



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

2001

**HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION**

Comparative Literature

General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 3 hours
- Write using black or blue pen

Total marks – 50

- All questions are of equal value
- Attempt THREE questions, ONE from each section

Section I Pages 2–6

- Question 1 is COMPULSORY
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section II Page 7

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–6
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section III Pages 8–9

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 7–14
- Allow about 1 hour for this section

Section I

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

This question is COMPULSORY.

Question 1

The FOUR excerpts on pages 3–6 are translations of a passage from Book 21 of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Using THREE of the excerpts, write an essay showing the principal differences in the use of language in the three translations you are discussing AND what the effects of these differences are.

Context: *Odysseus, ruler of Ithaka, has been absent from home for 20 years. On his return, he finds his palace filled with suitors wanting to marry his wife Penelope and take over the prosperous kingdom. Disguised as a beggar in his own palace, he participates in an archery contest, using the mighty bow he had left with his family. The winner of the contest will marry Penelope, but none of the suitors has managed even to string the bow. In this episode from Book 21, Odysseus, still disguised, strings his bow (and, in subsequent lines, kills all the suitors).*

Note that Odysseus (a Greek, or Achaean), is sometimes called by his Roman name Ulysses in translations into English, and Zeus (the son of Kronos) is called Jupiter or Jove.

Question 1 continues on page 3

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 1

And thus would speak another one of these arrogant young men:
'How I wish his share of good fortune were of the same measure
as is the degree of his power ever to get this bow strung.'

So the suitors talked, but now resourceful Odysseus,
once he had taken up the great bow and looked it all over,
as when a man, who well understands the lyre and singing,
easily, holding it on either side, pulls the strongly twisted
cord of sheep's gut, so as to slip it over a new peg,
so, without any strain, Odysseus strung the great bow.
Then plucking it in his right hand, he tested the bowstring,
and it gave him back an excellent sound like the voice of a swallow.
A great sorrow fell now upon the suitors, and all their colour
was changed, and Zeus showing forth his portents thundered mightily.
Hearing this, long-suffering great Odysseus was happy
that the son of devious-devising Kronos had sent him a portent.
He chose out a swift arrow that lay beside him uncovered
on the table, but the others were still stored up inside the hollow
quiver, and presently the Achaeans must learn their nature.
Taking the string and the head grooves he drew to the middle
grip, and from the very chair where he sat, bending the bow
before him, let the arrow fly . . .

RICHMOND LATTIMORE (1965)

Question 1 continues on page 4

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 2

Then spake another proud one: 'Would to heaven
I might (at will) get Gold, till he hath geven
That Bow his draught!' With these sharp jests did these
Delightsome woo'rs their fatall humors please.
But when the wise Ulysses once had laide
His fingers on it, and to prooffe survaide
The stil sound plight it held, as one of skill
In song and of the Harpe doth at his will,
In tuning of his Instrument, extend
A string out of his pin, touch all, and lend
To every wel-wreath'd string his perfect sound,
Strooke all together—with such ease drew round
The King the Bow. Then twang'd he up the string,
That as a Swallow in the aire doth sing
With no continu'd tune, but (pausing still)
Twinkes out her scatter'd voice in accents shrill—
So sharp the string sung when he gave it touch,
Once having bent and drawne it. Which so much
Amaz'd the wooers, that their colours went
And came most grievously. And then Jove rent
The aire with thunder, which at heart did chere
The now-enough-sustaining Traveller,
That Jove again would his attempt enable.
Then tooke he into hand from off the Table
The first drawne arrow—a number more
Spent shortly on the wooers—but this one
He measur'd by his arme (as if not knowne
The length were to him), nockt it then, and drew . . .

GEORGE CHAPMAN (1560–1634)

Question 1 continues on page 5

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 3

Heav'n to this wretch (another cry'd) be kind!
And bless, in all to which he stands inclin'd,
With such good fortune as he now shall find.
 Heedless he heard them; but disdain'd reply;
The bow perusing with exactest eye.
Then, as some heaven'ly minstrel, taught to sing
High notes responsive to the trembling string,
To some new strain when he adapts the lyre,
Or the dumb lute refits with vocal wire,
Relaxes, strains, and draws them to and fro;
So the great Master drew the mighty bow:
And drew with ease. One hand aloft display'd
The bending horns, and one the string essay'd.
From his essaying hand the string let fly
Twang'd short and sharp, like the shrill swallow's cry.
A gen'ral horror ran thro' all the race,
Sunk was each heart, and pale was ev'ry face.
Signs from above ensu'd: th' unfolding sky
In lightning burst; Jove thunder'd from on high.
Fir'd at the call of Heav'n's almighty Lord,
He snatch'd the shaft that glitter'd on the board:
(Fast by, the rest lay sleeping in the sheath,
But soon to fly the messengers of death).
 Now sitting as he was, the chord he drew,
Thro' ev'ry ringlet levelling his view;
Then notch'd the shaft, releast, and gave it wing . . .

ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744)

Question 1 continues on page 6

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 4

‘I wish him luck’, some cocksure lord chimed in,
‘as good as is his luck in bending back that weapon!’

So they mocked, but Odysseus, mastermind in action,
once he’d handled the great bow and scanned every inch,
then, like an expert singer skilled at lyre and song—
who strains a string to a new peg with ease,
making the pliant sheep-gut fast at either end—
so with his virtuoso ease Odysseus strung his mighty bow.
Quickly his right hand plucked the string to test its pitch
and under his touch it sang out clear and sharp as a swallow’s cry.
Horror swept through the suitors, faces blanching white,
and Zeus cracked the sky with a bolt, his blazing sign,
and the great man who had borne so much rejoiced at last
that the son of cunning Cronus flung that omen down for *him*.
He snatched a winged arrow lying bare on the board—
the rest still bristled deep inside the quiver,
soon to be tasted by all the feasters there.
Setting shaft on the handgrip, drawing the notch
and bowstring back, back . . . right from his stool,
just as he sat but aiming straight and true he let fly—

ROBERT FAGLES (1996)

End of Question 1

Section II

Attempt ONE question from Questions 2–6

Allow about 1 hour for this section

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.

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Question 2

‘A play is incomplete; a novel is a flawed structure; a poem may be perfect.’

What do you think?

OR

Question 3

‘Literature records the struggle between the instinct for life and the instinct for destruction.’

Do you agree?

OR

Question 4

It has been said that the comparative approach to literature allows us to see some sort of whole, instead of the defensive little patch offered by the individual’s own culture, literature and history.

Discuss.

OR

Question 5

‘Trust me. I’m a writer.’

In what sense do we trust literature?

OR

Question 6

‘Life is chaos; literature orders and connects.’

‘Literature ignores life.’

Use these different statements as a starting point for a discussion of some of the literature you have studied this year.

Section III

Attempt ONE question from Questions 7–14

Allow about 1 hour for this section

Answer the question in a SEPARATE writing booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Question 7 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘In the nineteenth-century novel everything can be said to fail . . . miserably, damply, quietly.’

To what extent does this view reflect your reading of the nineteenth-century novel?

Refer in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your answer.

OR

Question 8 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Nineteenth-century fiction deals with a world in which the characters are uncomfortable, but this does not mean that the writer is arguing against the values of the world he depicts.’

Do you agree? Refer in some detail to TWO or THREE novels in your answer.

OR

Question 9 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Knowledge is a subject for prose; faith is a subject for poetry.’

To what extent is this a valid statement? Write EITHER on *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR on no more than FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 10 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.’

Is this a good description of the literature of religious experience? Write EITHER on *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR on no more than FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 11 — Satiric Voices

‘Satirists are usually conservative, using their weapons against deviations from norms of conduct which threaten to undermine traditional and socially approved behaviour.’

Do you agree? Refer to at least THREE major works, OR to TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 12 — Satiric Voices

‘You can’t take satire seriously. It depends too much on exaggeration.’

Consider this claim with reference to at least THREE major works, OR to TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 13 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘Post-colonial texts are narratives of identity.’

What do you think this means? Discuss the implications of this statement with reference to at least THREE major works, OR to TWO major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 14 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘In their longing to return to roots which no longer exist, post-colonial writers re-invent their culture.’

In what ways is this true? Answer with reference to at least THREE major works, OR to TWO major works and several short ones.

End of paper

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