

QUESTIONS ON AUTHORS IN C19 BRITISH ROMANTIC 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 457 British Romantic Literature: One course (Spring 2006).

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

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., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN Package 2 (Vols. DEF) ISBN 13: 978-0-393-92834-1. Some page numbers still need to be upgraded to 8th edition.

AUTHORS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park, Persuasion, Pride and Prejudice.*

Barbauld, Anna. "Washing-Day."

Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence & of Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

Burke, Edmund. From *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

Byron, George Gordon. *Manfred*, from *Don Juan*, other poems, from *Letters.*

Coleridge, Samuel T. "Kubla Khan," various poems, from *Biographia Literaria*, etc.

De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, selected essays.

Godwin, William. From *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice.*

Hazlitt, William. "On Gusto," "My First Acquaintance with Poets," "The French Revolution," from *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, "On Personal Identity," "Originality," "On the Elgin Marbles."

Hogg, James. "Some Terrible Letters from Scotland," *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner.*

Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn," various poems, from *Letters.*

Lamb, Charles. "Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago."

Landon, Letitia. "The Bride of Lindorf."

Landor, Walter S. Various poems.

Paine, Thomas. From *The Rights of Man.*

Peacock, Thomas L. "The Four Ages of Poetry."

Polidori, John. "The Vampyre."

Robinson, Mary. "The Haunted Beach," various poems.

Scott, Sir Walter. *Ivanhoe.*

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein.*

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. From *Prometheus Unbound*, other poems, "A Defence of Poetry."

Smith, Charlotte. "Written at the Close of Spring," various poems.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. From *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

Wordsworth, Dorothy. From *Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals*.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, from *The Prelude*, "Tintern," other poems.

JANE AUSTEN QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Mansfield Park*.

Mansfield Park

1. Jane Austen seems to have considered *Mansfield Park* her best work, but many readers don't take kindly to Fanny Price as the heroine. Why might that be so? Do you feel that way about her, or do you find her an attractive and sympathetic character? Explain.
2. Our film, directed by Patricia Rozema and starring Frances O'Connor as Fanny, is best described as a modern interpretation rather than a detailed rendering of Austen's novel into a new medium. How do you think the film compares to the novel? Which do you prefer, and why?
3. Jane Austen, like Sir Walter Scott, is widely considered a conservative novelist who favors the interests and values of the landed gentry against the changes gathering in England during the Regency Period. On the whole that view is certainly correct, but how might a careful reading show Austen's work as something more than just an apology for all things old-fashioned and semi-aristocratic?
4. Why is the Crawford-led theatrical interlude such an important challenge to the value system operative in *Mansfield Park* itself and in the conduct of the Bertrams and Fanny Price? Which values win out in the end, and how do they win out?
5. How much of a role does the narrator of our story play in forming our perceptions of some of the characters aside from Fanny Price—how much access are we given to their "consciousness"? How much do we find out directly about what is supposedly going on inside the characters—their thoughts and feelings—and how much of what we find out seems to flow from the narrator's attitude towards them? Choose an instance or two and discuss.
6. It's clear that there are major contrasts in life at Portsmouth (where Fanny's parents live and where she is sent when she refuses to marry Henry Crawford) and life at *Mansfield Park*. But what similarities in perspective can you find amongst the representatives of these very different worlds?
7. What makes Edmund and Fanny an appropriate couple, a love match? What qualities do they share, and how do they differ?

Edition: Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. Ed. Jane Stabler. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. 019280264X.

Assigned: *Persuasion*. (Separate text; see page bottom for edition details.)

Persuasion

Volume 1, Chapter 1

1. What is the status and current situation of the Elliot clan—that is, what anxieties beset Sir Walter and his two favorites Elizabeth and Mary? How does the narrator size up the position of Anne, the least favored daughter?
2. What attitude does the narrator imply we should take regarding Sir Walter's evident concern for matters of beauty, rank, and wealth? Explain with reference to one or more passages.

Volume 1, Chapter 2

3. What motivates Lady Russell to help Sir Walter Elliot and his family? How does the narrator maintain Lady Russell as a respectable figure while at the same time making clear the limitations of her character? What advantage might it be to Jane Austen as a novelist to criticize without necessarily condemning or harshly satirizing some of her least admirable characters?

Volume 1, Chapter 3

4. Why does Sir Walter Elliot at first look coldly on renting Kellynch Hall to a navy man—what specific objections does he make? How does Mr. Shepherd bring him around to an agreement with Admiral Croft?

Volume 1, Chapter 4

5. This chapter recounts the brief (two-month) romance between Anne and Captain Wentworth seven years before the present narration. Why did the attachment go wrong, and what is unusual about the development of Anne's sensibilities and opinions from that point forwards—what separates her from the rest of her family?

Volume 1, Chapter 5

6. While Sir Walter and Elizabeth (along with Mrs. Clay) travel to Bath, Anne stays behind to tend to her sister Mary at Uppercross Cottage. What qualities of observation does Anne show with regard to her own position in the family and the relations between the Elliots and the Musgroves (i.e. the family of Mary's husband Charles)? Mainly, how does she deal with Mary's complaints and Lady Russell's snubs, and how does she think of Miss Louisa and Henrietta Musgrove?

Volume 1, Chapter 6

7. Anne continues her stay with her sister Mary and Mary's husband Charles Musgrove. What role develops for her there, and what considerations enable the Musgroves to treat her as they do? How does Anne learn of the visit of her old flame Captain Frederick Wentworth?

8. In this chapter we are introduced to the Admiral's wife, Mrs. Croft. Since Jane Austen is excellent at creating suitable first impressions of her characters, examine what she chooses to tell us about Mrs. Croft—what does she include in her description? What doesn't she include?

Volume 1, Chapter 7

9. How does Captain Frederick Wentworth behave towards Anne when he visits the Musgroves? What private thoughts of each of these two former intimates does the narrator pass along to us? What shape do you predict their new romance will take, based upon what you find in this chapter?

Volume 1, Chapter 8

10. With Captain Wentworth a steady presence now, he and Anne can't avoid awkward meetings. Describe at least one of those meetings—what barrier remains between them? And how do Mr. and Mrs. Croft—i.e. Sophia and the Admiral—serve as a model couple in this chapter?

11. The behavior of the elder Musgroves in this chapter seems rather insincere—they lament over their departed son Richard, who served for a time under Captain Wentworth. Do you think Austen condemns insincerity altogether, or only some forms or degrees of it? Explain with reference to the text.

Volume 1, Chapter 9

12. How does this chapter develop the significance of jealousy in love relationships? How does the arrival of the curate Charles Hayter allow Austen to examine this feeling so closely associated with love? To what extent is Anne jealous with regard to Captain Wentworth, who has become the object of Henrietta and Louisa's attentions?

13. In what sense do considerations of love, marriage, and property seem mingled together in this chapter, at least with regard to the Musgroves? Explain with direct reference to the text.

Volume 1, Chapter 10

14. What powers of observation and sentiment does Captain Wentworth show in this chapter, with regard to Louisa and Henrietta as well as Anne? Why might this chapter be seen as an important one in the renewal of the relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth?

Volume 1, Chapter 11

15. In this chapter, Captain Wentworth visits his old navy friend Captain Harville, with whom another navy man, Captain Benwick, is staying. What view of navy men and their ways has Austen so far presented in *Persuasion*? In what sense do Wentworth and his associates serve as an alternative model of masculine behavior and sentiment?

16. What advice does Anne offer the unfortunate Captain Benwick regarding his taste for poetry? How does Anne apparently conceive of the difference in function between poetry and non-fiction prose such as literary letters and moral treatises? How might we connect Anne's advice to Jane Austen's interest in exploring love relationships in her novels? (How, that is, does a novel offer different opportunities to explore relationships than non-fiction prose?)

Volume 1, Chapter 12

17. In this chapter, Anne's male cousin takes notice of her, and Louisa foolishly leaps onto the seaside pavement, suffering a bad concussion. What changes have come over Anne in terms of her appearance and her spirits?

18. How do the main characters at the scene of Louisa's fall acquit themselves? Who behaves most sensibly? Are there any surprises here?

19. What effect does Louisa's fall—an unforeseen event—have upon the budding renewal of intimacy between Anne and Captain Wentworth?

Volume 2, Chapter 1

20. In this chapter, Anne accompanies Lady Russell to Kellynch Hall, now occupied by Admiral and Sophy Croft. What feelings does this visit to her old home occasion in Anne?

Volume 2, Chapters 2-3

21. In Chapter 14, Captain Benwick stirs some attention, but does not visit, and attentions shift to Anne's cousin Mr. Elliot, whom Anne meets in Chapter 15. How does Anne size up the person and motivations of this young gentleman?

22. How would you explain Austen's possible motive in dwelling upon the sensibilities of such characters as Sir Walter and his daughter Elizabeth? Is Sir Walter, in particular, merely a caricature or an object of satire to be dismissed, or can we learn something from heeding his ceaseless comments on the pageantry of life and his denigration of others?

Volume 2, Chapter 4

23. This chapter turns on the visit of the Elliots' relation, the Dowager Viscountess Lady Dalrymple. Describe the polite argument Anne engages in with her cousin Mr. Elliot regarding the value of renewing the Elliot's favor with such a visitor—how, for instance, does Anne define "good company," and how does Mr. Elliot rebut her?

Volume 2, Chapter 5

24. How does Anne's renewal of her friendship with Mrs. Smith establish a counterbalance to the Elliot way of thinking about friends and relations? What, for Anne, is a "friend," and what does she seem to view as her responsibilities towards friends?

Volume 2, Chapter 6

25. What explanation does Anne give for this chapter's surprising new development—the match between Louisa Musgrove and Captain Benwick? How are these two supposedly suited to each other?

26. What is the subject of the conversation between Anne and Admiral Croft when the two meet in Bath? How well do they agree on the match between Louisa and Captain Benwick?

Volume 2, Chapters 7-8

27. Who has the advantage in emotional position so far in the continuing saga of Anne and Captain Wentworth? Explore the hints of the sensibilities of each with regard to relative position.

Volume 2, Chapters 9-10

28. In Chapter 9, what does Anne's friend Mrs. Smith reveal to her about the character and motives of young Mr. Elliot? Describe also the process whereby this information comes to light—what accounts for Mrs. Smith's method of revelation here?

Volume 2, Chapter 11

29. How does Anne (conversing with Captain Harville) compare the relative emotional characteristics of men and women? To what extent does the unfolding of this chapter complicate what Anne says on this issue? Explain.

30. Anne learns of Captain Wentworth's agony in a letter—why, with some reference to the way in which the novel has handled its characters' emotional states up to this point, is it appropriate that a letter should be the means by which the Captain initially communicates his sentiments? And what mistakes does he think he made after his first courtship with Anne?

Volume 2, Chapter 12

31. At last, the happy ending comes to pass. Anne and Captain Wentworth are married. How does the narrator deal with the other characters—Anne's family and Lady Russell in particular? Are you left with a worse impression of them than ever, or is the picture softened? How might the statements in this chapter amount to a sifting or sorting out of relative merits amongst such characters?

General Question

32. How well do you think the film production captures the novel's characters, situations, and overall significance? What differences did you find between the book and the film? Which did you like better, and why?

Edition: Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. Eds. Deidre Shauna Lynch and James Kinsley. 2nd. Edition. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. ISBN 0192802631.

Assigned: *Pride and Prejudice*. (Separate edition; see below.) We will also watch the 2005 film by Joe Wright that stars Keira Knightley as Elizabeth and Matthew MacFadyen as Mr. Darcy.

Pride and Prejudice

Note: the questions below are for the most part general and allow wide latitude in choosing episodes for your response, so as an aid to recollection and choosing passages, you might find it useful to consult chapter summaries such as those at <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-prideprejudice/>. And [The Republic of Pemberley](#), among other sites, offers a full electronic version of the novel.

Pride and Prejudice

1. Austen revels in crafting images of Regency patriarchs like Mr. Bennet—what do you think of this character's judgment: choose one or more from among these considerations: how well does he deal with his wife and with the "silliest" among his several daughters—Lydia in particular? What terms is he on with his wiser daughters Elizabeth and Jane? What does he apparently think about the significance of marriage?
2. The title of the novel might lead us to suppose that the term "pride" belongs solely to Mr. Darcy, while "prejudice" is Elizabeth's tendency. What's wrong with that assumption? Discuss one or two brief episodes in the novel where things turn out to be more complicated than we might have supposed in this regard—how do these episodes put pride and prejudice into a relationship rather than keeping them separate?
3. Austen isn't shy of criticizing her more flawed characters, but she seldom condemns even the worst or the most trivial among them. What advantage might she gain from avoiding harsh condemnations or dismissals? Consider the treatment accorded by Austen to the ignorant and sanctimonious Mr. Collins—how does her narrator (aided by some of the novel's characters) note the man's flaws without condemning him altogether?
4. An alternative to the above question—how does the narrator bring out the flaws of one or more of the following: Mr. Wickham, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Miss Bingley, or other minor characters without resorting to outright condemnation of them? As in the previous question, what does Austen gain, or what opportunities does she preserve, by exercising this kind of restraint in judgment?
5. The fancy term "epistolary" critics sometimes use in reference to Austen's novels refers to the many letters that are written and read in them. Focus on one such letter in *Pride and Prejudice*, and discuss its significance in terms of the novel's plot movement and, more importantly, in terms of one or

more of its major themes. What can a letter reveal that actual interpersonal contact sometimes can't? What other advantages might letter-writing or letter-reading have for the characters involved, and for the narrator who is telling the story?

6. Austen's novels are filled with deft irony—often, what a character says isn't what he or she means; similarly, sometimes an utterance later takes on a significance of which (due to changing circumstances or new information) its speaker couldn't have been aware at the time. Choose a brief passage or episode where the narrator treats a character, event, or idea ironically and explain how and to what end the irony functions.

7. Charlotte Lucas' acceptance of Mr. Collins's belated proposal shocks the sensibilities of her friend Elizabeth Bennet. But in terms of the various views of marriage set forth in this novel, how might Charlotte's notions about that institution be interpreted in a more or less positive, or at least neutral, way? Why is it rather odd that Elizabeth should be so surprised at her friend's decision—what does this reaction tell us about Elizabeth's powers of perception and judgment?

8. Jane Bennet (often called "Miss Bennet") is at first disappointed when Mr. Bingley fails to propose to her, but in the end things work out for them. What similarities and contrasts do you find in this pair's courtship and eventual union with those of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy?

9. How do Elizabeth's aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, serve almost as a second set of parents to her and her sisters? What deficiencies or limitations in the real parents—Mr. and Mrs. Bennet—do they partly make up for, and how do they (along with Darcy) preserve the respectability of the Bennets when Lydia elopes?

10. "Place" (in the sense of physical location, but not excluding "social rank") is an important concept in Jane Austen, whose novels deal with people whose present identity and future prospects are wrapped up with their estates. Discuss one episode in which you find this emphasis on physical location and detail significant in terms of the novel's action and themes. One prominent example would be Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley in the opening chapter of Volume 3.

11. Consider the novel's concluding chapters in terms of its balancing act between "romance" and "social satire." Which, if either, seems to predominate, and on what passages or episodes do you base your judgment? In the end, what does Jane Austen seem to be telling us about what makes a marriage appropriate?

12. Our film, directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew MacFadyen as Mr. Darcy, is considerably shorter than the older BBC version. How well do you think the film captures or compares to the novel? What would it be unreasonable to expect the film to capture about the novel? Still, what does the film add to your understanding of the book?

Edition: Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Oxford: Oxford UP, repr. 2005. ISBN 0192802380.

ANNA BARBAULD QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Washing-Day" (37-38).

"Washing-Day"

1. How does this poem make fun of the usual way of treating pastoral subjects in poetry?
2. What connections does the speaker make between writing verse and doing the laundry?
3. What recollections of her mother and grandmother does the speaker pass along?

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

WILLIAM BLAKE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (81-97), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (110-22).

Songs of Innocence [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum, Title Page](#) and [Frontispiece](#)

Note: [The William Blake Archive](#) offers complete copies of Blake's major works, and is well worth using—below, I have included links to the plates for the specific poems we are covering, so please have a look at them if your time permits, especially if you are doing a presentation on Blake. Attending not only to the words but to the imagery surrounding and intertwining with them may help you develop some very promising ways to interpret the poems. Blake is not strictly a poet—even his words are part of works of visual art, so it's best to keep that in mind when you enjoy his poetry. The Archive allows you to magnify plate images and to view comparative copies.

General Questions

1. What do you consider to be the task or purpose of *Songs of Innocence*? In other words, do the songs teach us anything? What might the title itself *Songs of Innocence* add to our understanding of this purpose—how does it lend itself to two different interpretations of the songs' perspective on innocence?
2. Are adult limitations in understanding different in kind from a child's limitations? What bounds the perceptions of an adult? What bounds the perceptions of a child? Can you remember some feeling, perception, or incident from your childhood that suggests the difference between a grown-up's understanding of either very joyful or very distressing things and the understanding of a child? If you can (and it's not something you don't want to write about) discuss it as part of your response.

"Introduction" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

3. In the Introductory lyric, what is the child's role in this poem? In what circumstances does he appear to the piper, and when does he choose to vanish? Also trace the progression of the boy's demands—what is the piper expected to do, and why?

4. How does the piper react to the child's requests—what does he do in response to them? How does his task take shape as he tries to do what the child suggests? Is that task simply to sing joyful songs, or is it more complex? If so, how?

"The Ecchoing Green" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#), and [Continuing Plate](#)

5. In "The Ecchoing Green," how do the poem's aged characters (as reported in the second stanza, lines 11-20) perceive the children's joyful play? To what extent do they seem to connect to it, and in what way?

6. In "The Ecchoing Green," how does the child speaker interpret the passage of time? That is, how does the child view the cessation of play and the coming on of night? What difference is there between this young speaker's view and that of the poem's adults?

"The Lamb" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

7. In "The Lamb," how are the child, the lamb, and Christ (the Lamb of God) set in relation to one another? Why is it so easy for the child to identify the lamb's creator, and so easy to invoke God's blessing on the lamb? What traditional perspective on (or dimension of) the religious symbolism is *not* part of this poem?

"The Little Black Boy" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#) and [Continuing Plate](#)

8. In "The Little Black Boy," where might the young speaker have learned that he is "bereaved of light"? How would you characterize the way he initially interprets the significance of his race and that of the white "English boy" he mentions?

9. In "The Little Black Boy," how does the child's mother accommodate his understanding and yet correct it? What story does she tell him? What is the significance of "clouds" in that story? How does she teach him to view racial difference?

"The Chimney Sweeper" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

10. In "The Chimney Sweeper," to what extent does the young speaker interpret his situation—practically a form of industrial-age slavery—in a positive light? Does the content of his narration undercut his innocent trust in God? If so, how?

11. In "The Chimney Sweeper," what is the speaker's relationship to little Tom Dacre? How does he try to comfort Tom? How do you interpret the significance of Tom's dream as well as the concluding stanza, with its final line consisting of an "if/then" moral pronouncement?

"The Divine Image" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

12. In “The Divine Image,” why are “mercy, pity, peace, and love” good attributes in this poem—what sanctifies them? How do you interpret the moral significance of this poem whose contrary companion is to be found in “The Human Abstract” from *Songs of Experience*?

“Holy Thursday” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

13. In “Holy Thursday,” how does the speaker describe the annual progression of the children from their charity schools to St. Paul’s Cathedral in London? What images does the speaker employ to describe them, and to what effect? Is this poem less “innocent-sounding” than some of the others? If so, why—what do certain of its lines or phrases suggest about the true nature of “charity”?

“Nurse’s Song” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

14. In “Nurse’s Song,” what is the difference in the way the Nurse perceives the children’s playing and their own understanding of their day’s events? How does an adult perceive time (and play) differently than a child? If this poem is a gentle competition between children and an adult, who wins—or perhaps the question should instead be, “what is the outcome?”

“Infant Joy” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

15. In “Infant Joy,” we hear a brief dialogue between a newborn child and a singer, perhaps the one who takes up the task at the beginning of *Songs of Innocence*. What does the poem suggest happens to us when we transition from a nameless being to one endowed with a name? What is gained, and what is lost? Furthermore, in this poem the child names herself—what is the significance of that?

Songs of Experience [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum, Title Page](#) and [Frontispiece](#)

“Introduction” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

16. In the “Introduction,” what is the difference between the “Piper” of the introduction to *Songs of Innocence* and the “Bard” in *Songs of Experience*? What might we suppose to be the Bard’s task in the latter collection, which was created some five years after *Songs of Innocence*?

17. In the “Introduction,” how do you interpret the persistent nature-symbolism—the references to “Earth,” light and darkness, the “starry floor” and “watry shore,” and so forth? What question does the poem ask by way of initiating *Songs of Experience*?

“Earth’s Answer” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

18. In “Earth’s Answer,” who does Earth say prevents her from being regenerated—in what manner and to what end does he hinder Earth’s regeneration? What ideal relationship between nature and humanity does the poem imply, and what is the relationship as it stands in the poem?

“The Clod and the Pebble” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

19. In "The Clod and the Pebble," is the Clod's interpretation of love privileged? Is the Pebble's? Or do both have some legitimacy or power? What "experienced" understanding of love emerges when you put both interpretations together?

"Holy Thursday" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

20. In "Holy Thursday," how has the speaker's perspective changed from the corresponding poem in *Songs of Innocence*? What allows the speaker to see things differently? What has been gained, and what lost, with the change in perspective?

21. In "Holy Thursday," how do you understand the poem's references to natural things—sun, rain, fields, thorns, etc.? What do they add to our perspective on the children's situation? How do they differentiate the poem from its counterpart in *Songs of Innocence*?

"Chimney Sweeper" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

22. Compare "The Chimney Sweeper" to its companion poem in *Songs of Innocence*. What allows the speaker to see things differently? What has been gained, and what lost, with the change in perspective?

23. In "The Chimney Sweeper," what does the child say about his parents, their conception of God, and God's Priest and King? What enables the parents to constitute a heavenly realm from the misery that surrounds them?

"Nurse's Song" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

24. Compare "Nurse's Song" to its companion poem in *Songs of Innocence*. What difference in perspective distinguishes the Nurse in the poem of experience from the one in the poem of innocence? In addition, how do you interpret the final line, in which the Nurse insists that the children are wasting their "winter and night in disguise"?

"The Sick Rose" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

25. In "The Sick Rose," what does the worm or caterpillar symbolize? Moreover, characterize the unhealthy sexuality figured by this poem: what has gone wrong?

26. Compare "The Sick Rose" with its unassigned companion in *Songs of Innocence*, ["The Blossom,"](#) which runs as follows: "Merry Merry Sparrow / Under leaves so green / A happy Blossom / Sees you swift as arrow / Seek your cradle narrow / Near my Bosom. / Pretty Pretty Robin / Under leaves so green / A happy Blossom / Hears you sobbing sobbing / Pretty Pretty Robin / Near my Bosom." How does the latter poem re-imagine sexual experience?

"The Fly" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

27. With regard to “The Fly,” see *King Lear* 4.1, where Gloucester says “As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods. / They kill us for their sport.” To what extent is the speaker’s thought about the fly in Blake’s poem similar? Is his identification with the fly uplifting or pessimistic? What power is attributed to “thought”?

“The Tyger” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

28. In “The Tyger,” the speaker in part imagines the creation of the tyger. How and from what “materials” is the tyger created? Who is the creator? What is the significance of the poem’s references to “fire,” “burning,” and the “furnace” with respect to the tyger’s creation?

29. In “The Tyger,” do you understand Blake’s beast to be a “tyger of the mind” — an imaginary or symbolic tiger — rather than an existing, flesh-and-blood animal? Or would giving an either/or response oversimplify the matter? Explain the reasons for responding as you do.

30. In “The Tyger,” what emotional stance or progression does the poem imply in the speaker’s contemplation of the Tyger and the process whereby it came to exist? In particular, why does the speaker feel compelled to ask, “Did he smile his work to see? / Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (19-20)? What great moral issue has the speaker raised in posing the questions that he has throughout the poem?

31. Examine the plate for “The Tyger” included in the Norton edition or in the link above, and describe the Tyger’s appearance. (The William Blake Archive’s “comparison tool” allows viewers to compare different versions of Blake’s plates, so you can view several “tygers.”) What sort of “tyger” is this that Blake has engraved — is it the one you expected based on the text of the poem? Why or why not? Also, what effect does the odd spelling “tyger” create?

“My Pretty Rose Tree” / “Ah Sun-flower” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

32. What two troubling dimensions of love do “My Pretty Rose Tree” and “Ah Sun-flower,” taken together, invoke? Why does the speaker in the first poem refuse the flower offered to him, and what is the consequence of his refusal? And with regard to the second poem, what thematic use does Blake make of the sun-flower’s “aspiration” or growth skywards — to what dimension or experience of love does he relate this flower?

“The Garden of Love” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

33. In “The Garden of Love,” explain the speaker’s perspective on religion-enforced morality as a power that crushes free sexual expression and connection. To what extent, if any, is the speaker complicit in what is happening — what in the poem leads you to respond as you do?

“London” [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

34. Articulate the system of oppression that the poem "London" describes: what kinds of oppression does the speaker mention, and how does he reinforce the idea that they all work together as a tyrannical system that destroys the human spirit? What stylistic features and word choices help the poet convey the intensity and pervasiveness of the injustices he describes?

"The Human Abstract" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

35. In "The Human Abstract" (the contrary companion of "The Divine Image" in *Songs of Innocence*), why is it significant that Blake's title includes the word "abstract" — what does that word mean in context, and how is abstraction perhaps the key to the erroneous thinking that the poem laments? Moreover, what progression of mental states does the poem describe, and what are the material consequences of those successive states?

"Infant Sorrow" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

36. In "Infant Sorrow," why is the child sad following the ordeal of birth? What relationship to the father and mother does the infant-speaker assert? What happens in this poem that didn't happen in its companion or contrary "Infant Joy," and to what effect?

"A Poison Tree" [Blake Archive Image, Copy A, British Museum](#)

37. What story does "A Poison Tree" relate? What is the apple, in symbolic terms, and why does the speaker decide to use it to kill the foe? Why does the foe try to steal the apple? As with "The Human Abstract," what progression of mental states does this poem trace? What are the material consequences of those successive states?

"To Tirzah" [Blake Archive Image, Copy T, British Museum](#)

38. Tirzah in "To Tirzah" is one of Blake's figures for material nature, in addition to what the Norton editors say. Blake seems to have added this poem to *Songs of Experience* only in later copies. Does that mean we should take the speaker's attitude towards nature and the human body as definitive?

39. Look up the editorial reference to the *Gospel of John* 2:4 and its surrounding context. How does it affect your understanding of "To Tirzah"? (Time permitting, you might also look up *Song of Solomon* 4:6 and *I Corinthians* 15:44, and discuss how they affect your view of Blake's poem.)

"A Divine Image"

40. Refer back to "The Divine Image" in *Songs of Innocence*. What was Blake suggesting about the relation between the human and the divine in that poem? How has the representation of that relationship changed in "A Divine Image"?

41. The Norton editors say that "The Human Abstract" is subtler than "A Divine Image." How so? Which poem do you consider a more effective contrary to "The Divine Image" in *Songs of Innocence*, and why?

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

General Questions

42. To what extent, if at all, does Blake privilege the Voice of the Devil (or other characters/statements from the perspective of Hell throughout *MHH*?) To what extent does the prophetic narrator identify with or ally himself with the Devil? Give some instances one way or the other.

43. Trace the progression of events in *MHH*. That is, if we read this poem as a narrative in which things happen in some understandable sequence, what kind of story does it tell? Also, how might the poem fit within the long tradition of English satire?

44. How is the marriage of heaven and hell supposed to come to pass? Does the poem point towards this union, or does it in some sense achieve it? Explain. Also, what are the implications of calling the desired result a marriage rather than a fusion or some other such term?

"The Argument"

45. What general expectations does the Argument establish for the rest of *MHH*?

"Plate 3"

46. What is a "contrary"? How do contraries differ from simple opposites?

47. Whose perspective do the last four sentences flow from? Are they to be accepted at face value?

"The Voice of the Devil"

48. Does the Devil satisfactorily correct the Errors he says have been caused by "Bibles or sacred codes"? What, if anything, does he propose to do by way of setting them right?

"Plate 5"

49. In what ways has Milton misread the Bible, according to the narrator?

50. Why does the narrator nonetheless admire Milton? What does that admiration have to do with the doctrine of contraries?

"A Memorable Fancy" and "Proverbs of Hell"

51. Explicate three or more of the Proverbs and, if possible, relate them to one another. In what way might the proverbs be true, in spite of their apparent contradictoriness?

52. In Plate 11 (115), what is Blake's warning about the poetic device of personification? I.e. "The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses..."

"A Memorable Fancy"

53. What does the narrator learn from the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel?

"Plates 14 and 15, A Memorable Fancy"

54. What constitutes the Apocalypse alluded to in the line "the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years"?

55. What, if anything, does Blake's own writing or engraving have to do with the Apocalypse? (The Norton editors write that the Fancy is an allegory about Blake's methods as an engraver. Is it more than that?)

56. What are the "Prolific" and the "Devouring," respectively? What is the relationship between them?

"A Memorable Fancy"

57. From what perspective does the Angel admonish the narrator?

58. By what means do the Angel and the narrator descend into the abyss or "void boundless"? Provide some description and explanation with regard to the various "places" along the way.

59. Why should it matter that the Angel is upside down? I.e. that "he was suspended in a fungus which hung with the head downward into the deep"?

60. What form does the narrator's comic vision of the Angel's eternal lot take? Why does it take that particular form—that is, why is it appropriate for the Angel based on what we know about that character?

"Opposition is True Friendship"

61. What is the narrator's basic criticism of the Angel's view and of those who ground their opinions in sacred codes, or institutional religion? If such codes are wrong, then what is the way to gain true knowledge?

"A Memorable Fancy"

62. Why is it significant for *MHH* as a whole that the Angel is converted to the narrator's and the Devil's perspective?

"A Song of Liberty"

63. Blake apparently added this poem to some copies of *MHH*. How does it complement *MHH*?

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EDMUND BURKE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (152-158).

From *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

1. On 152-54 top, Burke explains the relationship between nature and "artificial institutions." Why is nature, as Burke defines it, a vital component in the maintenance of civil society and political culture? To what extent, at this point and elsewhere, does Burke value reason?
2. On 153 and elsewhere, Burke suggests that feudal concepts and practices are central to his ideal of civic life and governance. Why are they so important to Burke's argument? What notion of social rank and political authority do they imply?
3. On 155, Burke writes, "we procure reverence to our civil institutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to revere individual men." Such statements run directly counter to America's founders, who insist that we should be "a nation of laws, not of men." To what extent do you think that a country can be a nation of laws and not of individuals? When does that ideal come under maximum stress?
4. On 156-58, Burke offers suggestive remarks about the French Revolution's principle of equality and about poverty. What do you suppose Burke would say about modern ideas concerning social welfare, income redistribution, and so forth?

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LORD BYRON QUESTIONS

Assigned: Lord Byron. "Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos" (611-12); "She Walks in Beauty" (612); "Darkness" (614-16); "January 22nd. Missolonghi" (735); Manfred (635-669); *Don Juan* (669-734); Letters (736-41).

"Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos" (611-12)

1. What attitude does this poem take towards earlier literary retellings of the Hero and Leander story—specifically, to Marlowe’s Elizabethan version and to the ancient recountings by Musaeus Grammaticus and Ovid? There’s no need to go over these earlier versions in detail; the point is to discuss briefly how Byron connects himself to and distinguishes himself from “literary tradition.” Internet sources: [Hero and Leander](#) (on the ancient version) and [Marlowe’s version](#).

“She Walks in Beauty” (612)

2. What accounts for the remarkable beauty of the “She” in this poem (Mrs. Wilmot, Byron’s cousin)? Consider how the speaker deals with what Coleridge would call “opposite and discordant qualities” (disparate phenomena, that is) in his description of the lady, and how he connects her physical beauty to moral qualities.

“Darkness” (614-16)

3. When the sun is extinguished in the speaker’s dream, what natural processes follow the same path to destruction? How does this path correspond to the speaker’s recounting of the human race’s final days?

4. If you are familiar with the Bible’s book Revelation (in which John of Patmos describes his vision of the Apocalypse), how does Byron’s end-of-the-world scenario differ in its tone and assumptions from that work?

“January 22nd. Missolonghi” (735)

5. Byron died of a fever in Missolonghi not long after this poem was composed—he was there to help organize Greece’s fight for independence from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. How does he arrive at his resolution to stay and “Seek out... / A Soldier’s Grave” (37-38)?

6. Compare the attitude struck up in this poem with the one in the earlier, shorter poem “When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home” (page 561). Together, how do they suggest the complexity of Byron’s understanding of his own actions and the claims used to justify them?

***Manfred* (635-669)**

Act 1, Scene 1

7. From 1.1.21-25, Manfred refers to some primal scene and curse that have caused his unhappiness. The Norton editors point out that this vague reference may have to do with an incestuous relationship between Manfred and Astarte. Aside from the obvious taboo status of incest, how might this forbidden behavior be interpreted in a way that sheds light on Manfred’s dilemma as a “romantic hero”? In this light, consider the lines that begin the play—1.1.1-25 as a unit.

8. From 1.1.28-192, Manfred has his first encounter with the Spirits whom he has summoned. Who are these spirits? Why must they obey Manfred? What can't they tell him that he wants to know, and why? What do they offer him in compensation, and then what happens when (175ff) Manfred demands to "behold... {them} face to face"?)

9. From 1.1.193-261, what further insight does the Voice offer about Manfred's situation? To what extent does it explain the end of the previous episode, in which Manfred "faints away" at the sight of one of the Spirits?

Act 1, Scene 2

10. From 1.2.1-56, we note that the scene has shifted from Manfred's Castle to the Mountain of the Jüngfrau. Why is this alternation in setting between the Alps and a human habitation significant? How is the mountain-summit setting, in particular, metaphoric of the speaker's spiritual condition? More generally, what does Manfred suggest in this passage about his connection (or lack thereof) to the natural world?

11. Again from 1.2.1-56, how does Manfred explain his failure to leap from the mountain at once, without further thoughts or words? How, in this passage, does Manfred analyze and figure forth his desire to die, and why do his words seem only to increase his misery?

12. From 1.2.57-125, the Chamois Hunter comes upon Manfred unawares, and rescues him. How does this character's sensibility differ from that of Manfred, and how does he apparently regard the latter's attempt at suicide? And why—aside from brute force—does Manfred descend with the Chamois Hunter rather than continue to struggle?

Act 2, Scene 1

13. From 2.1.1-95, how does his continuing conversation with the Chamois Hunter help Manfred decide what his course must be, now that he has rejected suicide? How much does the Hunter understand of Manfred's problem? How does Manfred himself describe it at this point?

Act 2, Scene 2

14. From 2.2.1-205, how does Manfred describe his differences from ordinary human beings? What did he seek most intently, and to what extent did he find what he was looking for? How does the picture we obtain of Manfred here amount to what readers and critics came to call "The Byronic Stance (or Pose)"?

15. Again from 2.2.1-205, why won't Manfred swear obedience to the Witch of the Alps? What is the symbolic significance of his rejection, and how does his refusal follow logically from the self-description given us?

Act 2, Scene 3

16. From 2.3.1-72, what are the aims and powers of the Destinies and Nemesis?

Act 2, Scene 4

17. From 2.4.1-169, what request does Manfred make of the Destinies, Nemesis, and Ahrimanes? What does he want from Astarte, and what answer does the Phantom of Astarte give him?

Act 3, Scene 1

18. From 3.1.1-171, the Abbot of St. Maurice visits Manfred's Castle—what arguments does this priest employ to bring Manfred round to an acceptance of Christian tenets? What explanation does Manfred give for refusing, and in what sense is this explanation (which gives us a sense of the Count's ethics or moral system) characteristic of the "Byronic Hero"?

Act 3, Scenes 2-3

19. From 3.2.1-30 and 3.3.1-63, Manfred bids goodbye to the sun, and then his servants Herman and Manuel reminisce about former times. Manuel begins to recount "an event / Which happened hereabouts" (32-33), but the Abbot's return prevents him from speaking further. To what conjectures might this passage give rise concerning the event that took place in the Castle and involved Manfred and Astarte?

Act 3, Scene 4

20. From 3.4.1-153, with the Abbot standing by, Manfred confronts the Spirits that have come to summon him away. Examine his dying speech from 3.3.109-41. Why does he refuse to bow to the spirits' will, and to what extent does the scene as a whole call into question the Abbot's orthodox Christian understanding of Manfred's fate?

21. General question: Manfred is often described as programmatically romantic—a play that illustrates later critics' claims about what constitutes literary romanticism. What characteristics of the play lend themselves to such a categorization? Still, is there anything about the text that doesn't seem so programmatic, or that is characteristic of romantic appreciation for nuance and an ability to question romantic premises? Explain.

***Don Juan* (669-734)**

Canto 1 (670-97)

22. Who is the narrator of this epic poem? Discuss a few important passages in which he intrudes upon the story with his own ideas about the poem's purpose, moral status, structure, characters, and so forth. How does he make his own situation and attitudes an inextricable part of the Don Juan narrative?

proper? On the whole, which predominates—the story about young Juan, or the interjections and commentary of the narrator?

23. Consider Juan's first love match—the one with the winsome (but married) Donna Julia. What in the circumstances of his education and upbringing (particularly with regard to Juan's mother, Donna Inez) makes this affair and its consequences all but inevitable? How is this episode perhaps Byron's way of mocking the absurdity of conventional moral strictures against sexuality?

Canto 2 (697-717)

24. In the first half of the selections from this canto, how does the narrator handle the shipwreck suffered by Juan and the "cannibal lottery" that costs Juan's guardian Pedrillo his life? What attitude, that is, does the narrator adopt towards these unfortunate events? How does the episode as a whole cut against the notion that Juan is an active hero or romance quester, as he is in some earlier versions of the legend?

25. In the second half of the selections from this canto, what observations does the narrator offer regarding Haidée, the beautiful young woman who finds Juan washed up along the shore? What makes her special, and distinguishes her from, say, European women such as Donna Inez and Donna Julia from the previous canto?

26. The narrator traces for us Juan's recovery and the stirrings of a glorious "innocent love" between Juan and Haidée. In this recounting, do the narrator's interruptions and sly comments undercut your enjoyment of the "innocent love" theme, or does that theme hold its own against humor and cynicism? Explain your rationale.

Canto 3 (718-25) and Canto 4 (725-34)

27. Just as the love between Juan and Haidée is becoming more intense, Haidée's pirate father Lambro returns to the island. What happens then—how does Haidée manage to save Juan's life, if not preserve his freedom? In what sense does the narration reverse or at least unsettle traditional male-centered notions about heroism?

28. What happens to Haidée as a result of her heroic act? How—at the end of the selection from this canto—does the narrator extricate himself from having to dwell longer on her sad fate, and how has he thereby circled back to his self-absorbed interjections at the beginning of the 4th canto? On the whole, do you find that the narrator's own ideas and circumstances in Cantos 3-4 overshadow the Juan-narrative proper, or do you regard them as having equal weight or less significance? Explain your rationale.

Letters (736-41)

29. In any of the selected letters, discuss Byron's comments about his own work or that of others—in what estimation does he seem to regard his own literary productions? What does he say about other authors' work?

30. In any of the selected letters, discuss Byron's remarks about his affairs with women and his attitude towards women generally: what (if anything) do you find noteworthy about them? What (if anything) do you not like about his remarks on this topic, and why?

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Biographia Literaria* (474-85), *Lectures on Shakespeare* (485-88), *The Statesman's Manual* (488-91), "The Eolian Harp" (426-28), "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (428-30); "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (430-46), "Kubla Khan" (446-48), "Frost at Midnight" (464-66), "Dejection: an Ode" (466-69); "The Pains of Sleep" (469-70).

"The Eolian Harp"

1. What is the poem's setting—where are Samuel and Sara as he speaks? What is the relationship between the **poem's** setting and the speaker's initial state of mind?
2. In the second verse paragraph (beginning "And that simplest Lute...", lines 13ff), what comparisons does Coleridge make between the action and sound of the lute and other things? What affinity between such action and the movements of his own imagination does he assert from lines 39-43?
3. At the height of his musings, Coleridge praises "the one life within us and abroad" (26), and later muses, "And what if all of animated nature / Be but organic Harps diversly fram'd, / That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps / Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each, and God of all?" (44-48) What do such claims posit about the relationship between human beings and the natural world? How do they redefine and challenge Christian orthodoxy concerning God, the spirit, and nature?
4. What influence does the now-silent Sara exercise over Coleridge's thoughts as the poem concludes? How does her influence differ from that of the Eolian Harp? In what sense have his musings not been "guiltless" (58), and what is the antidote, so to speak, for such thoughts?

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"

5. How is this poem a meditation on the powers of the imagination and observation, and on the sustaining influence of the speaker's relationship to the natural world? Discuss with reference to specific lines in the poem.

6. Coleridge, the speaker, addresses his friend Charles Lamb—how do his thoughts about Charles and the rest of the walking party (the Wordsworths, among others) further sustain him? What additional benefit of nature might we infer from this comfort?

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

Part 1

7. The editor’s note says that the Mariner uses hypnosis (“mesmerism”) to stop the Wedding Guest in his tracks. That clearly the case, but why might we suppose the Mariner has chosen this *particular* person to hear his tale—a man on his way to the wedding of his own “kin” (6)? What will he be missing when he misses the wedding?

8. The Albatross appeared suddenly “Thorough the fog” (64), says the Mariner, and was treated as a friendly spirit, a good omen. What unusual behavior does it exhibit, and what relationship does it begin to establish with the ship’s crew? How does the tale affect the Mariner himself as he retells it? Why aren’t we given an exact reason for the Mariner’s deplorable act against the bird?

Part 2

9. How do the Mariner’s fellow crewmen judge what has done in shooting the Albatross? What aspects does the seascape take on now that the Mariner has killed the bird—what has happened to the natural world, and what agent seems to be bringing about the changes?

Part 3

10. The Mariner sees a ghost-ship and becomes the object of “Life-in-Death’s” grim attentions. Why does Death get to strike down the other sailors, and why should “Life-in-Death” take particular interest in the Mariner who killed the Albatross?

Part 4

11. What are the effects of the curse that the crew, in dying, laid upon the Mariner? (Or we might say it’s the curse that came upon the Mariner when he killed the Albatross.) This is the high point in the poem—what descriptive techniques make this part so effective in making us see and feel what the Mariner tells us of?

12. Why is the Mariner at first unable to pray? What leads him to bless the sea-snakes “unaware” (285) and find them beautiful, even though he had been resentful of every living thing around him not long before? Why is it vital that he be able to bless the sea-snakes?

Part 5

13. The Mariner tells how a troop of angelic spirits took possession of the dead crew and drove the ship onwards without the aid of a breeze. What is the Polar Spirit's involvement in this new turn of events—how has this Spirit been intimately involved in what has happened up to now? In what sense does the nature of the Mariner's sin become still clearer in this section of the poem? Why must he still do penance after suffering so much?

Part 6

14. What important stage in the Mariner's return to awareness and human contact does this section recount? What does it signify that the dead men's curse finally lifts? Why is it appropriate that Mariner should see the seraphs (angelic spirits) visibly take their leave of the crew members' corpses?

Part 7

15. The Mariner has arrived home, but only as a wanderer who must retell his tale again and again to repulse the "woful agony" (579) that comes upon him for his depraved killing of the Albatross. How might his sufferings be said to illustrate something about the way fallen humanity attains insight?

16. Is the Mariner to some extent a poet-figure? If so, what might Coleridge be suggesting about the source and value of his own spellbinding, supernaturally charged poetry?

"Kubla Khan"

17. How seriously do you take the story Coleridge affixes to this poem—i.e. his claim that he was about to write down his complete vision when "a person on business from Porlock" (447) interrupted him? Why do you suppose he thought it advantageous to include such an explanation (almost an apology) for the poem itself?

18. Again with regard to the prose explanation or preface, what extraordinary relationship between things, images, and words does this preface assert? How might this assertion shed light on what happens in the poem itself, if indeed it does?

19. What allows the speaker to compose this poem in spite of the alleged interruption of his opium-and-Samuel Purchas-induced reverie? How does the enabling factor or power differ from memory?

20. If you agree that Kubla Khan is a poet-figure, by what means does he compose his "poetry" (his "stately pleasure dome" and its sublime surroundings)? What does this creative act do for him—what knowledge or experience does it make possible?

21. "I would build that dome in air" (46), declares the speaker—why would another vision of "A damsel with a dulcimer" (37) allow him to build the dome? Why do you suppose he's apparently unable to revive such a vision?

22. What does the speaker apparently mean by “building” in the lines just referenced? Does he mean “describing” or something more than that? Explain.

23. If the speaker *were* to build “the dome of pleasure,” what relationship would thereby be established between him and his audience? What would the “building” do for that audience? How would they regard the poet? How might he regard himself?

24. The speaker avows his failure—but has he in fact failed? Or has he described/built the dome in some sense or to some extent? What major point about the nature of imagination—both the poet’s and the listener or reader’s—might “Kubla Khan” be understood to make? Another question might be, “has he failed at something it would be possible to do under any circumstances, however favorable?”

“Frost at Midnight”

25. From lines 1-43, how is the child (Samuel Coleridge in his early years) the “father of the man” in this poem, to borrow a phrase from Wordsworth—what marked the experience and character of Coleridge as a boy that still marks them now? How does the “stranger” and its fluttering establish a key connection between the younger and older Samuel Coleridge?

26. In the third and fourth verse paragraphs (lines 44-74), Coleridge turns his attention to his seventeen-month-old son Hartley—how will Hartley’s relationship with nature be different than the one his father experienced as a boy (and, by inference, at present)? What “eternal language” (60) will Hartley be able to understand without painful effort?

27. The final verse paragraph (65-74) references the “secret ministry of Frost” that will go to work if the temperature drops enough to prevent the raindrops from falling off the cottage eaves. What further connotations does this natural process bear—what might we infer from Coleridge’s description of it as a “secret ministry”?

28. Why might the poet so emphatically describe the *silentness* and *reflectiveness* of the icicles that will form because of the cold? How might such references point towards an analogy between “the secret ministry of frost” and the workings of the human imagination, or the powers of self-reflection?

“Dejection: an Ode”

29. In the first stanza (lines 1-20), what is the weather as the speaker utters his lines? What hopes does the expectation of a storm raise in him?

30. In the second stanza (lines 21-38), how does the speaker characterize his state of mind as he observes the “western sky”? What problem is this depressed state causing him as an observer of nature? How does this stanza itself (along with the third one, lines 39-46) both describe and demonstrate that problem?

31. The fourth and fifth stanzas (lines 47-58, 59-75) further refine the third stanza's statement that he "may not hope from outward forms to win / The passion and the life, whose fountains are within" (45-46). What is the "Joy" he describes in these stanzas, and what effects does it have on the person who is suffused with it? What is the ideal relationship between a human being and the natural world?
32. In the sixth stanza (lines 76-93), how does the speaker describe the felicity of his former connection to nature, and how does he describe the process whereby that happy connection was lost? In what sense is philosophical reflection (including the poem he utters now) not helpful, and perhaps even harmful, to his spirits?
33. In the seventh stanza (lines 94-109), the speaker bids his "viper thoughts" take their leave and turns his attentions to the stirring wind. What does he hear—what is the wind "up to," what "tales" does it tell? What progression, if any, in the speaker's psychological process does this stanza mark? Does listening to the harsh wind help him somehow? If so, in what sense does it help him?
34. In the concluding eighth stanza (126-39), what wish does the speaker Coleridge make on behalf of his absent addressee, Sara Hutchinson? Meyer Abrams divides the Greater Romantic Lyric into three stages—a description of the natural scene, an analysis of that scene and the problem it brings to mind for the speaker, and an emotional ("affective") resolution of the problem. Does the speaker resolve his own problem in the current poem? One way to respond would be to compare the transaction between Coleridge and Sara in this poem with that between William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy towards the end of the "Tintern Abbey" ode.

"The Pains of Sleep"

35. In his prefatory remarks to "Kubla Khan," Coleridge describes the present poem as a companion piece to the more famous poem: he calls it "a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease" (447). Aside from the ugliness and frightfulness of his dream-visions in opium withdrawal, what dark intimations seem to trouble him most? What "way out" of his distress does he gesture towards at the end?

***Biographia Literaria*, from Chapter 4 ("Mr. Wordsworth's Earlier Poems," 474-76 and "On Fancy and Imagination," 476-77)**

36. What aspects of Wordsworth's early poetry does Coleridge fault, and what qualities of "genius" does he find in more mature works by that poet? In particular, what effect on the ordinary reader does Wordsworth have a special capacity to generate? On 476-77, how does Coleridge begin to define this special capacity or cast of mind?

***Biographia Literaria*, from Chapter 13 ("Of the Imagination," 477-78)**

37. What is the "primary imagination," according to Coleridge? What affinity between divine creation and human perception does this definition advance, at least indirectly?

38. The “secondary imagination” is the creative imagination of the artist. How does Coleridge describe the relationship of this power to the world of objects? How does this kind of imagination differ from “fancy”?

***Biographia Literaria*, from Chapter 14 (“Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*...,” 478-83)**

39. On 478-79, what respective tasks did Wordsworth and Coleridge set themselves in agreeing to collaborate on the poems that became *Lyrical Ballads*? In what sense might those tasks be said to work towards a common goal?

40. On 480-81, what definition of poetry (as opposed to a scientific treatise or ordinary prose) does Coleridge develop partly by way of distinguishing his own poetic theory from that of Wordsworth? On 481 top, what is Coleridge’s final definition poetry?

41. On 481 below the first paragraph, how does Coleridge elaborate on his definition – what is the relationship of parts to parts in a “legitimate poem”? How does a genuinely satisfactory poem engage the reader’s attention with respect to its parts, and with respect to the whole? Why is the mind’s progression in reading a poem best described as resembling “the motion of a serpent”?

42. On 482 middle to end, what specific effects does Coleridge suggest flow from the poet’s imaginative efforts? Since he believes Wordsworth wields poetic imagination in the highest degree, how does that author’s poetry achieve “the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities”? Alternately, how might it be said that his poetry “blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial” without exalting art over nature?

43. On 482-83, how does the quotation from John Davies’ poem *Nosce Teipsum* reinforce the claims Coleridge has been making in favor of imagination?

***Biographia Literaria*, from Chapter 17 (“Examination of the Tenets Peculiar to Mr. Wordsworth,” 483, “Rustic Life...,” 483-84, and “The Language of Milton...,” 484-85)**

44. According to Coleridge, why is Wordsworth’s much-promoted “low and rustic life” inadequate as a source of the language most proper to poetry? What is wrong with Wordsworth’s emphatic use of the word “real” to describe that language? And how is Wordsworth’s faith in the effect of strong emotion upon language somewhat misplaced?

45. On the whole, since he rejects the diction of simple country folk, what kind of language does Coleridge suggest ought to inform the best poetry? Why should the words of Richard Hooker, Francis Bacon, or Edmund Burke (or Milton, as in the subsection title) serve the purpose better?

From *Lectures on Shakespeare* (“Fancy and Imagination in Shakespeare’s Poetry,” 485-87)

46. What special qualities does Coleridge attribute to Shakespeare’s genius, and how do the passages he cites reinforce his earlier definition of “fancy” and “imagination” in Ch. 13? But in addition, what is

special about Shakespeare even beyond what this discussion of genius can convey – what ability does he have “which belongs only to a great poet” (487)?

From *Lectures on Shakespeare* (“Mechanic vs. Organic Form,” 487-88)

47. On 487-88, what relationship does Coleridge posit between the “spirit of poetry” and “rules”? Where do “rules,” properly understood, come from? Finally, in what sense is Coleridge rejecting neoclassical standards of value (like those of Voltaire) in judging Shakespeare’s work?

48. On 488, how does Coleridge describe “mechanical form” and “organic form,” respectively? As with rules, what is the true source of “form” in a work of art?

From *The Statesman’s Manual* (“On Symbol and Allegory,” 488-90)

49. What is an “allegory”? Give an example to fill in Coleridge’s description on 489, paragraph 2.

50. What is a symbol, according to Coleridge—in what sense is the symbol a fundamental mode of language rather than a mere literary device or figure of speech? Since Coleridge’s best example is Jesus’ “The eye is the light of the body” (*Matthew 6:22*), how does that utterance drive home the point?

From *The Statesman’s Manual* (“The Satanic Hero,” 490-91)

51. Coleridge doesn’t share the younger romantics’ admiration for Milton’s rebel Satan; perhaps he would agree with Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence* that Byron and Shelley engaged in a kind of “strong misreading” of their great predecessor poet in order to clear a space for their own originality, their own stance as rebels. In Coleridge’s view, what is the true “character” of Milton’s Satan?

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

THOMAS DE QUINCEY QUESTIONS, FULL VERSION

Assigned: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

***Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821)**

“To the Reader”

1. How does De Quincey distinguish his confessional text from those written by others? How, for example, does he try to lend respectability to his narrative?

“Preliminary Confessions”

2. How does De Quincey define the term “philosopher,” and why might it be important to him that he be considered a philosophical writer?

3. What contrasts in social class does De Quincey set up in the long preliminary section, and how does he situate himself with respect to others of lower standing than himself—mainly the orphan girl and his friend Ann?
4. What vision of London do De Quincey's descriptions of his stay there provide?
5. How is De Quincey's meeting and subsequent loss of contact with the kind-hearted prostitute Ann characteristic of his narrative style—his handling of events and of character?

"The Pleasures of Opium"

6. In a brief preliminary note to the reader, De Quincey addresses Oxford Street? How does his address or apostrophe reflect back on the "Preliminary Confessions" and contextualize your perception of his early life?
7. How does De Quincey first come to use opium?
8. What differences does De Quincey point out between the effects of alcohol and the effects of opium? What fallacies does he lay to rest?
9. To what extent does De Quincey's praise of opium's powers remind you of romantic claims about imagination, art, and meditation?
10. What change takes place in De Quincey's opium-eating regimen in 1813?
11. After 1816, what happens that worsens De Quincey's troubles with opium? What effect does the chance meeting with a Malay have upon him?

"The Pains of Opium"

12. How might De Quincey, in describing his opium-laced reveries and dreams, be considered an archetypal romantic poet? What is he able to do, and what is he unable to accomplish?
13. Around 1817, what changes do De Quincey's dreams undergo? What sorts of dreams and visions does he have? What happens to his sense of space and time, as well as to his memory?
14. How does De Quincey explain the way he dealt with his abuse of opium?
15. Ultimately, what would you say is De Quincey's target audience? Is it really fellow opium-eaters? Do you take his purpose in writing *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* to be the imparting of a moral lesson, or does he appear to be up to something else?
16. How do De Quincey's descriptions of the pleasures and pains of opium, respectively, balance out? Or is one description more significant than the other? Explain.

17. Finally, a question on the work as a whole: do you think that De Quincey's long biographical and moral prefaces outweigh the opium-related descriptions he provides, or do the descriptions outweigh the prefatory material?

Edition: De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. New York: Dover, 1995. ISBN 0486287424.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY QUESTIONS, SHORT VERSION

Assigned: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (556-69), "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*" (569-72); "The Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power" from *Alexander Pope* (572-76).

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (1821)

1. On 556-58, in describing his meeting and subsequent loss of contact with the kind-hearted prostitute Ann, how does De Quincey distance himself from ordinary middle-class morality, and how does he legitimize his strong emotions about this person and this phase of his life?
2. On 560-65, ("The Pains of Opium"), how might De Quincey be considered an archetypal romantic poet? To respond, discuss the new experiences that open up to him: his altered perception of space, time, personal memory, and reality more generally. But what capacities are denied him?
3. On 565-69, why does the Malay (whom De Quincey met by accident at his own cottage in the mountains) fill his dreams with such horror? How, that is, does De Quincey connect "the Orient" as a Western concept with his opium-laced "bad trips"? (For the setup of the Malay's significance, see also 559-60.)

"On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*"

4. On 569-72, with what attitude does De Quincey approach his object of study, the Shakespeare play *Macbeth*? How does he explain the dramatic purpose of the drunken porter's knocking at the castle gates just after Macbeth has done his dreadful deed?

"The Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power" from *Alexander Pope*

5. On 572-76, what is the literature of knowledge, and what is the literature of power? How are they opposed?
6. On 572-76, to what degree is De Quincey offering a romantic "defense of poetry" or art more generally? Explain.

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

WILLIAM GODWIN QUESTIONS

Assigned: [Enquiry Concerning Political Justice](#), online selection from Book 4, Ch. 2: "Of Revolutions." (Paragraphs in the online text have been numbered for the sake of reference. First ed. published in 1794.)

From *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*

1. In paragraphs 1-10, Godwin speaks up for the perfectibility of human beings. What does he apparently mean by "perfectibility," and what underlies his faith in our capacity to improve? How is perfectibility an argument, according to Godwin, against sudden political revolutions?
2. In paragraphs 11-17, Godwin explains the negative consequences of revolutions—what are those consequences, and what evidence does Godwin provide for them?
3. In paragraphs 18-20, Godwin addresses the possibility of political reaction against any revolutionary movement—why, in his view, is it almost inevitable that revolution should provoke counter-revolution?
4. In paragraphs 21-33, Godwin sets forth his faith in Reason as a vehicle of practical progress, and defends political gradualism (i.e. change over long periods of time) as anything but airy or naive idealism. How much strength do you find in Godwin's advocacy of progress through the patient application of Reason? Is that advocacy naively idealistic, or do you credit Godwin with more savvy than that? Explain your rationale.

Edition (Electronic): Godwin, William. From [Enquiry Concerning Political Justice](#), online selection from Book 4, Ch. 2: "Of Revolutions."

WILLIAM HAZLITT QUESTIONS

Assigned: "On Gusto" (538-41), "My First Acquaintance with Poets" (541-54).

"On Gusto"

1. How does Hazlitt initially define "gusto in art"? How does he further refine his definition as the essay moves along?
2. What does Hazlitt's essay suggest about the relationship between art and criticism, and about their relative value? Does his treatment of gusto challenge the supremacy of art in relation to critical understanding of it? If so, to what extent?
3. What key examples does Hazlitt offer of the way in which various artists do or don't exhibit "gusto" in their work? Does the lack of gusto necessarily make a poet or artist uninteresting? How does Hazlitt deal with those who, according to him, don't exhibit gusto in their art?

"My First Acquaintance with Poets"

4. What effect does Hazlitt say Samuel Taylor Coleridge had upon him as a young man? What possibilities did Coleridge open up for him?
5. Hazlitt spends much of the essay characterizing Coleridge's appearance and habits, and some of the circumstances surrounding his visit to Shropshire. To what extent does Hazlitt introduce notes of irony and criticism into his characterization? Discuss some examples.
6. Hazlitt seems fond of quoting or near-quoting the observations and sentiments of others. Why do you think he does that? Do you find that it adds to the effect of his essays, or detracts? Explain.
7. How does Hazlitt describe Wordsworth (549ff)? What qualities set him off from Coleridge? What observations come to Hazlitt as a result of reading Wordsworth's contributions to *Lyrical Ballads*?
8. How much about himself does Hazlitt reveal, deliberately or otherwise, in this descriptive and ruminative account of a youthful meeting with two great poets?

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

WILLIAM HAZLITT QUESTIONS, DIFFERENT SET

Assigned: Hazlitt's "The French Revolution" (84-98), "On Personal Identity" (190-202), "Originality" (270-77), "On the Elgin Marbles" (277-96). Selections aren't in the *Norton Anthology*—see below for edition details. If you are unable to get hold of the Oxford text early in the semester, here is a version of "[The French Revolution](#)" to use.

"The French Revolution"

1. Hazlitt clearly believes that the press played an important role in bringing on the French Revolution. What, specifically, did the French press do to prepare the way for revolution? What philosophical and/or political assumptions underlie Hazlitt's claims in this regard?
2. Hazlitt describes with gusto the decayed state of the old regime in France—how it had already lost its legitimacy well before the Revolution. But what, according to him, accounts for the fact that the old regime and its supports lasted so long in such a sorry state—what kinds of attitudes and practices can protect even discredited authority?
3. Hazlitt writes perceptively about the character of fanatics such as Maximilien Robespierre, the Jacobin leader often associated with the Revolution's worst excesses. Why did Robespierre mostly succeed in achieving his designs? That is, what were his qualities, and how did those qualities suit the revolutionary times in which he lived?

4. To what extent, if at all, does Hazlitt, a persistent supporter of the French Revolution, excuse the authoritarian, guillotine-happy direction the Revolution took during the period known as “The Terror” (i.e. 1793-94)? How, in any event, does he explain this violent episode?
5. A general question—with regard to the journalistic press today and its coverage of momentous political and social events, do you share Hazlitt’s optimism about the great power of a free press to inform and shape public opinion? Or do you feel that the press mostly fails to ask the right questions of the right people at the right time? Give an example one way or another with respect to current affairs in the national/international news.

“On Personal Identity”

6. According to Hazlitt, what constitutes a person’s identity? From 197-201 especially, what observations he offer regarding the role of class, education, taste, and habit in what we call “identity”?
7. In the simplest sense, this is an essay that centers on defining a key term. How would you characterize Hazlitt’s method of definition? Is he mainly interested in offering a precise definition, or would you describe his method otherwise?

“Originality”

8. What is Hazlitt’s simplest definition of originality? How does he flesh out his seemingly paradoxical claim that an artist’s production must be “both true and new” (270ff)?
9. On 273 and following, what does Hazlitt say constitutes “genius,” and what relationship does he posit between originality and genius?
10. Discuss Hazlitt’s remarks in the last few pages of this essay regarding issues such as the value of “eccentricity and paradox” and the problems inherent in individual artistic styles and collective schools or movements of art? What antagonism does he describe between “the mob” and those who truly understand and/or create art?

“On the Elgin Marbles”

11. What exactly are the Elgin Marbles to which Hazlitt refers, and what controversy surrounded them from the moment they were brought to Britain from Greece? (A good place to look is the [Wikipedia essay](#) on the subject, but you might also visit this [Illustrated Tour](#).
12. Hazlitt (like William Blake) clearly disagrees with Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), the neoclassical painter and president of the Royal Academy, about nearly all things pertaining to the visual arts. Discuss the main points of disagreement between Reynolds and Hazlitt—most particularly the issue of how to represent something in its perfect, ideal state.

13. Hazlitt undeniably privileges nature over art. What are some of the comments he makes on this issue? Still, how does Hazlitt recuperate art and artistic expression—in what sense can works of art actually take on the excellence of nature?

Edition: Hazlitt, William. *Selected Writings*. Ed. Jon Cook. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. ISBN 0192838008.

JAMES HOGG QUESTIONS

Assigned: “Some Terrible Letters from Scotland” (99-112) from *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*.

“Some Terrible Letters from Scotland”

1. Do some quick internet research on cholera—what are its causes and symptoms? How common was it in early to mid-nineteenth-century England, and what theories seem to have prevailed about its causes and proper treatment during those times?
2. The first story is by “Andrew Ker,” who tells a macabre tale about how he returned to life from the very coffin. Do a brief internet search and relate why this fear was actually a living issue (pun intended) during the nineteenth century. In addition, what techniques does author James Hogg employ to get under our skin—what do he do to intensify the suspense and horror of the tale?
3. The subsequent letters deal mainly with the psychological effects of cholera epidemics. How do the letters’ ordinary people deal with the disasters that overtake them and others? How do religious notions and moral strictures, for example, play a significant role in characters’ behavior and their judgments of others? What morbid tendencies become manifest in some suffering characters?

Edition: Polidori, John et al. *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. ISBN 0192838946.

Assigned: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. (Separate text; see below.)

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner

“The Editor’s Narrative” (1-93)

1. From 1-20, the editor recounts the circumstances leading up to the birth of George Colwan and Robert Wringhim. Briefly, what marital disaster goes into the generation of these two opposites? What principles are at work in the raising of the two brothers, respectively?
2. From 21-35, Robert taunts his brother George in a couple of tennis matches and then at a cricket game. What has already been suggested (around pg. 18) as a motive for this strange behavior? Does it seem sufficient? What seems to be Robert’s strategy during these bizarre episodes?

3. From 36-47, George sees a dreadful apparition on a misty hillside, only to find that, yet again, it is Robert. What happens between the two of them, and what fear begins to take hold of George Colwan about the nature of his brother's comportment towards him?
4. From 51-56, George Colwan is discovered dead. Early evidence points towards Thomas Drummond as the murderer, but Mrs. Logan soon hears from accused robber Bell Calvert a very different account of George's death. From 70-78, what are the essentials of that account? What role does the supernatural (or at least Bell's surmises about its presence) play in the whole affair?
5. From 80-92, what further supernatural cast do events take on when Mrs. Logan and Bell Calvert go in search of George Colwan's killer? Do you find this cast believable, or does it seem to be the result of excitement and terror on the part of Bell and Mrs. Logan? What do you make of the "extraordinary being" who is said to accompany Robert Wringhim immediately before and during his encounter with the two women?

Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Sinner, Written by Himself (97-240)

6. From 97-114, how does Robert Wringhim explain the early influences on his character? With what ideas did the Reverend Wringhim fill his mind, and how did they affect the boy in both thought and deed?
7. From 114-41, Robert meets the being who calls himself Gil-Martin and is led to commit his first murder. Describe the method by which Gil-Martin succeeds in influencing Robert and getting him to commit this crime.
8. From 145-172, Robert is spurred on by Gil-Martin to destroy his brother. What fundamental doubt does Robert keep voicing, and how does Gil-Martin help him overcome that doubt?
9. From 173-240, in the wake of Robert's brother's death, what role does Gil-Martin take on—how does he manipulate events, and to what end? To what extent does the narrative suggest that Gil-Martin is a real being? To what extent does it cast doubt on that hypothesis?

"The Editor's Narrative" (240-55)

10. From 240-55, how does this brief narrative (including a letter by none other than author James Hogg) affect your understanding of the accounts that have gone before it? Are we to believe in the existence of the devilish Gil-Martin? Should we accept Robert Wringhim's account of his dreadful acts, or the editor's account in the first section, or neither?

Edition: Hogg, James. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. ISBN 0192835904.

JOHN KEATS QUESTIONS

Assigned: "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (880-81), "The Eve of St. Agnes" (888-98), "Ode to a Nightingale" (903-05), "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (905-06), "To Autumn" (925-26), "Letters" (940-55).

"On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"

1. What comparison does the speaker make between reading poetry and other kinds of experience? What value does the poem attribute to art? Keats is talking about a translation of Homer, not the Greek original—we usually think of translation as entailing some loss of meaning, but what might Chapman's Elizabethan translation have added to Keats' experience of reading Homer?

"The Eve of St. Agnes"

2. Why do you suppose Keats chose the Spenserian stanza form as his vehicle for the romance story we find in "The Eve of St. Agnes"? What makes Spenser's favorite form particularly good for dealing with romance material?

3. What significance can you find in the actions of the beadsman who appears at the beginning and end of Keats' poem? For example, does he perhaps repeat the pattern of Madeline's behavior? Or does he introduce some important concern in the poem?

4. How does the poem represent the development and continuation of love? Consider the love Porphyro shows for Madeline and the love she has for him—how does their passion develop? Is the passion strictly physical, or is there something more to it? Explain.

5. With regard to the poem's conclusion, in what sense might "The Eve of St. Agnes" betray genuine distrust of the power of imagination? What is the connection between dreaming and acts of imagination? What happens when Madeline's dream becomes reality?

6. Explain the medieval quest dimension of this poem—how is it a romance quest? What elements of medieval romance (images, themes, etc.) can you find in the narrative?

"Ode to a Nightingale"

7. What emotions and desires does Keats' speaker describe in connection with the nightingale? How do his feelings and desires differ from those of Shelley's speaker in "To a Sky-Lark"?

8. What value does the speaker attribute to the nighttime setting of his composition—that is, what opportunities does the night open to him? What associations does he make in connection with darkness?

9. How, in Stanza 7, does the bird's song lead the speaker beyond his immediate surroundings? What draws him back to himself in the final stanza? What does the poem suggest about the nature and duration of vision that the speaker has attained as he listens to the nightingale?

“Ode on a Grecian Urn”

10. Keats respectfully opposes Wordsworth’s poetry of the “egotistical sublime.” How does the present poem offer an alternative focus for poetry?
11. What makes the speaker question the urn in the first stanza? What state of mind does Keats’ poem seem designed to bring about?
12. Why are the figures on the urn called a “leaf-fringed legend”? (Look up the Latin verb “lego” or the gerundive “legendum” in a lexicon.) What does such a word have to do with the relationship between speaker and urn?
13. What paradox develops beginning with the second stanza and developing through the rest of the poem? What does art give us? What does it withhold?
14. What subjects of address does the speaker draw from the urn? What do they have in common? What don’t they have in common—in other words, does the speaker have to address some subjects differently? Does the speaker put them into any working relationship? Explain.
15. People have sometimes said that line 25 is not good poetry: “More happy love! more happy, happy, happy love!” But consider the placement of the line in the poem as a whole—why might Keats have included such a line where he does, rendering it appropriate?
16. Critics argue over the meaning of the poem’s last two lines, with or without the parentheses. How do you interpret them? What does it mean to identify truth and beauty—two realms that we generally insist upon keeping separate, just as we separate ethics or morality from aesthetics or beauty?
17. In a sense, the speaker is playing “art critic” when he questions the urn about its meaning. Does the personified urn’s response validate this questioning? What does the poem, and especially the final stanza as a whole, suggest about the status of attempts to address the meaning of a work of art?
18. Contemporary critics usually insist on interpreting art in terms of its social and historical context, with the understanding that context is always at least partly constructed by the critic and not simply available as objective data. But how does Keats’ speaker suggest we ought to consider a work of art, if indeed you take the poem as offering any insights about “context”?

“To Autumn”

19. All of the seasons have found poets to sing their praises, or at least their significance. But what is special to Keats’ speaker about Autumn? What associations does he draw from the season beyond the natural surroundings and the time of year?
20. How does the stanzaic patterning of this poem, along with other formal features, reinforce the seasonal mood that Keats explores?

“Letters” (889-95)

21. On 889-90, what is “negative capability”? How does Shakespeare exemplify this capability, while Coleridge, according to Keats, lacks it?
22. On 890, what criticism does Keats make of the Wordsworthian manner in poetry? What does Wordsworth do that he shouldn’t, and what does he not do that he should?
23. On 891, Keats writes that “if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all.” What do you think of that statement as a description of how poetry is generally written? Why is it or isn’t it a good description of poetic composition?
24. On 893-94, what comparison does Keats make by contrasting the poetry of Milton and Wordsworth? Does Keats favor one over the other, or is that not the right question to ask? Explain.
25. Why, according to Keats on 894-95, is the poet like a chameleon (i.e. “camelion”)? Why, in the view Keats explores, would it be beside the point to praise or condemn poetry for its supposed moral status or tendencies?

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

CHARLES LAMB QUESTIONS

Assigned: “Christ’s Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago” (496-505).

“Christ’s Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago”

1. Lamb’s essay explores childhood—an important period in romantic literature. What seems to underlie Lamb’s interest in the topic—that is, childhood considered in its own right and in relation to adulthood? Is Lamb’s exploration of early experience characteristically “romantic” as you understand that term? Explain.
2. The Norton editors point out that the “I” of this essay combines the experiences of Coleridge and Lamb. What further reasons can you find for this combinatory device beyond what the editors say? What does such a combination suggest, for example, about Lamb’s attitude towards the autobiographical dimension of his essays?
3. It has often been said that Lamb’s style is elaborate, that he likes a well-turned phrase and the occasional recondite allusion. How does this affect your view of the narrator as an individual honestly relating personal details and offering personal views? Why might an essayist seek out such finely tuned phrases rather than relating things in the most straightforward manner?

4. How does the early nineteenth-century “Christ’s Hospital” fare as a place of education under Lamb’s mature scrutiny? What did children learn, both in an academic and non-academic or social sense, from the Rev. James Boyer and Mr. Matthew Field?
5. Does the essay’s conclusion cap the subject definitively by offering final insights on the value of what has been examined, or does it leave matters open-ended? Explain your response. (One reason to consider this question is that it helps clarify the relationship posited between author and readers.)

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

LETITIA LANDON QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Bride of Lindorf” (175-200) from *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. (Separate edition; see below.) An e-text version is also available: [“The Bride of Lindorf.”](#)

“The Bride of Lindorf”

1. Who was Beatrice Cenci, and what was she known for? Why is it significant that Minna strongly resembles her, and what implications might her shadowy presence hold for an interpretation of Landon’s tale? (Wikipedia offers a good [article on Beatrice](#) and her afterlife as an artistic subject.)
2. What sort of person is Ernest von Hermanstadt? What seems to have formed his character early on, and in what sense does he not fit in with the habits and outlook of his aristocratic relatives? What makes him particularly susceptible to the misfortune that subsequently overtakes him?
3. How is Landon’s story both “Gothic,” as you understand that term (look it up if you find the term difficult to define), and a commentary on or critique of the assumptions that underlie Gothic (and macabre) stories?

Edition: Polidori, John et al. *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. ISBN 0192838946.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR QUESTIONS

Assigned: “Mother, I Cannot Mind My Wheel”; “Rose Aylmer”; “Past Ruined Ilion”; Twenty Years Hence.”

“Mother, I cannot Mind my Wheel”

1. How much does this brief poem reveal about the speaker’s situation and state of mind, and how much do you think it conceals?

“Rose Aylmer”

2. This is a formal stanzaic poem with an elegiac message. Why do you suppose Landor is content with such brevity on such a subject?

“Past Ruined Iliion”

3. Who is “Ianthé”? (Try an internet search for the name’s classical significance.) The poet offers the time-worn claim that verse will immortalize the poem’s subject. In this case, how much comfort does that provide?

“Twenty Years Hence”

4. What attitude towards life and death does this poem suggest? How does it characterize the relationship between the speaker and the beloved as time goes on?

Edition: Abrams, M. H. et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume 2. Seventh edition. New York: Norton, 2000. (Landor is not included in the 8th edition.)

TOM PAINE QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *The Rights of Man* (163-67).

From *The Rights of Man*

1. On 163-64, what basic principles does Thomas Paine enunciate concerning the present generation’s relation to past generations? How does he show his “Americanism” here?
2. On 165-66, how does Paine undermine Burke’s claims about the causes of the French Revolution? What does Paine himself believe to be the cause of that great event?
3. On 166-67, how does Paine connect Burke’s rhetorical emphasis with his argument about the French Revolution? As with Wollstonecraft, in what sense does he imply that this emphasis undermines Burke’s argument?
4. On 167, Paine says approvingly that the French Revolution has been “marked with so few sacrifices.” This comment was made before the Jacobin reign of terror began—does that piece of historical hindsight change your estimation of Paine’s optimistic claims about the Revolution and human nature? Explain.

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

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Four Ages of Poetry.”

“The Four Ages of Poetry” (1820)

1. Underlying the satirical humor in Peacock's essay are serious accusations against poetry in the modern era. How does Peacock's description of ancient poetry's origin and early development undermine the authority of poets in any age? How, for example, does he link poetry to political power and otherwise question its dignity and status?
2. Peacock does not entirely condemn poetry—how does he explore its value to the supposedly primitive people who originated it?
3. What characterizes the “golden age” and the “silver age” of poetry, respectively? Why is poetry's development during the silver age also “a step towards its extinction”? What begins to happen to the status of poetry when “the sciences of morals and of mind” begin to move forward?
4. What characterizes the “age of brass” in ancient poetry? What led to this stage—what demands were made upon poetry, and how did poets respond?
5. How does Peacock trace the development of the golden age of more recent poetry—what subject matter did it emphasize, and why were Shakespeare and his contemporaries able to get away with the wildness they showed in representing history and various cultures?
6. How, according to Peacock, did certain silver-age poets' way of describing nature lead to the modern-day “age of brass” as represented by the Lake Poets Wordsworth and Coleridge? What startling observations does he offer concerning the Lake Poets' claims that they perceive nature in a new and profound manner?
7. Peacock has many good things to say about the march of scientific discovery and its practical benefits. Towards the essay's conclusion, what characterization does he offer of the mindset that makes such advances possible? How does the scientist approach nature and “all external things”?
8. Peacock's journalistic narrator asserts that as reason and the scientific method advance, poetry will fade into oblivion. In varying degrees of sophistication, that argument is still with us. Without simply returning to romantic-era claims, how might poetry be defended today? To what extent is poetry still valuable? How so? To whom? Another version of those questions would be, “why is poetry still with us even though science and technology are more advanced now than they were in Peacock's day? What would we lose if poetry and other kinds of art disappeared?”

Edition: There are several copies available online.

JOHN POLIDORI QUESTIONS

Assigned: “The Vampyre” (1-24) from *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. (Separate edition; see below.)

“The Vampyre”

1. How might we describe Lord Ruthven's system of morals, or ethics – what seems to motivate him to treat others as he does throughout the story?
2. How does the author characterize the young gentleman Aubrey? What are his shortcomings? What seems to draw him closer to Lord Ruthven? To what extent does he deserve the fate that overtakes him?
3. This is obviously a tale of Gothic horror, but what elements and attitudes in the story come across as lighthearted or comical? How might it be interpreted as a social satire on Regency England?

Edition: Polidori, John et al. *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. ISBN 0192838946.

MARY ROBINSON QUESTIONS

Assigned: "January, 1795" (68-69); "London's Summer Morning" (69-70); "The Poor Singing Dame" (71-72); "The Haunted Beach" (72-74); "To the Poet Coleridge" (74-76).

"January, 1795"

1. What is the operative principle of criticism in this poem's observations? How does the poem's rhyme scheme help drive them home?

"London's Summer Morning"

2. What impression of London do you get from this blank verse poem? What is the poet's role in the goings-on?

"The Poor Singing Dame"

3. How does Robinson give us a sense of the kind of lives led, respectively, by the Old Dame and the Lord of the Castle? Why is the Lord so resentful of the old woman, and what is the cause of his eventual suffering and death?
4. In the end – judging from the poem's last two lines – who "wins" the unequal contest between the Lord and the Old Dame?

"The Haunted Beach"

5. What is the story or plot of this short poem, in simple terms – what happened, and to whom?
6. How does the speaker's description of the seascape reinforce the dreadfulness of the crime that has been committed?

“To the Poet Coleridge”

7. Please read this poem right after you read Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan.” What does the speaker feel emboldened to do because of “Kubla Khan,” and how does she turn the subject of Coleridge’s poem into an exploration of his genius?

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

SIR WALTER SCOTT QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Ivanhoe*.

Ivanhoe

1. Find a few points where Scott’s narrator self-consciously mediates between the reader of 1820 and the medieval setting and characters of the novel. Why might a narrator impose a strong “historical consciousness” upon the story he tells rather than simply relate it without such treatment?
2. Describe the tension between the conquered Saxons and the conquering Normans—what, aside from the initial subjugation of Saxon England by William of Normandy in 1066—do Saxons like Cedric have against their Norman rulers? How do their values and habits differ?
3. How does the narrator explore the social order amongst the Saxons themselves? For example, what is the relation between Gurth the Swineherd and Cedric, and between Wamba the Fool and Cedric? To what extent do you think Scott, in depicting the Saxons as he does, is proffering an ideal social vision for his contemporaries?
4. What picture emerges of Prince John, brother of the Crusader Richard the Lion-Hearted? What are the circumstances of his rule, and how do his subjects appear to regard him?
5. Do an internet search for information about the Knights Templar—how did this order originate, and what are the order’s values and objectives?
6. Isaac of York and his daughter Rebecca are major figures in Scott’s novel. Hundreds of years before the twentieth-century holocaust in Germany, Jews were already the objects of intense persecution. To what extent does the narrative support the negative view of Jews prevalent even in Scott’s time? How do Isaac and Rebecca serve as a focal point for our view of some of the novel’s other main characters?
7. How does the narrative deal with the status of women in the medieval society Scott describes? It is obvious that men like Cedric, Ivanhoe, and Brian de Bois-Guilbert are the power-figures in this society, but the women play a complex and important role. Find an instance or two where this complexity shows best, and discuss.

Edition: Scott, Walter. *Ivanhoe*. New York: Signet, 2001. ISBN 0451527992.

MARY SHELLEY QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Frankenstein*.

Frankenstein

Book 1

1. How does the presence of Robert Walton in this book affect the text's treatment of science? What is his scientific motivation and goal? How does it differ from the scientific quest that Victor Frankenstein relates?
2. Describe the relationship that develops between Walton and Victor Frankenstein when he and his crew meet the doctor on their way to the North Pole. Does their relationship parallel that between the doctor and the being that he has created? If so, how?
3. What is the significance of the relationship between Victor and his cousin Elizabeth? How do their differences complement each other?
4. In 1.1-2, how does Victor describe the way he came to pursue knowledge in the natural sciences? What does he at first find lacking in modern natural science, and what makes him at last find such modern studies and methods attractive?
5. In 1.3, how does Victor describe his discovery of the life principle? Does the discovery itself bring about a further change in his attitude towards scientific endeavor? If so, describe the change.
6. In 1.5, what goes wrong once Victor dares to apply his understanding of "animation" to material substance—i.e. to a human body? How, that is, do his methods and material underscore and embody the grotesqueness of his quest? When he speaks of the Being he has created, what kind of language does he employ?
7. To what extent is the romantic conception of "imagination" involved in Victor's actions as a creator? How might his creation of the Being be a parody of the poetic or creative process—i.e. a misuse of imagination?
8. What powers does the text attribute to nature with regard to human happiness? Follow out the fluctuations in Victor's relationship to and interpretations of his natural environment.
9. What is the significance of Book 1's many references to the domestic tranquility of the Frankenstein household—at least before little William is murdered and Justine is falsely convicted of the crime and executed?
10. In 1.6-7, how does Victor interpret the devastation that has been visited upon his family? How might William's murder and Justine's execution amount to "poetic justice" against Victor for his own misdeeds?

11. Trace the “light” imagery in Book 1—what are the connotations of “light” at various points in the book?

Book 2

12. In 2.3, why can’t ordinary humans accept the Being’s appearance? What does this inability imply about the basis of human community? In other words, why so much emphasis on physical similarity or dissimilarity?

13. In 2.3, the Being tells the story of his initial moments of consciousness. Describe some of his first impressions about himself and nature and comment on what you find significant about them.

14. As his narrative develops, we hear about his impressions of language’s value and the nature and habits of other human beings. Describe some of those views and comment on what you find significant about them.

15. How does the Being’s narrative as a whole not fully reflect Adam’s account of his creation in *Paradise Lost*? See Adam and Eve’s first impressions from *PL* (Books 7 and 4, respectively). How, that is, does the Being arrive at the desire to seek his creator?

16. Why does the Being keep comparing himself to Milton’s Satan—what do they have in common?

Book 3 and General Questions

17. Why might it be construed as “poetic justice” (of an infernal sort) that Victor Frankenstein’s worst catastrophe comes just as he is to be married?

18. Describe the cycle of vengeance that consumes both the Being and Victor in Book 3. Does either one truly renounce this sentiment?

19. Now that you have read *Frankenstein*, who has your sympathies—Victor or the Being he has created? Or neither? Explain.

20. Discuss the final usage made of fire and the natural setting. Why is it significant that the Being determines to immolate himself? Why is it appropriate that he will do this when he reaches the North Pole?

21. Has Walter the scientist learned anything from Victor? If so, what has he learned? If not, why not?

22. Does Mary Shelley’s novel conform to what you take to be the typically romantic view of scientific endeavor? Why or why not?

23. What are some “romantic” elements in the novel?

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.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Mutability" (744); "To Wordsworth" (744-45); "Mont Blanc" (762-66); "Ozymandias" (768); "England in 1819" (771); "Ode to the West Wind" (772-75); "To a Sky-Lark" (817-19); "Adonais" (822-35); *Prometheus Unbound* (775-814); "Defence of Poetry" (837-50); [The Cenci e-text](#).

"Mutability"

1. In this poem Shelley describes the inconstancy of human emotions and aspirations, even of life itself. To what extent is the sentiment in this poem a comment on poetry's potential to transform the individual and the community?

"To Wordsworth"

2. Shelley laments Wordsworth's withdrawal from the revolutionary optimism of his early poetry. How, if at all, does this poem comment on the present power of Wordsworth's early work to inspire and transform a reader's sense of self and community?

"Mont Blanc"

3. How does the speaker describe the mind's relationship to the material world? How does he connect the mind's processes and natural process, if in fact he does connect them? And is the mind an active, creative power, or does Shelley describe it some other way? Explain.

4. In what sense might Mont Blanc be said both to invite and to challenge interpretation, based on the way the speaker responds to the sight of the mountain in the middle and latter sections of the poem? Moreover, what promise does the mountain hold forth, and for whom?

5. How do Mont Blanc's glacial movements, combined with the elements, compare with or offer insight into the workings and durability of human civilization? In other words, how does the speaker reflect upon nature in such a way that he is also reflecting on human desire and achievement?

"Ozymandias"

6. The traveler suggests that the statue's sculptor intended his work to express the cruelty of Ramses II. The sculptor and time's ruinous effects appear to have issued their sentence against the Pharaoh, but in what sense has he defeated them both – what statement do the ruins still make about human history and human nature?

"England in 1819"

7. What is the source of the potential for a coming social and political transformation in the Great Britain referenced in this poem?

"Ode to the West Wind"

8. Describe the structure of this poem. How does the interlocking Dantean *terza rima* verse form suit the poem's subject and aims? (If you know some Italian, read a few stanzas of *La divina commedia* out loud to get the best possible sense of how *terza rima* flows. Allen Mandelbaum's translation is also very good, although it abandons the rhyme scheme to capture something of the movement in English.)
9. With regard to the first three stanzas, what are the West Wind's powers? What effects does it have on nature and the poet? In what way does it embody both danger and hope? How is the operation of Shelley's West Wind different from natural forces in Wordsworth and Coleridge (or Blake, or Keats)?
10. Alternately, concentrate on other kinds of nature description in the first three stanzas of "Ode to the West Wind" – what qualities, what potential, do Shelley's descriptions draw from the natural world's processes and its beautiful or sublime objects? One possibility would be to consider how the "organic metaphor" operates in "Ode to the West Wind," making sure to address both this metaphor's positive, uplifting dimension and its darker implications.
11. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, how does the speaker characterize his relationship to the Wind (both in the past and in the present)? How does that relationship involve deep affinity and, in a sense, strife (if that is the right term)? What assistance does the speaker ask of the West Wind?
12. When in the final stanza the speaker prays to the Wind to scatter abroad his words and thoughts like "withered leaves" (line 64) and "ashes and sparks" (line 67), what is he implying about poetic language? Is he certain that the West Wind will grant his prayer? What burden does he place upon his utterance with regard to his personal hopes and those of "mankind"? How, more generally, might we apply Shelley's theories in "A Defence of Poetry" about inspiration, expression, and poetry's value, to "Ode to the West Wind"?

"To a Sky-Lark"

13. Why can't the poet define the skylark? How does the bird exceed the capacity of human language to describe its qualities or the qualities of its song?
14. What is the purpose of the similes that the speaker employs in place of direct definition? Do they adequately describe the skylark?
15. What is the relationship between the skylark and physical nature? What is the source of the bird's song?
16. What prevents the speaker (and us) from singing as the skylark does? Why is the skylark's song better than even the best productions of human genius, language, and emotion?
17. In what sense might this poem (like many other romantic lyric poems) be said to efface the act of writing in favor of the spoken word? Why would a poet do that, whether consciously or otherwise?

18. At the poem's end, does the speaker seem confident that his words can have the same effect on future readers as the bird's pure song has upon him? Why or why not?

"Adonais"

19. Stanzas 1-8 set forth the invocation and the speaker's lament over the fallen Adonis (Keats). In stanzas 9-13, how, according to the speaker, does imagination work, and what are its effects?

20. In stanzas 14-21, the speaker details the sympathetic response of nature to Adonis' death. But what alteration in the relationship between the speaker and the natural world does he go on to describe in these stanzas? What musings on the human condition does he offer?

22. In stanzas 22-29, the muse Urania laments over the death of Adonis. What powers does she have, and what powers does she not have in relation to humanity? What does she say about the relationship between the literary arts and criticism?

23. In stanzas 30-38, we hear about a procession of mourners, the last of whom is the Shelleyan speaker. What does this speaker establish about his own status as an artist and his relation to the departed poet Adonis?

24. In stanzas 39-46, the speaker has arrived at a less disconsolate way of understanding the passing of Adonis. How, based on what has gone before, do you think he has transitioned to this new frame of mind, and what supposition about the brotherhood of poets sustains it in the present stanzas?

25. In stanzas 47-52, the speaker partly addresses himself, and partly a projected audience of mourners. What advice does he offer, and what Neoplatonic claims underlie it? (Refer to stanza 52 on this point)

26. In stanzas 53-55, at what final resolution has the speaker arrived? How do you interpret the concluding reference in stanza 55, line 486-87 to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"?

Prometheus Unbound

Preface

27. On pages 733-34, how does Shelley distance his own presentation of the Prometheus myth from that of Aeschylus? To what extent does he suggest that he borrows from Aeschylus, and in what sense does he reject his predecessor's treatment of the Prometheus story?

28. On pages 734-35, what relationship between individual poets and their environment does Shelley assert? Also, what connection does he see between himself and "the great writers of our own age" (735)?

29. On 736, Shelley says that he finds "didactic poetry" unbearable. What is didactic poetry? And what does Shelley describe as his goal in the current play, if it isn't didactic? What audience does he

seem to be targeting, and what effect does he expect his dramatic poem will have on that target audience?

Act 1

30. From 1.1.1-73, what transformation has begun to take place in Prometheus' attitude towards his predicament and towards Jupiter? And from 262-305, what were the terms of the curse that Prometheus uttered long ago against the tyrant Jupiter? How does Prometheus respond to the repetition of his own words now?

31. From 1.1.594-633, what strategy does the Fury pursue to dispirit Prometheus? Why does that strategy fail? Still, what inward vision continues to beset Prometheus, and how does Earth comfort him in the lines immediately following?

Act 2

32. From 2.4.32-109, after Demogorgon answers Asia's question about the origin of terror and other evils with the enigmatic phrase "He reigns," what account does Asia give of the original struggle between Prometheus and Jupiter?

33. From 2.4.110-74, how do Demogorgon and then the Spirit clarify the issue concerning which Asia has sought enlightenment?

34. From 2.5.1-110, what transformation does Asia undergo? What kind of journey she has taken with the Spirit of the Hour?

Act 3

35. From 3.1.1-83, Jupiter believes he is about to realize his dream of absolute power. What happens instead? And then from 3.4.97-204, how does the Spirit of the Hour describe the change that takes place when Jupiter falls?

Act 4

36. Shelley's fourth act has sometimes been dismissed as more or less an excrescence on an otherwise very fine drama. What is your view regarding the quality of the resolution achieved in Act 4, based on the Norton selections? Please include in your response some commentary on what Earth says from 370-423 and on Demogorgon's concluding lines (554-78).

"Defence of Poetry"

37. On 838-39, how does the metaphor of the "Aeolian lyre" figure (838-39) in Shelley's theory about poetic inspiration and expression—how does Shelley develop this metaphor beyond its simplest level, thereby offering a complex analysis of the concept "expression"?

38. On 839-42, how does Shelley define poets—what qualities do poets have, and what do they do for their fellow human beings? How were those who best wielded the poetic faculty vital to the earliest societies?
39. On 843-44, how does Shelley address the difficult issue of how we may judge the excellence of a given poet? On 843, he makes the famous statement that “A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds....” In the surrounding commentary, how does he more fully explain the relationship between poet and audience, poet and literary history? On 844, how does the issue of “morality” figure in Shelley’s analysis of poetic value?
40. On 845-46, while explaining why he thinks poetry is necessary, Shelley writes, “we want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know.” Shelley was certainly no despiser of science or philosophy, but in what sense do his remarks here criticize the tendencies of modern scientific practice, and somewhat deflate the claims of philosophy to ultimate wisdom? In addition, what does he imply is responsible in modern times for denigrating both individual imagination and any sense of community?
41. In Plato’s *Ion*, Socrates argues that inspiration is a direct transmission of emotion from the gods to the poet to the reader or listener. Is that the way inspiration works according to Shelley? Explain, with reference to his “fading coal” metaphor on page 846, and his remarks more generally on 846-47, culminating in the sentence at 847 bottom, “Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.” (A few other metaphors to consider, time permitting or if you are presenting on this question, occur on 846, “the colour of a flower which fades and changes,” and 847, “a wind over a sea.”)
42. In the Norton selection from *The Statesman’s Manual* (488-90), Coleridge suggests that symbolic utterances bridge the gap between mind and matter, subject and object, and that a symbol “participates in the Reality which it renders intelligible” (488). Is Shelley’s view poetic language as optimistic as Coleridge’s? Are there differences between the two authors on this key issue? Consider Shelley’s claims on 847, final paragraph through 848—“poetry,” he writes, “purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being” and “creates anew the universe,” etc.
43. On 850, Shelley concludes with a stirring declaration: “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” To judge from the surrounding content on this page and elsewhere in “A Defence of Poetry,” he isn’t simply arguing that we should pay more attention to poets. Explain the paradox involved in his claim, and try to unpack its complexity as a statement about the value of poets and poetry.
44. General question: are Shelley’s definitions of poets and poetry based more on expression than inspiration? Is there a conflict between claims about a poet’s “inspiration” and claims about the social function of poetry? Why or why not?

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

Assigned: [The Cenci Electronic Edition](#).

"The Cenci

Act 1

45. Scene 1 provides us with our first look at Count Francesco Cenci—what seems to have long been his motivation for the kind of life he has led? Is he a stage villain, or a complex character?

46. Scene 2 gives us a first look at Beatrice Cenci, the Count's daughter. What virtues does she manifest? Orsino takes the measure of her character—based on your reading of the play's later events, does his judgment of her hold true?

47. In Scene 3, the Count summons his relatives and friends to a banquet, and proceeds to shock them all by reveling in the death of two of his sons. Why does he engage in such a public display? What does he apparently seek from his guests?

Act 2

48. What does Scene 1 reveal about the Count's relations with his family? How does he explain his dark designs and justify them to himself?

49. In Scene 2, how does Orsino's brand of wickedness in thought and deed compare to that of Count Cenci? How are the two men similar? In what do they differ?

Act 3

50. In Scenes 1 and 2, following the Count's outrage against his daughter Beatrice, what logic does she set forth in favor of murdering him? Why is exposing him to public condemnation insufficient to the demands of justice?

Act 4

51. How does the plot against the Count play out in this act? What makes it unravel after Cenci is killed?

Act 5

52. What progression in tragic heroism can you trace in the words and actions of Beatrice in this fifth act, now that she has been arrested for her role in doing away with the Count? Mark the points you find most significant in this development.

53. How does the fifth act, and indeed the play in its entirety, condemn the kind of “justice” represented by the Pope and his ministers? What kind of justice has Beatrice asserted against it? Does this assertion in any way diminish her virtue and tragic standing, or does it seem instead that the sentiment of the play is entirely on her side? Explain your reasons for responding as you do.

Edition: *The Cenci* is not in the *Norton Anthology*, but can be read as an e-text: [The Cenci](#).

CHARLOTTE SMITH QUESTIONS

Assigned: “Written at the Close of Spring” (40); “To Sleep” (40); “To Night” (40-41); “Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex” (41); “On Being Cautioned against Walking on an Headland Overlooking the Sea. . .” (41-42); “The Sea View” (42).

“Written at the Close of Spring”

1. Explain the connection here between the season, the speaker’s state of mind, and the larger point she makes about the human condition. What other poems can you think of that make a similar connection?

“To Sleep”

2. A formal question—how does Smith’s concluding couplet in this Shakespearian sonnet compare in its effect on her previous twelve lines to the couplets in some of her other sonnets? (A Shakespearean sonnet is structured as follows: three rhyming four-line units or “quatrains” abab / cdcd / efef, and then a couplet rhyming “gg.”)

“To Night”

3. Poets sometimes deal with night as a time when things are waiting to be born. What associations does Smith make in this sonnet?

“Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex” / “On Being Cautioned. . . .” / “The Sea View”

4. In these three poems, what kinds of characters does Smith seem to be drawn to write about? How does Smith (or rather the lyric voice or “speaker”) relate to these characters? In what sense is her focus characteristic of what would later be called “romantic poetry”?

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

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (170-95); from *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (195-212); from *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (159-63).

From *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

1. General question: how does Wollstonecraft use key terms such as nature, reason, understanding, virtue, sensibility, love, etc., throughout our selection?
2. General question: how does Wollstonecraft's style and manner of argumentation generate authority for her as a writer addressing inequities in gender relations?
3. On 170-74 (Intro.), describe Wollstonecraft's conception of human nature—what are the main human faculties or characteristics, and how should they be ranked and otherwise related?
4. On 172 (Intro.), Wollstonecraft opposes "virtue" to "elegance." How does she define virtue, and how is it opposed to elegance?
5. On 173 (Intro.), what does Wollstonecraft suggest is the key to men's continuing domination over women? What is the basis of men's claims to superior status over women, and how does she undermine that basis?
6. On 174-76 (Ch. 2), what is Wollstonecraft's criticism of Milton and Rousseau on 170-71 and elsewhere? What does she argue that they misunderstood in treating of relations between men and women?
7. On 176 (Ch. 2), why is education so important a concept to Wollstonecraft? You might relate this question to her view of human nature.
8. On 177-78 (Ch. 2), explain Wollstonecraft's analogies between women and soldiers -74 and between women and the wealthy on 189-90 (Ch. 4). What do such comparisons allow Wollstonecraft to argue about the "naturalization" of perceived gender differences?
9. On 182-83 (Ch. 2), how does Wollstonecraft deal with the concept of love? How does romantic and physical love get in the way of a woman's development?
10. On 186-88 (Ch. 2), in what sense might Wollstonecraft be said to ask only for a "fair trial" for women to demonstrate their true capabilities? How does this stance allow her to maintain a scientific (i.e. empiricist) position with regard to alleged gender differences?
11. On 189-90 (Ch. 4), Wollstonecraft argues that women's current social subordination by no means proves their inferiority to men. How does she support her argument?
12. On 190-91 (Ch. 4), how does Wollstonecraft compare arguments made against educating the poor to arguments against educating women? What theoretical point does this comparison allow her to make?

From *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*

13. How does Wollstonecraft apply the analytical method she promotes in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to her experiences in the Scandinavian countries she visited at the behest of her lover Gilbert Imlay?

14. What are the observations you consider most important, and what immediate event in the narrative seems to have given rise to them?

A Vindication of the Rights of Men

15. On 159-60, what reproach does Wollstonecraft make against Burke's rhetorical emphasis in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*? How, according to her, does this emphasis undermine Burke's argument?

16. On 160-61, how does Wollstonecraft define "the rights of men"? According to her, what misunderstanding besets Burke's claims about human rights?

17. On 161-63, Wollstonecraft attacks Burke's views on property and on the correct way to deal with poverty. What is the basis of her argument against relying too much on property rights?

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

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *The Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals* (390-402).

From Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals

1. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge seemed to have been conversant with Dorothy's journals as well as with her verbal observations. Does this fact alter your view of their poetry or of romantic ideas about original composition? Explain.

2. Compare one of Dorothy's descriptions with a corresponding one in the poetry of Wordsworth or Coleridge. One example would be page 393, where Dorothy mentions the old man Wordsworth will call "the Leech Gatherer." Describe some similarities in the way Dorothy describes nature and the way William does in your example. Are there differences as well? Explain.

3. Follow closely one of Dorothy's passages in terms of style and structure—what does she notice and therefore make us notice first, middle, and last? How "finished" are the journal entries in terms of style and grammar?

4. What kind of life does Dorothy apparently lead? What does she say about her brother William? How does she deal with his marriage to Mary Hutchinson?

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

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH QUESTIONS

Assigned: "Expostulation and Reply" (250-51); "The Tables Turned" (251-52); "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (258-62); "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (262-74); "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" (275); "Three years she grew" (275-76); "A slumber did my spirit seal" (276-77); "Lucy Gray" (277-79); "Resolution and Independence" (302-05); "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (305-06); "My heart leaps up" (306); "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (306-12); "The Solitary Reaper" (314-15); "Sonnet composed upon Westminster Bridge, 1802" (317); from *The Prelude* (322-89).

"Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned"

1. What is "wise passiveness"? Why is that quality important to William's argument in favor of communing with nature and against Matthew's emphasis on the benefits of book-learning? How would you summarize the two characters' arguments?

"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"

2. M. H. Abrams has described "Greater Romantic Lyrics" as divided into three stages: a) description of a particular scene; b) analysis of the scene's relation to a creative or spiritual problem; and c) affective or emotional resolution of that problem. In "Tintern Abbey," the first verse paragraph (lines 1-22) comprises stage one. What is the scene—what does the speaker see around him? What qualities do his natural surroundings possess? What effect do they presently have upon his consciousness?
3. In the first verse paragraph (1-22), how does the speaker signal the presence of other human beings in the midst of nature? What inference might be drawn from the speaker's fanciful conjecture that perhaps the distant smoke may be coming from a fire set by some "Hermit" alone in the woods? What is a "hermit," and what comparison might be made between such a person and the speaker himself?
4. In the second verse paragraph (lines 23-49), what sustenance has the speaker drawn from the "beauteous forms" of the locale around Tintern Abbey's ruins—what two "gifts" does he attribute to their influence? Regarding the second gift, what "blessed mood" does the speaker describe as flowing to him from the shaping influence of nature? In your own words, discuss the deliverance and insight the speaker says this mood makes possible.
5. In the third verse paragraph (lines 50-57), what anxiety does the speaker reveal? What sense of loss or fear of self-delusion besets him? How does he begin to hem in or limit this anxiety—in what sense does the second half of the verse paragraph resemble a prayer?
6. In the fourth verse paragraph (lines 58-111), the speaker analyses the stages of his relationship with nature, from his early youth to post-adolescence (five years prior) to the present when he must be around 26. The editor's note on lines 66ff characterizes those stages well, but there's more to say about the psychology of loss and compensation in this paragraph: what has been lost, and what two "gifts" (85) does the speaker go on to explore as constituting his "abundant recompense" (88) for any loss he has suffered? (Quote the text, but use your own words to explain what you quote.)
7. In the fourth verse paragraph (lines 58-111), how do lines from "Therefore" (102) onwards not only refer to but also *demonstrate* the beneficial effects of the gifts the speaker believes he has received?

8. In the fifth verse paragraph (lines 112-59), the speaker first specifies that another dimension of his anxiety over the loss that comes with maturity has to do with his creative powers, his “genial spirits” (113). How do the presence and voice of the speaker’s sister (William’s sister Dorothy, that is) protect him from sadness and offer hope for the future? How is Dorothy an integral part of what Meyer Abrams would call the poem’s “affective resolution”?

“Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*

“The Subject and Language of Poetry”

9. On 264-65, Wordsworth says that the “incidents and situations” (264) in his experimental work *Lyrical Ballads* come from “humble and rustic life” rather than from life in England’s rapidly growing urban centers (“the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers”). What ideal relationship between the natural environment, language, and the deepest, most abiding qualities of human beings does he articulate on these pages?

10. On 265-66, Wordsworth offers a noteworthy definition: “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (265). How does he modify this purely expressive definition with a characterization of his meditative process, and how are his remarks on this point related to what he says about the “purpose” of his poems in “*Lyrical Ballads*” (265 bottom - 266)?

11. On 266-67, Wordsworth expresses faith that his poems, which (*contra* Aristotelian orthodoxy) emphasize feeling over action, will prove satisfying because “the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants” (266). What is the source of this faith, and what “multitude of causes, unknown to former times” does he identify as responsible for reducing urban dwellers to “a state of savage torpor” (266)? What exactly is this state of being that Wordsworth captures with his oxymoron “savage torpor”?

12. On 267-69, how does Wordsworth address the often-argued distinction between poetic language and prose? What criticism of Thomas Gray does he make to advance his argument against maintaining a broad gap between “poetic diction” and ordinary language, or “prose composition”?

“What is a Poet?”

13. On 269-71, what main characteristics does Wordsworth ascribe to poets? What is their relationship to their “own passions and volitions”? And what is the relationship between those “passions and volitions,” or personal feelings and desires, and the “goings-on of the Universe” (269)? In your own words, what point is Wordsworth making here about poets as ideally expressive human beings?

14. On 270-72, what sort of “truth” does poetry give, according to Wordsworth? How is this truth communicated, and why, in Wordsworth’s view, does the poet’s “song” appeal to individuals and to societies in a way that scientific discovery can’t hope to rival, even though its dominance as paradigm and practice grows constantly in modern times?

“Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity”

15. On 273-74, Wordsworth returns to the issue of poetic process. As in his previous reference (265-66), how does he modify a doctrine of pure expression with the language of meditation? How does he describe the process whereby a poet gets into the right state of mind to “compose” a poem mentally? What must the poet keep in mind so that readers or listeners will receive a given poem—one that may well have its partial source in strong emotion—with “an overbalance of pleasure” (273) rather than simply being overwhelmed by an all-too-genuine burst of feeling?

16. General question: scholars in the Meyer Abrams tradition have long argued that Wordsworth’s “Preface,” written after early radical support for the French Revolution had to confront the ascendancy of the Jacobin guillotine, displaces the Revolution’s three main ideals (liberty, equality, fraternity) into a theory about how poetry is composed and the effects it ought to have. If that’s the case, what are the “Preface’s” theoretical equivalents to liberty, equality, and brotherhood?

17. General question: it’s clear that Wordsworth would have no patience with popular entertainment in C21 America—“Reality TV,” high-stakes game shows, endless crime-series broadcasts and spin-offs, shock-jock radio, the almost “mainstream” presence of pornography on the Internet, and so forth would probably drive him to despair. How might some of this popular culture be defended against assertions that it’s simply “gross and violent” stimulation for a dehumanized urban population?

18. General question: Wordsworth’s “Preface” amounts to a passionate assertion that the popular taste needs to be shaped, even re-humanized, by poets and thinkers who are wise but “*not*” elitist in their sensibilities. How tenable do you find such assertions in our own time? As you see things, what agents and factors actually shape the public’s taste in modern America? How do they exercise this shaping influence? Is that influence for better, for worse, or both, depending on the particularities of each case? Discuss.

19. General question: Wordsworth and other romantics (even Shelley, who actually admired science) often write rather negatively about what they see as the destructive effects of scientific thinking and practices—do you find their assertions about the superiority of poetry and poetic “truth” convincing? Why or why not? Do you think what they say is fair to science—if so, why? If not, what do you mean by “science”—the pure pursuit of truth, or applied science? How well does such a distinction hold up in the Twenty-First Century?

“She dwelt among the untrodden ways”

20. How does the poem express a democratic sense of subject matter? What kind of person was “Lucy”? What is unusual about addressing a poem to someone like her?

21. What do the “star” and “violet” metaphors for Lucy have in common? How do they differ? What do they imply about Lucy’s qualities and the powers and habits of observation necessary to discern them? (This is not the only Wordsworth pairs flowers and stars—can you think of some others?)

“Three years she grew”

22. How does Wordsworth's view of nature in this poem (and others) differ from that of Christian theology? How does his view of nature differ from that of William Blake?

23. What will be the relationship between the child and nature? Is it a different one than is posited for the speaker? If so, how?

24. On what note does this poem end? Compare it to the great odes by Wordsworth—"Tintern Abbey" and "Intimations of Immortality."

"A slumber did my spirit seal"

25. This is usually read as one of Wordsworth's "Lucy" poems (along with "She dwelt..." and "Strange fits of passion..."; but the so-called "Lucy canon" varies) How do you connect the two brief stanzas? Do you take the poem's message as positive and uplifting, or dark and disturbing? Why?

"Lucy Gray"

26. This poem turns into a ghost story of sorts. What point may be drawn from this treatment concerning Lucy's qualities when she was alive? Why do you suppose the poet emphasizes Lucy's solitariness, both in life and in death?

27. How do the poem's metrical qualities (it's ballad 4/3 4/3 pattern and abab rhyme scheme) affect the way you read the story it tells?

"Resolution and Independence"

28. How does the speaker describe himself early in the poem? How does the natural setting accord with that description?

29. How does the poet-speaker characterize the old man's language? What effect does it at first have upon the speaker?

30. What effect does the second telling or "iteration" of the old man's words have upon the speaker? Why does it have that effect? What does the speaker gain from the old man's explanations, qualities, and presence?

31. How might this poem be interpreted as a comment on the power and limitations of words and, hence, of poetry and poets?

"I wandered lonely as a cloud"

32. How does the sensation of something natural lead the speaker to an imaginative vision? How does Wordsworth's "poetry of nature" in this lyric transform itself into the "poetry of self-consciousness"? Why is the poet's choice of the word "host" significant in this transformation?

33. Describe the poet's epiphany and its aftereffects. What effect did the vision have "real-time," so to speak, and then what happens when the poet recalls his vision in the absence of the natural scene itself?

"My heart leaps up"

34. How do you understand the implications of the speaker's claim "the Child is father of the Man"? What are the speaker's hopes for his future way of relating to nature?

35. What does "piety" mean in the context of this poem? (Consider what the editor's note suggests, and try to add something of your own.)

"Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"

36. In the first four stanzas (lines 1-57), what is the physical setting and the season? As usual in what Abrams calls the "Greater Romantic Lyric," the speaker is led by contemplation of his surroundings to certain emotions connected with a spiritual or creative problem. What problem begins to trouble the speaker in these stanzas? In addition, characterize the "back-and-forth" movement of these stanzas from joy to sadness or perplexity—at what points do these feelings show?

37. In the fifth and sixth stanzas, respectively (lines 58-76, 77-84), what variation on the ancient "myth of pre-existence" does the speaker advance? How does this variation emphasize the "dark side" of the myth, at least for the moment, pending the poem's resolution? And how is nature characterized in a way that seems unusual in Wordsworth's poetry?

38. In the seventh and eighth stanzas (lines 85-107, 108-28), what narrative about the process of attaining maturity does the speaker relate? How does the seventh stanza's "stage metaphor" help the poet convey his attitude towards this process? In the eighth stanza, how does the address "Thou best Philosopher" (110), along with the speaker's explanation of that phrase, signal the strangeness or ironic quality of children's eager pursuit of adulthood?

39. In stanzas 9-11 (129-203), we arrive at what Abrams calls the "affective resolution" stage of the Greater Romantic Lyric—how does the speaker further refine his sense of what has been lost, and what consolation or gift does he say has taken the place of the "glory" (line 18) and the "visionary gleam" (line 56) of childhood? To what extent does this gift invoke the romantic concept of "sublimity"?

40. General question: compare the present ode's conclusion or "affective resolution" compared to the one you have already studied in "Tintern Abbey"? What is similar and what is different? Do you find "Immortality" more upbeat or less so? Explain your rationale.

"The Solitary Reaper"

41. As with "Lucy Gray," why is it important to Wordsworth's speaker that the Reaper is alone, singing by herself? What is the significance of her solitariness—is she an exemplary figure? If so, explain how she and her song might be understood that way.

42. What seems to be the difference in degree of self-consciousness between the solitary singer and the poem's observer-speaker? Moreover, how does the poem exhibit "democratic sensibilities" — what sort of person are we being asked to pay attention to here?

43. How is this poem both mimetic (i.e. an imitation of something) and expressive at the same time? Consider the phrase "the vale profound" (line 7)—why is it significant that the vale is "overflowing with the sound" (line 8) of the woman's voice?

44. What imaginative, exotic interpretations does the speaker offer in his attempt to describe the reaper's singing? Does it matter that he cannot understand her words? What *does* he understand, or what spirit does he catch from her?

"Sonnet composed upon Westminster Bridge, 1802"

45. What fresh perspective does this sonnet provide on London? What role does the device of personification or *prosopopeia* play in this achievement? What is the relationship between the city and nature? (See [Westminster Bridge, Wikipedia](#) for information on the bridge and its environs.)

From "The Prelude"

Book 1

46. From lines 1-79, how does the speaker describe his spiritual state before beginning his poetic task? What questions does he raise? How does he describe the coming on of inspiration and its immediate effects upon him?

47. From lines 80-269, what possible subjects does the speaker set forth, and why does he feel discouraged?

48. From lines 269-356, what experiences from his early childhood does the speaker explore, and what relationship to the natural world do these experiences suggest for the five-year-old boy? Consider lines 340-350—what do these lines suggest about the passage's significance for the determination of the poet's subject matter?

49. From lines 357-414, the speaker explains how his early adventure in a small boat turned into something more exciting than he had expected. How is this adventure an early adventure of the sublime? How does his perception of the natural surroundings change, and what physical effects does the change produce in him?

50. From lines 415-543, what other experiences with nature does the speaker reflect upon? How does he describe the "ministry" of nature involved in such experiences?

51. From lines 544-612, how does the speaker distinguish the operation of nature by "extrinsic passion" (544) from other experiences with nature—"joys / Of subtler origin" (548-49)—as he calls them? What

complexity do these new experiences introduce or extend with regard to the speaker's early relationship to nature?

52. From lines 613-47, how does the speaker characterize his accomplishment to this point in his narrative? What have the recountings of his boyhood experiences and feelings done for him so far? Why is he confident that his addressee—his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge—will judge his efforts kindly?

Book 2

53. From lines 175-203, while relating feelings and events from his grammar-school years, the speaker addresses the growing complexity of his regard for nature. In what manner, as a boy, did the speaker love the sun—how did this kind of love differ from the way an adult loves the sun?

54. From lines 203-66, the speaker takes us back even to the period of his infancy. What difficulties does he identify with his project: why is it hard to do what he has determined to do? How, nonetheless, does he deal with an infant's first perceptions and experiences—how do they form a child's future interactions with the natural world?

55. From lines 277-369, the speaker gives us further reflections on what at lines 202-03 he had called the stage in which nature "was sought / For her own sake." What does he apparently mean by this phrase—in what sense did he begin to love nature for its own sake, and with a kind of "religious love" (358)? Left unexamined, the speaker's words might suggest that he simply idolized nature—but how would that be an oversimplification?

56. From lines 420-72, the speaker ends this selection with thoughts similar to what we found in Book 1—a statement of confidence about his progress in the epic, and a nod to Coleridge as a brother in his enterprise. Again, what accounts for the confidence, and why is Coleridge particularly capable of appreciating what the speaker has accomplished so far?

Book 3

57. In the third book, the speaker recounts his first impressions of Cambridge University, where he attended classes from 1787-91. From lines 1-169, how does he explain his uneasiness about attending Cambridge, and what distinguishes him from other students there? In what sense is there an implicit contrast here between two different ways of seeking knowledge?

58. In the brief selections from the third book, the speaker twice puts an abrupt end to his musings—"But peace!" (124) and "No more:" (197). Why is it appropriate for him to treat his own reflections this way—what imperative in his poetic task compels him to do it, even though he tells us that his "heroic argument" (184) is what has "passed within" (175) his own mind and heart?

Book 4

59. The speaker describes how, when he was around 18, trivial social pursuits began to get in the way of his communion with “books and nature” (299). How do the two main events he examines—his walk home from a dance and his meeting with a vagrant soldier—partly make up for the time he has wasted? What does he learn about his mission in life (308-37), and what value does he find in his accidental connection to the soldier (370-472)?

Book 5

60. From lines 45-141, the speaker recounts a dream occasioned by his reading of *Don Quixote*. An Arab appears to him bearing a stone and a shell—what does each represent, and why is the shell “something of more worth” (90)? How do you account for the sense of anxiety or even dread that pervades this dream—why, that is, does the speaker apparently find it disturbing?

61. From lines 366-427, the speaker tells the story of “the Boy of Winander”—what was special about the boy, and to what observations does this long-lost boy give rise in the speaker? For example, how does the personified “Thronèd Lady” of the Village Church regard the departed Boy? What would a perfect childhood be like?

62. Why might “books and nature” (425) both be equally valuable to a growing child? In responding, consider what the speaker says from lines 428-615 about “the mystery of words.”

Book 6

63. In his description of crossing the Alps’ Simplon Pass (lines 525-641), the speaker at first admits his disappointment at the actual appearance of Mont Blanc. The magnificent Vale (Valley) of Chamouny below helps him recover, but what further surprise confronts him in the form of a peasant traveler’s announcement (560-92)? And from 593-641, how does the speaker overcome this second shock to his expectations?

64. At lines 625-630, the speaker offers a natural description: “The immeasurable height / Of Woods decaying, never to be decayed, / The stationary blasts of waterfalls, / And in the narrow rent at every turn / Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn, / The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky....” Consider this language for a moment as a species of rhetoric—i.e. language that is trying to convince us of something. How would you characterize the assertion the poet is making here about nature’s power and about the temporal and spatial dimensions of the world in which we live?

Book 7

65. From lines 619-674, the speaker contrasts the effect of human crowds and solitary individuals—in this case a blind beggar standing against a wall. What state of mind is the speaker in when he comes across this beggar? What is “really there” before his eyes? What emotional and imaginative effects does the speaker inspire in him? To what observations does the experience give rise?

66. From lines 675-772, the speaker offers another example in which clarity may be drawn from apparent confusion: his experience of London's annual St. Bartholomew's Day Fair. What contrast between poetic or contemplative perception and ordinary perception emerges from this episode? What does "Nature" (738) have to do with the contrast?

Book 8

67. Coleridge says in his prose that the power of imagination lies partly in its ability to acknowledge the particularities of a person or thing and yet to see its universal dimensions. How does the speaker show this power in his description of a shepherd walking through the mist (lines 257-93)?

68. *The Prelude*—especially in its final 1850 version—often seems to invoke the Christian idea of Providence (God's plan) to surround the development of the speaker's special gifts and the pattern of his life. How is our selection in this book (lines 257-356) a good example of that tendency?

Book 9

69. In this selection (lines 1-124), the speaker reflects on the beginning of his second visit to France during the exciting, tumultuous Revolutionary period of 1791-92. What phenomena does he notice? What does he read? How does he analyze his state of mind at the time? Why does he join up with the people and become a "Patriot" for their cause?

Book 10

70. From lines 48-93, the speaker deals with his impression of Revolutionary France at the stage when radical extremists set their hearts on eliminating moderate resistance to their desires for total transformation of French politics and society. How does a quotation from *Macbeth*—"Sleep no more" come to his aid in rendering this impression? (Look up the reference in Shakespeare's play at 2.2.33-34, as the *Norton* note indicates—what is the context of Macbeth's utterance, and why is it appropriate in Wordsworth's passage?)

71. From lines 263-299, how does the speaker explain his dismay at the annunciation of war between England and Revolutionary France early in 1793? By this time he has returned home to England—what alienates him from the mass of his countrymen? What is the cause of his self-reproach?

72. From lines 356-415, the speaker describes France's further slide into the Reign of Terror under Maximilien Robespierre, leader of the Jacobin extremists. What do his nightmares reveal to him about the nature and source of such violence, and about the power (or lack thereof) of one individual to make any difference in such terrible events?

Book 11

73. From lines 104-235, and then 279-363, the speaker explains how he reacted to events in France and England in 1794-95—into what errors did he fall as an analyst of the Revolution, and at what personal

cost? What protected him from permanent spiritual damage during this difficult time? In your response, consider the balance Wordsworth seems intent on maintaining between “reason” and “passion.”

Book 12

74. From lines 88-151, the speaker explains that thanks to “overpressure from the times” (51), he turned for a while to the fashionable doctrine of “the picturesque.” What is the “opportunity cost” of such an emphasis—namely, what are devotees of the picturesque doing that they shouldn’t be doing, and what are they not doing that they should be doing, with respect to the proper appreciation of nature?

75. From lines 208-87, the speaker defines and illustrates what he calls “spots of time” (208). What is a spot of time? What important truth about ourselves does it reveal to us? What nuances does the “Girl with a pitcher” example add to the basic definition?

76. From lines 288-335, the speaker offers another instance of what he means by a “spot of time.” What value does this particular spot—a brief experience not long before the death of his father—have for him? How, for instance, does it sum up his difficulties and prospects at the time he experienced it?

Book 13

77. This book chronicles a return to valuation of the human form as worthy of poetic concentration. From lines 1-63, and at 282-92, how does the speaker explain this decision—why has he found it possible to come back to such an emphasis on human beings, rather than just dealing with nature alone?

78. From lines 300-59, the speaker suggests that each poet receives the gift of “his own peculiar faculty” or kind of insight (302). How does his recounting of his vision at “Sarum’s Plain” (Salisbury Plain) reveal the quality of his peculiar faculty? What has he accomplished by means of this vision?

Book 14

79. From lines 66-90, the speaker describes his ascent of Mount Snowdon, and tries to convey the mountain’s powerful effect upon his imagination and feelings. What does the Mount suggest exists beyond the physical by the grandeur of its physical properties? From lines 91-129, to what insights about the faculty of imagination does his vision of the Mount lead the speaker?

80. From lines 150-205, the speaker proclaims that he has never fallen prey to merely selfish thoughts or motives, and he ascribes his success in this regard to “fear and love” (162). What do these two terms apparently mean in the context of Book 14, and what is the relative value of each?

81. From lines 371-456, the speaker offers his concluding thoughts about what he has gained the confidence to “teach”—what lesson, then, will his future poetry impart? Is it the same one that the

current epic offers us, or would you describe the lesson of *The Prelude* in a different way? Either way, explain the basis for your response.

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