

QUESTIONS ON AUTHORS IN C20-21 BRITISH LITERATURE

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***2023 Note: This document's contents are over a decade old, so some links may no longer function, and page numbers need updating to the latest edition/s.**

This document includes versions of my study questions from the following survey courses and upper-division seminars:

English 212 British Literature since 1760 surveys: many courses (2011-2002).

English 336 C20 British Literature: Two courses (Fall 2005 & Fall 2003).

Includes some colonial and post-colonial literature from the period.

To search for a specific author: Use MS Word's Edit Menu "Find" feature—since author headings follow the pattern "Author Questions," just type the author's last name, a space, and the letter q. Titles, pages, and editions are included along with the questions, but for the majority of texts, I have used Greenblatt, Stephen, et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 2 (Vols. DEF) ISBN 13: 978-0-393-92834-1.

AUTHORS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa...", *Anthills of the Savannah*.

Auden, W. H. "The Shield of Achilles," various poems.

Beckett, Samuel. *End Game*.

Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*.

Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, short and full versions.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*.

Desai, Anita. "The Scholar Gypsy."

Eliot, T. S. "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men," "Tradition and the Individual Talent," "The Metaphysical Poets."

Ford, Ford Madox. *The Good Soldier*.

Forster, E. M. From *A Passage to India*.

Graves, Robert. "The White Goddess," various poems.

Housman, A. E. "Terence, This is Stupid Stuff," various poems.

Joyce, James. "The Dead" from *Dubliners*, from *Ulysses*, from *Finnegans Wake*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Lawrence, D. H. "The Odour of Chrysanthemums," other stories and criticism.

Mansfield, Katherine. "The Daughters of the Late Colonel."

Orwell, George. *1984*.

Pinter, Harold. *The Dumb Waiter*.

Pound, Ezra. "The Seafarer," "In a Station of the Metro," "The River-Merchant's Wife," from *The Cantos*, 1.

Rhys, Jean. "Mannequin."

Rushdie, Salman. "The Prophet's Hair."

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*.

Waugh, Evelyn. *A Handful of Dust*.

Woolf, Virginia. "The Mark on the Wall," "A Room of One's Own."

WWI Voices. Brooke, Thomas, Sassoon, Gurney, Rosenberg, Owen, Cannan, Graves, Jones.

Yeats, William Butler. "Sailing to Byzantium," various poems and prose.

CHINUA ACHEBE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Anthills of the Savannah* (Separate text) and "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (2709-14). Please read the latter short piece in conjunction with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

"An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*"

1. How does Achebe justify his argument that Conrad's authorship of *Heart of Darkness* shows him to have been a racist? Do you think Achebe's assessment of Conrad is on the mark, or do you disagree with it? Explain your reasoning on this issue.

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

Assigned: *Anthills of the Savannah*.

Anthills of the Savannah

Note: Achebe peppers his novels with delightful Nigerian Pidgin English, which is difficult until you get the hang of it. No sabi? Ogbale o! You go see [Babawilly's Dictionary of Pidgin English Words and Phrases!](#) Other sites of interest: [The Fundamentals of Odinani](#) and, on Idemili, the following story: [Idemili](#).

Chapters 1-2

1. According to the "first witness" of events, Commissioner for Information Christopher Oriko, how did His Excellency (Sam) come to power? What sort of political atmosphere do the first two chapters establish—that is, how does His Excellency wield his considerable power, and how do his subordinates treat him? (Professor Okong and the Attorney General are two examples, along with Oriko himself.)

Chapters 3-4

2. In these chapters, the narrator is Ikem (an old friend of His Excellency "Sam" and of Chris Oriko), who serves as editor of the newspaper *The Gazette*. What effect does his "Hymn to the Sun" at the end of the third chapter have on your perception of the fictive West African country Kangan's recent history and current situation?

3. How does Ikem's perspective on Kangan's dictator differ from that of Oriko? How would you describe his political philosophy insofar as he has explained it in these chapters?

Chapter 5

4. In this chapter, narrated by Oriko, we are introduced to the white character John Kent, called “Mad Medico” or MM for short. What is his story, and how does he say his friend “Sam” (His Excellency) has changed since he knew him in Britain? Why should the novel include this “European interpretation” of Kangan’s main political players?

Chapters 6-8

5. In the previous chapter, we were introduced to Beatrice Okoh (“BB”), Oriko’s friend. In the next two chapters (6-7), how does she describe and analyze her status as a woman in Kangan, and how does she relate to the important men in her life—Oriko, “Sam,” and Ikem?

6. How does Chapter 8, with its references to the Igbo goddess Idemili and to animal lore, qualify our understanding of Beatrice? What happens between Beatrice and Chris Oriko in the aftermath of His Excellency’s party at Abichi?

Chapters 9-13

7. These chapters detail the downfall and death of *Gazette* editor Ikem Osodi—what is the immediate cause of Ikem’s fall from power? What is the more remote one—what makes his position at the novel’s outset increasingly untenable?

8. Discuss Ikem’s final performance as a speaker at the University of Bassa—what insights does he offer his listeners concerning the plight of Kangan? Whom does he hold responsible for his country’s unraveling situation?

Chapters 14-18

9. Ikem having been eliminated, Chris Oriko is next on Sam’s hit list. But how does he meet his end in the 17th Chapter? And what insights does he gain while on a bus ride to his projected hideaway in the northern province of Abazon?

10. In what sense does the final chapter of the novel—the 18th—counsel hope rather than despair? What elements in this chapter seem hopeful rather than despairing with regard to the fate of Kangan and, more generally by implication, Africa?

Edition: Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. New York: Anchor, 1987. ISBN 0385260458.

W. H. AUDEN QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Petition" (2422); "On This Island" (2422-23); "Spain" (2424-27); "As I Walked Out One Evening" (2427-28); "Musée des Beaux Arts" (2428-29); "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (2429-31); "In Praise of Limestone" (2435-36); "The Shield of Achilles" (2437-38).

"Petition"

1. Who is the "Sir" that the speaker addresses? What genre of speaking or writing is the poem patterned after? What connects the various things concerning which the speaker petitions for redress?

"On This Island"

2. This poem explores the effect of landscape on consciousness. How does it diminish human perspective without eliminating it altogether?

"Spain 1937"

3. How, in the context of this poem, does "war" (i.e. "Spain," where leftists were at the time fighting General Franco's fascists) impact all else in people's lives? Describe the poem's evocation of war's effects both private and public.

"As I Walked Out One Evening"

4. How does this poem explore the way a poet animates and gives voice to surrounding things? What counsel do the voices the speaker hears offer?

"Musée des Beaux Arts"

5. What does the poem suggest about the way art is created and then interpreted by others? That is, what goes into the making of, say, a classics-themed painting by "the Old Masters" of the Renaissance?

6. Aside from art, what might the poem be suggesting about how each person experiences time and suffering?

"In Memory of W. B. Yeats"

7. What does the speaker say about the effect of poetry on life beyond art, as he writes in 1940? What difference does the poetry of Yeats make now? And how does a living poet become a "name" or a "text"?

"In Praise of Limestone"

8. How has limestone shaped the people of Yorkshire, according to the speaker? Aside from limestone's power as a symbol, what limitations of this rock's symbolic value does the speaker introduce towards the poem's end?

“The Shield of Achilles” (1372-73)

9. How does this poem about the creation of an “ekphrastic” shield (look up the term “ekphrasis”) address the concept of heroism in the modern world? What does the classical setting add to the poem—why, that is, describe modern suffering and values through a story about Greek gods and heroes?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

SAMUEL BECKETT QUESTIONS

Assigned: *End Game* (2393-2420).

End Game

1. How would you characterize the dialogue in this play, in comparison to older, more “realistic” drama? Another way of asking this question is, “what is the value of words in this play?” Do they serve the same purpose as they do in older kinds of drama, or not? Explain.
2. How do you interpret the relationship between Hamm and Clov? And why does Hamm keep demanding his “dog”?
3. “Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit,” writes Beckett in an essay on Proust. “Breathing is habit.” How might you use this kind of thinking as a way to describe his handling of plot in *Endgame*?
4. Beckett dealt often with the untenability of love and with the illusory quality of friendship and relationships more generally. How do Nagg and Nell reflect this interest?
5. On page 2401, Nagg retells his story about the Englishman and his trousers. Later, on page 2410, Hamm declares “it’s story time,” and launches into his own little tale. What is the point of this kind of storytelling in *Endgame*?
6. What is the point of the little boy’s appearance at page 2418-19? What do Hamm and Clov think his significance is?
7. What is the “endgame”? It’s said that nothing ever happens in Beckett’s plays. If something were to happen in *Endgame*, what would it be? Explain.
8. A general question: Beckett’s aim is surely not to please an audience—at least not in any simple way. What elements of traditional drama does he reject to strip us of our viewing pleasure? What’s the

payoff for being patient with him? In other words, wherein lies the value of Beckett's postmodern drama for you as an individual viewer?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

ANTHONY BURGESS QUESTIONS

Assigned: *A Clockwork Orange*.

A Clockwork Orange

1. What differences do you find between Stanley Kubrick's film and Burgess' novel? Which do you prefer, and why?
2. What's the point of all that, like, Russian slang and labor-union "O my brothers" stuff, along with the occasional Shakespearian lingo, as in, "what didst thou in thy mind intend?"
3. How might Burgess' story about Little Alex be a parody of the old-fashioned "conversion narrative," whereby the 'umble narrator goes from a state of sin to a state of belief?
4. What connections does the novel make between aesthetics (especially "high culture" art such as Alex's beloved Beethoven) and violence? How does it undercut the longstanding notion that art is necessarily an improving cultural force?
5. Alex is an adolescent—but in what sense might he be said to represent something archetypal about humanity, not just about youth?
6. How does Burgess characterize the various adults in this novel? To what extent are they responsible for the behavior of rascals like Alex, Dim, and Georgie Boy?
7. How, and how successfully, does Burgess' novel reassert the principle of Justice that seems to have been abandoned by the futuristic society and its governors?
8. To some degree Burgess' novel, like Orwell's *1984*, is a dystopian fiction. What similarities and differences do you find in the two texts' handling of the relationship between freedom and order, the individual and the collectivity?

Edition: Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. New York: Norton, 1986. ISBN 0-393-31283-6.

J. M. COETZEE QUESTIONS, SHORT VERSION

Assigned: selection from *Waiting for the Barbarians* (2838-48).

From *Waiting for the Barbarians*

1. Why does Colonel Joll take a group of aborigines (the fishing people) prisoner? Is there more to his decision than ignorance or interrogation plans? Explain.
2. On 2831-32, what shift in attitude occurs in the narrator and his subordinates when the “fishing people” remain at the frontier post for some time?
3. On 2832, what regrets does the narrator reveal about his job as an official in an unnamed authoritarian regime?
4. On 2833-34, what does the narrator discover when he checks up on the fishing people after Colonel Joll’s departure? How does he rationalize his intended course of action with respect to them?
5. General question: a major theme in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the way an authoritarian regime exploits its subjects’ fear (or passion, or need to “belong,” etc.) to maintain order. What other works of art can you think of that explore the same theme, and what conclusions do they reach about this phenomenon?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

J. M. COETZEE QUESTIONS, FULL VERSION

Assigned: *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Penguin edition; see below).

Waiting for the Barbarians

Part I (1-25)

1. In this section (1-25), the Magistrate describes his first encounter with Colonel Joll of the Third Bureau, who has come to the frontier on rumors of “barbarian” unrest. What does the Magistrate apparently think of the Colonel? What is revealed about the Colonel’s understanding of his own commission and about his methods of carrying it out?
2. In this section (1-25), how does the Magistrate progressively unveil a sense of his own complicity in the authoritarian order that Colonel Joll represents more aggressively than he? How does the Magistrate differentiate himself from Joll and others like him?

Part II (25-56)

3. Succinctly trace the relationship that develops in this section between the maimed “barbarian” woman whom the Magistrate meets after she is left behind in town—what draws him to her, in what ways does his desire for her manifest itself, and why is his relationship with her so disturbing to him?
4. A parallel event in this section is the Magistrate’s increasingly self-conscious alienation from the “civilized” order whose values and laws he is supposed to be upholding. Briefly trace this increasing

awareness on the Magistrate's part—what does he say about his own people, and what problem does his outspokenness begin to create for him?

5. The Magistrate's dreams influence him powerfully—discuss what you consider to be the function of the odd dreams he describes in this section. What can we learn from them? Choose one or two specific dream narratives or images and respond.

Part III (57-76)

6. The Magistrate ventures north on a supposed embassy that turns out to be a successful attempt to return his "barbarian" friend to her people. What changes take place in the Magistrate's feelings for her and in his outlook generally (how he regards the barbarians and his own role as a civilized official, etc.)? What factors seem to be involved in bringing about the changes?

Part IV (76-121)

7. In this section, Colonel Joll arrests the Magistrate and subjects him to interrogation and various indignities. Choose at least a few instances of this treatment and discuss Colonel Joll's methodology as an enforcer of imperial discipline and ideology: how does he break down the Magistrate's self-respect and shatter his identity and ideals? In the name of what ideals or imperatives does he do these things? (I.e. what "philosophy" seems to motivate the Colonel?)

8. In his real-time recounting (i.e. the Magistrate narrates things as they are happening to him, not from the perspective of hindsight), how does the Magistrate describe his attempts to resist what the Colonel and his enforcers do to him? To what understanding of his situation does the Magistrate come round during or towards the end of the process spanned by his imprisonment?

Part V (122-43)

9. The Magistrate begins to reassume some of his old authority in the frontier town abandoned by the Empire's baffled soldiers. What does he want towards the beginning of the chapter, and to what reflections about his former and present role and about the imperatives of imperial rule do these first comments give way?

Part VI (144-56)

10. Now settled in (if rather unofficially) as Magistrate of the much reduced settlement, what final thoughts occur to the narrator on some of the main concerns that occupied him throughout the story—his sexuality, his feelings for and treatment of the barbarian girl, his relation to the Imperial order and, finally, his attempt simply to make sense of what has happened to him and his town?

11. Now that you have finished Coetzee's novel, how do you understand the significance of its title, *Waiting for the Barbarians*?

Plot Summary

The Magistrate runs a frontier garrison of the Empire that is said to be threatened by nomadic barbarian hordes from the north. Near the beginning of the novel, Colonel Joll of the Third Bureau military police force arrives with a contingent of soldiers, shattering the town's peace. The Colonel's men round up alleged "barbarians" and interrogate them brutally to find out if they are planning to attack frontier settlements. One of these "barbarians," a young woman tortured, maimed, and blinded and left behind in the town, catches the Magistrate's attention, and while nursing her wounds he begins an oddly erotic but not directly sexual liaison with her that takes up much of the novel's second and third of six sections. At last, the Magistrate pretends to undertake an embassy to speak with the barbarians, but then simply hands the young woman over to her people and returns to the settlement. His embassy announcement draws the suspicion of the Third Bureau, and in the fourth section, Colonel Joll, now in charge of the town, arrests him, isolates him, and subjects him to degrading punishments, culminating in an episode in which he is forced to wear a woman's smock, marched out to be hanged, and then hoisted with his arms behind his back while the villagers watch. Eventually (in the fifth section), he is released to make his way as a beggar, but as the garrison town suffers the shock of the soldiers' departure and then their decimation by a barbarian ruse, he begins to recover much of his old authority, supervising first the fishing-people on the town's outlying areas and, at last, the remnant of the entire frontier town. The novel's concluding sixth section describes the once-placid Magistrate as still confused and plagued by feelings of his complicity in the Imperial order—he reassumes some reduced semblance of his former life, and toys with writing a history of the garrison's ordeal, but realizes that he is probably the least qualified person in the town to undertake such a project.

Edition: Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. New York: Penguin, 1982. ISBN 014006110X.

JOSEPH CONRAD QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Heart of Darkness* (1890-1947).

Heart of Darkness

1. What is the point of providing a "frame narrator"? How does the presence of this kind of narrator affect your view of Marlow's authority as a narrator?
2. On 1892, what does the frame narrator say distinguishes Marlow from other sailors? How is this distinction significant with respect to the adventure that Marlow recounts?
3. What does Marlow say on 1893-94 about the Roman imperial project? How does the Roman project compare to the Belgian (and British) motivations for seeking an empire?
4. Keep track of references to maps—see, for example, 1894-95. What significance lies in Marlow's references to maps? How, for example, do they represent the novella's frequent opposition between light and "darkness"?
5. On 1896, Marlow describes a map image of the Congo River in Africa as being like a snake. What snake-like qualities does this reference transfer to the River, and how does the transference set us up for the rest of the novel's events?

6. On 1897, Marlow meets a pair of women weaving—to what Classical myths does this scene appeal, and why would such an appeal be significant in the context of the story as a whole?
7. On 1898, describe the exchange between Marlow and his idealistic aunt. How well does Marlow's self-description as a realist hold up over the course of the story? Explain.
8. Soon Marlow sets out for Africa on a French steamship, and gets his first look at native Africans along the shore. On 1899, what qualities does he observe in them, and what seems to be his attitude about those qualities?
9. By page 1901, Marlow has reached the Company's Outer Station, and offers us some observations about it. What does he say about the reigning "Devil" in this Outer Station? How does this "Devil" differ from others with whom he has made acquaintance?
10. On 1901-02, what fundamental contrast or contradiction among the Outer Station inhabitants begins to appear right away, as soon as Marlow comes across dying workers and the smartly dressed Company Accountant?
11. On 1903, what is the first description we hear of Kurtz? For what quality or activity is he praised? How does the praise bring up the novella's frequent oppositions between light or whiteness and darkness?
12. On 1904 and following, Marlow reaches the Central Station. How does he describe nature's effects on the Station and its inhabitants? What power does the wilderness have over the Station, and what appears to motivate its occupants?
13. On 1907-08, what view of Kurtz does the Brickmaker (a favorite of the Manager) take? Why does he appear to resent Kurtz?
14. On 1909, Marlow says that he detests lies. Does this implied (and elsewhere stated) preference for truth hold constant in the novella? Does Marlow seem to understand his own character, or is he at times confused about his interests and beliefs? Explain.
15. On 1912-13, how do the Manager and his nephew reveal their resentment of Kurtz in spite of that agent's obvious success as an ivory collector? What effect does their resentment have upon Marlow, who has overheard their conversation?
16. On 1914-15, how does Marlow describe the Congo River and its environs? How does he describe his interaction with the River? What illusion does the River promote? What insight does it provide, at least so far as Marlow is concerned?
17. On 1916, what does Marlow imply is the basis for his ability to respond to the African natives he observes? To what extent does he here invoke the distinction often made between nature and culture, primitive and civilized? Does he accept that distinction?

18. On 1917, Marlow discovers a hut with some firewood and a book. Why does this book impress him?
19. On 1918-19, Marlow says that he came to an important realization as he neared Kurtz's Station. What is the realization, and to what extent does it influence or explain his behavior in the rest of the story?
20. On 1920-21, what commentary does Marlow offer on the issue of "restraint"? What accounts for the restraint shown by the natives, and what accounts for the restraint shown by the Manager?
21. On 1924-25, Marlow speaks of Kurtz as "a voice." Soon thereafter, how does Marlow's manner of relating his story change? What seems to be the reason for his fascination with Kurtz' voice?
22. On 1926-27, how does Marlow describe the partially completed report that Kurtz penned before lapsing into his fatal illness? What effect does that report have on Marlow?
23. On 1930-32, Marlow meets a Russian devotee of Kurtz. What view of Kurtz does the Russian set forth? How does he differ from Kurtz?
24. On 1932, Marlow sees the "symbolic" skulls lining Kurtz's hut? What reflections do those skulls lead Marlow to make regarding the nature of Kurtz' downfall in the wilderness?
25. On 1934-35, the travelers meet Kurtz' mistress. Does her presence affect their (or your) understanding of Kurtz? If so, how?
26. After making some less than condemnatory remarks about Kurtz, Marlow is pegged as a "fellow traveler" of Kurtz. How does Marlow react when, on 1937-40, he finally closes in upon and then encounters Kurtz?
27. On 1940-41, what does Kurtz say in his final illness? What, if anything, does Marlow learn from Kurtz? How does he interpret Kurtz's phrase "the horror, the horror"?
28. Kurtz finally passes away, and, at the text's conclusion, Marlow decides to visit Kurtz's "Intended," or fiancée. Why does Marlow lie to her about Kurtz's last words? Does his lie reflect any insight he has gained from his trip up the Congo and to "the Heart of Darkness"? Explain.

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

ANITA DESAI QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Scholar and Gypsy" (2768ff). 7th edition; not included in the Norton 8th edition.

"Scholar and Gypsy"

1. On 2769-71, what specific things about India and Indians make the sociologist David's wife, Pat, uneasy? What does she think and say about this uneasiness?
2. On 2772-75, what is it about the trip to Manali in the Kulu Valley (where they go by bus to escape the dry heat of Delhi) that revives Pat's spirits? How does the narrator's description of the scenery in part convey the source of revival? Why doesn't David find the trip congenial?
3. On 2776-77, what is so appealing to Pat about the village of Manali proper? What is "authentic" about it in the sense that the villagers don't behave like big-city Indians?
4. On 2778-81, Pat and David come upon a Hindu temple, and argue. How does Pat's way of perceiving and understanding her travels in India differ from David's—what is the big contrast in their perspectives? David makes fun of her confusion over the distinction between Buddhism and Hinduism, but what doesn't he understand about her viewpoint?
5. On 2781-82, what is to be learned about David's interpretation of his wife's behavior and attitude since the beginning of their trip to Manali? For example, why does the sight of Indian tourists gawking at white folks listening to a guru unsettle him, and why is he upset about her striking up a friendship with some Californians?
6. On 2783-84, what does David's accident (he is burned by some radiator water while waiting for a bus) reveal about his true relation to those around him and, most specifically, about his deepest view of Anglo-American culture and Indian culture?
7. On 2784-85, why do you suppose Anita Desai has chosen to make the narrator recount much of the final argument and breakup between Pat and David, rather than offering us direct dialogue throughout? And what final explanation does Pat offer regarding what she believes she has found in Manali?
8. A general question: Why do you suppose a fair number of Westerners have felt an intense desire to abandon their ways in favor of Eastern religions, even to the point of leaving behind jobs, spouses, and friends? Based on what you know about Hinduism and/or the teachings of Buddha, would Krishna or Buddha say you have to leave everything behind and do something completely new?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2A. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97568-1.

T. S. ELIOT QUESTIONS

Assigned: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (2289-93); "Sweeney among the Nightingales" (2293-94); "The Waste Land" (2295-2308); "The Hollow Men" (2309-11); "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (2319-25), "The Metaphysical Poets" (2325-32).

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

1. How does this poem represent nature? What is the relationship between the humans in this poem and their environment?
2. How does this poem describe the passage of time?
3. What keeps the speaker from acting or even making decisions?
4. How do lines 122-end affect your understanding of the speaker's situation? How do you interpret the symbolism involved in these lines?

"Sweeney among the Nightingales"

5. Why is this poem bracketed by references to the violence done in Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon*?

The Waste Land

I. The Burial of the Dead.

6. What elements of the first section set up the problems that the poem as a whole explores: the loss of a unifying mythic consciousness and loss of individual and cultural vitality?
7. To what end does the first section of the poem incorporate historical references, people, and settings?
8. Is there a single narrative voice behind the various utterances made in the poem? To what extent do the biblical references help you construct a narrator or to what extent do they encompass the poem's meaning?
9. What seems to be the value of Madame Sosostris' the clairvoyant's from 42 through 59? Does she have anything to offer us?
10. From lines 60 through 76, who is the "Stetson" addressed by the narrative voice? What sense of London emerges from this stanza?
11. If you are familiar with the grail legends of Arthurian romance, what elements of these stories does the first section introduce?

II. A Game of Chess.

12. How does this section represent sexuality or sexual reproduction?
13. How do you connect this section with the previous one?
14. Why might the reference to Philomel be significant in terms of the poet's task in the waste land as well as to the cultural regeneration the poem calls for?

15. How do you interpret the references to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in this section? Is the poem making a statement about the relationship between the present and literary tradition?

III. The Fire Sermon.

16. To what extent does this section purge our vision of the scenes in the previous section? Explain.

17. If purgation is the theme of this section, what kinds of purgation do you find?

18. This section seems to continue the scenes of sexual frustration and apathy from the previous section. But does Tiresias offer a way around these problems? How might Tiresias be considered a purgative or purifying force?

19. Why is the mention of Edmund Spenser's River Thames a possible turning point in the poem? Explain.

IV. Death by Water.

20. What happens to Phlebas the Phoenician? Does this section advance the plot? If so, how?

V. What the Thunder Said.

21. In the course of this section, what is discovered, and what does the discovery make possible? For whom?

22. What strategies for survival or at least for understanding do the poem's final three stanzas involve?

"The Hollow Men"

23. How is this poem a continuation of or sequel to *The Waste Land*—what themes and allusions does it carry forwards from the prior poem?

24. What do the Hollow Men seek? What has led them to seek what they do, and what seems to be keeping them from attaining it?

"Tradition and the Individual Talent"

25. How, on pages 2320-21, does Eliot describe the tradition and the "mind of Europe" to which writers must connect themselves? How can the past be altered by the present?

26. On 2321, how does Eliot answer the charge that his theory requires "a ridiculous amount of erudition"? Do you find "*The Waste Land*," which Eliot wrote three years after this essay, a successful example of the kind of poetry he is calling for? Why or why not?

27. From 2322-23, how does Eliot characterize the creative process? What does the poet's mind "express"? How does his analogy of the poet's mind to "a bit of finely filiated platinum" help him explain the creative process?

28. What fault, on 2324, does Eliot find with Wordsworth's formulation of poetic expression as "emotion recollected in tranquility"? How does his essay as a whole reject romantic expressivism?

29. Eliot does not say much about how the reader connects to the kind of literature he is defending. What conjectures can you offer on this point?

"The Metaphysical Poets"

30. From 2325-27, how does Eliot defend metaphysical poetry from Samuel Johnson's charge that in it "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together"? (2326)

31. On 2328-30, what is the "dissociation of sensibility" that Eliot says set in from the 17th century onward? How, by contrast, did John Donne and some of his contemporaries generate their poetry?

32. On 2330-32, why, according to Eliot, must poets of our time be "difficult"? How does Baudelaire offer us some hope that the dissociation need not be permanent?

33. Eliot wrote this essay not long before he composed *The Waste Land*. Do you find that his practice as a poet deals well with the dissociation of sensibility he describes in this essay? Why or why not?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

FORD MADOX FORD QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Good Soldier*.

The Good Soldier

PART I (7-88)

Chapter 1

1. Why does the narrator John Dowell write? Does he seem to have gained any wisdom from his experience? What initial impressions does he give us of the Ashburnhams?

Chapter 2

2. What sort of audience does Dowell imagine is hearing him out? What implications does this hold for the narration? (See also pg. 213.)

Chapter 3

3. This chapter functions in part as a disquisition on “Englishness” from the perspective of our American narrator, a well-to-do Philadelphian. Englishness is tied up with the narrator’s impressions of Edward Ashburnham and, to some extent, Leonora. How does Dowell here modify his initial portrait of those two? Is a consistent image of them emerging, or is that not the point of Ford’s impressionist method? Explain.

Chapter 4

4. According to John Dowell, what are “good people”? What makes English society function smoothly?

5. How does the narrator describe the coming together of his wife Florence and Edward Ashburnham? How does Leonora deal with it?

Chapter 5

6. Why is the narrator so relieved at what Leonora has said to him about Edward and Florence? He says he has learned something about himself – what is it?

7. Several of the characters in this novel either have a heart condition or are believed to have one. Why is that important, in the context of this chapter and possibly others?

8. What more do we learn about Edward Ashburnham in this chapter? What does the narrator think of Edward’s relationship with Mrs. Maidan? How does the new information modify what a reader might have thought of Edward before this chapter?

9. What seems to account for Leonora’s rather inconsistent, strange behavior towards this supposed mistress? How has she responded to Edward’s affairs? What does her Catholicism have to do with her behavior?

Chapter 6

10. The narrator has harsh words for all three of the people closest to him – does this sound at all accurate? What does it do to your perception of the account he has rendered so far?

PART II (89-119)

Chapter 1

11. The narrator describes his courtship of and marriage to Florence. What does Florence want from a marriage? How does the narrator assess the character of his wife? What does she apparently think of him?

Chapter 2

12. The narrator says that August 04, 1913 was the last day of his complete ignorance about his wife's conduct. What happens on this day to disabuse him—how does his recognition take place?

PART III (123-210)

Chapter 1

13. In what sense is Florence's death cathartic for John Dowell? How does it make his understanding of her coalesce? Do you find his explanation of Florence's reasons for committing suicide as well as his own reaction to her death convincing? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

14. What is Nancy Rufford's background, and how did she come to be associated with the Ashburnhams?

Chapter 3

15. Chapter 3 in part describes how Leonora and Edward Ashburnham met and were married. How is their coming together structured by class imperatives and sensibilities? What role does religion play in their subsequent relations as a married couple?

Chapter 4

16. What is the "Kilsythe case," and why was it an important event in the married life of the Ashburnhams? (Refer back to Part III, Ch. 3 for the opening part of the narrator's explanation.) How does it highlight the complexity of Edward's nature, or at least of the narrator's attempts to describe this "simple" man? How did the case supposedly transform Edward's sensibilities?

Chapter 5

17. At the chapter's beginning, what observations about his tale's ultimate meaning does the narrator offer? Why is his narration the "Saddest Story" and not a tragedy? How does the rest of the chapter bear out his observations here? Consider the perspectives of Edward and Leonora of each other as marriage partners, at least according to the narrator himself.

PART IV (211-94)

Chapter 1

18. We are offered further perspective on Leonora's boxing of Mrs. Maisie Maidan's ears. What accounts for the fact, as the narrator claims, that Florence's affair with Edward shatters Leonora's dreams of reconciliation?

Chapter 2

19. How might this chapter, in which we learn more about Edward's love for Nancy Rufford the young Catholic woman, and Leonora's conflicted feelings about the connection, be described as structured around the play of triangulated or competing desires? Whose perspective does the narrator cast as central for the present, and what is that perspective?

Chapters 3-4

20. What is Nancy Rufford's understanding of her relations with the Ashburnhams, particularly with Edward? How much weight does the narrator seem to give her impressions of how things stand?

Chapters 5-6

21. What principle of society does the narrator employ to explain the fate of the main characters with whose lives he has concerned himself? Does he himself seem to be satisfied with that principle, either in terms of justice or simple explanation? Refer to relevant parts of the text in your response.

22. On the whole, now that you have finished the novel, do you find John Dowell to have been a credible or trustworthy narrator? If not, why? If so, in what sense might he be said to have been honest with his implied reader and us?

Edition: Ford, Ford Madox. *The Good Soldier*. Oxford: Oxford UP, repr. 1999. ISBN 019283620X.

E. M. FORSTER QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *A Passage to India* (2133-41 Norton 7th edition).

From *A Passage to India*

1. On 2133-35, Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali argue whether an Indian can be friends with a British person. What does Hamidullah's remark that "They all become exactly the same" imply about British imperialism and, perhaps, about human nature? What does Dr. Aziz add to this argument, when he is finally drawn into it?

2. On 2135-36, what details does the narrator provide to start building up a full sense of Dr. Aziz's character? For example, what about Aziz's education and his love of poetry?

3. On 2136-38, what complexity comes into play regarding race relations when the Raj (that is, the British rulership in India) Civil Surgeon summons Dr. Aziz on official business, and then is out when

he arrives? What does Aziz actually do (as opposed to what he thinks) when confronted first by this snub and then by two British ladies' commandeering his hired transportation?

4. On 2138-39, what is Dr. Aziz's attitude towards his religion, Islam? What emotions does being in the mosque bring to the fore?
5. On 2139-41, what accounts for the closeness that Dr. Aziz feels when he meets Mrs. Moore? (Mrs. Moore is the mother of the local magistrate Ronnie Heaslop, and she has traveled to India as an escort for her son's fiancée, Adela.) Why is he so impressed with her? Are his impressions narrated as if they are likely to be accurate? Explain.
6. General question: I know it's hard to tell from such a short selection (we may watch part of a recent film rendition in class to get a better sense of what the novel is about), but how would you sum up Forster's way of dealing with the supposed differences between the British and Indians?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2A. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97568-1.

ROBERT GRAVES QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Down, Wanton, Down!" (2445); "Love Without Hope" (2446); "The Cool Web" (2446); "The Reader Over My Shoulder" (2446); "To Juan at Winter Solstice" (2447); "The White Goddess" (2448); "The Blue-Fly" (2449); "A Slice of Wedding-Cake" (2450). (These questions are for the 7th edition—Graves is included in the 8th, but these selections have been removed and he is now part of the Voices of World War I section.)

"Down, Wanton, Down!"

1. What immemorial conventions of love sonneteers does the speaker make fun of in this stanzaic address to a certain male body part? Does the poem equate "love" with sexuality, or does it try to do something else? Explain.

"Love Without Hope"

2. Love without hope of success is of course an unhappy theme in the obvious sense, but how does the figure of the bird-catcher offer another way to view that kind of love?

"The Cool Web"

3. What is the function of language, according to the speaker? How does the speaker's view challenge or modify the commonly accepted "instrumental" notion of language? (By "instrumental," I mean we usually say that words are tools we use to get things done in the everyday world, or that we use words to point to real things in the world and thereby understand them.)

4. Why, according to the speaker, would we “go mad” if we were to cast off language before the point of death? Why couldn’t we face things without it?

“The Reader Over My Shoulder”

5. Who or what is the “reader over my shoulder”? What does the speaker—or rather writer, in the context of this poem—have against that reader, and why? How does the writer here conceive of the act of composing poetry—how much is expression, and how much is formal and related to editing and craft?

“To Juan at the Winter Solstice”

6. In his book *The White Goddess*, Graves offers his view of myth and its continuing value. Here his speaker says that there is only one true story for the poet. What is that story, and, in particular, why might it be appropriate to dedicate a poem about the story to the poet’s newborn son?

“The White Goddess”

7. Who are the seekers identified in this poem? Why do they go in search of the White Goddess? What seems to be the speaker’s own attitude towards her? Explain this last question with reference especially to the poem’s final stanza.

“The Blue-Fly”

8. What is the speaker’s complaint about the way modern humans think about and behave towards their fellow creatures? Why do you suppose Graves chose to make the blue-fly the subject of such a poem, and why the provocative reference to our fear of epidemics?

“A Slice of Wedding-Cake”

9. What makes the speaker question the persistent chivalric attitude towards women even in modern times? Does he himself seem to have abandoned that attitude? Explain.

10. What does the speaker suggest about the capacity we often attribute to love of transforming individuals into something more extraordinary than their limited everyday selves? How much value (in your own view) should we invest in such idealistic notions?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2C. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97570-3.

A. E. HOUSMAN QUESTIONS

Assigned: “Loveliest of Trees” (1948-49); “When I was One-and-Twenty” (1949); “To an Athlete Dying Young” (1949-50); “Terence, This is Stupid Stuff” (1950); “The Chestnut Casts his Flambeaux” (1952), “Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries” (1953).

“The Loveliest of Trees”

1. Compare the speaker’s thoughts about nature (the seasons, the blossoming tree) with those of Tennyson’s speaker in the “Old Yew” lyrics of In Memoriam A.H.H. How does the speaker’s relationship to nature differ from the ones posited by romantic poets and by Tennyson?
2. Does the combination of a young speaker and a mature consciousness seem appropriate to you? What do you think Housman is accomplishing by giving his youthful speakers such mature thoughts about various topics, in this poem and others?

“When I was One-and-Twenty”

3. What advice does the wise man give the speaker at 21, and then later? What do you make of the contradiction?
4. What lesson does the speaker learn? In what sense might the speaker be conforming his romance to a “type” or general category of experience? What is gained, and what is lost, when we “categorize” our life-events and our thoughts this way?

“To an Athlete Dying Young”

5. Compare this poem to the way Keats, in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” muses on art as eternal and life as brief and painful. What is posited as eternal in Housman’s poem?
6. What insights does the poem offer on how to make the most of a short existence? What is the value of intense reflection on great questions like “the meaning of life”? Can we ever be completely immersed in life, without the need or desire for something like an “outsider’s” perspective?
7. Consider that such meditations on sporting glory are as old as the ancient Greek poet Pindar — what is attractive to many of us about sports? Is it solely the intensity of the competition many enjoy, or is there more to say?

“Terence, This is Stupid Stuff”

8. Compare this poem to Wordsworth’s companion poems, “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned.” What is similar about the dialogue in these poems, and what is different?
9. What is the source of inspiration for Housman’s speaker Terence? What kind of poetry does Terence supposedly write, and why do his companions reject it?
10. What comparison between “malt” (liquor—ale) and poetry? Is he making a concession to his companions, or distancing himself from their opinions? What does he go on to say is the value of his poetry for others—that is, what can poetry do for us that ale cannot?

11. How does the final stanza, in which the speaker refers to the ancient King Mithridates, carry forward the comparison between poetry and malt? What further insight about the value of poetry or literature more generally emerges from this refinement?

“The Chestnut Casts his Flambeaux”

12. What is the relationship between the tavern or ale-house and the natural surroundings? Are they mutually exclusive realms, or is there a connection between them?

13. How does this poem set forth a “stoical” response to life’s sufferings? Do you find it convincing? Do you think Housman wants it to be convincing? “Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries”

“Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries”

14. See Hugh Macdiarmid’s caustic reply to this poem on 2437—what criticism does he offer?

General Question

15. If you had to place Housman in terms of an appropriate era, where would you place him? Victorian, Modernist, in-between? (general question)

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

Selections from the Norton 7th edition only

“On Wenlock Edge” (2043);

“On Wenlock Edge”

1. As with “The Loveliest of Trees,” how does the speaker typify or classify his experiences, or his thoughts? What points of comparison are there between the speaker and the ancient Roman he conjures up? What is the same, and what has changed, concerning both the speakers and the natural setting?

2. In what sense do nature and human convention assert a similar power over human individuality? What seems to be the speaker’s attitude towards the similarity, or the power itself?

3. To what extent does this poem allude to the weight of the cultural past—how much of what the Greeks, the Romans, and others can we bring forward and live by, or at least find value in?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2C. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97570-3.

JAMES JOYCE QUESTIONS

Assigned: "The Dead" (2172-99); from *Ulysses* (2200-2239); from *Finnegans Wake* (2239-43).

"The Dead" from *Dubliners*

1. On page 2172, Lily is the first character to be introduced to us. What is her position in the text—her social class, etc? How important will she be in the rest of the story?
2. On 2173-74, why does Gabriel "color" as if he has made a mistake when Lily becomes upset about the subject of men? What might his reaction reveal about his ability to relate to women and to people of other social classes?
3. On 2174, why is Gabriel anxious about the after-dinner speech he must make? How does he see himself in relation to his hosts, Aunts Kate and Julia? Does the narrative voice offer any enlightenment about Gabriel's thoughts here—or elsewhere in the story?
4. On 2175, Gretta explains why she is wearing galoshes. What picture of her marriage with Gabriel emerges from the interchange (spoken and unspoken) between Gretta, Gabriel, and Aunts Kate and Julia?
5. On 2176-77, what mistake does Mr. Browne make? How does his conduct hint at the rift that is beginning to open up between the men and the women in Joyce's story?
6. On 2179-80, why is Miss Ivors successful in getting under Gabriel's skin? What things has she implied about him that he finds unpleasant?
7. On 2182-83, what is revealed about Julia's abortive singing career? Is she a good singer? What kept her from going on with her singing? Why is the subject of Julia dropped or diverted so quickly?
8. On 2187, why is Mr. Browne unable to understand what he is told about the Monks' habits? More generally, what contrast does Mr. Browne provide in the story?
9. On 2187-88, Gabriel makes his speech. What themes does he offer his guests, and how sincerely do you suppose his words reflect his real views about Kate and Julia, his own self-image, Irish hospitality, and possibly other things?
10. On 2190-91, what effect does Gabriel's anecdote about Patrick Morkan ("the Old Gentleman") have upon the speech he has just made at the dinner table?
11. On 2192-94, what does the text reveal about Gabriel's understanding of his wife as an individual with thoughts beyond her marriage relations with him? Describe the advancing stages of Gabriel's desire for his wife—what makes him remember their "secret life together," and what further excites him?

12. From 2195-99, how does Gabriel's long-time misunderstanding of his wife play out? To what extent is Gabriel able to reflect accurately upon his own motivations, desires, and actions? to what extent does he seem sincere or accurate in his reflections upon himself and Gretta?

13. By the story's end, on 2199, we hear that the snow is falling all over Ireland, on both the living and the dead. What symbolic and predictive value does the snowfall have by this point? From 2187 onwards, what effect has the narrative's mention of snow had upon your perception of events and of the characters' thoughts?

From *Ulysses*

14. What takes place in this chapter entitled "Proteus," on the most basic or literal level? What parallels can you find between Homer's *Odyssey* Book 4 (in which Menelaus tells Telemachus how he was able to get hold of Proteus) and this chapter from *Ulysses*?

15. We know that since his days as a youth, Stephen has rejected Catholicism—what is his attitude in "Proteus" towards the philosophical and religious questions that exercised him so much in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*?

16. Our editors point out the strong contrast between the sunny, optimistic consciousness of Bloom here in "Lestrygonians" and Stephen in "Proteus" and elsewhere, but what in this chapter might recall the "dark side" of Bloom's private existence and his interaction with others?

17. Both of our chapters from *Ulysses* exemplify Joyce's "stream of consciousness" method of narrative. How would you characterize the contents of that consciousness in either Bloom or Stephen? What relationship or correspondence between thought (ideas, images, etc.) and language does Joyce posit when he employs such a method?

From *Finnegans Wake*

18. Like the rest of Joyce's most experimental novel, it seems that the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" selection isn't based on stream of consciousness as was much of *Ulysses*. If Joyce isn't exactly trying to represent how consciousness operates, what, then, is he representing (or accomplishing) when he writes in this new "Finnegans" style?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

Assigned: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Part I (1-61)

1. Stephen's father Simon Dedalus, Simon's friend John Casey the ex-Fenian, and the family governess Dante Riordan, a devout supporter of the priests who disowned Charles Parnell over his adultery with Kitty O'Shea, get into an argument over religion and politics during a Christmas dinner. (28-39) What are their respective positions, and what effect does the arguing have on young Stephen?
2. Aside from learning a bit of Latin and such, Stephen undergoes an intense brand of "socialization" at Clongowes. Discuss one or two of his experiences with adults and/or his fellow students—is the future artist Stephen like other kids, or is there something special about his thoughts and sensibilities (his way of feeling, hearing, seeing, interpreting what others say, etc.)?
3. Stephen's first experiences with the opposite sex deserve some attention. How does he relate to his playmate, Eileen Vance, and what associations does he make between her and the liturgical phrases "Tower of Ivory" and "House of Gold"? (34-35, 43)
4. Fathers Arnall and Dolan give Stephen his first taste of discipline at Clongowes. What is the occasion of this "initiation," and how does Stephen respond to his punishment? (49-61)

Part II (62-108)

5. How does Stephen respond to the political talk of his uncle Charles and others and to his natural environment? What begins to separate him from ordinary children as the chapter wears on, so that, as the narrator says on page 67, "he was different from others"?
6. How does "the night of the Whitsuntide play" at Belvedere (76-91) suggest the changes that are coming over Stephen as he moves into adolescence: What kind of relationships does he have with friends such as Heron and Wallis? How do you interpret the significance of the argument the boys had over Lord Byron? (82-86) How has he begun to understand the various "voices" swirling around him? (88)
7. How does Stephen experience the onset of sexual desire and what is his initiation into full sexuality like? (96-108)
8. What accounts for the alienation Stephen feels towards his father? (96-108) Joyce's novels and stories often dwell upon the difficulties in cultural and generational continuity; how do Stephen's thoughts about his father Simon reflect on those difficulties?

Part III (109-58)

9. Much of this chapter (109-46) is taken up with excruciatingly detailed fire-and-brimstone sermons about the perils of sin and the physical and spiritual torments of the damned. What effect do the sermons have on Stephen as he listens to them? In what sense is his response purely conventional?
10. From 147-158, the narrative describes Stephen's thoughts and actions after the sermons have ended, culminating in his confession of sins to a priest. What is the psychological effect of the confession?

Part IV (159-87)

11. From 159-66, Stephen is in a state of otherworldly ecstasy following his absolution from sin in the previous section, but from 166-173, he listens to the Belvedere school Director's advice about possible entry into the priesthood. How does the Director describe the benefits of becoming a Jesuit priest? And why, on 174-75, does Stephen decide very promptly that the priesthood is not for him?
12. From 176-82, how does Stephen view his family and friends after making his fateful decision to reject the path of priesthood? How does he now see the difference between them and himself?
13. From 183-87, Stephen muses on the course he must now pursue. What new significance does his name, "Dedalus," now take on for him, and why?
14. From 185-87, Stephen undergoes an epiphany of sorts. Characterize this important moment of revelation—what does Stephen see? What does he intuit about his own powers, and about the world around him, from this vision?

Part V (188-276)

15. From 190-94, how does Stephen assess his current state of preparation for becoming the artist he wants to be? How much help will his learning be to him? Why doesn't his mother (188-89) want him to continue with his education by matriculating to University College, Dublin?
16. From 195-99 (and elsewhere), Stephen converses with Davin, and then from 200-06 with the Dean, an English Protestant converted to Jesuit Catholicism. What accounts for his distance from the two—the young fellow student and the old man?
17. From 208-20, Stephen argues with some schoolmates—McCann in particular, about the importance of the era's latest social and political goings-on. How does Stephen justify his lack of concern over such events and demands—why doesn't he care much about universal peace and Irish nationalism?
18. From 221-33, Stephen offers his friend Lynch a budding theory of aesthetics. What are some of the main issues with which Stephen is concerned, and how does he propose to deal with them? (Consider what he says about sublime art and kinetic art; and his treatment of lyric, epic, and dramatic forms. Which of the three does he consider best, and why?)
19. From 234-45, Stephen, having caught sight of his old love interest, Emma Clare, reflects on what she has meant to him. What accounts for his ambivalence towards Emma? What are his reflections concerning the poem he has written about Emma?
20. From 258-69, Stephen converses with his friend Cranly. What advice does he offer Stephen? How does this friend assist Stephen as he moves forward and takes the first steps towards independence and life as an artist—that is, what insights does Stephen achieve because of his interaction with Cranly?
21. From 270-76, *A Portrait* concludes with some journal entries. What is the subject of these entries, and what insights about Stephen's state of mind does the style of the entries give you?
22. In his final journal entry, Stephen writes that he will "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." (276) To what extent might we see Stephen's life up to this point as an

embodiment of Modernist claims about the relationship between an artist and his work, and between that work and the artist's society and historical epoch?

Edition: Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin, 2003. ISBN 0142437344.

D. H. LAWRENCE QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (2245-58); "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter" (2258-69); and "Why the Novel Matters" (2269-73).

"Odour of Chrysanthemums"

1. At what points in the story are chrysanthemums mentioned? What significant change or emotional "fact" do they reference each time?
2. What is the contrast between Elizabeth and Walter's mother?
3. Before she learns about Walter's death, what changes in feeling and thought does Elizabeth undergo regarding her husband, the children, and her situation more generally?
4. What confronts Elizabeth when she sees Walter's body? What new understanding does it give her about Walter and the life she led with him?
5. To what extent, if at all, do you think Lawrence privileges Elizabeth's insights and consciousness over those of other characters?
6. Obviously, this realistic story ends unhappily. Would you call its starkness "pessimism"? Or is it something different than that? Explain.

"The Horse-Dealer's Daughter"

7. Before the family's bankruptcy, what gave Mabel Pervin her sense of independence and integrity? How authentic was that sense—in other words, was it something that needed to be stripped away so that Mabel could arrive at a more accurate understanding of herself and her situation, or not?
8. What first draws Dr. Ferguson towards Mabel? And how does Lawrence represent the nature and value of love, based on the way he describes the encounter between Mabel and Dr. Ferguson?
9. Do you think Lawrence's way of representing love is authentic and accurate, or do you find it contrived? Explain your response.

"Why the Novel Matters"

10. Do the Lawrence short stories we have read—though not novels—"matter" in the way he says prose fiction matters in this critical essay? Explain.

11. According to Lawrence on 2270-71, what is the limitation of the parson, the philosopher, the scientist, and the poet? What effect in the reader does the novelist generate that none of them can? Do you think he is correct? Why or why not?

12. On 2271-73, what does Lawrence say about the quest for absolutes, for a fixed sense of self, and “right and wrong”? How should the novel undercut such demands?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” (2333-46).

“The Daughters of the Late Colonel”

1. What differences does the narrative allow to emerge between Constantia and Josephine? These two sisters lead similar lives (taking care of their father, remaining unmarried, etc.), but what avenues of understanding, if any, do their differences open for us? Or do the differences mask the sisters’ sameness? Explain with references to at least one passage in the text.

2. The Norton editors’ introduction describes Mansfield’s method well—like Joyce, she works by indirections and atmospherics, and doesn’t often state an important point bluntly. Discuss a few instances of this method—how does Mansfield build up a sense of what a character is like, or what the significance of an event might be, without “saying it outright”?

3. The conclusion to the story references the desire on the part of both sisters for normalcy and fulfillment. They seem to attain (at least for a moment) a degree of enlightenment about their lives up to the present time. How would you characterize that enlightenment or sense of clarity? What happens to it in the end?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

GEORGE ORWELL QUESTIONS

Assigned: *1984* (Including the Michael Radford film version).

1984

1. Why does the Party want power? How, according to O’Brien (Richard Burton), does the Party differ from all previous ruling orders? How would you compare the Party in Oceania to, say, the Nazis, or to Stalinist Russia, or Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge in Cambodia?

2. What are the Party's means of control? That is, what are the respective control functions of language, audiovisual and other technology, war, government departments, etc.? Which means do you consider the most effective, and why?
3. In maintaining its control, how does the Party differentiate between social orders or ranks? (How does it keep the Proles in line? How does it keep the different levels of Party functionaries in line?)
4. Does the Party have a view of human nature? If so, what is it?
5. What strategies does Winston Smith (John Hurt) employ to defeat the Party's designs, and what assumptions about human nature and objective truth does he make, whether explicitly or implicitly? Does he retain those assumptions by the end of the novel?
6. To what extent does the novel's unfolding narrative undermine or support Winston's assumptions about the possibility of resistance? If you think the novel undermines Winston, what must then be the point in Orwell's writing a novel such as *1984*?
7. What's the difference between Winston and Julia (Suzanna Hamilton) in terms of the basis for their resistance? Whose resistance, by itself, would be most effective? What happens when their two strategies link up?
8. Consider O'Brien, an Inner Party Member. Is he orthodox in his statements and attitudes? Does a term like "orthodoxy" matter with regard to an Inner Party Member? Explain.
9. Do you believe it would be possible actually to achieve and maintain the totalitarian control that the Party has over its subjects? Has this ever happened, or come close to happening? What is required for "totalitarianism" to become a reality? Is it simply a matter of wresting sufficient authority, or is the issue more complex? Explain.
10. Are you an optimist or a pessimist with regard to our chances of getting along, governing ourselves, taking care of the planet, and so forth? Why?
11. How do you put Orwell's novel in a meaningful connection with the Modernist texts we have read?

Edition: Orwell, George. *1984*. New York: Penguin, 1990 repr. ISBN 0451524934. See also Michael Radford's film version.

HAROLD PINTER QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Dumb Waiter* (2601-2622).

The Dumb Waiter

1. "Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit" and "Breathing is habit," wrote Samuel Beckett, whose ideas influenced Pinter and other post-modernists. How might such a comment apply

to Pinter's plot and his characters' conversations in *The Dumb Waiter*? Consider, for instance, their obsessions and their "small talk."

2. What is the point of the semi-comic routine in which the mechanical "dumb waiter" figures? Ben and Gus receive chef's orders, send up their own fast food, get a reply, and so forth—what does this reveal about them and about their situation?
3. Ben and Gus seem to be something like "mafia foot soldiers." Why is that frame of reference particularly apt if the playwright wants us to treat his plays as a metaphor for modern life? Respond with reference to a passage or two in the text.
4. What ironic turn does the action take at the play's end? How is the plot resolved, if that's the right word for what happens? For example, how does the final event change the way an audience might understand the action and dialogue leading up to it?
5. Though there are comic moments in his plays, Pinter's aim doesn't seem to be to please an audience in any simple way. What elements of traditional drama does he reject? What's the payoff for being patient with his minimalist approach?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

EZRA POUND QUESTIONS

Assigned: "The Seafarer" (1187-89); "In a Station of the Metro" (1190); "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter" (1190).

"The Seafarer"

1. What features does this poem share with the Old English epic *Beowulf* in terms of style and tone? Divide "The Seafarer" into sections—what concerns does it address in each, and how are they connected?

"Letter from Li Po" or "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter"

2. Describe how this poem (a translation from the Chinese of Li Po, AD 701-762) builds a sense of the Wife's feelings, including her thoughts about her merchant husband. How have those feelings changed over time, and what is implied in the final four lines? Would you say this poem reveals more than it conceals, or that it conceals more than it reveals? Explain.

"In a Station of the Metro"

3. Look up "imagism" in a good literary guide such as *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (Google it!). Set down some of the most useful information you find: provide a definition of imagism, and mention the main practitioners and theorists of that style.

4. How is Pound's two-liner an excellent example of imagist poetry? Consider the poem's treatment of its two images—how are they conveyed, and what is the relationship between them? How do you explain the poem's perceptual and emotional impact?

Edition: *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. 4th ed. New York: Norton, 1996. ISBN 0-393-96820-0.

Assigned: from *The Cantos*, 1 (1296-98).

From *The Cantos*, 1

5. Why might Pound use a Latin translation by a Renaissance author (Andreas Divus) to generate his own (Old English-style) translation of a Greek epic, Homer's *Odyssey*? What point does such maneuvering make about the way a cultural artifact like the *Odyssey* has been handed down to us?

6. To what extent is "Pound" present in this excerpt—where does he step into the text, so to speak, and what reasons can you find for his intervention?

Baym, Nina et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 6th ed. Vol. D. New York: Norton, 2003. Package 2 (Vols. CDE) ISBN 0-393-97794-3.

JEAN RHYS QUESTIONS

Assigned: Jean Rhys. Jean Rhys. "The Day They Burned the Books" (Norton Vol. F, 2356-61); "Let Them Call It Jazz" (2361-72).

1. Jean Rhys' short story "The Day They Burned the Books" has much to do with race and social class, but how does the fact that the story is told from the perspective of a child (even if at some distance from the events) affect the exploration of those things?

2. In Jean Rhys' "The Day They Burned the Books," a number of titles are mentioned from among the many the departed Mr. Sawyer had collected: choose two or three and consider what they add to a reader's understanding of the story's main events — Froude's *The English in the West Indies*, Kipling's *Kim*, Christina Rossetti's poetry, etc.

3. In Jean Rhys' short story "Let Them Call It Jazz," what new ethos or perspective results from the narrator's experiences in a hostile and foreign place: London? How do her emotions and thoughts develop before her stint in prison, and how does the song she hears there serve as a catalyst for further changes in her perspective and her ability to deal with her situation?

4. Consider what eventually happens to the song Jean Rhys' narrator in "Let Them Call It Jazz" hears in prison. How does she respond to this eventual transformation? What does the song's transformation suggest about the social and other mechanisms that reinforce misunderstanding and mistreatment of people based on ethnicity and socio-economic status?

Edition: Greenblatt, Stephen et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. E. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 2 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

Assigned: "Mannequin" (2437-42). This short story has not been included in the 8th edition.

"Mannequin"

1. Who are the young "mannequins" aside from Anna, and how does Rhys's story develop the relationship between commercially viable "genres" (i.e. types or varieties) of femininity and the individual personalities of the store mannequins who are paid to embody and demonstrate those types? Are the characters reduced to such stereotyping in the service of fashion, or do they resist it?
2. Anna is the main character, and her presence brackets this short story at both ends. How is she described at the story's beginning, and what purpose does the description serve? The narrator says that Anna gets her new job because of her legs—they gain the approval of Madame Veron's "sweeping glance." How does the rest of the narrative distance us from (and perhaps, at times, implicate us in?) this reductive way of looking at the women in the story?
3. How do you interpret the story's concluding paragraph, which runs, "All up the street the mannequins were coming out of the shops, pausing on the pavements a moment, making them as gay and as beautiful as beds of flowers before they walked swiftly away and the Paris night swallowed them up"? Is this a positive, vital ending, or do you see it as conveying a somber and dehumanizing sense of the mannequins' lives in Paris?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2C. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97570-3.

SALMAN RUSHDIE QUESTIONS

Assigned: "The Prophet's Hair" (2842-52).

"The Prophet's Hair"

1. General question: what features of "magic realism" appear in this short story? What do the conventions of such a genre as magical realism make possible that would not be possible in a story without supernatural occurrences?
2. Discuss a few of the most salient features of Rushdie's style as a storyteller—for example, the way he structures his tale, and the quality of language employed to convey it. What seems to be the narrator's attitude towards the events he tells us about?
3. Why is it appropriate that the moneylender Hashim, of all people, should be so "lucky" as to happen upon the stolen vial with the Prophet's lock of hair? That is, what is it about his way of life, and the attitudes he manifests, that might make him the man to have such an experience? And why does he keep the vial instead of returning it to the mosque?

4. How do you account for the changes in behavior Hashim undergoes once he decides to hang on to the vial—simultaneously (and contradictorily) becoming devout in his religious practices, beating his wife, abusing his children, and savagely pursuing his debtors?
5. What lesson should we take away from the experience of Sín, the thief engaged by Hashim's daughter Huma to steal the vial from under Hashim's pillow, and the experience of the thief's own family (his four lame sons and his blind wife)? Why should he fail, and why should they be restored to health and sight?
6. This story is parable-like in its tone, so it makes sense to ask whether it offers a moral lesson. What do you take to be the moral of the story? One thing to consider is the question, "what happens when something sacred comes into the possession of those who are unworthy of it?" But perhaps you have other questions to pose and explore....

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2C. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97570-3.

TOM STOPPARD QUESTIONS

Assigned: Tom Stoppard. *Arcadia* (Norton Vol. F, 2752-2820).

Of Interest: [Skidmore College Guide to Arcadia](#)

General Questions

1. Consider the play's title: what associations does the word and place "Arcadia" call to mind? That is, where is the real Arcadia, and what does the name have to do with the development of the pastoral tradition in poetry? (Theocritus is one Greek poet you might want to research at least briefly.) To what extent is Sidley Park, where the action of Stoppard's play happens, an Arcadian space?
2. There's much speculation about physics and mathematics (broadly speaking) running all through this play. Explain as much as you can about its significance with regard to what the characters do, say and feel. For instance, Thomasina notes early on that you can stir something together but you can't stir it apart: look up "second law of thermodynamics" and "entropy": how might Stoppard be using these principles to address human desire and conduct?
3. What is the role of Lord Byron in Stoppard's *Arcadia*? He never actually puts in an appearance in the play; he is not a character in that sense, but he is important. Relate the basics of his significance to the play, and examine a few instances where he is mentioned to explore his relevance to some of the themes that interest Stoppard. Why might Stoppard be interested in incorporating real people from the past into a work of dramatic fiction?

Scene One

4. In Scene One, how do mathematics or physics and erotic interests already start to cross paths? Consider the scene's conversations between Septimus and Thomasina: how do those conversations involve both realms?
5. In Scene One, what is your impression of the visiting poet Chater? Consider his conversation with Septimus: what is the substance of it, and how do they manage to conclude the matter for the time being?
6. In Scene One, Lady Croom engages in a spirited conversation regarding Sidley Park's landscaping as proposed by the landscaping architect Noakes. What is this architect proposing to do, and what does the Lady think about it? Why is the art of landscaping such an important topic in this play: what might it say about the interplay of neoclassical and romantic views of nature?

Scene Two

7. In Scene Two, examine the dialogue between Hannah and Bernard. Why is Bernard visiting, and what information does he seek from Hannah concerning Lord Byron? What are Hannah's professional interests: what is she doing at Sidley Park, and what are her notions about the passage from the values of the Enlightenment to English Romanticism?

Scene Three

8. In Scene Three, we return to the Nineteenth Century. What is Thomasina's attitude here towards love? What problem does she have with it? Moreover, explain the cause of the prospective duel between Septimus and Chater: what is the cause of the argument here? How does Septimus respond to the challenge thrown his way?

Scene Four

9. In Scene Four, what does Valentine explain about his project at Sidley Park? What principle of modern physics does he describe to Hannah, and how does this principle reflect upon the knowledge that the present-day scholars in the play seek and gather, and perhaps other things they do as well?

Scene Five

10. In Scene Five, explore the argument that Hanna, Valentine and Bernard get into regarding the nature and purpose of knowledge: does anyone get the upper hand in this argument? How do they begin to pick apart one another's theories? Which of the three characters interests you most, and why?

Scene Six

11. In Scene Six, what new developments are related concerning the prospective duel at Sidley Park: what really seems to have happened?

Scene Seven

12. In Scene Seven, how does Bernard's theory about Lord Byron as the killer of Mr. Chater unravel? Where do Hannah and Valentine's researches stand by now? Whose ideas seem most relevant by the play's end?

13. In Scene Seven, what does bringing the characters from the two respective time frames together towards the play's end illuminate or settle? Why, perhaps, does the play end with a pair of couples dancing: how does their act of dancing invite us to conclude all the intellectualizing, philosophizing and intrigue we have processed up to this point? That is, try to explain the poignant quality of the conclusion.

Edition: Greenblatt, Stephen et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. E. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 2 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

EVELYN WAUGH QUESTIONS

Assigned: *A Handful of Dust*.

A Handful of Dust

Chapter I. Du Cote de Chez Beaver (3-12)

1. What is the social status of John Beaver and his mother? What first impression do they give us of Brenda and Tony Last? Based on your reading of subsequent events, why do you think Waugh chose to begin the novel with a chapter about the Beavers?

Chapter II. English Gothic—I (13-83)

2. In section 1 (13-47), what is established about Hetton Abbey and about Tony Last's feelings regarding his home? What kind of life do he and his wife lead, in what kind of village? How do you understand the basic significance of the term "Gothic"?

3. In section 2 (47-55), what seems to be Brenda Last's motive for starting an affair with John Beaver? And in the third section (55-69), how does their romance progress? What problems between them are already apparent?

4. In section 4 (55-84), what opinions about the budding affair do various characters offer? What kind of "moral universe" would you say this chapter posits?

Chapter III. Hard Cheese on Tony (84-172)

5. In section 1 (84-102), a drunken Tony and Jock almost pay Brenda (and John Beaver) a visit in her London flat, but their indecision saves her from discovery. In sections 2-3 (102-25), what strategy does Brenda employ to keep Tony happy? How does it turn out, and why does it turn out that way?

6. In sections 5-6 (131-65), John Andrew (the Lasts' young son) meets with a fatal horse-riding accident. Almost everyone thinks it is "nobody's fault," but what exactly happens and what factors contribute to the boy's death?
7. In sections 5-6 (131-65), what roles does Mrs. Rattery ("the Shameless Blonde," Jock's girlfriend) play in the aftermath of John Andrew's death? In what sense might she be a significant character in the novel, even though she only appears for a short time?
8. In section 7 (165-72), how does Brenda take the news of her son's death, and what decisions does she reach on its basis?

Chapter IV. English Gothic—II (173-210)

9. In sections 1-2 (173-200), what steps are taken, and by whom, to secure a divorce between Tony and Brenda Last? On the basis of this chapter, what might be said about the class structure that informs this novel?
10. In section 3 (200-10), what does Tony learn about Brenda's character in the course of negotiating the divorce proceedings with her brother Reggie St. Cloud? Moreover, what further change does this chapter as a whole make to our understanding of "the Gothic?"

Chapter V. In Search of a City (211-83)

11. In section 1 (211-33), how does Tony Last arrive at his plan to become an explorer? What is his own vision of the "City" that is the goal of Dr. Messinger's South American expedition? How do you interpret the abortive romance between Tony and a young woman on her way to her native Trinidad?
12. In sections 2-3 (233-66), Tony and Dr. Messinger pursue their goal, engaging in frustrating negotiations with the Pie-Wie natives, getting lost, and finally abandoned by their guides. Meanwhile, Brenda's hold on John Beaver is slipping away as he prepares to travel to America with his mother. In section 4 (266-83), what disaster overtakes Tony? Do his fever-induced hallucinations make sense in light of the novel's prior events? Does any new truth emerge (or does an old perspective gain a new angle) from his ravings, or is it just nonsense?

Chapter VI. Du Cote de Chez Todd (284-302)

13. Tony, fever-ridden, stumbles into the Amazon compound of one Mr. Todd. Briefly, what is Mr. Todd's story, and what happens to Tony as his "guest?" Why is this an appropriately ironic fate for a man of Tony Last's position and views to meet?

Chapter VII. English Gothic—III (303-08)

14. With Tony declared dead, Brenda has married Jock Grant-Menzies and Tony's cousins Richard and Molly Last have inherited Hetton Abbey. How does this brief chapter round off the novel's major

themes? What final transformation has the term “Gothic” undergone — what is Hetton’s projected future now that Tony’s cousins have come into it?

Edition: Waugh, Evelyn. *A Handful of Dust*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1934 (repr. 1999). ISBN 031692605.

VIRGINIA WOOLF QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Mark on the Wall” (2141-48); “A Room of One’s Own” (2153-2214).

“The Mark on the Wall”

1. We know from the end of the story what the “mark” is, but what purposes does it serve for the speaker before that news is announced? Why, for instance, doesn’t the speaker get up and *see* what the mark is? What is “Nature’s game” (2085-86) with regard to action and thought?
2. If you have read much “stream of consciousness” writing, do you generally find it a convincing technique for conveying shifting, flux-like states of mind and emotion? Why or why not?

“A Room of One’s Own,” Chapter 1

1. Why is it significant that Woolf’s essay is partly fictional? Why doesn’t she write completely in non-fictional mode about the limitations real women face in writing literary works?
2. Consider Woolf’s audience. What was the original occasion of “A Room of One’s Own”? What kind of audience is she addressing, and to what extent does Woolf do in her essay what she advises other women to do?
3. How does Woolf characterize “Oxbridge” (i.e. Oxford and Cambridge) on 2092-95 as a material place and in terms of its traditions and conventions? What are the connections between Oxbridge and British life and institutions beyond the universities?
4. What effects does Oxbridge have on Woolf’s semi-autobiographical character Mary Beton? How does Oxbridge limit her and impinge upon her consciousness?
5. From 2096-98, Woolf analyzes the change in relations between men and women since WWI. How do the Tennyson and Christina Rossetti verses she quotes help her make the points she does? What is it about gender relations that she says has changed since the Great War?
6. From 2100-02, what does Woolf point out about the difference between male educational institutions and women’s colleges? What effects does the difference generate?
7. What is Woolf’s closing reflection in this first chapter? What does she accomplish by “casting into the hedge” the day’s thoughts and occurrences?

Chapter 2

8. From 2104-07, what problem does the proliferation of male-authored books and views about women pose? Why have so many books been written, and what underlies the pose of “disinterested” (i.e. objective, scientific, dispassionate) male objectivity? What “conclusion” do all the men, according to Woolf, arrive at?
9. From 2107-08, what underlies Professor von X’s hostile treatment of women? How does his hostility amount to more than simple anger? According to Woolf, what individual and societal needs has male writing about women served?
10. On 2111, Woolf’s speaker mentions a departed aunt’s legacy. What effect does this newly revealed information have on your understanding of “Mary Beton’s” situation? What impact does Woolf say the legacy has made?

Chapter 3

11. On 2113-14, why is the significance accorded to women by male fiction a kind of sham or dodge with regard to real-life women? How can women address this problem in recovering women’s history?
12. From 2114-18, Woolf imagines the career of Shakespeare’s fictional sister, Judith. What happens to Judith, and why? How does Judith’s fate show that “genius” is not above history and material circumstance?
13. On 2121-22, why, according to Woolf, is Shakespeare so little known as a person? What was granted to him that would not have been granted to a sister with equal potential?

Chapter 4

14. From 2122-24, what criticisms does Woolf make of Lady Winchelsea’s poetry?
15. From 2125-26, how does Woolf trace the history of women’s writing from the eighteenth century onwards? Why was the novel the main genre for female writers in that period?
16. From 2128-31, what contrast between Jane Austen / Emily Bronte and Charlotte Bronte does Woolf make? What limitations did Austin and Emily Bronte reject that Charlotte Bronte was unable to reject?
17. From 2131-33, Woolf discusses the “newness” of the novel, its suitability for women writers. To what extent does Woolf index her argument here to notions about the supposed differences between men and women?

Chapter 5

18. From 2133-2141, Woolf invents “Mary Carmichael,” a novelist. What criticisms does Woolf make of this fictional author? What is nonetheless promising, and even startling, about her work?

Chapter 6

19. From 2143-44, what, according to Woolf, did Coleridge mean by his term “androgyny”? Why is Shakespeare an excellent example of this quality?
20. From 2145-46, why is it “fatal” to write solely as a man or as a woman? Why, according to Woolf, is the modern (post-WWI) way of constantly theorizing about gender and gender relations misguided?
21. What exhortation does Woolf offer women in her audience from 2146-52? What does she suggest that women should do to make progress? Is Woolf offering this advice to “women in general,” or is her advice offered to a more limited group than that? Explain.

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

WORLD WAR I VOICES QUESTIONS

Assigned: Voices of World War I Section—read all selections: Brooke (1955-56); Thomas (1956-59); Sassoon (1960-64); Gurney (1965-66); Rosenberg (1966-70); Owen (1971-80); Cannan (1981-84); Graves (1984-89); Jones (2989-95).

RUPERT BROOKE

“The Soldier”

1. Compare this sonnet’s representation of “England” and death with the representation of nationality and death in another WWI poem.

EDWARD THOMAS

“Adelstrop,” “Tears,” “The Owl,” “Rain,” “The Cherry Trees,” “As the Team’s Head Brass”

2. In any of Thomas’ selected poems, examine the effects of war’s shadow on the people and landscape—how does it transform Thomas’ and others’ sensibilities and thoughts?

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

“They”

3. How might this poem be a reflection on the contrast between experiencing something and talking about it? For example, how does the Bishop describe the change that has come over the men after their war experience? How do the men reply?
4. How is the poem a reflection on the concept of individual experience? Why do the men seem to speak as a chorus rather than as individuals?

5. Does the Bishop understand what the men say? What does his manner of processing their reply reveal about his understanding?

“The Rear-Guard”

6. How does the speaker deal with the difficulty of comprehending his own experience even as it happens, down in the trenches, and then back in the light?

7. How does the speaker convey his experience to readers who have not gone through it? To what extent does he “simply describe,” and to what extent does he resort to traditional literary language and devices?

8. How does the poem pit an individual’s sensibilities against a situation proper to mechanized mass warfare?

“The General”

9. What figure does the General cut in this poem? How does the speaker, evidently an enlisted man, perceive him?

10. How would relations between officers and ordinary soldiers differ in modern warfare from the relations that held in pre-technological times? (Say, Caesar and his men, or Alexander the Great?)

“The Glory of Women”

11. What is the speaker’s attitude towards the women—mothers, sisters, lovers, etc. —who he addresses? Does he accuse them of naiveté or something worse?

“Everyone Sang”

12. What is the poem’s situation? What traditional literary analogies does the speaker employ in describing it?

13. Is the poem suggesting a momentary victory of the spirit over gross material circumstance? How do the final two lines complicate this possibility?

“On Passing the New Menin Gate”

14. What is the basis for the speaker’s condemnation of civilian attempts to memorialize those who die in war? How do the New Menin Gate’s inscriptions lie?

15. If you have ever visited a war memorial—Pearl Harbor, Arlington National Cemetery, the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., etc. —what did you see as the purpose of the place, of the words you read?

IVOR GURNEY

“To His Love”

16. Who is the speaker? In what sense does the poem deal harshly with generic expectations for such writing?

“The Silent One”

17. How is this poem an exploration of “antiheroic” sentiment about the psychology of trench-and-barbed-wire warfare—what’s the cost here of survival?

ISAAC ROSENBERG

“Break of Day in the Trenches,” “Louse Hunting,” “Returning, We Hear the Larks”

18. In one or more of these poems, how does Rosenberg enlist the perspective of animals and the presence of nature to reflect on his own experience of war?

Dead Man’s Dump”

19. Rosenberg evidently chose to write this poem with rather “classical” syntax, with archaic inversions and so forth. What does this style bring home about the nature of the situation and experience he describes?

WILFRED OWEN

“Anthem for Doomed Youth”

20. The poem’s title suggests that it is a poem appropriate in form to those it commemorates. What tone and conventions does it set forth as appropriate to the “doomed youth”? How does it ironize or undercut this conventionality?

“Apologia Pro Poemate Meo”

21. How does Owen adapt the conventional meaning of certain words and actions to suit his experience of war?

22. The last two stanzas address civilian readers: what is the speaker’s final judgment on the possibility of conveying or representing his experience to others who have not been through similar ones?

23. Is the problem simply one of language—i.e. there are no proper words to deal with war’s violence and terror—or does the problem lie elsewhere? Explain.

“Miners”

24. How does this poem's analogy between miners' work and soldiering undercut nineteenth-century narratives about the inevitability of progress, the triumph of civilization over material obstacles, of the human spirit over what Tennyson calls in *In Memoriam A.H.H.* "the ape and tiger {in us}"?

25. How, according to the poem by implication, is "forgetting" integral to the process of civilization?

"Dulce et Decorum Est"

26. It is sometimes said that language cannot describe extreme violence or suffering. To what extent does this poem attempt to do so? What is the strategy of representation?

MAY WEDDERBURN CANNAN

27. In "Rouen" and the excerpt from *Grey Ghosts and Voices*, what view does Cannan set forth in opposition to the sort of criticism we find in Sassoon and some other WWI poets? Does it seem convincing as one possible way to make sense of how many people "processed" the Great War, or too limited in perspective to be convincing?

ROBERT GRAVES

From Goodbye to All That

28. Graves recounts his wounding during the Battle of the Somme in mid-1916. What attitude does he describe himself as having taken towards this episode when it happened? How does the excerpt testify both to the confusion that besets any wartime event and to a certain determination to achieve clarity about what has happened?

"The Dead Fox Hunter"

29. How does this poem reconfigure "heaven" for the sake of the Major's battlefield bravery and the kind of life he led? How does its tone resemble "Georgian" poetry like that of Rupert Brooke, while yet taking on a harder edge in its representation of death and violence?

"Recalling War"

30. In this poem, looking back at the "Great War" and revised during the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War that preceded the outbreak of yet another World War in 1939 (Hitler's forces invaded Poland on Sept. 1 of that year), Graves reflects on how the passage of time affects people's understanding of wartime violence and pain. Discuss some of those reflections—which seem most valuable, and why? In addition, how do you interpret the poem's final four lines?

DAVID JONES

31. In the Preface to *In Parenthesis*, what explanation does Jones provide for his choice of title—what is “in parenthesis” with regard to WWI? (In your response, consider the ways in which a parenthetical phrase can relate to the sentence surrounding it.)

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” (2025); “Easter 1916” (2031-33); “The Second Coming” (2036-37); “Leda and the Swan” (2039); “Sailing to Byzantium” (2040); “Among School Children” (2041-42); “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (2042-43); “Byzantium” (2044-45); “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop” (2045-46); “Under Ben Bulbin” (2047-50); “The Circus Animals’ Desertion” (2051-52).

“The Lake Isle of Innisfree” ([Lough Gill, County Sligo, Wikipedia](#))

1. In “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” what does the speaker say he wants to do—why will he go to the Lake Isle and what will he do there? Also, compare this poem to a romantic nature lyric—how does the relationship posited between nature and the speaker in this symbolist-oriented poem differ from that of a romantic poem?

“Easter 1916” ([Easter Rebellion, Wikipedia](#))

2. Aside from praising the Irish Easter Rebellion’s executed leaders, what more complex attitude does the speaker adopt in “Easter 1916” towards the sacrifices called for during the struggle for Irish independence? How does the line “a terrible beauty is born” encapsulate this attitude?

“The Second Coming”

3. What do the last twelve lines of “The Second Coming” suggest about poetry’s power to render great events intelligible, or to project future possibilities based on present conditions? Do the last twelve lines clarify the historical situation, or obscure it? Explain your reasons for responding as you do.

4. What is the source or “provenance” of the Sphinx myth referenced in “The Second Coming,” and what was the point of the original version? What significance does it take on in Yeats’ modern treatment?

“Leda and the Swan” ([Leda, Wikipedia](#))

5. In “Leda and the Swan,” what is the source of the myth that Yeats employs? (See the Wikipedia entry above.) How does the speaker represent the transmission of poetic insight by means of this classical legend? To what extent does the poem respond to its own question about whether Leda “put on his knowledge with his power”? That is, what does the poem suggest about the connection between prophetic knowledge and creative power?

6. What suggestions does “Leda and the Swan” make about the origins of Greek civilization—how does it represent the foundational moments in the life of a people so important to the development of western history? What does this poem imply about the significance of Greek myth as a way of understanding history?

“Sailing to Byzantium” ([Constantinople, Wikipedia](#))

7. The speaker begins “Sailing to Byzantium” with the line, “That is no country for old men,” apparently in reference to the natural world and to youthful human beings. What is going on in that environment that makes it unfit for an aging person—how does the poet describe it?

8. In the second stanza of “Sailing to Byzantium,” how does the speaker convey what it means to him to grow old? How does he represent the relationship between body and soul? And what becomes his priority, now that he knows his end is near? How does he present his decision to set sail for “the holy city of Byzantium”?

9. Who are the “sages” in the third stanza of “Sailing to Byzantium,” and what does the speaker pray for in addressing them? How does this stanza reinforce the need for (and further specify the nature of) the transformation he must undergo from mortality to a state of being that lasts?

10. In the fourth stanza of “Sailing to Byzantium,” what resolution does the speaker make about what he will do when he arrives in Byzantium? What does “Byzantium” represent in this poem? How does this final stanza (and the poem in its entirety) assert the value of artistic form and process over “Whatever is begotten, born, and dies” (6)?

“Among School Children”

11. In stanzas 1-4 of “Among School Children,” the speaker’s stroll among school children leads him to reflect on his present identity and his childhood past. (Yeats himself held a post as an inspector of schools in Ireland.) What does he apparently think of the children before him, and how does he say they regard him? To what reveries does his presence among them lead him, and what do those reveries mean to him emotionally?

12. How do stanzas 5-7 of “Among School Children” follow up on the meditation the speaker has already offered on childhood? What does he suggest about the philosophical systems of Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, which tried to explain the nature and purpose of life? Why does he compare the “images” mothers worship with those venerated by nuns—what insight does he draw from that comparison?

13. How, and to what extent, does the final stanza of “Among School Children” resolve the speaker’s quandary over his present identity and his earlier self? What role does the address to a great “chestnut tree” play in the speaker’s attempt to deal with his disjunctive sense of who he was and is? And what does the reference to dancing add to our understanding of this problem? When the speaker asks, “how can we know the dancer from the dance?” How do you interpret the significance of that question?

“A Dialogue of Self and Soul”

14. What are the Soul’s primary concerns in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”? On what grounds does the Self justify its choice of rebirth over escape from the cycle of life and death? Which do you find has the better argument, and why?

“Byzantium” ([Constantinople, Wikipedia](#))

15. In “Byzantium,” what is the holy city like and what seems to be happening in it, now that the speaker has arrived there, as he said he wanted to in “Sailing to Byzantium”? And as for the speaker, what are his experiences, thoughts, and feelings in Byzantium?

16. How does “Byzantium” explore the distance between ordinary human affairs and the world of artistic production? In “Sailing to Byzantium,” the aging speaker seemed to have figured this destination as an answer to his difficulties. What sort of answer does the present poem turn out to be—do you find “Byzantium’s” vision of the eternal city of art satisfying, reassuring, comforting, etc? Or would some other terms better describe your own response and what you believe to be Yeats’ aim? Explain your reasons for responding as you do.

“Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop”

17. In “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop,” how is Crazy Jane’s response an appropriate rebuke to the Bishop, who privileges heavenly things at the expense of the body? How does she drive home her point about the importance of the body? And how does she explain the soul’s relation to the body?

“Under Ben Bulbin” ([Ben Bulbin, Wikipedia](#))

18. In “Under Ben Bulbin” who is the addressee from the first stanza onward? Who must “swear” to do—and then do—what the speaker tells them to? And who is the speaker to tell them this—where does his authority come from, as this authority reveals itself through the poem’s several stanzas?

19. In the second section/stanza of “Under Ben Bulbin,” what doctrine about “eternity” emerges? How should we understand death, according to this doctrine? And how does the poet’s loyalty to Ireland and its heritage begin to show in this section?

20. In the third section/stanza of “Under Ben Bulbin,” what admonishment does the speaker offer about the need for “tension” in human existence? What does the “violence” the speaker references do for a person? And what understanding of life’s purpose does this stanza encourage?

21. In the fourth section of “Under Ben Bulbin,” how does the speaker sum up the ages of art and their effect upon the societies within which they were created? How did those ages all, in their way, honor the imperatives of form and craftsmanship?

22. To what extent does the fifth section of “Under Ben Bulbin” suggest that the past can serve as the “stuff” of poetic creation? What significance does the present play in this regard—that is, what should

Irish poets of the speaker's own time do so that future generations may remain "the indomitable Irishry"?

23. In the sixth section of "Under Ben Bulbin," how does the speaker describe his coming to terms with death? What words does he require to be carved upon his tombstone, and how should they be interpreted? Does this epitaph refer to the relationship between the poet and his work, or perhaps to that and something more? Explain.

"The Circus Animals' Desertion"

24. In the first part of "The Circus Animals' Desertion," what trouble is the speaker having as a poet, at least for the present time? How do you interpret his reference to the "circus animals" that were always "all on show" until he arrived at old age?

25. In the second part of "The Circus Animals' Desertion," what is the speaker's point in taking himself (and us) back to his earlier creations in the second part of the poem? What enabled him to create them?

26. How confident is he in his ability to recover what has been lost? What course of action does he decide upon? The poem concludes, "I must lie down where all the ladders start / In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart." What is the "ladder" here, and what is the "bone shop"? Where does creative capacity originate?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. Vol. F. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 3 (Vols. DEF) 0-393-92834-9.

Selections from the Norton Anthology 2C, 7th Edition

Assigned: "After Long Silence" (2117); from *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* and *The Trembling of the Veil* (2124-31).

"After Long Silence"

1. What opposition between love and art is set up in this short poem? How strictly is it maintained?

From *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* and *The Trembling of the Veil*

2. In the excerpt from *Reveries* (2124-27), how does Yeats make sense of his long family history and his environment, both as a child and then as an adult looking back on his past notions?

3. In the excerpt from *Reveries* (2124-27), what main reflection does Yeats offer on his plans for "an Irish literature"? What criticisms does he (directly or indirectly) make of his native land?

4. In an excerpt from *The Trembling of the Veil* (2127-31), Yeats discusses his early ideas about the Pre-Raphaelites? and the later painters who rejected them (2127-28). How does he compare himself to his

contemporaries on the subject of art and religion, and what does he apparently think of the views he then expressed to distinguish himself from others?

5. In an excerpt from *The Trembling of the Veil* (2127-31), Yeats tries to explain the effect Oscar Wilde had on those around him—what special qualities did Wilde have as a speaker and, in general, as “a presence”? What reservations, if any, does Yeats express about Wilde’s pronouncements and influence?

6. In the last few excerpts from *The Trembling of the Veil* (2127-31), Yeats writes about his early poem “Innisfree” and about his membership in The Rhymers’ Club. Does his description of “Innisfree’s” genesis sound complete enough to be convincing? How does Yeats describe his relationship to the Rhymers and his relative lack of knowledge about the Classical backgrounds of English literature?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 7th ed. Vol. 2C. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 0-393-97570-3.