

Revision Guide: the Romantics/Synoptic Paper

THE EXAM

The paper will consist of two sections. You will receive two booklets, one containing the questions and one containing the set passages. The exam lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes. It is a closed-text exam.

Section A consists of **one compulsory question**: it will ask you to write a critical appreciation of a poem, relating your discussion to your reading of writing of the Romantic era.

A0s 3 and 5 are dominant here (close analysis of language/form, and use of relevant contextual material), though the other A0s are still assessed and must not be neglected.

Do not make the mistake of writing about the wrong passage - hitherto the Romantic passage (which will always be a poem) has been question 3.

Section B offers a choice between three questions, though in effect you have a **choice between two**. (Hitherto, the Romantics question in this section has always been question 9.) You may answer **either** the question that specifies it relates to 'John Keats: *Poems and Letters*' **or** the '(c)' question that does not specify a text but asks you to 'compare works of at least two writers of the Romantic era'.

The sections are equally weighted in terms of marks. You should spend **one hour on each question** (including plan) and **fifteen minutes reading and annotating** the passage in section A.

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

Reading

- Re-read all of Keats' poems and letters that you have studied, the notes that you have made on them and the essays that you have written on them.
- Do the same for Blake.
- Do the same for all unseens and poems by other writers that you have looked at and/or written about.
- Re-read all handouts, articles and contextual material that you have been given.

Writing

- Write approx. 2 paragraphs on key Romantic themes. Then, for each theme, jot down:

3-5 quotations from Keats' poetry

1 quotation from Keats' letters

3-5 quotations from Blake's poetry

3-5 quotations from contextual sources (poems by other writers; other writings by writers from the period etc.)

2 pieces of relevant contextual information (e.g. political, biographical, cultural)

2 quotations from critics/readers

You might want to do this in a table format. It is, of course, OK to reuse some quotations and material, but don't rely on just a small group.

Some themes you might make notes on:

MELANCHOLY

BEAUTY

TRANSITION

NATURE

LIBERTY

LOVE

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

THE SENSES

THE SELF / THE INDIVIDUAL

EMOTION

STRIVING / YEARNING

ARCHAISM / THE PAST

DEATH

TRANSCIENCE / EPHEMERALITY

WONDER

IMAGINATION

THE POET / POETRY / ART

- Practise timed essays – one of the best things that you can do. Writing under the constraints of a time limit is what often catches people out. Getting used to planning, structuring and writing essays in these conditions can make the difference between grades.

Section A

- Attached are some unseen poems, the instruction for each of which is:

Write a critical appreciation of a poem, relating your discussion to your reading of writing of the Romantic era.

Section B

Attached is a list of all previous titles set on the Romantic paper.

Here are some further titles.

- 1.) 'The Romantic quest for beauty is frequently hindered by a pervasive sense of melancholy.' Discuss this view by comparing works of at least two writers of the Romantic era. (In your answer you must use one or both of the texts specified for this topic.)
- 2.) By comparing Keats' *Poems and Letters* with the work of at least one other writer of the Romantic era, explore the significance of the sensuous imagery and abundant verbal richness that characterises Romantic writing.

- 3.) 'An important concern of Romantic writing is the tension between the inner emotions of the individual and the experiences of society at large.' Discuss this view by comparing works of at least two writers of the Romantic era. (In your answer you must use one or both of the texts specified for this topic.)
- 4.) 'I am certain of nothing but ... the truth of the Imagination. — What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not.' (Keats, in a letter to Benjamin Bailey written 22nd November 1817). By comparing Keats' *Poems and Letters* with the work of at least one other writer of the Romantic era, explore the importance of the imagination in Romantic writing.
- 5.) By comparing works of at least two writers of the Romantic era, explore the idea that 'Romantic writing displays an urgent interest in the idea of liberty.' (In your answer you must use one or both of the texts specified for this topic.)
- 6.) By comparing Keats' *Poems and Letters* with the work of at least one other writer of the Romantic era, explore the importance of the natural world in Romantic writing.
- 7.) 'Romantic writing frequently observes and admires the innocence of children.' Discuss this view by comparing works of at least two writers of the Romantic era. (In your answer you must use one or both of the texts specified for this topic.)
- 8.) By comparing Keats' *Poems and Letters* with the work of at least one other writer of the Romantic era, explore the view that 'for Romantic writers creative powers could be used to illuminate and transform the world into a coherent vision.'
- 9.) By comparing works of at least two writers of the Romantic era, explore attitudes to religion and spirituality in Romantic writing. (In your answer you must use one or both of the texts specified for this topic.)
- 10.) 'How beautiful, if sorrow had not made / Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.'; 'make me sick / Of joy and grief at once'; 'with fierce convulse / Die into life' (all from Keats, *Hyperion*). By comparing Keats' *Poems and Letters* with the work of at least one other writer of the Romantic era, explore the importance of contrariety and paradox in Romantic writing.