

Midterm Examination Review Sheet

The midterm exam will be 50 minutes long, and it will be worth 50 points. Please bring a blank blue book or blank loose-leaf paper for your answers. You may not use your books or your notes. There will be two parts to the exam.

Part 1. Identifications. This section will be worth 15 points. I will give you six quotations from texts we've read this semester. You will need to identify five of them by providing the name of the author, the title, and an explanation of the quotation's significance.

Part 2. Essay Questions. This section will be worth 35 points. I will provide you with two of the following questions. You will write an essay in response to one of the two. Please make your answer as specific as possible.

1. Benjamin Franklin is often considered the original author of the myth and rhetoric of the optimistic, freedom-loving, self-made, self-reliant, pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps American. Write an essay that explains why he has become associated with this myth and rhetoric. Then select another text that we've read and explain in what ways it contradicts or challenges this myth or rhetoric.
2. Compare the Indian captivity genre (Rowlandson, Dustan, perhaps Cabeza de Vaca) to the slave narrative as a genre (Equiano, perhaps Wheatley). What are the key features of each genre? In what important ways are these kinds of stories similar? What do you find interesting or significant about the differences?
3. Octavio Paz has called Puritan society a culture based on the principle of exclusion. Do you think Paz is correct? Discuss, with reference to the literature we read this semester, the evidence of this principle in Puritan life and culture.
4. Compare a poem by Anne Bradstreet to a poem by Phillis Wheatley or Jane Johnston Schoolcraft. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? It is important that you consider not only their ideas and themes (what they write about) but also the style or form of their verse (how they write).
5. Which of the following writers would you consider the best representative of the Age of Enlightenment: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Phillis Wheatley, or Olaudah Equiano? Defend your selection by defining "The Enlightenment" and showing how the author you selected represents that era. You will want to use specific references to the selected author's writing to support your answer. You may also, if you wish, explain why you elected not to choose the other two authors.
6. Poe writes, "the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world--and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved love" (Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," 1621). In light of this statement, discuss a selected poem or short story by Poe. You might select "Ligeia," "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and some other work by Poe.