

How to Study and Prepare for an Exam

Components of the Exam:

Short Answer: identification of key passages, titles of works, authors, definitions of key terms, ability to understand a passage's significance to the entire work.

Short answers are just that: SHORT. Do not write long responses or you will run out of time. Be able to directly answer a question—all parts of it—in a few, well stated and accurate, sentences.

Know and be able to correctly spell the names of authors and texts.

Essay Section: Know how to write a complete essay. Remember that an essay is not just one paragraph. It requires at least four or five. It requires an introduction, a clear and direct thesis sentence that directly addresses the topic of the essay, supporting paragraphs and a conclusion of some sort. It needs substantive proof for each assertion you make about the topic, so consider having relevant, direct quotations on your one-page sheet of notes.

FAQs:

Q. How do I study for identification of authors, passages, and titles of works?

- a. Reread your index cards and remind yourself of plot details: what happens in the work? What is the plot or subject matter? Re-familiarize yourself with the texts themselves.
- b. Memorize titles, authors, and characters of specific works. Yes, memorization IS a valid study tool. And one you should learn to use. If there are numerous poems by a single author, know the titles of each of those poems and be able to tell poems apart based on subject matter, verse form, meter, line length, and so forth. You should be able to tell the difference between a poem by Baudelaire, for example, versus Browning or Blake based on subject matter alone. And Goethe's poetry is very different from the other three, based on meter and rhyme. Check it out. If you know the subject and the form of the work, you will be able to identify the author and work with just a little effort.
- c. Determine which works are poetry, which drama, which non-fiction, and which prose fiction. Know the differences.

Q. How do I study significance of a passage?

- a. Read and deeply consider the passages provided during class lecture. Consider how these passages, listed by page numbers on my powerpoint slides, relate to themes, leit motifs, or other aspects of the entire text the passage is from.
- b. Re-read your class lecture notes, not just the printed notes online. Taking in-class notes will help you understand how a passage relates to the theme (main ideas) of the entire text. If you don't take notes, you aren't able to study as well.

Q. How do I study for defining key terms?

- a. Do more than memorize the meaning of a given term. Figure out how to APPLY the term to specific passages or to entire works. Terms apply to ALL the texts, not just the one from the class lecture, so know how a term might work in another text we've read for this exam. For example, where in a given passage do you see a symbol? How might the symbol affect the meaning of the passage? Does that same symbol affect other parts of the entire work? Be able to state how it affects the entire work and the passage.

Q. How do I prepare for the essay section?

- a. Study how different works approach similar ideas and issues. Are they approaching similar themes (ideas)? If so, are there differences in the approach? Are they dealing with a similar topic or type of character? For example, Romantic works tend to rely on idealistic views of human nature. Realist works do not idealize human nature. Know which type of work you are studying: realist, symbolist, romantic?
- b. Read the Introductions to authors and to entire sections of the anthology we are using. These introductions can give you ways to organize your study guide.
- c. Consider how key ideas (available in the lecture notes online) affect more than one of the texts. Construct possible essay questions based on lectures. Are there specific threads of thought that affect many works? You know I think so, therefore you should consider how different works use or depict similar ideas.