

British Romantic Literature PYQ 2022

Q1. Identify, contextualize and critically comment:

Or diedst thou - martyr of disastrous love? Ah!

songstress sad! That such my lot might be,

To sigh and sing at liberty - like thee!

Ans. The lines you have provided are from the poem "To the Nightingale" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, an English Romantic poet. The poem was written in 1820 and reflects Shelley's admiration for the nightingale's ability to sing freely and expressively.

In these particular lines, Shelley addresses the nightingale as a "songstress sad" and wonders if it had died as a martyr of disastrous love. The speaker expresses a desire for a similar fate, wishing to be able to sigh and sing freely like the nightingale. This longing suggests a yearning for the emotional release and artistic expression that the nightingale embodies.

The nightingale has been a symbol of **inspiration and artistic expression** in literature and poetry for centuries. Its beautiful and melancholic song has often been associated with themes of longing, love, and the pursuit of freedom. Shelley, in this poem, uses the nightingale as a metaphor for the ideal of artistic expression without any constraints.

The lines evoke a sense of admiration for the nightingale's ability to pour out its emotions through song, even if those emotions are tinged with sadness. By wishing for a similar freedom, the speaker expresses a desire to be able to express their own emotions and experiences without restrictions or inhibitions.

Overall, "To the Nightingale" captures Shelley's fascination with the nightingale as a symbol of artistic freedom and the power of expression. The poem highlights the human longing for emotional release and the desire to be able to communicate one's innermost thoughts and feelings in a way that transcends the limitations of ordinary existence.

Q2. Identify, contextualize and critically comment :

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist, This

beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,

Save to the pure, and in their purest hour

Ans. These lines are from the poem "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" by William Wordsworth. The poem was written in 1802-1804 and is considered one of Wordsworth's most famous works. It explores the idea of the loss of childhood innocence and the sense of wonder that accompanies it.

In these lines, the speaker describes a sense of beauty and light that is associated with the experience of joy. This joy is depicted as a pure and virtuous force that is only accessible to those who are themselves pure. The speaker suggests that this joy is not accessible to those who are not pure, and is only available in the purest moments of life.

The language used in these lines is highly emotive and expressive, with Wordsworth using poetic techniques such as repetition and alliteration to convey the sense of beauty and joy that he is describing. The use of the word "glory" suggests a sense of transcendence, while the reference to "beauty-making power" suggests that this joy has the power to create beauty in the world.

Overall, these lines are a vivid and evocative depiction of the experience of joy and beauty. Wordsworth suggests that these experiences are only available to those who are pure and virtuous, and that they are associated with a sense of light and transcendence. The poem "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" continues to be admired for its exploration of the nature of childhood and the human experience of joy and transcendence.

Q3. Identify, contextualize and critically comment

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Ans. These lines are the final lines of the poem "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The poem was first published in 1818 and is one of Shelley's most famous works. It is a sonnet that tells the story of a traveler who comes across the remains of a statue in the desert.

In these lines, the speaker describes the scene of the statue's remains. The statue, which was once colossal and impressive, has decayed and is now a "wreck." The desert around it is "boundless and bare," with nothing else around it except for the "lone and level sands" that stretch far away.

The language used in these lines is stark and powerful, with Shelley using words such as "decay," "wreck," and "bare" to convey a sense of desolation and emptiness. The reference to the "lone and level sands" suggests a sense of vastness and emptiness, while the repetition of the "s" sound in "sands" and "stretch" creates a hissing sound that adds to the sense of desolation.

Overall, these lines are a powerful expression of the transience of human achievement and the inevitability of decay. Shelley suggests that even the most impressive and grandiose monuments will eventually be reduced to ruins, with nothing left behind except for a desolate landscape. The poem "Ozymandias" continues to be admired for its exploration of the theme of mortality and the limits of human power.

Q4. Identify, contextualize and critically comment:

You cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation... which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine

Ans. These lines are a quote from Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein," which was first published in 1818. The novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a living creature through a series of experiments.

In these lines, Victor is speaking to his friend Henry Clerval about his creation. Victor believes that the creation of his creature is a revolutionary and groundbreaking achievement that will benefit all of humanity for generations to come. He argues that only someone like himself, who possesses the knowledge and skills of a scientist, could undertake such a project.

The **language** used in these lines is grandiose and ambitious, with Victor using words such as "inestimable" and "undertaking" to convey a sense of the magnitude of his achievement. However, the reader later learns that Victor's creation turns out to be a monster who brings misery and destruction to Victor's life and those around him.

Overall, these lines are an example of Victor's hubris and his belief in the power of science to transform the world. Shelley's novel "Frankenstein" is often read as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked scientific ambition and the ethical responsibilities of scientists. The quote highlights the potential pitfalls of scientists who prioritize their own goals and ambitions above the ethical implications of their work.

Q5. What, according to Rousseau, are the sources of inequality?

Ans. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a prominent philosopher of the 18th century, believed that there were two primary sources of inequality: natural and social.

According to Rousseau, natural inequality arises from differences in physical and mental abilities among individuals. Some people may be naturally stronger, faster, or more intelligent than others, which can create a hierarchy of abilities that leads to unequal outcomes. However, Rousseau believed that this kind of inequality is not morally significant because it is not caused by human actions.

In **contrast**, Rousseau believed that social inequality is caused by human actions and is therefore morally significant. Social inequality arises from the development of private property and the division of labor. Rousseau argued that when people began to claim ownership over land and resources, they created a system of inequality where some people have access to more resources than others. This led to the development of social classes, with some people having power and privilege while others are left with very little.

Rousseau also believed that the division of labor created social inequality by creating dependency and competition among people. When people began to specialize in certain jobs, they became dependent on others for goods and services that they could no longer provide for themselves. This created a situation where people had to compete with one another for access to resources and power, leading to social inequality.

Overall, Rousseau believed that both natural and social inequality were problematic, but that social inequality was particularly concerning because it was created by human actions and could be addressed through political and social reforms. His ideas about inequality were influential in shaping later discussions of social justice and equality.

Q6. The Chimney Sweeper poems decisively locate Blake within the late eighteenth century tradition of art as radical politics. Do you agree? Discuss.

Ans. William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" poems can be seen as a powerful critique of the social and political realities of his time, and an affirmation of the transformative potential of art. These poems decisively locate Blake within the late eighteenth century tradition of art as radical politics, which sought to use art as a means of challenging established power structures and promoting social change.

The poems describe the brutal exploitation of young boys who are forced to work as chimney sweepers in the dirty and dangerous industrial cities of late eighteenth-century England. In "The Chimney Sweeper" from Songs of Innocence, the young protagonist is comforted by an angel who promises him a better life in heaven, while in "The Chimney Sweeper" from Songs of Experience, the boy becomes bitter and cynical, recognizing the harsh realities of his existence.

Through these poems, Blake exposes the cruelty and inhumanity of the industrial system, and the way it destroys the innocence and hope of the most vulnerable members of society. He also suggests that the only hope for change lies in the transformative power of art and imagination, which can help to awaken people's consciences and inspire them to action.

In this sense, Blake's work can be seen as part of a wider tradition of radical art and literature in late eighteenth-century England, which sought to challenge the status quo and promote a more just and humane society. Writers like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Mary Wollstonecraft all used their work to critique the existing social and political order and to promote new ideas and values.

In conclusion, "The Chimney Sweeper" poems are a powerful example of Blake's commitment to using art as a means of promoting social change. Through his work, he challenges the dominant power structures of his time and offers a vision of a more just and compassionate society. As such, his work can be seen as part of a wider tradition of art as radical politics in late eighteenth-century England.

Q7. Discuss the correlation between the different parts of Wordsworth's Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.

Ans. William Wordsworth's Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood is a complex and multi-layered poem that explores the relationship between memory, imagination, and the nature of human existence. One of the most striking features of the poem is its structure, which consists of several distinct sections that are united by a common theme and subject matter.

The **first section** of the poem sets the scene by describing the speaker's sense of loss and longing for the joy and wonder of childhood. The speaker mourns the fact that he can no longer see the world in the same way he did as a child, and reflects on the transience and impermanence of all things.

The **second section** of the poem introduces the central theme of the ode: the idea that human beings are born with a sense of connection to a higher spiritual realm, but gradually lose this connection as they grow older. The speaker reflects on the sense of wonder and awe he felt as a child, and suggests that this was a glimpse of a deeper reality that is now obscured from him.

The **third section** of the poem explores the relationship between memory and imagination, and suggests that memory is a key to unlocking the deeper truths of existence. The speaker reflects on the power of memory to transport him back to the joys and wonders of childhood, and suggests that this same power can lead him to a deeper understanding of the nature of reality.

The **fourth section** of the poem returns to the theme of loss and suggests that even though the speaker can never fully recapture the sense of wonder and awe he felt as a child, he can still find meaning and purpose in life by seeking out the traces of that lost world in the present.

The **final section** of the poem brings together all of these themes and suggests that the human experience is characterized by a continual striving towards a higher spiritual reality, even in the face of loss and impermanence. The speaker reflects on the possibility of a future reunion with the divine, and suggests that this is what gives life its ultimate meaning and purpose.

Taken together, the different parts of Wordsworth's Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood create a rich and complex portrait of the human experience. The poem explores themes of loss, memory, imagination, and the search for a higher spiritual reality, and suggests that even in the face of impermanence and mortality, human beings are capable of finding meaning and purpose in life by striving towards a deeper understanding of existence.

Q8. Examine Byron's 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' as a Romantic poem, and a self reflexive critique of the age.

Ans. Lord Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is considered one of the most significant works of the Romantic era. The poem is both a celebration of the beauty and grandeur of nature and a selfreflexive critique of the age in which Byron lived. The poem is written in the first person, with the narrator, Childe Harold, serving as a proxy for Byron himself. This allows Byron to explore his own emotions, experiences, and attitudes towards the world around him.

One of the key features of the Romantic movement was the emphasis on the individual experience, and the rejection of the rational and scientific approach to understanding the world. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is a perfect example of this, as the poem focuses on the narrator's emotions and inner thoughts, rather than objective observations of the world. The poem is filled with vivid descriptions of nature, which serve as a reflection of the narrator's own state of mind.

At the same time, the poem is also a self-reflexive critique of the age in which Byron lived. The Romantic movement was a response to the Enlightenment era, which emphasized reason, science, and rationality. Byron's poem can be seen as a critique of the Enlightenment values, and an attempt to return to a more intuitive and emotional approach to understanding the world.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage also contains a critique of the social and political realities of Byron's time. The poem reflects the disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the status quo that many Romantics felt, as they saw the world around them as corrupt, materialistic, and lacking in true human

connection. The narrator's sense of alienation and loneliness can be seen as a reflection of Byron's own feelings of disconnection from the society in which he lived.

Overall, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is a quintessential Romantic poem, in its emphasis on the individual experience, the rejection of reason and rationality, and the critique of the social and political realities of the age. The poem is a self-reflexive exploration of Byron's own emotions, experiences, and attitudes, as well as a critique of the broader cultural and political context in which he lived.

Q9. In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley interrogates the very idea of monstrosity. Discuss.

Ans. In Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, the idea of monstrosity is central to the story, and the novel can be seen as an exploration and interrogation of this concept. Throughout the novel, Shelley challenges the reader's assumptions about what makes a monster, and raises questions about the nature of humanity and morality.

One of the key ways in which Shelley interrogates the idea of monstrosity is through the character of the Creature. Although the Creature is initially portrayed as a horrifying monster, the reader comes to understand that he is capable of both great violence and deep empathy. The Creature is a complex and nuanced character, who defies easy categorization as either monster or human.

Shelley also challenges the idea of monstrosity through the character of Victor Frankenstein himself. Although Victor is initially portrayed as a hero, the reader comes to understand that his obsession with creating life is in fact a monstrous act, and that he is responsible for much of the tragedy that unfolds in the novel.

Ultimately, Shelley's interrogation of the idea of monstrosity can be seen as a reflection of the broader cultural and philosophical debates of her time. The 19th century was a period of rapid scientific and technological advancement, and many thinkers were grappling with the ethical and moral implications of these changes. Shelley's novel can be seen as a warning against the dangers of unchecked scientific ambition, and a reminder of the importance of empathy and compassion in the face of technological progress.

Overall, Frankenstein is a powerful exploration of the idea of monstrosity, and an interrogation of the assumptions and prejudices that underpin our understanding of what it means to be human. Through the character of the Creature and the actions of Victor Frankenstein, Shelley challenges us to reconsider our preconceptions about morality, responsibility, and the nature of humanity itself.

Q10. Write an essay explaining the distinction Kant draws between the beautiful and the sublime.

Ans. Immanuel Kant, the renowned German philosopher, made a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime in his Critique of Judgment. He argued that beauty and sublimity are two different aesthetic experiences that arise from distinct features of objects, and that they have different effects on the mind and the emotions.

According to Kant, the beautiful is an aesthetic experience that arises from the harmony, proportion, and order of an object. A beautiful object is one that is pleasing to the senses and is perceived as having a certain perfection and completeness. The beauty of an object is objective, in that it is determined by the qualities of the object itself, and is not dependent on the subjective preferences or tastes of the observer.

In **contrast**, the sublime is an aesthetic experience that arises from the contemplation of an object that is vast, powerful, or overwhelming. The sublime is not dependent on the qualities of the object itself, but on the effect it has on the observer's mind. The sublime is subjective, in that it depends on the observer's response to the object.

Kant argued that the sublime is an experience of the mind's attempt to comprehend something that is beyond its capacity to fully understand. The sublime is therefore an experience of awe, wonder, and reverence. It is the feeling that arises when we contemplate something that is infinitely greater than ourselves, such as the vastness of the universe or the power of nature. The sublime is an experience of the mind's awareness of its own limitations in the face of something that is beyond its comprehension.

Kant also argued that the sublime has a moral dimension. The experience of the sublime can lead us to a greater appreciation of our own moral worth and our duty to act in accordance with moral principles. The sublime can inspire us to act with courage, compassion, and selflessness in the face of challenges and difficulties.

In **conclusion**, Kant's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is an important contribution to the philosophy of aesthetics. The beautiful is an experience of harmony and perfection, while the sublime is an experience of awe and reverence. The beautiful is objective, while the sublime is subjective. The sublime has a moral dimension, in that it can inspire us to act in accordance with moral principles. Understanding these two aesthetic experiences can deepen our appreciation of art, nature, and the world around us, and can inspire us to live a more fulfilling and meaningful life.