

Comprehensive MA Tests in English Literature

15 series of state university entrance exams

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PREFACE

The book you have in your hands started as a modest project five years ago. At the time, I realized that there is no reliable source for BA graduates to study for the MA Entrance Examination in English Literature. It seemed that there is a need to compile the multiple choice tests starting from the very first year (1370) with detailed explanations.

I also thought the candidates need to have the sources for each test in order to study the ideas expressed in tests in a more comprehensive manner. This of course was something easier said than done. I asked many of my BA students to go and find the sources for each single test. The process of finding the sources took a couple of years! Eventually, I found out that what my students have compiled now needs careful editing. At this stage my two MA students, Shadi Fard Teimoori and Frazaneh Doosti embarked on the difficult task of editing and proofreading. During their editing process they felt that many of the explanations for the tests need to be rewritten. Many sources needed to be rechecked and this took them at least a year to accomplish.

During the time, we had many sessions discussing the problematic or, let us say, enigmatic tests. In fact, we found out that there are many errors in the actual tests themselves. I asked the editors not to suffice with an answer and in many cases explain the errors in the tests without giving a hasty answer.

I have to confess that I still believe that multiple choice exams in literature are not a plausible way to evaluate candidates to enter postgraduate studies. Of course multiple choice exam is not something just practiced in Iran. GRE exam in English literature (a major requirement for graduate studies in the United States) is also in the form of multiple choice tests. But considering the number of candidates each year, perhaps the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology might have no other choice.

I have to thank all my students who helped finding the sources for the tests. The main thanks go to Ms Teimoori and Ms Doosti who patiently and professionally completed the job and insisted on publishing the final work. Without their perseverance, I wouldn't have considered publishing the work. We hope the present book helps the candidates to continue their education in English Literature. The book with such a monstrous scope (1200 tests) will definitely have errors. Please let us know about the mistakes so that the editors would consider them in the following editions of the book.

Amir Ali Nojournian, Ph.D.
February 2007

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I. Purpose of the Book

- ◆ The primary and main purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive and convenient collection of all State university entrance exams ever held for English Language and Literature M.A. students in Iran.
- ◆ The second but not less important aim is to provide the most logically correct and detailed answers to the questions based on the four possible alternatives given so that the students may get a vivid picture of the questions far from anxieties aroused by ambiguous questions or lack of descriptions for the provided choices.
- ◆ The book includes a section on the accessible sources from which a large number of the tests are elicited. By providing such detailed list of sources, classifying and introducing them to the students, we hope to provide a clear-cut guideline for those preparing themselves for the academic study of English literature or those interested in the field but not familiar with its basics. We also hope that this book would help us take a step further towards systematizing English literature MA testing in our country – a requirement not yet accomplished.
- ◆ Moreover, a compendious survey of the whole state university questions from 1370 to 1384 provides a rich ground for both teachers and students who are interested in the evolution of the questions and the shift in their contents, form, and perspectives seen when comparing the primary ones of 1370 with the latter of 1384.
- ◆ The detailed descriptions are designed in a way that enables the students in the last months of study review the gist of each source without any need to refer to complex sources any more. Each answer also consists of a *SEE* section providing all possible sources for reference (including page number). The book is also beneficial for those interested in the basic concepts of literature and literary criticism; they can enjoy reading the book and expand their knowledge of English literature without necessarily taking any regular exam. We hope to guide students towards a more conceptual study of the material and avoid advertising memory-based exams.

II. Guideline

- ◆ The book is divided into two main sections: the Questions section appears first, and the Answers section as the second. It is highly recommended that the students begin each question series without any reference to the Answers section. This is the last thing to do.

- ◆ The book also covers a wide range of books and sources which do not hold the same position in terms of priority. These sources could be divided into three categories:

The Primary Sources are those basic books that contain the very first things of English literature. We recommend that the books in this category should be studied at least twice before taking any exams or starting the Questions section. These basics include:

- I. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Abrams or any available compilation)
- II. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Abrams)
- III. *An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. (Dutton)
- IV. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (Guerin)

The Secondary Sources are the next but not the less important sources that the students should be quite familiar with. If there is plenty of time before taking exams it is recommended to read the books at least one time. If not, the materials of these books could be covered when examining the Questions. References to these books are brought whenever necessary and you can study them along with the Answers section. Among these sources are:

- V. *Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense* (Perrine - 3 vols.)
- VI. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Cuddon)
- VII. *An Outline of English Literature* (Thornley & Roberts)
- VIII. *Cambridge Paperback Guide to Literature in English* (Ousby)
- IX. *The McGraw-Hill Guide to English Literature* (Lawrence - 2 vols.)
- X. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (Bressler)

Further Reading refers to those kinds of books helpful in expanding the general knowledge of the field and quite recommended, but not suggested for the beginners or those short of time. You will find many of them provided in the *SEE* sections and finally at the Bibliography page.

- ◆ There is also another section at the end of the book which provides an index to authors and their works. The students can have all the works and names ever appeared in the state exams at hand with a quick glance at it. The index is also helpful for accessing any specific subject in the book for it not only makes the book search easier, it also shows the numbers of each item's appearance in the questions and the book.
- ◆ The first step to take is obviously the Questions section. If you have enough time, spend some time on all four alternatives and do not simply choose the correct answer. Reading and considering all choices and even looking them up, helps you acquire a good sense of logic in finding the correct answers in more complex questions. You can later spend enough time on the Answers section and examine your own decision.

- ◆ In the Answers section, the most logically correct answer is suggested for each question. In the case of problematic questions or questions with two or no answers, everything is explicitly explained in order to avoid any kind of ambiguities. And also quite innovatively all four alternatives are examined in detail and the reason for their not being correct is explained.
- ◆ Make sure you have checked all the sources and page numbers provided. Some of the references are explicit, that is, the questioned phrase is directly taken out of the source. But some others are implicit, that is, you have to read a number of pages and books in order to be able to deduce the most appropriate answer.
- ◆ This volume of state exams is not supposed to be the end and the last word in the field of MA entrance examinations; as far as the exam system is continued, the need to provide appropriate guidelines to the newer forms of questions is constantly felt. Moreover, the book before you still needs your thoughtful examination and comments to take its ideal format. Hence we welcome your kind and patient collaboration to the task and would be grateful to read and apply your comment on the volume. Please send your comments or suggestions to the email address [test MA literature@yahoo.com](mailto:test_MA_literature@yahoo.com). Be sure your opinions will be definitely considered for later editions and volumes.

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