

FINAL EXAMINATION REVIEW

This final examination is worth 20% of your grade for the semester. Please bring a blank blue book or blank loose-leaf paper for your answers. You may bring with you one 4" x 6" index card with notes, a card that you will hand in with your answers. You may also bring in a photocopy of a poem by Whitman or Lazarus or a passage from James's *Psychology* (see question 6 below), a photocopy that you will also hand in with your answers. There will be three parts to the exam.

Part 1. Identifications. This section will be worth twelve (12) points. I will give you five quotations from texts we've read this semester. You will need to identify four of them by providing the name of the author, the title, and an explanation of the quotation's significance.

Part 2. Short Answer. This section will be worth eight (8) points. It will have some short answer questions.

Part 3. Essay Question. This section will be worth eighty (80) points. I will provide you with questions selected from the following list. You will write an essay in response to **two** of them. The final arrangement of the questions will allow for some choice. Please make your answer as specific as possible.

1. What makes American literature "American"? Using any of the texts we've studied this semester to illustrate your answer, write an essay that explains the distinctive or defining features of United States literature of the nineteenth century.
2. Perhaps the most common thesis about American literature in the nineteenth-century is that everything seems to change around the Civil War. American literature abandons its romance, its spirituality, its idealism, and its expansive hopes in the wake of the war; it begins to focus instead on a more realistic, scientific, practical, perhaps even cynical view of the world and human nature. Does this sound more or less correct? Use your understanding of the texts we've studied this semester to evaluate this thesis, and write a short essay in response to it. Feel free to take a position for or against the thesis, to carve out a middle ground, or to reframe the idea. Whatever your approach, please use specific textual details to illustrate your ideas.
3. Writing about nineteenth-century culture, Anita Levy has said: "If gender seems to be located with the female in the household, then race and class belong to the male domains of . . . history." Criticize or defend Levy's statement, using any three of the following texts: *Hope Leslie*, "Rip Van Winkle," "The Great Lawsuit," *My Bondage and My Freedom*, "Calamus," *Little Women*, "The New Colossus," "Our America," *A Voice from the South*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*.
4. Consider the texts we studied this semester. Of them, which one would you consider most important to its own moment? Which one had the most impact or most influence or mattered the most at the time it was written and first read? And why? Of them, which one would you consider most important to the twenty-first century? Which one matters the most now? And why? Explain your choices using specific references to the texts themselves.

5. In many respects, the "long" nineteenth century is the era of women's rights. Shortly before the century begins, writers like Judith Sargent Murray articulate the idea of equality between the sexes and point to the social injustices that constrain and limit women. Near the century's mid-point, women and men from across the country in Seneca Falls, New York at the 1848 Women's Rights Convention to declare that "all men and women are created equal" and to begin the movement for women's suffrage. Early in the next century, after a long political struggle, women were finally granted the right to vote by the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Which of the texts examined this semester seemed to contribute—morally, intellectually, socially, or politically—to the cause of women's rights. Choose three texts studied this semester and explain their contributions to this important nineteenth-century social movement.
6. Close reading question. Select a short poem by Whitman, a short poem by Lazarus, or a passage from James and explicate the selected text in detail. Summarize carefully the main ideas, but pay careful attention also to the language used to articulate those ideas.
7. Compare the self as it is represented in Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* to the ideas about the self as they appear in one or more of the following: James's *Psychology*, Alcott's *Little Women*, Whitman's "Song of Myself," or Emerson's "Self-Reliance." In what ways does Douglass resonate with these other nineteenth-century ideas about the self? In what ways does he depart from them? How would you explain these convergences and/or divergences?
8. Think of the non-poetic and non-fictional texts we read this semester: a school record, an autobiography, Transcendentalist essays and speeches, antislavery speeches, political essays, literary criticism, scientific writing, and so on. Using three such texts as examples, locate the moments of "literary" interest (in something like the modern sense of that word)? Why do they strike you as literary? How would you go about studying these texts as literary works? To answer this question well, you'll have to have a sense of what you mean by "literary."
9. Using references to texts we've studied to illustrate your ideas, describe what you think are the main features of American Transcendentalism. (If you would like to make distinctions between various kinds of Transcendentalism, please do so.) Then select a text from this century that seems to challenge Transcendentalist thinking. In what ways does it oppose, resist, subvert, or question the Transcendentalist worldview?
10. What can one learn about America in the 1800s from reading American novels of the 1800s? One doesn't really learn any "facts" per se. So what is it that one could learn about the society, culture, ideas, feelings, Zeitgeist ("spirit of the times), or anything else about the era? Answer this question in an essay that makes use of *Hope Leslie*, *Little Women*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*.
11. Choose three nineteenth-century texts that treat in a significant way death and dying. Whitman, Crane, Douglass, Louisa May Alcott, some Transcendentalist passages, a few Lazarus poems, and parts of *Hope Leslie* come most immediately to mind; other texts that discuss death and dying may work as well. Using these three texts to illustrate your ideas, write an essay that explains what is significant about nineteenth-century ideas related to death and dying. You may consider, if you choose, death in relation to other concerns in these texts such as violence, nature, and religion.