

British Literature Chapter Tests

Chapter 1: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Discuss the structure of *Beowulf*.

Chapter 2: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Outline your personal worldview, including an introductory paragraph, three brief paragraphs regarding your beliefs and why you believe, and a summary paragraph.

Chapter 3: Test

Essay (100 Points)

“The Pardoner’s Tale” is a tale inserted into a sermon, the most frequent form of rhetoric experienced by medieval people. In this story, the moral is “Selfishness and greed is the root of all evil.” Write a five-page story illustrating a common aphorism such as “A fool and his money are soon parted.” Look through the Bible or *Poor Richard’s Almanac* for more examples. Here are a few you will find: “Failure to prepare is preparing to fail” (Franklin). “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

Chapter 4: Test

Essay (100 Points)

The American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr offers four categories for understanding the relationship of Christianity and culture: Christ against culture, Christ and culture, Christ of culture, and Christ the transformer of culture. Within each character of the poem "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," tension arises as each character struggles to manifest Christian behavior when pagan behavior is more natural. Within King Arthur's court there also is a struggle between Christianity and paganism. In American culture today we find a similar struggle.

What evidence in modern American culture do you find to support the above statement? Consider television shows, court cases, and governmental laws. What are the abiding qualities of biblical Christianity that transcend time, place, and culture, and in what ways does Sir Gawain evidence these qualities?

Chapter 5: Test

Essay (100 Points)

The poet of "Sonnet 18" discusses the whole notion of immortality. How, in Shakespeare's estimation, is immortality attained? How, according to the Word of God, is eternal life attained? What is the difference between eternal life and immortality?

Chapter 6: Test

Essay (100 Points)

One criticism of Christianity is that Christians are not clear enough on what they believe. As a result, men like Macbeth find themselves floundering in pragmatism. As the English historian Philip Johnson writes:

We have here [in the 20th century] the very opposite of historical determinism — the apotheosis of the single autocrat. Thus it is, when the moral restraints of religion and tradition, hierarchy and precedent, are removed, the power to suspend or unleash catastrophic events does not devolve on the impersonal benevolence of the masses but falls into the hands of men who are isolated by the very totality of their evil natures.

In a two-page essay, first explain what Johnson means, and then agree or disagree with what he says. Be sure to use the Scriptures and passages from the play to defend your answer.

Chapter 7: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Answer the following essay in a one-page essay.

All contemporary worldview discussions can be traced one way or another to Plato and Aristotle. Plato was the Pharisee of his day, the conservative, the one who believed that the gods were intimately involved with human beings. His *Republic* was a perfect society based on the notion that mankind was creating a city based on the word of the gods. Cosmology, or the presence of supernatural being(s), in other words, was very important to Plato. Likewise, to the Pharisee, who believed strongly in the Resurrection, the supernatural was very involved in human life. To Plato, the gods defined reality.

Is God intimately involved in the affairs of mankind or not? The answer to this question is more or less the battle that is raging on college campuses today.

Aristotle, on the other hand, in his important essay “Poetics” argued that the world was governed by impersonal laws. Aristotle argued that mankind defined who the gods were. While the gods are alive and well, they do not much concern themselves with the world. Therefore, mankind should be concerned about finding out about his world without worrying about the gods. Aristotle called his disciples to a “golden mean” where truth was at neither extreme but was in the middle. This view was evident again in the Sadducees — who rejected the supernatural — and later philosophers like David Hume. I am not discussing Hellenistic philosophy for any other reason than to point out that the struggle in which you will participate is over 3,000 years old. It is the struggle that Elijah joined when he fought King Ahab. King Ahab was a good Jew; the problem was he did not live his life as if God was actually alive.

So is God intentionally involved in the affairs of mankind or not? The answer to this question is more or less the battle that is raging on college campuses today. Paul, a student of Greek philosophy, was deeply affected by Plato. The Holy Spirit led Paul to write: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

How do Francis Bacon and Ben Jonson enter this debate?

Chapter 8: Test

Essay (100 Points)

What purpose does the chorus serve in *Dr. Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe? Next, compare the chorus in this play with the chorus in *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles.

Chapter 9: Test

Essay (100 Points)

“Holy Sonnet IX” is full of paradox. Paradox is a statement that seems self-contradictory but holds more truth than is at first apparent. Find examples of paradox in the poem below and discuss how this literary technique enhances the effectiveness of Donne’s poem.

Holy Sonnet IX

If poisonous minerals, and if that tree,
Whose fruit threw death on (else immortal) us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damn'd, alas ! why should I be ?
Why should intent or reason, born in me,
Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous ?
And, mercy being easy, and glorious
To God, in His stern wrath why threatens He ?
But who am I, that dare dispute with Thee ?
O God, O ! of Thine only worthy blood,
And my tears, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
And drown in it my sin's black memory.
That Thou remember them, some claim as debt ;
I think it mercy if Thou wilt forget.

Chapter 10: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Answer the following question in a one-page essay.

The poetry of George Herbert reveals beginnings of the sentiments that were to lead to the ascendance of Puritanism in England within a decade of his death — sentiments such as the emphasis on personal salvation, the importance of prayer to the Christian life, and the need to seek personal forgiveness for sins from God. Yet for all Herbert's longing for personal spiritual reconciliation with God, his diversion into recording and possibly inventing proverbs betrays his vocational imperative as an Anglican priest to provide lessons to his congregation in which common sense and orthodox Christian teachings are presented. Herbert's *Outlandish Proverbs* is a fine example of these personal testimonies. *Outlandish Proverbs* at its most basic level is Herbert's attempt to bring the Gospel alive to his parish community. Yet, even during his age, some criticized his attempt to make stuffy Anglican liturgy more palatable to common men.

Marva J. Dawn (a pseudonym, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), argues that contemporary attempts to do what George Herbert did largely harm the church. Dawn uses the expression "dumbing down" to describe the status of most contemporary worship services — both informal and formal, low and high, charismatic and traditional. Dawn draws many of her views about dumbing down from Jane Healey's book *Endangered Minds* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, p. 7), which argues persuasively that many cultural forces are at work to sabotage people's abilities to think. This has had an impact on all parts of American society, including worship. Dawn is not concerned with those statuses. What concerns Dawn is whether a worship service is "dumbing down" or challenging its worshipers to be all they can be for the Lord, all that God wants them to be.

Analyze the worship experience you presently enjoy. Is it a "dumbing down" experience for you? Do you feel that it is okay for modern versions to translate Scripture into modern vernacular? Why or why not?

Chapter 11: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Write three poems on the subject of mutability. The first poem should be an Elizabethan poem. The second should be a metaphysical poem (as Donne wrote). The final should be a poem in the Puritan style (as Milton wrote).

Chapter 12: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Create a contemporary story based on themes in *Paradise Lost*. Your story should be at least five pages long.

Chapter 13: Test

Essay (100 Points)

John Dryden wrote in the Augustan Age style of English writing. In Roman literature, the Augustan Age was the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14), during which Ovid and Horace wrote. The name has come to designate any eminent period in the literary life of a nation. In English literature, the Augustan Age was the period from the restoration of the monarchy (1660) to the death of Alexander Pope (1744). The major writers of the age were Alexander Pope and John Dryden in poetry, and Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison in prose. The literature of the age is distinguished by its striving for clarity and order (in verse, the tight heroic couplet is the predominant form), its public tone, and its imitation of Roman models, especially Cicero and Horace. Dryden was a master of English prose. Compare his style with any contemporary writer you choose.

Chapter 14: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Robinson Crusoe has a strong moral vision. Crusoe is warned by his father not to go sailing, but just like his two elder brothers — the eldest died as a soldier near Dunkirk and the second was never heard of again after he left the house of his parents — However, Crusoe is too much attracted by the adventures promised by the sea.

I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands, of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

This character flaw ultimately dooms Robinson Crusoe to learn his lessons the hard way. Find other examples in the book to support this observation.

Chapter 15: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Write your own satirical poem about 20th-century American life.

Chapter 16: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Write an imaginary satire in which a modern Gulliver tries to initiate the king of Brobdingnag into modern society.

Chapter 17: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Dr. Charles Primrose, the pastor presented in *Vicar*, is a complicated character. He clearly exhibits Christian tendencies. Whether or not he was a committed Christian is debatable. What do you think? Defend your answer from the text.

Chapter 18: Test

Essay (100 Points)

A critic observed:

Johnson cultivated a literary style of sonorous distinction. He became a master of the personified generality: his sentences give life to terms like envy, hope, and malice. This style confers upon his moral writings an air of exceptional authority. His conversation . . . was distinguished by a similar power and also by such epigrammatic brilliance that many of his recorded sayings have achieved the status of proverbs.

In a one-page essay, explain what this literary critic means and offer evidence from the “Preface” to support this statement.

Chapter 19: Test

Essay (100 Points)

In a three-page essay, analyze the following excerpt from the opera *The Duenna* and highlight stylistic tendencies that Sheridan manifests:

If a daughter you have,
She's the plague of your Life
[excerpt from *The Duenna*]

If a daughter you have, she's the plague of your life,
No peace shall you know, tho' you've buried your wife,
At twenty she mocks at the duty you taught her,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter.
Sighing and whining,
Dying and pining,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter.

When scarce in their teens, they have wit to perplex us,
With letters and lovers for ever they vex us,
While each still rejects the fair suitor you've brought her,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter.
Jangling and jangling,
Flouting and pouting,
O, what a plague is an obstinate daughter.

Chapter 20: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Write a critical analysis of the following poem by William Blake from *Songs of Innocence*:

The Divine Image

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.
For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, His child and care.
For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;

And Love, the human form divine:
And Peace the human dress.
Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine:
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.
And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

Chapter 21: Test

Essay (100 Points)

In prose or poetry, describe a place in nature that is very important to you.

Chapter 22: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Lord Byron lived a life in direct contradiction of Judeo-Christian values. He made no bones about his moral decisions; he did not subject them to the authority of Scripture. Many Hollywood actresses and actors are living lives that are not Christian. In some cases their personal lifestyles are reflected in their movies. Madonna, for instance, regularly plays promiscuous women. Yet Christians can avoid the movie theater! In other cases, it is not so simple. For instance, in the wonderful family movie *Chariots of Fire*, away from the movie house, one of the main characters openly promotes a lifestyle contrary to the Word of God. Should Christians participate in artists' experiences that support morally and/or financially immoral lifestyles and individuals living those lifestyles? Defend your answer in a one-page, well-organized, persuasive essay.

Chapter 23: Test

Essay (100 Points)

What are several themes in *Jane Eyre*? How are they developed?

Chapter 24: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Dickens has been criticized for his excessive use of undeveloped or archetype characters. They represent a “type” rather than an “individual.” Do you agree?

Chapter 25: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Compare and contrast the female characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Frankenstein*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Chapter 26: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Contemporary Americans prefer to read *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as *Frankenstein*, as Gothic horror stories when, in fact, they were written to be vividly real novels full of sociological and psychological commentary. Why is this so? Answer in a one-page essay.

Chapter 27: Test

Essay (100 Points)

In *Moral Fiction in Milton and Spenser*, John M. Steadman examines how Milton and Spenser — and Renaissance poets in general — applied their art toward the depiction of moral and historical “truth.” Steadman centers his study on the various poetic techniques of illusion these poets employed in their effort to bridge the gap between truth and imaginative fiction. Steadman suggests that these poets, along with most other Renaissance poets, did not actually regard themselves as divinely inspired but, rather, resorted to a common fiction to create the appearance of having special insight into the truth. He also argued that these poets wrote with a moral purpose; for the first time poets in the 19th century spoke of themselves with no moral purpose. Agree or disagree with Dr. Steadman, and offer evidence from poetry to support your answer.

Chapter 28: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Like many of the great tragic heroes in literature, Michael Henchard suffers from excessive pride. The Greeks called this sin *hubris*. Hubris involves a combination of excessive pride, ambition, and self-confidence. An example would be “Oedipus Rex,” by Sophocles. We see Oedipus’ vain father destroying two generations by his hubris. In a sense, a tragic hero creates his own sense of morality that may run counter to the basic moral rules of the society. The punishment for hubris is often a slow and painful death, in which the hero must first be stripped of personal possessions and public favor. Compare the sin of Saul in the Bible, who manifests this sin of hubris, and discuss how his life slowly deteriorates. What are other ways in which this novel parallels the story of Saul and David?

Chapter 29: Test

Essay (100 Points)

The British historian Paul Johnson, in his book *Modern Times*, writes:

Among the advanced races, the decline and ultimately the collapse of the religious impulse would leave a huge vacuum. The history of modern times is in great part the history of how that vacuum is filled. Nietzsche rightly perceived that the most likely candidate would be what he called the “Will to Power,” which offered a far more comprehensive and in the end more plausible explanation of human behavior than either Marx or Freud. In place of religious belief, there would be secular ideology. Those who once filled the ranks of the totalitarian clergy would become totalitarian politicians. And, above all, the Will to Power would produce a new kind of messiah, uninhibited by any religious sanctions whatever, and with an unappeasable appetite for controlling mankind. The end of the old order, with an unguided world adrift in a relativistic universe, was a summons to such gangster-statesmen to emerge. They were not slow to make their appearance (Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, p. 48).

Would Conrad agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why not? In a one-page essay, answer this question and analyze in depth Joseph Conrad’s worldview.

Chapter 30: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Considering the condition of the protagonists and what happens to them, compare the short stories in Lesson 30.

Chapter 31: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Find poems and songs that were part of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam era. What similarities do the songs have with the World War I poems? Answer this question in a one-page essay.

Chapter 32: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Lewis states that three great civilizations have condemned the very thing North Americans have based theirs on. What were the three civilizations, and what is the thing they have condemned?

Chapter 33: Test

Essay (100 Points)

“Although *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* present no “God,” no “Christ,” and no “Christians,” they embody much of Tolkien’s “real religion” and form a profoundly Christian work. No “God” is required in this story. . . . Gandalf and Aragorn need not turn our thoughts to . . . Christ . . . but they persuade us that if we are to have hope in our lives and in our history, it must be hope for the kind of power and authority revealed in Aragorn the king and on the basis of the kind of power revealed in Gandalf’s “miracles” and in his rising from the dead. What Frodo does and undergoes speaks to us of what a man’s responsibility, according to the Christian faith, must always be: to renounce the kind of power that would enslave others and ourselves, and to submit to that power which frees us all.” (Gunnar Urang)

Evaluate this interpretation.

Chapter 34: Test

Essay (100 Points)

Scenario: You are asked to choose your school's spring play production. In a short essay, argue for the performance of *Murder in the Cathedral* as the best choice.

