

DIRECTIONS: Choose two questions to answer from each section.

Section I: Answer any two of the following questions. (Each worth 25%)

1. A central theme of American literature, beginning at least in the nineteenth century, has been a deep reverence for nature, a feeling of closeness to the land. Discuss this pastoral or agrarian ideal as it is reflected in any three of the following writers: Henry David Thoreau, James Ferimore Cooper, Mark Twain, Robert Frost, Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner.
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville all share a typical romantic fascination with madness, with the irrational depths of the human unconscious. Discuss this preoccupation as it figures in the work of any two of these writers.
3. A large proportion of Emily Dickinson's poems deal, from one perspective or another, with the experience of death. Explain what Dickinson is trying to communicate in these poems and the methods she uses to achieve her purpose.
4. Explain how puritanism affects early American literature.

Section II: Answer any two of the following questions. (Each worth 25%)

1. After the first World War, though the United States emerged as the world's leading economic and military power, many writers, bereft of idealism due to the affect of the war and overridden with a feeling of inevitable doom, came to agree with what Gertrude Stein said, they were "all a lost generation." Identify one or two writers of the period between the wars and explain how their works reflect the sense of futility and the searching for a new source of hope.
2. Contemporary American literature reflects a great variety of point of view of women writers, black writers, and other minorities such as Jews and hyphenated Americans. Using specific writers, explain this cultural pluralism in literature.
3. In all modern American literature, what three works do you think have the most to say about what has become of "the American dream." Explain and justify your choice.
4. Contemporary western literature has come to be described generally as "postmodern." Illustrating your points with specific literary works, explain what the chief characteristics are of a postmodernist work, including especially those characteristics that distinguish it from a modernist work.