

EXAMINATION BOOKLET

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Subject: Literature II Section: 85/100

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Begin here and write on both sides

Exam I (25% of total grade for this course)

1.A. This is from Neruda's "If you forget me" where the poet talks about his love for an unidentified woman or most likely Chile, and about his ~~complicated~~ relationship with her. complicated

Here the poet is explaining how although he loves his homeland, he is more than ready to abandon it if it does not love him in return.

The poet is also describing how he is more than ready to change his ^{roots and} ~~roots~~ country if Chile does not love him back. 17/20

B. This is from William Blake's poem "A Poisonous Tree" where the poet discusses how his repressed anger to his enemy let him evil and be destructive.

Here he describes how his fears, hatred, pain, and deceit increased the magnitude of his repressed anger. He uses images of watering and planting to illustrate how his fears and his inability to vent his anger have only made his anger fester and grow. 18/20 fears? what?

2. For as long as people can remember, people have existed. The purpose and value of our existence has never been completely clear for people though. Some have laid the foundation for debates by asking us if, even if we do have value, where does it come from? Others have provided two extremes of values: our lives have complete precious value, or our lives are only temporary and have no serious effects. While some have been realistic in their debate and said that regardless of what we believe our values are, we still give each other meaning as humans because we live with humans. Vague thesis

One of the most important philosophical debates that people have had over the centuries is whether our existence in the world is coincidental to ~~plan~~ ~~plan~~ ~~plan~~ planned by a higher power. This is the logic discussed in Frost's "Design" where the poet describes a 'murder scene' of a moth by a spider. There Frost provides readers with two plausible explanations, either all of life and existence is by coincidence and random or all of it is designed and planned by some higher force. In the case of the latter explanation, that includes all bad things in life (~~some~~ terrorism, rape, murder, etc...). For Frost, we either → have a purpose and goal in life because we have been designed or we ~~don't~~ don't have a purpose because everything is by chance. The answer is unknown. Longfellow

Alongside Frost's debate over whether we have a purpose or not, Longfellow takes a very strong position and says that our life has value and we should use that value. In Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life" the poet explores his belief that life has value and that people have to understand that pessimism won't get us anywhere. Instead, the Psalm urges people to take life by its horns, forget about the past and future, and live for the present. It is only by trying to live our lives to the fullest do we get to find value in life. It is only by being determined we give our life value and likewise to inspire others to do the same.

Although Longfellow is very optimistic about life, Teasdale argues that ~~although~~ our value as humans is very limited. In her poem "There will come soft rains", she depicts a possible future where humanity has gone extinct and where nature continues to flourish. Here, Teasdale argues that although people's actions have effects on the world around them, our actions ultimately have temporary effects that only last as long as humans are alive. For Teasdale, the meaning of human life is insignificant and our effect on the universe will pass in time.

Despite the fact that Longfellow and Teasdale are at odds when it comes to determining the value of life, some poets have provided an alternative explanation for man's purpose and value. That alternative is explored in Donne's "No man is an island" where the poet draws a concise and multifaceted metaphor of islands. Here the poet explores the idea that all humans are united in their existence, suffering or joys, and lives. Whether a person lives his life to the fullest, dies miserably, or has only

short-term effect on the universe, everyone else in the world is affected by that person. No person is an island, so to speak, in the sense that he is connected with every other person, whether for the better or the worse. In many ways, Donne is a realistic middle ground between Longfellow's carpe diem philosophy and Teasdale's philosophy that everything is just temporary. Whether or not our lives, their values, and their effects are temporary, people still influence each other and unite together.

In many ways, these small four poems by Frost, Longfellow, Teasdale, and Donne encapsulate a whole range of philosophical thought about human value and existence. They range from complete optimism about humanity (Longfellow's carpe diem) to human nihilism or lack of value (Teasdale's apocalyptic poem). But they also go at a higher level and wonder if there is even a value to be found or if it just by coincidence (Frost). But at the end of the day, reality kicks in and people realize that regardless of what believe in, whether we are optimists, pessimists, creationists, etc. we still exist. And because we still exist, we still affect each other in ways we cannot predict. This is illustrated in Donne's metaphysical poems. Ultimately though, the answer will never be fully known but we still try to find out. And one of the ways to find out is to read works written by the giants who have come before us.

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