

English 12
Exam Review

Your exam will consist of two essay questions, one that you cannot directly prepare and one that you should research and prepare beforehand, though you may not bring materials in to the exam.

I. Cold poem.

Review your notes and handouts from the poetry unit and expect that you will be asked to analyze a poem's form and style and the ways those elements relate to the poem's meaning (theme) or overall emotional effect.

You should review handouts about shaping and closed forms (and be able to identify a poem in a major form) as well as "useful repetition," though I will not ask for unreasonably obscure knowledge. You should have mastery of fundamental poetry terms and their implementation: metaphor, simile, metonymy, imagery, rhyme, slant rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia (as we encounter it in mature poetry). You should be able to talk intelligently about the meter of a poem and use appropriate, specific terminology.

We will review these skills in class this week.

II. Prepared essay.

Here are three essay questions; prepare two of them, as two will appear. You will then choose one of the two questions for your essay.

1. Soldiers. Many of the texts we have studied have featured soldiers, numbed or hardened by their experience—or seeking out the army as a remedy for personal trauma. Choose two texts where soldiers figure prominently, and discuss the ways in which the experience of war or army affects the characterization or the themes of the stories.
2. Thought and storytelling. Characters interpret their experiences through their thoughts, and through the narration of thought—in a novel, poem, or play—they arrive at conclusions, reasonable or not, that affect outcomes for those characters. Choose two or three characters from different texts and examine the way the characters process their thoughts and the way the texts show this processing—through soliloquies, stream-of-consciousness internal monologues, shifting third-person narration, or other means—and, then, the way their thoughts relate to their actions and outcomes.
3. Thwarted love. Just as Charles and Julia in *Brideshead* are thwarted because of their misdirected love, Hamlet perhaps suffers from sloth: insufficient love of his father. If you were sorting the characters, into which tiers of Purgatorio would you place them? Write an essay in which you explore two or three characters from different texts, characters who commit the same sin in perhaps different ways. What lesson or lessons do the texts advocate to the reader? The challenge for this topic is to end up with a coherent essay that is also interesting and meaningful.