

LIT 380 Midterm Example Questions

Here is an example that will hopefully help you in preparing for the exam.

The example question will not be on the exam. They are just examples of the types of questions I will ask. **You only need to have read and watched what we have covered up to this point on the syllabus.**

You will be allowed to use the assigned readings for the short answer/essay portion of the exam. Bring your texts with you to the exam so that you can reference them while writing your short answer and essay responses. I will not lend my copies out; you must bring your own.

Identification (6 questions x 7 pts ea = 42 points)

I'll expect you to come up with the following information for each passage. Note that you must not only situate the passage within the plot of the play, but discuss its significance (that is, how the passage fits into play as a whole). I've given an example answer for you so that you know how to structure your response (note: you may not need to use that much detail depending on the passage you are analyzing). I will provide stage directions and an ellipsis in brackets [...] when I omit portions of the text. If there is more than one speaker, I will use terms like "Speaker 1" to differentiate. I will also provide glosses from the Norton Shakespeare when appropriate.

Instructions: For each passage, identify the play and the character speaking the lines and discuss how it fits into the plot action of the play as well as the significance of the lines to the rest of the play.

Now might I do it pat*, an a* is praying,
And now I'll do't,
 [He draws his sword]
 and so a goes to heaven,
And so am I revenged. That would be scanned*.
A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge!
A took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?
[...] And am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned* for his passage?
No.
 [He sheathes his sword]

*neatly / "he" (in the cockney accent)
*carefully evaluated
*made ready

The type of response I'm looking for:

Play: *Hamlet*

Speaker: Hamlet

Significance: This speech is delivered as Hamlet approaches Claudius following the performance of "The Mousetrap" (the play within the play) as Claudius reluctantly prays for forgiveness. As Hamlet moves to strike, he reflects that his father was killed by Claudius without a proper confession and his soul is in limbo, possibly even denied entrance to heaven. Were Hamlet to kill Claudius now, Claudius might go to heaven since he was confessing his sins, and his revenge would not be complete since Claudius would, in the afterlife, fare better than Old King Hamlet whom he wrongfully assassinated and deposed. Further demonstrating indecisiveness, Hamlet elects to delay his revenge until later.

Note in the above response that the characters are identified by name, the point at which the speech takes place is identified, and the significance of how this speech fits into the rest of the play is also identified and discussed.

Short Answer (4 questions x 10 pts ea = 40 points)

Instructions: Answer the following questions in three to five sentences.

Example: Describe how dress and clothing relates to Elizabethan social order and stage productions.

For this question, I expected students to discuss the changing of clothes in *The Taming of the Shrew* and also how Elizabethan stage actors received clothes (usually inherited from patrons of the theater or bought second-hand, typically Elizabethan in nature, and not necessarily corresponding to the period in which the play was set: think *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "Athenian weeds").

Essay (1 question, 18 points)

Instructions: Answer the following questions in three to five well developed paragraphs.

Example: Discuss the theme of "unnaturalness" in *Macbeth* using examples from the text and one (or both) film versions. What is unnatural about the events that take place? Why would this theme resonate with a period audience?

I expected students to discuss the concept of how killing the king upset the natural order of the world, specifically the concept of the king as the head and subjects as body. Of course in *Macbeth* there are several examples of the natural world reflecting the disruption of the "natural" order, and those are done differently in different versions of the films.