



**B O A R D O F S T U D I E S**  
NEW SOUTH WALES

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

**2000**  
**COMPARATIVE**  
**LITERATURE**  
**DISTINCTION COURSE**

*(50 Marks)*

*Time allowed—Three hours  
(Plus 5 minutes reading time)*

**DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- Attempt **THREE** questions, **ONE** from each Section.
- Question 1 is **COMPULSORY**.
- All questions are of equal value.
- Do **NOT** use substantially the same material in more than one answer.
- Answer each question in a **SEPARATE** Writing Booklet.
- You may ask for extra Writing Booklets if you need them.

## SECTION I

**QUESTION 1** This question is **COMPULSORY**.

The following five passages are translations of an extract from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto VII, lines 99–125, written in Italy in the fourteenth century. Dante is being guided through the various 'circles' or regions of Hell by the Roman poet Virgil. The original Italian is written in three-line stanzas with a characteristic rhyme scheme.

Using **THREE** of the passages, write an essay showing the principal differences in the use of language **AND** what the effects of these differences are.

### TRANSLATION 1

We crossed the circle to the other edge, above a fount that boils and pours over by a trench leading from it. The water was far darker than perse\*; and we, in company with the murky waves, entered down through a strange way. This dismal little stream, when it has descended to the foot of the malign gray slopes, flows into the marsh that is named Styx;

and I, who was standing intent to gaze, saw a muddy people in that bog, all naked and with looks of rage. They were smiting each other not with hand only, but with head and chest and feet, and tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth.

The good master said, "Son, you see now the souls of those whom anger overcame; and I would also have you know for certain that down under the water are people who sigh and make it bubble at the surface, as your eye tells you wherever it turns. Fixed in the slime they say, 'We were sullen in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, bearing within us the sluggish fumes; now we are sullen in the black mire.' . . ."

SINGLETON (1970)

\* very dark blue, almost black

Singleton, C (trans), *The Divine Comedy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N J, 1977, vii, pp 99-125

## QUESTION 1 (Continued)

## TRANSLATION 2

Straight to the circle's other bank we went  
     Above a fount that boils and pours its stream  
     Along a runlet from it effluent.  
 Than sable darker far its waters gleam;  
     And in the dusk waves' company we came  
     By a strange path into a lower seam.  
 This mournful streamlet makes a marsh whose name  
     Is Styx, when it has come in its descent  
     To foot of the grey slopes of evil fame.  
 And I, who stood on gazing there intent,  
     Saw folk mud-covered in the mid pool shown,  
     All naked and of semblance malcontent.  
 These struck each other not with hand alone,  
     But with the head and with the breast and feet,  
     And with their teeth tore piecemeal flesh from bone.  
 Said the good Master, "Here, son, thou dost meet  
     Their souls who still a prey to anger lie;  
     And I would have thee too as certain treat  
 That 'neath the water there are folk who sigh,  
     And make its surface all those bubbles bear,  
     As thy eye tells, wherever it may fly.  
 Fixed in the mud they say, 'Morose we were  
     In the sweet air made glad by the Sun's ray,  
     Carrying the fumes of sloth within us there;  
 Now here in the black mire morose we stay.' . . ."

HASELFOOT (1887)

**Question 1 continues on page 4**

## QUESTION 1 (Continued)

## TRANSLATION 3

We travelled across  
 To the circle's farther edge, above the place  
  
 Where a foaming spring spills over into a fosse.  
 The water was purple-black; we followed its current  
 Down a strange passage. This dismal watercourse  
  
 Descends the grayish slopes until its torrent  
 Discharges into the marsh whose name is Styx.  
 Gazing intently, I saw there were people warren'd  
  
 Within that bog, all naked and muddy—with looks  
 Of fury, striking each other: with a hand  
 But also with their heads, chests, feet, and backs,  
  
 Teeth tearing piecemeal. My kindly master explained:  
 "These are the souls whom anger overcame,  
 My son; know also, that under the water are found  
  
 Others, whose sighing makes these bubbles come  
 That pock the surface everywhere you look.  
 Lodged in the slime they say: 'Once we were grim  
  
 And sullen in the sweet air above, that took  
 A further gladness from the play of sun;  
 Inside us, we bore acedia's\* dismal smoke.  
  
 We have this black mire now to be sullen in.' . . ."

PINSKY (1994)

\* sloth, idleness (one of the Seven Deadly Sins)

*Pinsky, R The Inferno of Dante: a new verse translation, J M Dent, London, 1994*

## QUESTION 1 (Continued)

## TRANSLATION 4

So to the further edge we crossed the rink,  
 Hard by a bubbling spring which, rising there,  
 Cuts its own cleft and pours on down the brink.

Darker than any perse\* its waters were,  
 And keeping company with the ripples dim  
 We made our way down by that eerie stair.

A marsh there is called Styx, which the sad stream  
 Forms when it finds the end of its descent  
 Under the grey, malignant rock-foot grim;

And I, staring about with eyes intent,  
 Saw mud-stained figures in the mire beneath,  
 Naked, with looks of savage discontent,

At fisticuffs—not with fists alone, but with  
 Their heads and heels, and with their bodies too,  
 And tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth.

“Son,” the kind master said, “here may’st thou view  
 The souls of those who yielded them to wrath;  
 Further, I’d have thee know and hold for true

That others lie plunged deep in this vile broth,  
 Whose sighs—see there, wherever one may look—  
 Come bubbling up to the top and make it froth.

Bogged there they say: ‘Sullen were we—we took  
 No joy of the pleasant air, no joy of the good  
 Sun; our hearts smouldered with a sulky smoke;

Sullen we lie here now in the black mud.’ . . .”

SAYERS (1949)

\* very dark blue, almost black

*Sayers, D (trans), Comedy of Dante Allighieri, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955*

**Question 1 continues on page 6**

## QUESTION 1 (Continued)

## TRANSLATION 5

We crossed the circle to the other bank,  
 Near to a fount that boils, and pours itself  
 Along a gully that runs out of it.  
 The water was more sombre far than pers\*  
 And we, in company with the dusky waves,  
 Made entrance downward by a path uncouth.  
 A marsh it makes, which has the name of Styx,  
 This tristful brooklet, when it has descended  
 Down to the foot of the malign gray shores.  
 And I, who stood intent upon beholding,  
 Saw people mud-besprent in that lagoon,  
 All of them naked and with angry look.  
 They smote each other not alone with hands,  
 But with the head and with the breast and feet,  
 Tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth.  
 Said the good Master: "Son, thou now beholdest  
 The souls of those whom anger overcame;  
 And likewise I would have thee know for certain  
 Beneath the water people are who sigh  
 And make this water bubble at the surface,  
 As the eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turns.  
 Fixed in the mire they say, 'We sullen were  
 In the sweet air, which by the sun is gladdened,  
 Bearing within ourselves the sluggish reek;  
 Now we are sullen in this sable mire.' . . ."

LONGFELLOW (1867)

\* very dark blue, almost black

**SECTION II**

Attempt ONE question

In Section II, your answer must make close reference to works from MORE THAN ONE MODULE.

Answer EITHER on two or three longer works, OR on one longer work AND four or five poems or extracts.

EITHER

**QUESTION 2**

It might be said of all literature, but especially of poetry, that in William Blake's words 'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.' On the other hand it has been claimed that 'Poetry is a modest art.'

Do these two views necessarily contradict each other?

OR

**QUESTION 3**

'Cultural difference is not inherent in a text but is a product of the reader's experience of that text.'

Discuss.

OR

**QUESTION 4**

'ALL literature involves translation.'

In what way or ways might this be so?

OR

**QUESTION 5**

'The purpose of literature is repeatedly to reconstruct the world.'

Do you agree?

OR

**QUESTION 6**

'Each age gets the literature it deserves.'

Assess the validity of this claim with respect to works from AT LEAST TWO different periods.

### SECTION III

Attempt ONE Question

EITHER

#### QUESTION 7 The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘The nineteenth-century novel is more daring in its narrative methods than in its exploration of social issues.’

Do you agree? Refer in some detail to AT LEAST TWO novels in your answer.

OR

#### QUESTION 8 The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

The poet William Blake refers to ‘the mind-forg’d manacles of man’.

To what extent do nineteenth-century novelists represent individuals as subject to psychological rather than social restrictions?

OR

#### QUESTION 9 Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Religious poets all set out, in Milton’s words, “to justify the ways of God to man”. Few succeed.’

To what extent is this a valid statement? Write on FIVE or SIX poems.

OR

#### QUESTION 10 Poetry and Religious Experience

‘The expression of doubt is at the core of writing about religious experience.’

Discuss, with reference to at least THREE different authors. If you are writing on short poems, use FIVE or SIX poems.

OR

#### QUESTION 11 Satiric Voices

If satire is designed to generate ridicule and disgust, how can it show the way to moral reform?

Refer to at least THREE major works, or TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

**QUESTION 12 Satiric Voices**

‘Because satire requires a shared view of the world, few satirical works retain an impact outside their own era.’

Discuss with reference to at least THREE major works, or TWO major and several short ones.

OR

**QUESTION 13 Post-Colonial Voices**

‘The post-colonial world is a territory of despair. All the writer can do is chart the territory.’

Do you agree? Answer with reference to TWO or THREE major works, or ONE major work and several short ones.

OR

**QUESTION 14 Post-Colonial Voices**

Why, in your opinion, do some post-colonial writers use non-standard language forms in their writing? What is lost and what is gained?

Answer with reference to TWO or THREE major works, or ONE major work and several short ones.

**End of paper**

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