British Literature

Final Study Guide

FORMAT

Section I: Identifications – 1 point each; multiple choice; read the quotation and answer the questions. You must be able to identify the passage and the author in order to answer the questions correctly.

Section II: Short Questions – 1 point each; multiple choice; read the question carefully and choose the best response.

Section III: Critical Reading and Analysis – 2 points each; multiple choice; read the identified passage and choose the best answer to each question.

Section IV: Essay – 20 points; short essay; choose one of the essay prompts and write a paragraph that completely answers the questions within the prompt with accuracy and clarity.

MATERIAL

*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

* Characters: Elizabeth, Jane, Mary, Kitty (Catherine), Lydia, Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Darcy, Georgiana Darcy, Mr. Bingley, Caroline Bingley, Louisa Hurst, Mr. Hurst, Lady Catherine, Mr. Collins, Sir William Lucas, Lady Lucas, Charlotte, Maria, Wickham, Colonel Forster, Mrs. Forster, Colonel Fitzwilliam, Mr. Gardiner, Mrs. Gardiner, Mr. Phillips, Mrs. Phillips
* Plot: The Bennet sisters are looking for husbands. Jane wants to marry for love, but also to make her family happy. Elizabeth wants to marry for love alone. The others just want to marry. Mr. Bennet’s property is entailed to the nearest male relative; therefore if his daughters do not marry before he dies, his wife and children will be poor and homeless. Mr. Bennet is satirical and not a very responsible father. Mrs. Bennet is loud and lacks tact. Jane is the pretty and nice sister. Elizabeth is the main protagonist and is reasonable, but strong-willed. Mary is the studious sister. Kitty has little to no personality. Lydia is irresponsible and obnoxious. When Mr. Bingley moves in the neighborhood, everyone wants Jane to marry him. They like each other, but his sisters and his friend, Mr. Darcy, do not approve and keep them apart. In the meantime, Mr. Darcy develops feelings for Elizabeth, who does not like him. But Mr. Collins, her father’s cousin, likes her too. He proposes; she says no. Mr. Collins then gets Charlotte Lucas to marry him. Elizabeth likes Wickham, but there is bad blood between Wickham and Darcy, involving Darcy’s father’s will. While visiting Charlotte, Elizabeth is surprised and upset when Darcy proposes to her; she says no and tells him why he is a bad person. He writes her a letter, explaining the truth behind his history with Wickham and why he disapproved of Jane and Bingley. Elizabeth believes him and becomes very attached to the letter. For the summer, Elizabeth plans a trip with her Aunt and Uncle Gardiner who take her to Derbyshire, where Mr. Darcy lives. Lydia also has a summer trip; she goes with Colonel and Mrs. Forster to Brighton with all the soldiers. Elizabeth is enjoying her trip and reconnects with Darcy, who is surprisingly kind to her and introduces her to his sister. They seem to be getting close when Elizabeth gets news that Lydia has run away with Wickham and has shamed her family. She tells Darcy and then leaves immediately. The search is on for Lydia in London. Mr. Bennet leaves the search in Mr. Gardiner’s hands and soon Lydia is found and she and Wickham are forced to marry, while Mr. Bennet is told to pay some of Wickham’s local debts. Elizabeth realizes that her whole family’s reputation was nearly destroyed. Mr. Bingley shows up again and soon rekindles his romance with Jane. This time they get engaged, seemingly with Darcy’s approval. Now Elizabeth is wondering if Darcy still loves her. Lady Catherine shows up one day and tells Elizabeth she is not to marry Mr. Darcy. She is shocked. But after finding out from Lydia and Mrs. Gardiner that Darcy found Lydia and Wickham and paid Wickham to marry her, Elizabeth is grateful to Darcy and when she sees him again, she thanks him. He proposes again and she says yes. Her father hesitates to approve, but she reveals the truth about Darcy and what he did for the family and Mr. Bennet consents. They marry.
* Major themes: marriage – why people marry, money, social pressure, class; social class – rank, who can interact with whom, money and titles, property

Romanticism

* The Romantic period is said to begin with the publication of “Lyrical Ballads” by Wordsworth and Coleridge at the tail end of the 18th century and lasted until the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign in England. Most Romantics were interested in a close, spiritual relationship with nature and in some cases inspired a resurgence of paganism. They were very much against establishment in government and religion. The Romantics called for a change in the style of poetry, in that it should be written to be accessible to the common man and therefore written in the common tongue and about universal themes. The Romantics used elements of the supernatural in their writing and were impressed by the grandness of nature, particularly described as the sublime. The Romantics were heavily influenced by revolutionary thinking, particularly by the French Revolution.

Poems by:

* William Wordsworth – “London 1802,” “The World is Too Much With Us”
  + The father of Romanticism with the publication of “Lyrical Ballads” with Coleridge. He was very concerned with making poetry accessible to all people and emphasized the importance of using uncomplicated language and writing about universal themes. He also felt that poetry should express an appreciation for nature. He did not approve of materialism in society and writes about that in “The World is Too Much with Us.” He also describes his disappointment with English culture and society in “London 1802” where he calls to Milton for guidance. Though a revolutionary in his youth, Wordsworth lived a long life and became increasingly conservative and nationalistic. He ended his long career as the poet laureate of England.
* Samuel Taylor Coleridge – “Kubla Khan,” “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
  + Friends with Wordsworth, Coleridge contributed to the poetry in “Lyrical Ballads” and was on the forefront of the Romantic movement. Like Wordsworth, he was a revolutionary thinker in his youth but grew conservative with age. Unlike Wordsworth, his work had a more supernatural and fantastical element to it and he failed to produce a large body of works mostly due to his opium addiction. In “Kubla Khan” he describes a dreamlike and Oriental setting with sublime natural features, but clearly incorporates a sexual undertone. This poem, he claims, is unfinished. Perhaps his masterpiece, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” describes the encounter of a wedding guest and a mysterious and captivating ancient mariner, who tells his tale of woe and redemption. This poem emphasizes the need for man to respect nature and includes the famous lines “water, water everywhere and naught a drop to drink.”
* Percy Bysshe Shelley – “Ode to the West Wind,” “Ozymandias”
  + Percy Shelley belongs to the second generation of Romantics and was heavily influenced by the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Although, he was disappointed by the conservative turn in his idols and he continued to champion revolution in France. His second wife, Mary, was the daughter of the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, and she is well known for writing novels such as “Frankenstein.” Shelley was notoriously good friends with Lord Byron and they often travelled with a group of friends through continental Europe, where they found thinking to be more liberal. Shelley worshipped nature and wrote about the sublime in many of his poems. “Ode to the West Wind” highlights his appreciation for the West Wind as both a destroyer and preserver of life and in “Ozymandias” he criticizes man’s hubris and shows that nature will outlive man and man’s accomplishments. Shelley died in a boating accident when he was only 29.
* George Gordon (Lord Byron) – “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage: Apostrophe to the Ocean”
  + George Gordon inherited a title and property from a relative and became better known as Lord Byron. Good friends with Shelley, they shared a lot of sentiments regarding Romanticism and the time period. He was known as a lady’s man and had a plethora of affairs. He wrote characters in his poetry that did not quite fit the traditional heroic mode; they became known as “Byronic heroes.” An example comes in his poem “Don Juan.” In “Apostrophe to the Ocean,” he emphasizes his love and respect for the power and beauty of nature, particularly the ocean. He shows that mankind cannot fully dominate the earth and that we are insignificant in comparison to the longevity of the natural world. Byron died young after contracting an illness while fighting for Greek Independence.
* William Blake – “The Chimney Sweeper” (Songs of Innocence), “The Chimney Sweeper” (Songs of Experience), “The Lamb,” “The Tyger,” “Holy Thursday” (Songs of Innocence), “Holy Thursday” (Songs of Experience).
  + Blake is not your typical Romantic, in fact, he is not really a Romantic at all. A contemporary, he is often associated with the Romantics, but his ideas are not entirely of the same vein. Blake was very concerned with the flaws of society, particularly in London. He writes about corruption in the church and state. He is famous for “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” and “Songs of Innocence” and “Songs of Experience.” Many of the poems in “Songs of Innocence and Experience” are partner poems – “The Lamb” and “The Tyger,” “The Chimney Sweeper” and “The Chimney Sweeper,” and both “Holy Thursday” poems. In “Songs of Innocence,” the narrators tend to be naïve and the content, while often disturbing, appears to have a positive element. In “Songs of Experience,” there is no naivety, and the content is more openly critical. Blake was by trade an engraver and many of his famous poems come with engravings as illustrations.

Victorianism

* The Victorian period starts with the rise of Queen Victoria and last for her reign. Style (artistically and personally) for the English was heavily influenced by the queen, herself. Women’s clothing, for example, took a turn towards the more conservative as an imitation of the Queen’s style of dress. Unlike the Romantics, the Victorians tended to return in some ways to a more traditional form for poetry and many Victorian writers emphasized the flaws of society, particularly urban society, at the height of the Industrial Revolution.

Poems by:

* Robert Browning – “My Last Duchess”
  + Married to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning was the less famous of the two poets during their lifetime, but gained recognition, especially for his dramatic monologues (like the poem “My Last Duchess”) later in his life/career and posthumously.
* Elizabeth Barrett Browning – “Sonnets from the Portuguese”
  + Married to Robert Browning, EBB was older than her husband and the met through a correspondence of letters that began after a successful publication of her poetry. She was afflicted with a lung ailment and a spinal injury. She was the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner (her family lived in Jamaica and was part Creole but moved back to England by the time of her birth) and she was well educated. She was famous for her sonnets – the lines “How do I love thee, let me count the ways” are very well known and often imitated. Later in her career she wrote a lot about social injustice, including child labor in the mines and mills of England.
* Lord Alfred Tennyson – “In Memoriam, AHH” and “The Lady of Shallott”
  + Poet Laureate after the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson is considered the quintessential Victorian poet. His early years were troubled, with an alcoholic father, health scares, and the loss of his best friend Arthur Henry Hallum, but it seems his troubles led to his future success because the publication of his elegies “In Memoriam AHH” brought him fame and fortune.
* Gerard Manley Hopkins – “Pied Beauty”
  + Hopkins’ poem “Pied Beauty” glorifies God and emphasizes the beauty of the uniqueness of each and every thing God has made. He praises God for spotted, speckled, brindled, and freckled things.

Arthur Conan Doyle

* The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
  + “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” – The death of Charles McCarthy and arrest of his son for the crime, puts Sherlock on the case. McCarthy was a tenant and friend of Mr. John Turner, having met in Australia. Turner’s daughter is the one who pleads with Sherlock to find out the truth. After reviewing the evidence, it is discovered that it was actually Turner who committed the crime. Apparently McCarthy had been for many years blackmailing Turner (Turner had been a highway robber in Australia and McCarthy knew it). McCarthy wanted his son to marry Turner’s daughter, but Turner did not wish to connect the two families. In order to protect his secret past and his daughter, Turner killed McCarthy. Ironically, the children were in fact in love and wanted to marry regardless.
  + “The Red-headed League” – Mr. Jabez, a red head, approaches Sherlock to solve the mystery of what happened to his club, the red-headed league. He reveals the odd history of how he was involved with this organization due to his having met the qualifications for membership (red hair). Sherlock uncovers the truth that the organization was a front which gave a notorious thief access to Jabez’s shop from which he could tunnel to the neighboring bank and rob it.
  + “The Five Orange Pips” – A young man approaches Sherlock after receiving a disturbing letter, much like the ones received by his uncle and father just prior to their deaths, containing five orange pips. As it turns out, the uncle had become involved with the KKK in America and they sent him this letter before murdering him. The father and unfortunate young man, who were hitherto uninvolved with the Klan, were unlucky enough to inherit the uncle’s estate and later share his fate. Sherlock uses the letter to discover the murderers and figures out that they must have been traveling on a boat at various trading points when sending out the letters. The fate of the ship and its passengers is unknown.