



INSTRUCTIONS: Read over the entire examination before you begin to write. Choose two topics from the list below as subjects for two brief, well-planned, well-organized, and well-written essays. Be sure to avoid overlapping and repetition; i.e., do not write too often about the same work, unless the subject matter and approach are radically different. Remember to make frequent specific reference to the texts under discussion.

TIMING: The examination has been designed for two hours: sixty minutes per essay. Nevertheless, you may have an extra half hour for planning and proofreading if you wish. Plan your time wisely and well: plan time for planning, organizing, writing, and proofreading. All booklets will be collected PROMPTLY at 10:30 A.M.

FORMAT: Please write on every other line and observe conventional margins. Be sure you number your topics.

TOPICS:

1. Give your own definition of a national literature, listing specific characteristics which are elements of a literature recognizable as originating from a specific nation. Then write an essay in which you show how at least four of the writers you have studied this semester may be identified as distinctively American. In other words, what is it in the text that makes the reader know, without a doubt, that this work is American?

2. Americans have long been described as lovers of and champions of self-reliance, freedom, and independence. In what ways do the authors you have read this semester reflect this distinctive American trait in their works? In an essay in which you deal specifically with the four works (You may make reference to more than four if you wish.) you find most expressive of this trait, explain the various ramifications of this love of freedom in American character and society as viewed by the four authors and the ways in which each author expresses them in his/her works.

3. Nineteenth century American writers have often been categorized as either ebulliently optimistic or grimly pessimistic about human nature, society, and the individual's position in the universe. First list all the writers you have read this semester under two headings: Predominantly Optimistic and Predominantly Pessimistic. Second, in an essay in which you consider Mark Twain, Henry James, and at least two other authors in the syllabus, discuss the role of optimism and pessimism in the works of the writers you have chosen.

4. "Know Thyself," Socrates declared. This ancient dictum often appears in the literature of many nations of the world. Write an essay in which you consider the ways in which the works of Henry James, Emily Dickinson, and at least two other writers you have studied this semester reflect the author's understanding of the importance of self-knowledge.

HINTS:

1. Keep the topic in the forefront at all times. Reread the topic several times as you write in order to keep your essay focused.
2. Avoid plot summary. I've read the works.
3. Avoid too many broad generalities. Be specific.
4. Leave time for proofreading.

GOOD LUCK!

