Summer Examinations 2015

LIT102915N

Module Title
Nineteenth Century Literature

Level
Four

Time Allowed
Two hours

Instructions to students:

- Enter your student number not your name on all answer books.
- Answer two questions: the Compulsory Question in Section A and one question from Section B.
- You should divide your time equally between Section A and Section B. The questions are weighted as follows:
  - Section A carries 50% of the overall marks. (25% for each extract)
  - Section B carries 50% of the overall marks.
- Begin each question on a separate page; label each page clearly with the number of the question you are answering.
- Students are not permitted to remove this examination paper from the examination room. For all purposes the examination paper remains the property of the University of Northampton.

Credit will be given to answers that:

- Refer closely to nineteenth-century texts;
- Refer to a range of texts from the period;
- Demonstrate an awareness of critical thinking;
- Demonstrate an awareness of the social and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century literature;
- Are well written and carefully organised.

Please note: You should not make substantial reference to material used in other assignments for LIT1029.

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Section A

1. Choose two of the following extracts and write a critical commentary on each. You should consider the following in your response:

- The significance of where the extract occurs in the novel, poem or play, where relevant;
- The primary themes and concerns of the extract and the relevance of these to the novel, poem or play as a whole;
- The significance of the extract in terms of the wider social and cultural context of the nineteenth century;
- Any stylistic features or narrative techniques used by the author and the effects they achieve.

Please note: You should divide your time equally between the two extracts.
Extract 1

My first glance round me, as the man opened the door, disclosed a well-furnished breakfast-table, standing in the middle of a long room, with many windows in it. I looked from the table to the window farthest from me, and saw a lady standing at it, with her back turned towards me. The instant my eyes rested on her, I was struck by the rare beauty of her form, and by the unaffected grace of her attitude. Her figure was tall, yet not too tall; comely and well-developed, yet not fat; her head set on her shoulders with an easy, pliant firmness; her waist, perfection in the eyes of a man, for it occupied its natural place, it filled out its natural circle, it was visibly and delightfully undeformed by stays. She had not heard my entrance into the room; and I allowed myself the luxury of admiring her for a few moments, before I moved one of the chairs near me, as the least embarrassing means of attracting her attention. She turned towards me immediately. The easy elegance of every movement of her limbs and body as soon as she began to advance from the far end of the room, set me in a flutter of expectation to see her face clearly. She left the window—and I said to myself, The lady is dark. She moved forward a few steps—and I said to myself, The lady is young. She approached nearer—and I said to myself (with a sense of surprise which words fail me to express), The lady is ugly!

Never was the old conventional maxim, that Nature cannot err, more flatly contradicted—never was the fair promise of a lovely figure more strangely and startlingly belied by the face and head that crowned it. The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal-black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead. Her expression—bright, frank, and intelligent—appeared, while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine attractions of gentleness and pliability, without which the beauty of the handsomest woman alive is beauty incomplete. To see such a face as this set on shoulders that a sculptor would have longed to model—to be charmed by the modest graces of action through which the symmetrical limbs betrayed their beauty when they moved, and then to be almost repelled by the masculine form and masculine look of the features in which the perfectly shaped figure ended—was to feel a sensation oddly akin to the helpless discomfort familiar to us all in sleep, when we recognise yet cannot reconcile the anomalies and contradictions of a dream.

"Mr. Hartright?" said the lady interrogatively, her dark face lighting up with a smile, and softening and growing womanly the moment she began to speak. "We resigned all hope of you last night, and went to bed as usual. Accept my apologies for our apparent want of attention; and allow me to introduce myself as one of your pupils. Shall we shake hands? I suppose we must come to it sooner or later—and why not sooner?"

MRS WARREN. Vivie: do you know how rich I am?

VIVIE. I have no doubt you are very rich.

MRS WARREN. But you don't know all that that means; you're too young. It means a new dress every day; it means theatres and balls every night; it means having the pick of all the gentlemen in Europe at your feet; it means a lovely house and plenty of servants; it means the choicest of eating and drinking; it means everything you like, everything you want, everything you can think of. And what are you here? A mere drudge, toiling and moiling early and late for your bare living and two cheap dresses a year. Think over it. [Soothingly] You're shocked, I know. I can enter into your feelings; and I think they do you credit; but trust me, nobody will blame you: you may take my word for that. I know what young girls are; and I know you'll think better of it when you've turned it over in your mind.

VIVIE. So that's how it is done, is it? You must have said all that to many a woman, to have it so pat.

MRS WARREN [passionately] What harm am I asking you to do? [Vivie turns away contemptuously. Mrs Warren continues desperately] Vivie: listen to me: you don't understand: you were taught wrong on purpose: you don't know what the world is really like.

VIVIE [arrested] Taught wrong on purpose! What do you mean?

MRS WARREN. I mean that you’re throwing away all your chances for nothing. You think that people are what they pretend to be: that the way you were taught at school and college to think right and proper is the way things really are. But it's not: it's all only a pretence, to keep the cowardly slavish common run of people quiet. Do you want to find that out, like other women, at forty, when you've thrown yourself away and lost your chances; or won't you take it in good time now from your own mother, that loves you and swears to you that it's truth: gospel truth? [Urgently] Vivie: the big people, the clever people, the managing people, all know it. They do as I do, and think what I think. I know plenty of them. I know them to speak to, to introduce you to, to make friends of for you. I don't mean anything wrong: that’s what you don't understand: your head is full of ignorant ideas about me. What do the people that taught you know about life or about people like me? When did they ever meet me, or speak to me, or let anyone tell them about me? the fools! Would they ever have done anything for you if I hadn't paid them?

George Bernard Shaw. *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Act IV.
Extract 3

As he spoke, we came suddenly out of the woodland into a short street of handsomely built houses, which my companion named to me at once as Piccadilly: the lower part of these I should have called shops, if it had not been that, as far as I could see, the people were ignorant of the arts of buying and selling. Wares were displayed in their finely designed fronts, as if to tempt people in, and people stood and looked at them, or went in and came out with parcels under their arms, just like the real thing. On each side of the street ran an elegant arcade to protect foot-passengers, as in some of the old Italian cities. About halfway down, a huge building of the kind I was now prepared to expect told me that this also was a centre of some kind, and had its special public buildings.

Said Dick: “Here, you see, is another market on a different plan from most others: the upper stories of these houses are used for guest-houses; for people from all about the country are apt to drift up hither from time to time, as folk are very thick upon the ground, which you will see evidence of presently, and there are people who are fond of crowds, though I can’t say that I am.”

I couldn’t help smiling to see how long a tradition would last. Here was the ghost of London still asserting itself as a centre,—an intellectual centre, for aught I knew. However, I said nothing, except that I asked him to drive very slowly, as the things in the booths looked exceedingly pretty.

“Yes,” said he, “this is a very good market for pretty things, and is mostly kept for the handsomer goods, as the Houses-of-Parliament market, where they set out cabbages and turnips and such like things, along with beer and the rougher kind of wine, is so near.”

Then he looked at me curiously, and said, “Perhaps you would like to do a little shopping, as ’tis called.”

I looked at what I could see of my rough blue duds, which I had plenty of opportunity of contrasting with the gay attire of the citizens we had come across; and I thought that if, as seemed likely, I should presently be shown about as a curiosity for the amusement of this most unbusinesslike people, I should like to look a little less like a discharged ship’s purser. But in spite of all that had happened, my hand went down into my pocket again, where to my dismay it met nothing metallic except two rusty old keys, and I remembered that amidst our talk in the guest-hall at Hammersmith I had taken the cash out of my pocket to show to the pretty Annie, and had left it lying there. My face fell fifty per cent., and Dick, beholding me, said rather sharply—

“Hilloa, Guest! what’s the matter now? Is it a wasp?”

“No,” said I, “but I’ve left it behind.”


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End of Section A
Section B follows overleaf
Section B

Answer one of the following questions:

2. Lyn Pykett notes that the sensation novels of the mid nineteenth century were ‘close to home in their subject matter’. What aspects of Victorian society and culture are sensationalised in *The Woman in White*?

3. Winifred Gerin states in regard to *Wuthering Heights* that ‘the creation of the children was a masterstroke’. Compare the representation and significance of children and childhood in any TWO OR MORE nineteenth-century texts studied on the module.

4. How far would you agree that the Victorian novel celebrates the working-class hero or heroine? You should refer to at least TWO texts studied on the module.

5. Elaine Showalter describes the nineteenth century as a period which saw ‘changes in women’s aspirations’. How do any TWO OR MORE texts studied on the module address these changing aspirations and how successfully are they fulfilled?

6. In what ways and to what extent is sustaining a religious faith depicted as an ongoing struggle in nineteenth-century literature? You should refer to at least TWO texts studied on the module in your response.

7. Dominic Baker-Smith argues that ‘we need utopian literature’. In what ways can the utopian *News from Nowhere* and the dystopian *The Time Machine* be regarded as relevant and necessary in the context of the late nineteenth century?

8. How far do you agree that poetry offers an alternative but equally effective means of addressing social issues and concerns in the nineteenth century when compared to the novel? You should refer to at least THREE poems studied on the module in your response.

9. In what ways might it be argued that the refrain ‘Come buy, Come buy’ in Christina Rossetti’s poem ‘Goblin Market’ reflects a wider concern in Victorian Literature with commodities AND/OR the commodification of human relations? You should refer to at least TWO texts studied on the module in your response.

End of Section B
End of Paper