

**B.A. III****English Literature Syllabus****Paper –III, Poetry and Practical Criticism****Max Marks: 75****Duration: Three Hours**

The following poems are prescribed for Units I-IV

1. Derek Walcott (West Indian): "A far Cry From Africa"
2. Wole Soyinka (Nigerian): "Dragonfly at My Window Pane"
3. Amiri Baraka (African-American): "Wise I"
4. Judith Wright (Australian): "Bora Ring"
5. A.D. Hope (Australia): "Australia"
6. Michael Ondaatje (Sri Lanka/Canda): "Letters and Other Worlds"
7. Eunice de Souza (India): "Autobiographical"
8. Agha Shahid Ali (India): "Postcard from Kashmir" A Lost Memory of Delhi"
9. A.K. Ramanujan (India): "Love Poem for a Wife I"
10. Arun Kolatkar (India): "The Priest's Son" and "The Butterfly"
11. Sylvia Plath (America): "Mirror" and "Daddy"
12. Gwendolyn Brooks (America): "The Lovers of the Poor"
13. Emily Dickinson (America): "After Great Pain, a Former Feeling Comes"
14. Sherman Alexie (America): "On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City"
15. Lorna Dee Cervantes (America): "Refugee Ship"

#### Unit V: Practical Criticism

The question paper will be divided into five units. Unit I will have six passages from any of the prescribed poems and will carry 24 marks. Candidates will be expected to explain with reference to the context any four passages. Unit II will consist of the poets: Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka, Amiri Baraka, Judith Wright and A.D. Hope. There will be two questions of eleven marks each and candidates will be required to answer any one. Unit III will consist of the poets: Michael Ondaatje, Eunice de Souza, Agha Shahid Ali, Arun Kolatkar and A.K. Ramanujan. There will be two questions of eleven marks each and candidates will be required to answer any one. Unit IV will consist of the following poets: Sylvia Plath, Gwendolyn Brooks, Emily Dickinson, Sherman Alexie and Lorna Dee Cervantes. There will be two questions of eleven marks each and candidates will be required to answer any one. Unit V will consist of four unseen passages for critical appreciation, two verse and two prose. Candidates will be required to attempt any one on verse and any one on prose passage. This Unit will carry 18 marks.

## 1. Derek Walcott (West Indian): "A far Cry From Africa"

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt  
 Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies  
 Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.  
 Corpses are scattered through a paradise.

Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries: 5  
 'Waste no compassion on these separate dead!'  
 Statistics justify and scholars seize  
 The salients of colonial policy,  
 What is that to the white child hacked in bed?  
 To savages, expendable as Jews? 10

Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break  
 In a white dust of ibises whose cries  
 Have wheeled since civilization's dawn  
 From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.  
 The violence of beast on beast is read 15  
 As natural law, but upright man  
 Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.  
 Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars  
 Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,  
 While he calls courage still that native dread 20  
 Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands  
 Upon the napkins of a dirty cause, again  
 A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,  
 The gorilla wrestles with the superman. 25

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,  
 Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?  
 I who have cursed  
 The drunken officer of British rule, how choose  
 Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?      30  
 Betray them both, or give back what they give?  
 How can I face such slaughter and be cool?  
 How can I turn from Africa and live?

## 2. Wole Soinka (Nigerian) “Dragonfly at My Window Pane”

## 3. Amiri Baraka (African-American) “Wise I”

WHYS (Nobody Knows  
 The Trouble I Seen)  
 Traditional

If you ever find

yourself, some where  
 lost and surrounded  
 by enemies  
 who won't let you  
 speak in your own language  
 who destroy your statues  
 & instruments, who ban  
 your omm bomm ba boom  
 then you are in trouble  
 deep trouble  
 they ban your  
 own boom ba boom  
 you in deep deep  
 trouble

humph!

probably take you several hundred years  
 to get  
 out!

#### 4. Judith Wright (Australian) “Bora Ring”

The song is gone; the dance  
 is secret with the dancers in the earth,  
 the ritual useless, and the tribal story  
 lost in an alien tale.

Only the grass stands up  
 to mark the dancing-ring; the apple-gums  
 posture and mime a past corroboree,  
 murmur a broken chant.

The hunter is gone; the spear  
 is splintered underground; the painted bodies  
 a dream the world breathed sleeping and forgot.  
 The nomad feet are still.

Only the rider's heart  
 halts at a sightless shadow, an unsaid word  
 that fastens in the blood of the ancient curse,  
 the fear as old as Cain.

## 5. A.D. Hope (Australia): "Australia"

A Nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey  
 In the field uniform of modern wars,  
 Darkens her hills, those endless, outstretched paws  
 Of Sphinx demolished or stone lion worn away.

They call her a young country, but they lie:  
 She is the last of lands, the emptiest,  
 A woman beyond her change of life, a breast  
 Still tender but within the womb is dry.

Without songs, architecture, history:  
 The emotions and superstitions of younger lands,  
 Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,  
 The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth.  
 In them at last the ultimate men arrive  
 Whose boast is not: "we live" but "we survive",  
 A type who will inhabit the dying earth.

And her five cities, like five teeming sores,  
 Each drains her: a vast parasite robber-state  
 Where second-hand Europeans pullulate  
 Timidly on the edge of alien shores.

Yet there are some like me turn gladly home  
 From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find  
 The Arabian desert of the human mind,  
 Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,

Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare  
 Springs in that waste, some spirit which escapes  
 The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes  
 Which is called civilization over there.

## **10. The Butterfly**

**Arun Kolatkar**

There is no story behind it.  
 It is split like a second.  
 It hinges around itself.

It has no future.  
 It is pinned down to no past.  
 It's a pun on the present.

Its a little yellow butterfly.  
 It has taken these wretched hills  
 under its wings.

Just a pinch of yellow,  
 it opens before it closes  
 and it closes before it o

where is it?

**Sylvia plath**

## Daddy

You do not do, you do not do  
Any more, black shoe  
In which I have lived like a foot  
For thirty years, poor and white,  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.  
You died before I had time—  
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,  
Ghastly statue with one gray toe  
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic  
Where it pours bean green over blue  
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.  
I used to pray to recover you.  
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town  
Scraped flat by the roller  
Of wars, wars, wars.  
But the name of the town is common.  
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.  
So I never could tell where you  
Put your foot, your root,  
I never could talk to you.  
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.  
Ich, ich, ich, ich,  
I could hardly speak.  
I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene

An engine, an engine  
 Chuffing me off like a Jew.  
 A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.  
 I began to talk like a Jew.  
 I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna  
 Are not very pure or true.  
 With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck  
 And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack  
 I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you*,  
 With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.  
 And your neat mustache  
 And your Aryan eye, bright blue.  
 Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You——

Not God but a swastika  
 So black no sky could squeak through.  
 Every woman adores a Fascist,  
 The boot in the face, the brute  
 Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,  
 In the picture I have of you,  
 A cleft in your chin instead of your foot  
 But no less a devil for that, no not  
 Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.  
 I was ten when they buried you.  
 At twenty I tried to die  
 And get back, back, back to you.

I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,  
And they stuck me together with glue.  
And then I knew what to do.  
I made a model of you,  
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.  
And I said I do, I do.  
So daddy, I'm finally through.  
The black telephone's off at the root,  
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two—  
The vampire who said he was you  
And drank my blood for a year,  
Seven years, if you want to know.  
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you.  
They are dancing and stamping on you.  
They always *knew* it was you.  
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

Sylvia Plath, "Daddy" from *Collected Poems*. Copyright © 1960, 1965, 1971, 1981 by the Estate of Sylvia Plath.  
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Source: *Collected Poems* (HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 1992)

**Gwendolyn Brooks (America):  
"The Lovers of the Poor"**

arrive. The Ladies from the Ladies' Betterment League  
 Arrive in the afternoon, the late light slanting  
 In diluted gold bars across the boulevard brag  
 Of proud, seamed faces with mercy and murder hinting  
 Here, there, interrupting, all deep and debonair,  
 The pink paint on the innocence of fear;  
 Walk in a gingerly manner up the hall.  
 Cutting with knives served by their softest care,  
 Served by their love, so barbarously fair.  
 Whose mothers taught: You'd better not be cruel!  
 You had better not throw stones upon the wrens!  
 Herein they kiss and coddle and assault  
 Anew and dearly in the innocence  
 With which they baffle nature. Who are full,  
 Sleek, tender-clad, fit, fiftyish, a-glow, all  
 Sweetly abortive, hinting at fat fruit,  
 Judge it high time that fiftyish fingers felt  
 Beneath the lovelier planes of enterprise.  
 To resurrect. To moisten with milky chill.  
 To be a random hitching-post or plush.  
 To be, for wet eyes, random and handy hem.

Their guild is giving money to the poor.

The worthy poor. The very very worthy  
 And beautiful poor. Perhaps just not too swarthy?  
 perhaps just not too dirty nor too dim  
 Nor—passionate. In truth, what they could wish  
 Is—something less than derelict or dull.  
 Not staunch enough to stab, though, gaze for gaze!  
 God shield them sharply from the beggar-bold!  
 The noxious needy ones whose battle's bald  
 Nonetheless for being voiceless, hits one down.

But it's all so bad! and entirely too much for them.

The stench; the urine, cabbage, and dead beans,  
 Dead porridges of assorted dusty grains,  
 The old smoke, *heavy* diapers, and, they're told,  
 Something called chitterlings. The darkness. Drawn

Darkness, or dirty light. The soil that stirs.  
 The soil that looks the soil of centuries.  
 And for that matter the *general* oldness. Old  
 Wood. Old marble. Old tile. Old old old.  
 Not homekind Oldness! Not Lake Forest, Glencoe.  
 Nothing is sturdy, nothing is majestic,  
 There is no quiet drama, no rubbed glaze, no  
 Unkillable infirmity of such  
 A tasteful turn as lately they have left,  
 Glencoe, Lake Forest, and to which their cars  
 Must presently restore them. When they're done  
 With dullards and distortions of this fistic  
 Patience of the poor and put-upon.

They've never seen such a make-do-ness as  
 Newspaper rugs before! In this, this "flat,"  
 Their hostess is gathering up the oozed, the rich  
 Rugs of the morning (tattered! the bespattered. . . .)  
 Readies to spread clean rugs for afternoon.  
 Here is a scene for you. The Ladies look,  
 In horror, behind a substantial citizeness  
 Whose trains clank out across her swollen heart.  
 Who, arms akimbo, almost fills a door.  
 All tumbling children, quilts dragged to the floor  
 And tortured thereover, potato peelings, soft-  
 Eyed kitten, hunched-up, haggard, to-be-hurt.

Their League is allotting largesse to the Lost.  
 But to put their clean, their pretty money, to put  
 Their money collected from delicate rose-fingers  
 Tipped with their hundred flawless rose-nails seems . . .

They own Spode, Lowestoft, candelabra,  
 Mantels, and hostess gowns, and sunburst clocks,  
 Turtle soup, Chippendale, red satin "hangings,"  
 Aubussons and Hattie Carnegie. They Winter  
 In Palm Beach; cross the Water in June; attend,  
 When suitable, the nice Art Institute;  
 Buy the right books in the best bindings; saunter

On Michigan, Easter mornings, in sun or wind.  
 Oh Squalor! This sick four-story hulk, this fibre  
 With fissures everywhere! Why, what are bringings  
 Of loathe-love largesse? What shall peril hungers  
 So old old, what shall flatter the desolate?  
 Tin can, blocked fire escape and chitterling  
 And swaggering seeking youth and the puzzled wreckage  
 Of the middle passage, and urine and stale shames  
 And, again, the porridges of the underslung  
 And children children children. Heavens! That  
 Was a rat, surely, off there, in the shadows? Long  
 And long-tailed? Gray? The Ladies from the Ladies'  
 Betterment League agree it will be better  
 To achieve the outer air that rights and steadies,  
 To hie to a house that does not holler, to ring  
 Bells elsetime, better presently to cater  
 To no more Possibilities, to get  
 Away. Perhaps the money can be posted.  
 Perhaps they two may choose another Slum!  
 Some serious sooty half-unhappy home!—  
 Where loathe-love likelier may be invested.

Keeping their scented bodies in the center  
 Of the hall as they walk down the hysterical hall,  
 They allow their lovely skirts to graze no wall,  
 Are off at what they manage of a canter,  
 And, resuming all the clues of what they were,  
 Try to avoid inhaling the laden air.

Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Lovers of the Poor" from *Selected Poems*. Copyright © 1963 by Gwendolyn Brooks.  
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Source: *Selected Poems* (1963)

**Emily Dickinson (America):**  
**“After Great Pain, a Former Feeling Comes**

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –  
 The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –  
 The stiff Heart questions ‘was it He, that bore,’  
 And ‘Yesterday, or Centuries before’?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –  
 A Wooden way  
 Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –  
 Regardless grown,  
 A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –  
 Remembered, if outlived,  
 As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –  
 First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

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Source: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson Edited by R. W. Franklin* (Harvard University Press, 1999)

**Sherman Alexie (America):**  
**“On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”**

The white woman across the aisle from me says 'Look,  
look at all the history, that house  
on the hill there is over two hundred years old, '  
as she points out the window past me

into what she has been taught. I have learned  
little more about American history during my few days  
back East than what I expected and far less  
of what we should all know of the tribal stories

whose architecture is 15,000 years older  
than the corners of the house that sits  
museumed on the hill. 'Walden Pond, '  
the woman on the train asks, 'Did you see Walden Pond? '

and I don't have a cruel enough heart to break  
her own by telling her there are five Walden Ponds  
on my little reservation out West  
and at least a hundred more surrounding Spokane,

the city I pretended to call my home. 'Listen, '  
I could have told her. 'I don't give a shit  
about Walden. I know the Indians were living stories  
around that pond before Walden's grandparents were born

and before his grandparents' grandparents were born.  
I'm tired of hearing about Don-fucking-Henley saving it, too,  
because that's redundant. If Don Henley's brothers and sisters  
and mothers and father hadn't come here in the first place

then nothing would need to be saved.'  
But I didn't say a word to the woman about Walden  
Pond because she smiled so much and seemed delighted  
that I thought to bring her an orange juice

back from the food car. I respect elders  
of every color. All I really did was eat  
my tasteless sandwich, drink my Diet Pepsi  
and nod my head whenever the woman pointed out

another little piece of her country's history  
while I, as all Indians have done  
since this war began, made plans  
for what I would do and say the next time

somebody from the enemy thought I was one of their own.

## **"Refugee Ship" Lorna Dee Cervantes**

Like wet cornstarch, I slide

past my grandmother's eyes. Bible

at her side, she removes her glasses.

The pudding thickens.

Mama raised me without language.

I'm orphaned from my Spanish name.

The words are foreign, stumbling

on my tongue. I see in the mirror

my reflection: bronzed skin, black hair.

I feel I am a captive

aboard the refugee ship.

The ship that will never dock.

El barco que nunca atraca.