not change her relationships with others.
- d. The poet's transformation is unnatural.

C5. How would you describe the writer's attitude to Amy Bartholomew in this piece?

- a. Sympathetic and descriptive.
- b. Critical and noncommittal.
- c. Critical and heteronormative.
- d. Heteronormative and descriptive.

C6. 'There is ultimately no answer to this question, as she ruefully acknowledges.' The question that Amy cannot answer relates most closely to which of the following?

- a. Body image.
- b. Heteronormativity.
- c. Polygyny.
- d. Patriarchy.

Passage D

What is common between literature and film? At base, both are storytelling media, and both use words. But there the similarity ends. In literature, authors use all kinds of clever tricks to make us believe two things are happening at once. But the fact is, our eyes take in the words on the page one after another, and our minds are free to visualise the story in our own way. In film, however, many things can be shown happening at once, limited only by the frame and the shot. The frame becomes our compelling reality. In it, there can be a complex interplay of background and foreground, there can be multiple messages crisscrossing each other, there can be a thing that means something undercut by a thing that means something else. A visual image is a gestalt, a message in three dimensions, where a literary text is a stream of information. However, literature can take us straight inside a person's head. Film cannot, or rather, filmmakers have all kinds of tricks to make us feel what isn't there to be seen. Background music, voiceovers, characters talking to themselves, flashbacks representing memory, the list goes on.

D1. On the basis of the passage, which of these statements is incorrect?

- a. Books are streams of information.
- b. Filmmakers strive to frame stories.
- c. A visual image is seen in its entirety all at once.
- d. Authors face no limits to their art.

D2. The author says that 'The frame becomes our compelling reality'. Which of these sentences best elucidates the meaning of the author's comment?

- a. We are compelled to watch the film.
- b. We believe the events of the film are actually happening.
- c. We cannot look away from the film.
- d. The film replaces reality.

D3. Flashback is to memory what

- a. Clothes are to the body.
- b. Speech is to action.

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

- c. Dance is to emotion.
- d. Sports are to the body.

D4. Which of these descriptions best fits the passage?

- a. A comparison of the shortcomings of literature and film.
- b. A comparison of the methods of literature and film.
- c. A celebration of literature and film.
- d. Musings on the similarities of literature and film.

D5. Which of these sentences is a non-figurative way of saying that 'literature can take us inside a person's head'?

- a. Literature is the same as psychology.
- b. Literature can show internal mental states.
- c. Literature dissects personality.
- d. Literature can show internal and external states at the same time.

D6. According to the passage, 'a complex interplay of background and foreground' gives what capability to film?

- a. The power to undercut its own message.
- b. The appearance of three-dimensionality.
- c. Freedom to visualise the story in our own way.
- d. Simultaneous communication.

Passage E

I think it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Inquisition in the formation of Western thought. The Inquisition pre-dated the Renaissance and remained active from the twelfth into the nineteenth century. Its sole purpose was to stamp out 'heresy' and secure the spiritual realm exclusively for Catholic theology. Its one big failure was the escape of Martin Luther's particular brand of freethinking from the Inquisition's clutches. The Lutherans set a dangerous precedent for the other sects who were to be grouped under the catchall term 'Protestantism'. In many ways the Protestant Reformation freed the youth of Europe from the fear of constant spiritual surveillance, but it did not change the deep psychic wounds left by centuries of spirit-policing. The Western mind-body split is as much an artefact of centuries of oppression as it is of Rene Descartes' civilised musings. In effect, the Inquisition placed a flaming sword above the entrance to the realms of spiritual enlightenment, and forced the bright young minds of Europe to seek other kinds of enlightenment. With the magical arts off-limits, they turned their minds to the baser arts, those that dealt with brute matter. The Industrial Revolution was as much a result of this process as it was of the plagues and the labour fluctuations came in their wake.

E1. According to the passage, the Inquisition was active for

- a. Seven centuries.
- b. Eight centuries.
- c. Nine centuries.
- d. Six centuries.

E2. Which of these reasons best explains why the precedent set by the Lutherans was dangerous?

- a. They were heretics.
- b. They believed in racial equality.
- c. They were spiritual..
- d. They escaped the Inquisition.

E3. What is the most likely reason for the author's assertion in the last sentence?

JOIN OUR MA ENGLISH ENTRANCE PREP COURSE

- a. Great minds set themselves to abolishing plagues.
- b. The suppression of magic led to the rise of technology.
- c. The population rose because fewer people were being burned.
- d. The spiritual realm was no longer being policed.

E4. Which of these descriptions best fits the passage?

- a. Historical and analytical.
- b. Polemical and descriptive.
- c. Descriptive and historical.
- d. Historical and polemical.

E5. Which of these definitions fits the phrase 'catchall term'?

- a. A gigantic net.
- b. An inclusive description.
- c. A mishmash.
- d. An exclusive description.

E6. On the basis of the passage, which of these sentences is false?

- a. The Protestant Reformation led to the Industrial Revolution.
- b. The Lutherans seceded from the Catholic Church.
- c. The Protestant Reformation reversed the damage done by the Inquisition.
- d. The Inquisition continued to function after the Protestant Reformation.

PART 2

Write a short essay on any one of the following topics:

40 marks

1. Texts in the World: Should Authors Be Activists?
2. A Fictional Character Who Changed My Life.
3. A Kind of Heat: Sexuality in Young Adult Books
4. Protection or Powergame? Censorship and the Common Reader.