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Faculty of Arts
English Department

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A Guiding Model Answer for
First Grade (Old Time-Table)
Introduction to Poetry (Make-Up) Exam
Faculty of Arts

Prepared by

Mohammad Badr AlDin Al-Hussini Hassan Mansour, Ph.D.
University of Nevada, Reno (USA)



BANHA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FIRST GRADE



FIRST TERM
YEAR (2013-2014)
TIME: 3 HOURS
MAKE-UP EXAM

Introduction to Poetry Make-Up Exam

Respond to the following questions:

1. Read the following stanza and answer the subsequent questions?

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

- A. Define the sonnet and show its different kinds?**
 - B. Find out a metaphor, then define and explain it?**
 - C. Draw a metonymy and a personification, then define and explain them?**
 - D. What is the simile that underlies the structure of the whole sonnet?**
 - E. Explicate the poem thematically and technically? (Time: 30 minutes)**
- 2. Ben Jonson's "Song: To Celia" is dominated by two images: wine and the rosy wreath. Explain fully? (Time: 20 minutes)**
- 3. Explain Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan"? (Time: 30 minutes)**
- 4. Lord Byron's poem "She Walks in Beauty" praises harmony. Explain? (20 minutes)**
- 5. Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is dominated by three extended images that not only carry the meaning of the poem but also provide much of the emotional and imaginative impact. Explain? (Time: 20 minutes)**
- 6. Explain Walt Whitman's poem "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing"? (30 minutes)**
- 7. "A complete poem," Robert Frost once said, "is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words ... A poem is merely an extended metaphor." Apply that definition to "The Road Not Taken"? (Time: 30 minutes)**

Good Luck
Mohammad Al-Hussini Arab

Answers

Question 1:

Read the following stanza and answer the subsequent questions?

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

- A. Define the sonnet and show its different kinds?
- B. Find out a metaphor, then define and explain it?
- C. Draw a metonymy and a personification, then define and explain them?
- D. What is the simile that underlies the structure of the whole sonnet?
- E. Explicate the poem thematically and technically?

Answer:

- A. The sonnet is a fixed form of lyric poem. The sonnet was originally a vehicle for love poetry. It has fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. Several kinds of sonnet are distinguished by different rhyme patterns. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet has two parts: an octave (eight lines) rhyming a b b a a b b a; and a sestet (six lines) rhyming c d e c d e or c d c d c d. The English or Shakespearean sonnet is arranged differently. It uses three quatrains, but the rhyme sounds are different in each one: a b a b c d c d e f e f. The couplet follows, g g. The Spenserian sonnet has three quatrains (four lines) rhyming a b a b b c b c c d and a final couplet rhyming e e. Both Spenser's and Shakespeare's sonnets are called English sonnets to distinguish them from Italian sonnets. The English sonnet tends to emphasize the climactic ending of the couplet, while the Italian sonnet, with its two-part structure, emphasizes the contrast or contradiction from the octave to the sestet.
- B. The metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two essentially unlike things. One or more qualities of the thing described (called the tenor) are said to be like qualities of the thing that makes the metaphor (the vehicle). For example, when Shakespeare says "the eye of heaven shines," he compares the human eye, as a source of perception, to the sun.
- C. Metonymy is the substitution of one item for another item that it suggests or to which it is closely related. Personification is the attribution of human characteristics and/or feelings to nonhuman organisms, inanimate objects, or abstract ideas. The use of metonymy in "eye of heaven" (the sun) illustrates the power of that device: The eye is usually thought of as the agency for perception and character; here the central focus of the sky seems central to the concept of nature itself. Personification of this eye enhances the subject of the poem as a whole, for dimming his gold complexion implies hiding the beauty of the individual whom the poet addresses—something the poet intends to prevent.
- D. In Sonnet 18, Shakespeare sets up his comparison by rhetorically introducing the basis for a simile that will underlie the structure of the whole poem: the comparison between the person who is the object of the poet's attention and a summer's day. The first image, of rough winds shaking May's buds, is stated directly. In the next line, however, the poet uses the metaphor of summer's lease being too short, aptly indicating the transitory nature of a season and, by extension, a year, and a life.
- E. "Sonnet 18" addresses immortality through verse. A lesser poet might have been content supplying the expected affirmative response to the opening question. This speaker, however, answers in the negative; and in his explanation of why his beloved young friend should not be compared to a summer's day, manages to compliment not only the sonnet's recipient, but every reader, as well as himself as sonneteer. The object of

the speaker's affection will not blossom and shine for a mere 24 hours, but forever—or at least as long as this sonnet continues to be read.

Sonnet 18 begins with a question addressed to the object of the poet's attention: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" After a direct answer, "Thou art more lovely and more temperate," the next seven lines develop the comparison with a series of objections to a summer day. Shakespeare develops the "temperate" elements of his comparison first. His first criticism of summer is that in May rough winds shake the "darling" buds. Hence, rough winds shake the May buds and, as the next line indicates, summer is too short. Sometimes the sun is too hot; at other times the day becomes cloudy.

In lines 7 and 8, the poet summarizes his objections to the summer day by asserting that everything that summer produces will become less beautiful over time. Then, the poet creates a transition to the next section by introducing the second element of his comparison, that comprehended in the word "lovely."

The last six lines detail the advantages of the person addressed, indicating no diminution in the durability or fairness of that individual. The reason lies in the "eternal lines to time" that Shakespeare creates in his sonnet, knowing that the poem in which the person is memorialized will last through all time.

Although in the concluding couplet Shakespeare gives a direct statement of the theme, he uses the pronoun "this" to carry the weight of meaning and gives no verbal referent to the pronoun. Yet in making the poem itself the referent, the poet creates the object that will transmit the immortality of its subject to eternity.

In this sonnet form, the poet addresses his issue in the first quatrain, then illustrates it more in the next two quatrains, but the concluding couplet summarizes the theme. Shakespeare sets up his comparison by rhetorically introducing the basis for a simile that will underlie the structure of the whole poem: the comparison between the person who is the object of the poet's attention and a summer's day. The first image, of rough winds shaking May's buds, is stated directly. In the next line, however, the poet uses the metaphor of summer's lease being too short, aptly indicating the transitory nature of a season and, by extension, a year, and a life. The use of metonymy in "eye of heaven" (the sun) illustrates the power of that device: The eye is usually thought of as the agency for perception and character; here the central focus of the sky seems central to the concept of nature itself. Personification of this eye enhances the subject of the poem as a whole, for dimming his gold complexion implies hiding the beauty of the individual whom the poet addresses—something the poet intends to prevent. The personification of death in line 11 curiously treats the word "shade," often used to describe those who have died. Here it seems to signify, instead, the atmosphere of death—the shadow that hovers over those who come within its influence, which the poet's lines are about to dispel.

Question 2:

Ben Jonson's "Song: To Celia" is dominated by two images: wine and the rosy wreath. Explain fully?

Answer:

Ben Jonson's "Song: To Celia" is a short monologue in which a lover addresses his lady in an effort to encourage her to express her love for him. Jonson includes conventional imagery, such as eyes, roses, and wine, but employs them in inventive ways. As a result, the poem becomes a lively, expressive song extolling the immortality of love.

Conveniently enough, it is dominated by two images: wine and the rosy wreath. The first octet offers a series of possible substitutions—love favors—that the poet is willing to accept in lieu of the traditional wine. Wine implies intoxication, the delirium of love, but also sensual gratification. The substitutes that the poet is

willing to accept seem more ethereal: the glance, the kiss in a cup. Indeed, the wine itself becomes rarefied into love's nectar, a divine drink that reputedly had a rejuvenating effect—the same effect that Celia has on the poet.

The wreath dominates the second octet. It is a more concrete pledge than those requested in the first part of the poem, but it is rejected. The rose is the archetypal symbol of love in the English tradition. The wreath consists of a number of roses woven into a circle, which is itself a symbol of eternity. The eternal devotion that was the hallmark of the more spiritual love popularized by Petrarch is combined, then, with the sensual. While the circle may imply eternal love, the wreath's nonstatic quality is emphasized: "it grows, and smells." These flowers are still alive, growing as does the poet's love.

Finally, the wreath, an interweaving of flowers, stands for this poem itself, which is an ingenious interweaving of excerpts from the classical source. The weaving finds its analogue in the rhyme scheme of the poem. The short lines of both octets revolve on single rhymes and thus bind the poem together. The wreath itself has passed from the poet to the lover and back to the poet, describing in its movement a circle. It is the only physical thing that links the two, besides the poem itself.

Question 3:

Explain Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan"?

Answer:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan" is the product of the synthetic power of the imagination. The action of the poem takes place through a circuit that consists of the two opposite poles of life and death, which, ultimately, are brought into harmony in the stereoscopic picture of immortality.

Coleridge sums up the idea of the whole poem in the first stanza. The "sacred river" which stands for life runs "Through caverns measureless to man" to "a sunless sea," which is the sea of the dead who never see the sun. The remaining part of the first stanza, in addition to the second, develops the images of life and death.

The image of life is reflected in the phrase "mighty fountain" where the poet refers to birth, and in a simile compares it to the personified earth which pants thickly due to the pangs of delivery. Then this "fountain" is transmuted into the sacred river—the river of life. In the beginning the scene is picturesque. It runs through "fertile ground," and is enriched with walls and towers, symbols of pomp and power. It also abounds in winding rivulets. These elements are in a realm of sun and greenery, which are symbols of life. The opening lines of the first stanza depicts life in its beauty through their musical artistry, which unconsciously prepares the reader for involvement in the images of life and death, and leads him to accept death as a state accompanied with rapture and delight.

The same fusion of life and death is echoed in the second stanza, where lines merge into the following lines, and the images of life are contrasted with those of death. As a result, the vivacity of the first stanza gives way to "a mazy motion," a motion characterized by uncertain progress. Innocence is replaced by experience at the end of which man sinks in agony to the "lifeless ocean," the symbol of death. Thus the stream of life, which has started from the fountain, is now terminated in the caverns—those which are "measureless to man." The contrast between the stage of innocence (life) and that of experience (death) is clear in the second stanza, which starts with the adversative conjunction "But" and the exclamatory "oh!" The continuity of the stream of life, with its associated pleasures and sorrows, is reflected in the syntax and the additive conjunctions. The stanza, long as it is, consists only of two multiple sentences, and the additive conjunctions, "and" and "then," support the syntax and the cumulative burdens of the life of experience.

The ending lines of the second stanza foreshadow what is going to take place in the third stanza. The voices which Kubla Khan is hearing are not, in fact, foretelling war, but refer to the process inside the poet's

mind; that is, to the synthetic power of the imagination to create harmony out of the discordant elements of life and death. As the sense does not end with the final lines of the stanza, the second stanza merges into the third.

In the third stanza, the poet's imagination creates a dome of pleasure which is not as stately as that which is decreed by Kubla Khan, but embodies the "mingled measure" of the "fountain" and the "caves," the symbols of life and death. Coleridge has harmonized the discordant qualities of both life and death and the outcome of the marriage between both is the miracle which unites the "sunny pleasure-dome" of Kubla Khan to the "caves of ice." It is not the shadow of the dome that Coleridge beholds but the stereoscopic picture of immortality which results from the two different angles of life and death.

In the fourth stanza, the image of the dome, in which the poet's imagination has harmonized the discordant qualities of life and death, is reiterated in the image of the "Abyssinian maid" who is seen playing music, since in music, the musician can bring discordant tunes into harmony. Thus, if the poet has the ability to animate this music "within himself," he will be able to rebuild the "pleasure-dome" "in air" or in his poetry.

Question 4:

Lord Byron's poem "She Walks in Beauty" praises harmony. Explain?

Answer:

Lord Byron's poem "She Walks in Beauty" describes and praises a beautiful woman, shrouded in the beauty of the starry night, in idealized, other-worldly terms. It is not just her physical beauty that is exalted, but her "nameless grace," or inner beauty, that is glorified. The most intense image in the poem is that of light, but it is a different sort of light than is normally associated with heavenly beauty; it is muted or "tender," not the light of "gaudy day," but a light that is fused with darkness. Byron overturns the reader's expectations by associating beauty with darkness rather than light and also by showing how light and darkness merge to create a perfect harmony. The woman's dark hair "lightens o'er her face," and the poet suggests that if she contained within her more darkness or more light, she would be "half impaired," or less than perfect as she is now. She also exudes a nameless grace or indescribable inner loveliness that matches her exterior perfection.

The poem is exceptional because of the interesting use of the images of darkness and light, the harmony of inner and outer beauty, and the rhythmic musicality of the lines, but which does not offer much else of intellectual interest.

To Byron, that lady is beautiful in the same way that "night" is beautiful, and, as he hastens to add, he means a particular kind of night, one of "cloudless climes and starry skies." There is no threat of a storm in this imagined landscape; there are no clouds to produce even a shower. Such a night is not really dark, for the sky is filled with stars. Their light is soft and subdued; similarly, the dark lady has "tender" eyes, as unlike those of less subtle women as the light of a "starry" night is from that of "gaudy day."

Byron proceeds to amplify his earlier suggestion that a perfect combination of "dark and bright" is the secret of his subject's beauty. The second stanza of the poem begins with an explicit statement to this effect: either more or less light, he insists, would have at least to some degree "impair'd" her "grace." Byron seems to mean that she it is her "thoughts serenely sweet," so evident in her facial expressions, that account for the impression she makes on all those who observe her.

In the final stanza, Byron continues to explore the relationship between inner and outer beauty. The blushes that appear on the lady's "cheek," her "smiles," everything on her "brow," or countenance, all reveal her sterling virtue. In the last lines of the poem, Byron sums up what he surmises: that the lady spends much of her time doing good deeds, that her "mind" harbors no animosity toward anyone, and that when love enters her

heart, it is an "innocent" emotion, Byron's description of a dark-haired lady thus becomes much more: It is also his definition of the ideal woman.

Question 5:

Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is dominated by three extended images that not only carry the meaning of the poem but also provide much of the emotional and imaginative impact. Explain?

Answer:

Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is dominated by three extended images that not only carry the meaning of the poem but also provide much of the emotional and imaginative impact.

The first image mixes sight and sound and occupies the entire first section of the poem. The poet begins with a broad general view from the horizon, coming closer to that which is in the forefront of his view, the sea meeting the moon-blanching land, whence comes the disturbing sound. The deceptive calm of the opening lines is undercut by the grating surf on the beach. The deliberately plain opening, a common poetic practice in Arnold, emphasizes nouns and verbs and their emotional impact. It is only in the fourteenth line, with the mention of "an eternal note of sadness," that there is any indication that the reader will be exposed to anything more than a simple description, that in view of what follows one shall have to reorient oneself to the significance of the initial description.

The second dominant image in the poem is in lines 25 through 28, expressing the emotional impact of the loss of faith. The individual words add up—melancholy, withdrawing, retreating, vast, drear, naked—re-creating the melancholy sound of the sea withdrawing, leaving behind only a barren and rocky shore, dreary and empty. These images, emphasizing the condition after faith has left, present a void, an emptiness, almost creating a shudder in the reader; it is perhaps a more horrifying image than even the battlefield image with which the poem closes.

The last important extended image closes the poem; it is a very common practice for Arnold to supply such closing, summarizing images in an attempt to say metaphorically what he perhaps cannot express directly. (Such closings are to be clearly seen in "The Scholar-Gipsy," "Sohrab and Rustum," "Tristram and Iseult," "Rugby Chapel," and others.) The calm of the opening lines is deceptive, a dream. Underneath or behind is the reality of life—a confused struggle, no light, nothing to distinguish good from evil, friend from foe; it is; the result of the thought suggested by the sound of the surf. The poem makes clear that one is not viewing this battlefield as from a distance; one is in the middle of the fight.

Arnold reinforces the impact of these images with an often subtle but evocative use of sound and syntax. The convoluted syntax of lines 7 through 14, coming as it does after the plain statements of the opening, reflects not only the actual repetitive sound of the scene but perhaps also the confusion and lack of certainty in the poet's own mind. The first fourteen lines may well also suggest a sonnet, since this gives certain appearances that it is a love poem. While the rhyme scheme and line length do not conform to the sonnet tradition, the poem is divided into octave and sestet by the turn at the first word of the ninth line, "Listen!" As if to further emphasize this line, which begins with "Listen!" and ends with "roar," it is the only line in the whole poem that does not rhyme.

Question 6:

Explain Walt Whitman's poem "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing"?

Answer:

Walt Whitman's "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" is a short lyric poem made up of thirteen lines of free verse. The poem begins with a memory: The poet remembers the live oak tree he saw standing by

itself in Louisiana, whose "rude" and "lusty" look reminded the poet of himself. In one important respect, however, the tree was very different from the poet, for the tree was "uttering joyous leaves" even though it stood without another of its kind (a "companion") nearby, and this is something that the poet knew he could never do. That the tree was in Louisiana may have some autobiographical significance: Whitman, who lived most of his life in New York and New Jersey, spent some time in Louisiana. In any case, the live oak flourishes in Louisiana, and the geographical reference grounds the poem in fact. The poet is speaking of a real tree he actually saw rather than of a metaphor for his feelings.

In speaking of the tree as "uttering" its leaves, Whitman uses a word that is perfectly appropriate on a literal level. In this context, "utter" can simply mean to "put forth" or "sprout." However, since the word is more commonly used to describe human speech, the word implies more. The tree that "utters [...] leaves" is an image not only of the man but also of the poet. The poet tells the reader that he broke a twig from the tree and that he now keeps the twig, with a little moss tied around it, in his room, where it remains a curious token. Its purpose is not to remind him of his friends because, he tells us, he thinks of little else. Rather, it stands for manly love or the love of man for man. Yet the phrase is ambiguous. A reader might take "manly love" to mean the love a man may feel for a woman. Whitman probably accepted, even intended, the ambiguity.

The poem's last lines return to the theme of the opening. In this restatement, the live oak's isolation is still more strongly emphasized: "solitary/ in a wide flat space." The phrase "friends and lovers," uniting two forms of human relationship in one grammatical unit, appears for the first time. Furthermore, the poet is again in awe at the memory of the tree "uttering joyous leaves" in its isolation. The poet's response is reaffirmed in the last line of the poem: "I know very well I could not." For the poet, then, it is in the presence of companions, friends, and lovers that he finds the inspiration to utter his leaves; for the man, to be isolated from those he loves would cause him pain beyond his powers of expression.

A number of qualities contribute to the overall rhythm of Whitman's verse. Two of these are line length and syntax. Using the syllable as the unit of measurement, the reader can find in the poem a rhythm of expansion and contraction. The first line is shorter than any other line except for the last. The longest lines, the fifth and sixth, are followed by three relatively short lines of fifteen syllables each. Line 10 expands to twenty syllables, line 11 to twenty-five. Line 12 contracts to seventeen syllables, leading to the eight syllables of the eloquently concise last line.

Syntax also contributes to rhythm. Each line is capable of standing alone as at least a complete sentence, and line 11 could be written as two sentences. Yet only line 11 ends with a full stop of any kind, and the first period appears only at the end of the poem. The result is a rhythmically significant tension between sense and sound as the punctuation forbids the major pause at the end of the line that the sense would seem to call for. Syntactical subtleties also produce effects beyond the rhythmic.

Question 7:

"A complete poem," Robert Frost said, "is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words. A poem is merely an extended metaphor." Apply that definition to "The Road Not Taken"?

Answer:

In his essay "The Constant Symbol," Robert Frost defined poetry with an interesting series of phrases. Poetry, he wrote, is chiefly "metaphor, saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another, the pleasure of ulteriority." His achievement in the poem "The Road Not Taken" is to bring these different uses of metaphor into play in a delightfully ironic balancing act. That is to say, the speaker solemnly uses the metaphor of the two roads to say one thing, while Frost humorously uses the speaker as a metaphor to say something very different.

The speaker is a solemn person who earnestly believes in metaphor as a way of "saying one thing in terms of another." The speaker uses the details, the "terms," of a situation in nature to "say" something about himself and his life: that he has difficulty making a choice and that he is regretfully certain that he will eventually be unhappy with the choice that he does make. When he first considers the two roads, he sees one as more difficult, perhaps even a bit menacing ("it bent in the undergrowth"), and the other as being more pleasant ("it was grassy and wanted wear"). Even in taking the second path, though, he reconsiders and sees them both as equally worn and equally covered with leaves. Changing his mind again, he believes that in the future he will look back, realize that he did take the "less traveled" road after all, but regret "with a sigh" that that road turned out to have made "all the difference" in making his life unhappy. The speaker believes that in the future he will be haunted by this earlier moment when he made the wrong choice and by the unfulfilled potential of "the road not taken."

In contrast to the speaker, Frost uses metaphor to "say one thing and mean another." That is, Frost presents this speaker's account of his situation with deadpan solemnity, but he uses the speaker as a specific image of a general way of thinking that Frost means to mock. The speaker first grasps at small details in the landscape to help him choose the better path, then seems to have the common sense to see that the two roads are essentially equivalent, but finally allows his overanxious imagination to run away with him. The reader is meant to smile or laugh when the speaker scares himself into believing that this one decision, with its options that seem so indistinguishable, will turn out someday to be so dire as to make him "sigh" at "all the difference" this choice has made.

"The Road Not Taken" is an excellent example of what Frost meant by "the pleasure of ulteriority" in his poetry. That is, the poem offers an entertaining double perspective on the theme of making choices, with one perspective fairly obvious and the other more subtle.

Considered through the perspective of the speaker himself, "The Road Not Taken" is an entirely serious, even a sad poem. It expresses both the turmoil of making a choice and the depressing expectation that the choice he makes between seemingly equal options will turn out for the worse-is in fact going to make an even greater difference for the worse than seems possible when he makes the choice.

Considered from Frost's perspective, on the other hand, "The Road Not Taken" is a humorous parody of the speaker's portentous habits of mind. Frost's 1931 essay "Education by Poetry" offers further clarification on this point. In it, he wrote that people need to understand that all metaphors are human constructs that "break down at some point"; people need to "know [a] metaphor in its strength and its weakness [...] [h]ow far [one] may expect to ride it and when it may break down." From this perspective, the main problem of the speaker in "The Road Not Taken" is that he tries to ride his metaphor too far and too hard. Although he sees it break down early in the poem (in that he actually cannot see any real difference between the two roads), the speaker persists in thinking that the road is "less traveled" in some way that he cannot see and that this difference will lead to dire consequences later on.