

2202235 Reading and Analysis for the Study of English Literature
Semester II, 2016
Final Exam Review

The final exam is an opportunity for you to showcase all that you have learned this semester. To help instructors evaluate your critical and analytical skills, in your essays, demonstrate that you have read closely and understood the material, that you can critically and creatively engage with the material, with discussion in class, and with the test question, that you can synthesize material and knowledge gained, and that you can write clear, effective, and well-substantiated prose.

Some Reminders

Read instructions carefully and follow them. The essay prompt may consist of several questions but what the entire prompt does is give you a topic with a scope. You should formulate a thesis in response to the prompt that enables you to discuss and elaborate on the topic within that scope for the works involved effectively. Structure your essay around that thesis or argument, citing specific scenes, lines, words or information to illustrate and support the points you are making. Again, you do not need to answer every single question in the prompt cluster in order and separately because then the essay structure will not necessarily be appropriate to your discussion. Rather, your writing should be designed as a coherent unified piece, not unconnected answers to different questions strung together or a bulleted list. The multiple questions are there to help you brainstorm on the topic and to spark critical engagement with it. You should draw on your own close reading of the material, your notes, your discussion about it in and outside of class, and relevant reading and research you have done, and extend them, not merely repeat them. Think critically about the material and be prepared to think critically on the topic prompted by the test questions as well. Though you should focus on primary readings, you do not have to limit yourself to them. Where relevant and useful, you may refer to supplementary texts in the course packet or online. When writing, follow academic conventions and try to be as legible, clear, effective, and compelling as you can. Don't do anything risky like socks-skating with your sister over the weekend, rest well, eat clean good food, arrive at least fifteen minutes before exam time, wear comfortable and proper uniform, bring your ID, and make sure your watch and writing implements are in order. Pace yourself well and share with us your ideas. Good luck!

Exam Structure

There will be three essay-type prompts: two on stories and poems and one on *Frankenstein*. The first two prompts on the stories and poems each require you to discuss two works, and to choose different works to focus on. You will be given a list of works to choose from for these two prompts.

List of Works

- William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18 (“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”; c 1609)
- Francis Heaney, “Is a Sperm Like a Whale?” (2004)
- John Milton, Sonnet 19 (“When I consider how my light is spent”; c. 1655)
- John Milton, “On Shakespeare” (1630)
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias” (1818)
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1831)
- Ruskin Bond (1994)
 - “Lone Fox Dancing”

- “A Frog Screams”
- “From My Notebook”
- “The Man Who Was Kipling”
- “The Girl from Copenhagen”
- Ted Chiang, “Story of Your Life” (1998)
- Seamus Heaney, “Digging” (1966)
- Daljit Nagra, “Digging” (2007)
- Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman* #19 “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (1990) excerpt
- Allie Brosh, *Hyperbole and a Half* (2013) excerpt
- Takehiko Inoue, *Vagabond* (2007) excerpt

Review Tips

Whether you are reviewing alone or with friends, it is helpful to note characteristic features of each text. You should be able to identify the title, author, genre, subject matter, key characters, themes, and distinctive formal and stylistic qualities of each work in the list above. For key characters, themes, and defining qualities of each work, you should also be able to explain *why* they are key or worth noting and give specific examples to illustrate your explanation.

In discussing a poem, for instance, you should be able to note verse form, rhyme scheme, idea development, imagery, diction and other characteristics and discuss how they work together to produce certain impressions, effects or ideas, and how they are relevant to the prompt question.

Look for relationships between elements within a work and for connections or contrasts between different works. In choosing two works to discuss together, consider whether they complement each other, contrast provocatively with each other, or otherwise allow for a rich and meaningful discussion in response to the prompt. Notice the many ways you can read one text against another such as in terms of the ideas they address, the techniques they use to express those ideas, their genre, historical and cultural contexts, their playfulness, predictability, or innovation.

Timed Practice

The most effective way to prepare for the exam is to work under conditions as similar to those you will experience on Monday as you can. The following prompts give you some exercise for this. Time yourself strictly for 60 minutes for each prompt you choose to practice with to give you feedback on where you need to further review or improve in your writing and pacing.

Treat unseen passages like you do any text that you have read for class, that is, close read it, look for ideas they bring up and devices they use to convey those ideas, consider how they compare with other texts and what the resulting implications are of that juxtaposed reading.

1. Examine the use of setting in two works. How is setting presented and what function(s) does it have? How, if at all, does setting change? Why is it significant? What are the effects of an external physical versus an internal abstract one, or a real versus imaginary, or a present versus a past or future, natural versus man-made, or multiple versus singular? What phenomena are enabled by each setting? How do they contribute to the impact of the work?

2. What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.

(William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1597)

Analyze appellation in two works. Consider how the same thing is called different names or the same name is used to refer to different things. What difference does naming or labeling make? What connection or disconnection is created with the choice of word used to describe something or someone? What is the difference and effect, for example, of Ozymandias' term "my works" and the term "colossal wreck" used to call the same thing? What about "digging"? What about action vs. acting in "Story of Your Life" or "lone fox dancing" vs. being elated in Ruskin's poem? Is a thing the same thing, as Juliet says, no matter what different titles you give it?

You can also try this as a prompt for *Frankenstein*. What does the string of different appellations for Frankenstein's creation reflect? What meaning do you see in the fact that an unnamed creature is given the various names of being, daemon, demon, wretch, creature, creation, etc.? The fact of Frankenstein's creating life out of nonlife is also called by different names: discovery, crime, ambition, result, knowledge, birth, curse. Is there a development to this series of names? Who uses which terms, when? How does the labeling change the meaning of the same act, or doesn't it?

3. Compare and contrast a turning point in two works. Explain what turns into what and discuss the implications of this shift. When does the turn happen? Why is this meaningful? Address the kind of turn it is. Is the turn physical, a turn in action, logic, viewpoint, time, space, style, rhetoric, grammar, sentence structure, mood, imagery, knowledge, stance, age, relationship? How is meaning reassigned at this alterative point?
4. Explore an action or nonaction in two works. Explain how the act or nonact is significant in the work. What motivates the action or nonaction? What is the meaning of acting or not acting? What does it mean, for example, that the speaker acts by forcing the snake to de-act or reverse its action of eating the frog, and that god's voice later declares that he would not have acted thus? What factors influence a character's decision to act or not to act? Is it even a decision? What are its consequences? How is nonaction active or action nonactive or inconsequential?
5. With reference to two works, discuss endings. How does the ending of the work resolve what is set up in the beginning? Do endings signify the end or something else? What do endings mean if the text is nonlinear or achronological? How does the depiction of endings reflect the speaker's or author's idea of an end?
6. Choose two works and discuss how a text can speak to another text. How is this intertextuality presented? What do these allusions, references or responses to another text achieve? What does the external text add to the text at hand? What is the difference between a narrative reference to another text and a graphic narrative reference to another text?

7. Pick a relationship between two entities in *Frankenstein* and discuss its role in the novel. An entity can be a character, an object, a place, or more conceptual or abstract units like the environment and a narrative.
8. What contradictions occur in *Frankenstein*? Why are they important? What is incongruous about the two things in contradiction? How are they in opposition? Are these conflicts created or intrinsic? How are contradictions used? Who or what do they involve? Do the contradictions change throughout the novel? Are they resolved? Why or why not?

And Bonus Questions from Acharn Ingo Peters

1. The following is an inner monologue by the serial-killer protagonist of the novel *American Psycho*, the “evil genius” and “monster” Patrick Bateman.

[...] there is an idea of a Patrick Bateman, some kind of abstraction, but there is no real me, only an entity, something illusory, and though I can hide my cold gaze, and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours, and maybe you can even sense our lifestyles are probably comparable: I simply am not there. It is hard for me to make sense on any given level. Myself is fabricated, an aberration. I am a noncontingent human being. My personality is sketchy and unformed, my heartlessness goes deep and is persistent. My conscience, my pity, my hopes disappeared a long time ago (probably at Harvard) if they ever did exist. There are no more barriers to cross. All I have in common with the uncontrollable and the insane, the vicious and the evil, all the mayhem that I have caused and my utter indifference toward it, I have now surpassed. I still, though, hold on to one single bleak truth: no one is safe, nothing is redeemed. Yet I am blameless. Each model of human behavior must be assumed to have some validity. Is evil something you are? Or is it something you do? My pain is constant and sharp and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact, I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape. But even after admitting this—and I have, countless times, in just about every act I've committed—and coming face-to-face with these truths, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge of myself, no new understanding can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant nothing [...]

Are there parallels between the way Bateman sees himself (and his actions) and the monster or Victor from *Frankenstein*, or do the characters from Shelley's novel have very different characteristics and self-images? Choose **either** Victor **or** his creation and write an essay that analyzes the chosen character, as he is and as he thinks he is, through the lens of the issues that Bateman raises in the statements below. Note that Bateman addresses many aspects, from identity to guilt, hopes, responsibility, suffering, awareness, motives, attitudes towards society and several more.

2. Below is an excerpt from a famous science fiction short story. Write an essay that examines if Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* expresses a similar judgment of science, knowledge and exploration. Focus on the various specific aspects that the passage addresses. Give evidence and illustration for your claims.

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst

of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

(H. P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*, 1928)

3. In the excerpt below, famous French novelist Marcel Proust introduces a way to accept unfulfilled dreams and ambitions that seems very different from how Victor and the monster in *Frankenstein* deal with their dreams and ambitions. Are there signs and scenes which suggest that the novel criticizes Victor's and/or his creature's pursuit of their desires, and which hint that alternative actions and coping mechanisms in line with what Proust says would be possible and better for everyone involved? Analyze these signs and scenes, which might include actions, interactions, dialogues, character juxtapositions, images etc., in a coherent and unified essay.

We believe that we can change the things around us in accordance with our desires—we believe it because otherwise we can see no favourable outcome. We do not think of the outcome which generally comes to pass and is also favourable: we do not succeed in changing things in accordance with our desires, but gradually our desires change. The situation that we hoped to change because it was intolerable becomes unimportant to us. We have failed to surmount the obstacle, as we were absolutely determined to do, but life has taken us round it, led us beyond it, and then if we turn round to gaze into the distance of the past, we can barely see it, so imperceptible has it become.

(Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 1913)

4. Below are three very different quotes about free will. Choose the one that you feel is most relevant to the complex discussion of free will and fate in *Frankenstein*, and write a coherent and unified essay that demonstrates if the novel, on the whole, expresses the same view as the quote or not. Refer to specific characters and specific actions plus their intended effect on the reader (in terms of a message about free will) in your answer. You can also take narration, imagery, etc. into account.

- a) “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it [it = being in hell]. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened.”

(C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 1945)

- b) “*Der Mensch kann tun was er will; er kann aber nicht wollen was er will.*”
 (“Man can do what he wants but he cannot [decide to] want what he wants.”)
(Arthur Schopenhauer, “On the Freedom of the Will,” 1839)

- c) “You are not controlling the storm, and you are not lost in it. You are the storm.”
(Sam Harris, *Free Will*, 2012)

5. Write an essay about the portrayal of science in *Frankenstein* that addresses the following questions: Why is science brought up; what does it symbolize or illustrate? How is science defined, and how does that differ from other possible definitions or compare with other disciplines? Is the novel pro- or anti-science (or something in between), how does this stance manifest itself, and what does it have to do with the larger themes of the book? Refer to characterization, plot, setting, and narration to demonstrate how Mary Shelley depicts and employs science.

6. According to scholar Stephanie Forward, “the Romantics highlighted the healing power of the imagination, because they truly believed that it could enable people to transcend their troubles and their circumstances.” Is *Frankenstein* a “romantic” or “anti-romantic” work in this sense? In other words, does the novel suggest individuals can overcome their problems on their own—if they have the right kind of motivation, creativity, and talent—or does it criticize this idea? How does it promote or dismiss the power of the will and imagination? In your detailed answer, in which you should give specific evidence, you can refer to characterization, plot, setting, narration, etc.