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 **one** question from **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.

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

Answer the compulsory question.

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

It was a typical summer evening in June, the atmosphere being in such delicate equilibrium and so transmissive that inanimate objects seemed endowed with two or three senses, if not five. There was no distinction between the near and the far, and an auditor felt close to everything within the horizon. The soundlessness impressed her as a positive entity rather than as the mere negation of noise. It was broken by the strumming of strings.

Tess had heard those notes in the attic above her head. Dim, flattened, constrained by their confinement, they had never appealed to her as now, when they wandered in the still air with a stark quality like that of nudity. To speak absolutely, both instrument and execution were poor; but the relative is all, and as she listened Tess, like a fascinated bird, could not leave the spot. Far from leaving she drew up towards the performer, keeping behind the hedge that he might not guess her presence.

The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells—weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were underfoot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him.

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space. The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed-flowers glowed as if they would not close for intentness, and the waves of colour mixed with the waves of sound.

The light which still shone was derived mainly from a large hole in the western bank of cloud; it was like a piece of day left behind by accident, dusk having closed in elsewhere. He concluded his plaintive melody, a very simple performance, demanding no great skill; and she waited, thinking another might be begun. But, tired of playing, he had desultorily come round the fence, and was rambling up behind her. Tess, her cheeks on fire, moved away furtively, as if hardly moving at all.

Thomas Hardy. Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Phase the Third. Chapter XIX.
Extract 2

VIVIE [intensely interested by this time]. No; but why did you choose that business? Saving money and good management will succeed in any business.

MRS WARREN. Yes, saving money. But where can a woman get the money to save in any other business? Could you save out of four shillings a week and keep yourself dressed as well? Not you. Of course, if you’re a plain woman and can’t earn anything more; or if you have a turn for music, or the stage, or newspaper-writing: that’s different. But neither Liz nor I had any turn for such things at all: all we had was our appearance and our turn for pleasing men. Do you think we were such fools as to let other people trade in our good looks by employing us as shop girls, or barmaids, or waitresses, when we could trade in them ourselves and get all the profits instead of starvation wages? Not likely.

VIVIE. You were certainly quite justified—from the business point of view.

MRS WARREN. Yes; or any other point of view. What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man’s fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him?—as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing! Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick! Liz and I had to work and save and calculate just like other people; elseways we should be as poor as any good-for-nothing drunken waster of a woman that thinks her luck will last for ever. [With great energy] I despise such people: they’ve no character; and if there’s a thing I hate in a woman, it’s want of character.

VIVIE. Come now, mother: frankly! Isn’t it part of what you call character in a woman that she should greatly dislike such a way of making money?

MRS WARREN. Why, of course. Everybody dislikes having to work and make money; but they have to do it all the same. I’m sure I’ve often pitied a poor girl, tired out and in low spirits, having to try to please some man that she doesn’t care two straws for—some half-drunk fool that thinks he’s making himself agreeable when he’s teasing and worrying and disgusting a woman so that hardly any money could pay her for putting up with it. But she has to bear with disagreeables and take the rough with the smooth, just like a nurse in a hospital or anyone else. It’s not work that any woman would do for pleasure, goodness knows; though to hear the pious people talk you would suppose it was a bed of roses.

VIVIE. Still, you consider it worth while. It pays.

MRS WARREN. Of course it’s worth while to a poor girl, if she can resist temptation and is good-looking and well conducted and sensible. It’s far better than any other employment open to her. I always thought that it oughtn’t to be. It can’t be right, Vivie, that there shouldn’t be better opportunities for women. I stick to that: it’s wrong. But it’s so, right or wrong; and a girl must make the best of it. But of course it’s not worth while for a lady. If you took to it you’d be a fool; but I should have been a fool if I’d taken to anything else.

George Bernard Shaw. Mrs Warren’s Profession. Act II.
Clara was cheerful and natural, but a little subdued, I thought; and she at least was not sorry to be gone, and often looked shyly and timidly at Ellen and her strange wild beauty. So we got into the boat, Dick saying as he took his place, “Well, it is a fine day!” and the old man answering “What! you like that, do you?” once more; and presently Dick was sending the bows swiftly through the slow weed-checked stream. I turned round as we got into mid-stream, and waving my hand to our hosts, saw Ellen leaning on the old man’s shoulder, and caressing his healthy apple-red cheek, and quite a keen pang smote me as I thought how I should never see the beautiful girl again. Presently I insisted on taking the sculls, and I rowed a good deal that day; which no doubt accounts for the fact that we got very late to the place which Dick had aimed at. Clara was particularly affectionate to Dick, as I noticed from the rowing thwart; but as for him, he was as frankly kind and merry as ever; and I was glad to see it, as a man of his temperament could not have taken her caresses cheerfully and without embarrassment if he had been at all entangled by the fairy of our last night’s abode.

I need say little about the lovely reaches of the river here. I duly noted that absence of cockney villas which the old man had lamented; and I saw with pleasure that my old enemies the “Gothic” cast-iron bridges had been replaced by handsome oak and stone ones. Also the banks of the forest that we passed through had lost their courtly game-keeperish trimness, and were as wild and beautiful as need be, though the trees were clearly well seen to. I thought it best, in order to get the most direct information, to play the innocent about Eton and Windsor; but Dick volunteered his knowledge to me as we lay in Datchet lock about the first. Quoth he:

“Up yonder are some beautiful old buildings, which were built for a great college or teaching-place by one of the mediæval kings—Edward the Sixth, I think” (I smiled to myself at his rather natural blunder). “He meant poor people’s sons to be taught there what knowledge was going in his days; but it was a matter of course that in the times of which you seem to know so much they spoilt whatever good there was in the founder’s intentions. My old kinsman says that they treated them in a very simple way, and instead of teaching poor men’s sons to know something, they taught rich men’s sons to know nothing. It seems from what he says that it was a place for the ‘aristocracy’ (if you know what that word means; I have been told its meaning) to get rid of the company of their male children for a great part of the year. I daresay old Hammond would give you plenty of information in detail about it.”

“What is it used for now?” said I.
“Well,” said he, “the buildings were a good deal spoilt by the last few generations of aristocrats, who seem to have had a great hatred against beautiful old buildings, and indeed all records of past history; but it is still a delightful place. Of course, we cannot use it quite as the founder intended, since our ideas about teaching young people are so changed from the ideas of his time; so it is used now as a dwelling for people engaged in learning; and folk from round about come and get taught things that they want to learn; and there is a great library there of the best books. So that I don’t think that the old dead king would be much hurt if he were to come to life and see what we are doing there.”

“Well,” said Clara, laughing, “I think he would miss the boys.”

“Not always, my dear,” said Dick, “for there are often plenty of boys there, who come to get taught; and also,” said he, smiling, “to learn boating and swimming. I wish we could stop there: but perhaps we had better do that coming down the water.”

William Morris. News from Nowhere. Chapter XXIV.
Section B

Answer one out of eight questions.

2. Compare the representation of work and the nature of working life in the nineteenth century in any two or more texts studied on the module.

3. How do any two or more texts studied on the module confirm or challenge conventional ideas regarding female and/or male sexuality in the nineteenth century?

4. Elizabeth Helsinger argues that ‘Goblin Market’ is a poem about ‘buying and selling’ in nineteenth century society. With reference to at least two texts studied on the module, consider in what ways nineteenth century literature interrogates a culture of commodification and consumption.

5. Henry James suggested that the Sensation novel ‘introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own door’. What aspects of nineteenth century society are sensationalised and made mysterious in Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White?

6. ‘Now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules’ (Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest). To what extent is nineteenth century literature concerned with the fulfilment or rejection of social expectations and/or public duty? You should refer to at least two texts studied on the module in your response.

7. With reference to William Morris’s News from Nowhere and H. G. Wells’s The Time Machine, how far do you agree with Barbara Goodwin’s claim that utopias and dystopias ‘hold a mirror to the fears and aspirations of the time in which they were written’?

8. ‘Once victim, always victim – that’s the law!’ (Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D’Urbervilles). In what ways are social class and/or gender presented as the basis of victimisation in any two or more nineteenth century texts studied on the module?

9. In what ways might nineteenth-century literature be considered a literature of political reform and/or revolution? You should refer to at least two texts studied on the module in your response.

End of Section B
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