

Masters of Arts in English
Comprehensive Examination Spring 2008

*Section 1: In a full paragraph, answer **ten** of the following twelve questions. This section is worth 100 of 300 points, and you have one hour to complete it. You may do these in any order, but be sure to number your responses. For the two that you choose not to do, write the number and then the word "omit."*

1. Does Hansberry critique traditional gender roles in *A Raisin in the Sun*?
2. Giving examples from at least two works, define the nature of Dryden's satire.
3. In *Twelfth Night*, how does Viola/Cesario feel about her disguise? She asserts "I am the man" in her soliloquy (2.2.12-36); what insights does this proclamation give us about desire and the role Cesario plays in the various relationships?
4. Discuss some characteristics of at least two Bishop poems that could explain the title of this scholarly work: *Inscrutable Houses: Metaphors of the Body in the Poems of Elizabeth Bishop*. ("Inscrutable house" comes from "Sestina," where it refers to the picture that the child is drawing, but the author of this scholarly book is using the term more broadly.)
5. What has the dreamer learned by the end of *Pearl*?
6. Which character best represents the moral center of Austen's *Emma*, and why?
7. Patricia Waugh argues that "Metafiction explicitly lays bare the conventions of realism; it does not ignore or abandon them." Choose a convention of nineteenth-century social realism that Fowles toys with in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and analyze how and to what purpose he adapts this convention.
8. Keats's "To Autumn," though written well after the great poems of April-May, 1819, is often thought of as an ode, though Keats did not call it that. Is it?
9. In his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, in the New York Edition of his novels, Henry James comments on his creation of the two principal characters and how they have "a consciousness highly susceptible of registration." Choose either Prince Amerigo or Maggie Verver and briefly explain what James means by this phrase.
10. When he meets his Pearl and hears her claim to an exalted station in heaven, the Jeweler is openly skeptical. Why is he doubtful, and what does the Pearl maiden tell him to mend his disbelief?
11. How does Hansberry contribute to the conversation, ongoing in black intellectual thought, about Africans Americans and education?

12. Frederick Holmes' essay "The Novel, Illusion, and Reality: The Paradox of Omniscience in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*" indicates Holmes' interest in "the paradoxes generated by a god-like author who attempts to bestow freedom on his own characters." Take a position on Fowles' novel—possibly the ending(s)?—with such paradoxes in mind.

Section 2: *This section is worth 200 of 300 points, and you have two hours to complete it.*

For this essay, you should analyze writers from 3 periods and from 2 different genres. If you are writing on a poet for whom you were assigned a group of poems, you should discuss several poems that, taken together, reflect the poet's work as a whole.

Whether they are novels, plays, or poetry, every text establishes some sort of conflict or problem and, by the end of the work, has resolved the conflict, even if "resolution" takes the form of showing that the problem cannot be solved. These conflicts and resolutions reflect the assumptions and issues of each writer's time and place, the conventions of the genre, and each writer's own preoccupations (both thematic and technical). In your essay, compare the conflicts and resolutions found in the works of 3 writers. What conflict does each writer explore, and what resolution is offered by the text(s)? How does each conflict and resolution reflect the era, the genre, and the individual writer?