



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

2003

**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 passages below are translations of a passage from the 10th–11th Century Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*.

Using THREE of the passages, 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: The dragon (in Old English often called a ‘wurm’ (where modern English ‘worm’ comes from) has been guarding a great treasure in his barrow for three hundred years. One day, a man, fleeing from his enemies, finds the dragon’s cave and hoard, and takes away a goblet, awakening the dragon’s anger. In furious revenge, the dragon lays waste the land of the Geats (roughly, modern Sweden) and eventually, after the passage printed here, Beowulf, King of the Geats, fights and kills the dragon, but is himself fatally wounded in the battle.

Note that this is an alliterative poem in Old English. In the original, each line has at least three alliterating words, two before the caesura, and at least one after. Alliterative poetry is rich in metaphors and elaborations — eg, a man’s lord or king, in this case Beowulf, is called ‘the giver of treasure’ or the ‘ring-giver’ (where ‘ring’ means chain-mail, armour), and was written in a specialised poetic diction, reserved for epic poetry, that was not like everyday speech.

Question 1 continues on page 3

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 1

The treasure guardian, sore and savage in mind, made eager search along the ground; was set on finding the man, him who had done him scathe while he slept; often he made a whole circuit of the mound outside. There was no man in that waste place. Yet he was keen for the conflict, the work of war; at times he turned to the barrow, sought the treasure. Forthwith he found that some man had ransacked the gold, the rich stores. With difficulty did the treasure guardian delay till evening came; then wrathful was the warden of the barrow; the foul creature was determined to avenge with fire the precious flagon.

Then day had departed, as the dragon desired; no longer would he wait on the wall, but went forth with fire, furnished with flame. The first onslaught was terrifying to the people in the land, even as it was speedily ended with sorrow for their giver of treasure.

Then the monster began to belch forth flames, to burn the bright dwellings. The flare of the fire brought fear upon men. The loathly air-flier wished not to leave aught living there. The warring of the dragon was widely seen, the onslaught of the cruel foe far and near, how the enemy of the people of the Geats wrought despite and devastation. He hastened back to the hoard, to his hidden hall, ere it was day. He had compassed the dwellers in the land with fire, with flames, and with burning; he trusted in the barrow, in bravery, and the rampart. His hope deceived him.

R. K. GORDON (1926)

Question 1 continues on page 4

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 2

The dragon searched the ground, wanted to find
the man who had sorely harmed him in sleep.
Fierce-hearted, hot, round the outside
of the mound he turned; but there was no man
in that wilderness. He rejoiced in the thought
of flame-work; returned now and then
into the barrow-cave, looked for his cup.
Then he saw that someone had disturbed his gold,
high treasures. The hoard-keeper waited,
miserable, impatient, till evening came.
By then the barrow-snake was swollen with rage,
wanted revenge for that precious cup,
a payment by fire. The day was over
and the dragon rejoiced, could no longer lie
coiled within walls but flew out in fire,
with shooting flames. The onset was horrible
for the folk of the land, as was its ending
soon to be hard for their ring-giving lord.
The visitor began to spew fire-flakes,
burn the bright halls; the glow rose high,
a horror everywhere. The fiery terror
left nothing alive wherever it flew.
Throughout the night sky the burnings were visible,
cruellest warfare, known near and far;
the Geatish people saw how the burner
had raided and hurt them. He flew back to the hoard,
the mysterious hall, just before day.
His flames had set fire to men and their houses;
he trusted his barrow, its deep walls,
his strength in fire; his trust was to fail.

HOWELL D. CHICKERING JR. (1977)

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Question 1 continues on page 5

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 3

The hoard-guard sought him eagerly over the ground, would find the man who had done him injury while he slept. Hot and fierce-hearted, often he moved all about the outside of the barrow. No man at all was in the emptiness. Yet he took joy in the thought of war, in the work of fighting. At times he turned back into the barrow, sought his rich cup. Straightway he found that some man had tampered with his gold, his splendid treasure. The hoard-guard waited restless until evening came; then the barrow-keeper was in rage: he would requite that precious drinking cup with vengeful fire. Then the day was gone — to the joy of the worm. He would not wait long on the sea-wall, but set out with fire, ready with flame. The beginning was terrible to the folk on the land, as the ending was soon to be sore to their giver of treasure.

Then the evil spirit began to vomit flames, burn bright dwellings; blaze of fire rose, to the horror of men; there the deadly flying thing would leave nothing alive. The worm's warfare was wide-seen, his cruel malice, near and far — how the destroyer hated and hurt the people of the Geats. He winged back to the hoard, his hidden hall, before the time of day. He had circled the land-dwellers with flame, with fire and burning. He had trust in his barrow, in his war and his wall: his expectation deceived him.

E. TALBOT DONALDSON (1975)

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Question 1 continues on page 6

Question 1 (continued)

TRANSLATION 4

The hoard-guardian
scorched the ground as he scoured and hunted
for the trespasser who had troubled his sleep.
Hot and savage, he kept circling and circling
the outside of the mound. No man appeared
in that desert waste, but he worked himself up
by imagining battle; then back in he'd go
in search of the cup, only to discover
signs that someone had stumbled upon
the golden treasures. So the guardian of the mound,
the hoard-watcher, waited for the gloaming
with fierce impatience; his pent-up fury
at the loss of the vessel made him long to hit back
and lash out in flames. Then, to his delight,
the day waned and he could wait no longer
behind the wall, but hurtled forth
in a fiery blaze. The first to suffer
were the people on the land, but before long
it was their treasure-giver who would come to grief.

The dragon began to belch out flames
and burn bright homesteads; there was a hot glow
that scared everyone, for the vile sky-winger
would leave nothing alive in his wake.
Everywhere the havoc he wrought was in evidence.
Far and near, the Geat nation
bore the brunt of his brutal assaults
and virulent hate. Then back to the hoard
he would dart before daybreak, to hide in his den.
He had swinged the land, swathed it in flame,
in fire and burning, and now he felt secure
in the vaults of his barrow; but his trust was unavailing.

SEAMUS HEANEY (1999)

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

‘Literature doesn’t record experience, it plays with words.’

To what extent is this true?

OR

Question 3

Attacking the practice of judging literature by its moral or social usefulness, Théophile Gautier wrote: ‘I prefer a completely useless Chinese vase to my chamber pot.’

Discuss the implications of Gautier’s comment.

OR

Question 4

‘No work of art is perfect communication, entire of itself; every reading expands it.’

How true is this?

OR

Question 5

‘Poetry is personal; drama is political; novels are social.’

Do you agree? Why or why not?

OR

Question 6

‘All writers are liars.’

Discuss.

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

What makes a nineteenth-century novel more than a history of its times?

Refer in your answer to at least TWO novels.

OR

Question 8 — The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Only at the end of a novel can we see the whole work in perspective and understand it.’

How do the endings of nineteenth-century novels affect our understanding of them?

Refer in your answer to at least TWO novels.

OR

Question 9 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Writing about religious experience must move beyond reason.’

Must it?

Write on EITHER *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR on FOUR or FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 10 — Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Literature of religious experience is not always centred on God.’

Discuss, referring to EITHER *An Imaginary Life* and up to THREE poems or extracts, OR to FOUR or FIVE poems or extracts.

OR

Question 11 — Satiric Voices

‘Satirists always choose easy targets.’

Discuss, referring to at least **THREE** major works, **OR** to **TWO** major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 12 — Satiric Voices

‘Satire is only really effective in the contexts in which it is written.’

Explore this idea, referring to at least **THREE** major works, **OR** to **TWO** major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 13 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘Loss is the constant theme of post-colonial literature.’

Justify or refute this statement, referring to at least **THREE** major works, **OR** to **TWO** major works and several short ones.

OR

Question 14 — Post-Colonial Voices

‘In post-colonial literature, the experience of the individual represents the collective experience of the nation.’

To what extent is this true?

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

End of paper

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