Examination paper for ENG2302 Literature and History: ‘Perspectives on the Past in British Contemporary Fiction’ (7,5 sp)

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Examination date: 5 June 2015
Examination time (from-to): 09:00 – 13:00
Permitted examination support material:

**Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary.** Versions with the earlier title—*Collins COBUILD English (Advanced Learner’s) Dictionary*—are also approved.

Other information: Examination results will be published 26 June 2015

Language: English
Number of pages (front page excluded): 4
Number of pages enclosed: 2

Checked by:

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Date

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Signature
Section A counts for 50% of your final grade. Section B counts for 50% of your final grade. You are recommended to divide your time accordingly.

**Section A (short answer section)**
Answer **four** of the following five questions. Write your answers in full sentences. An answer to a question in this section does not need to be longer than around half or three quarters of a page.

1. Attached to this exam you will find a passage from Michael Frayn’s *Spies*. In what ways can this passage be said to bring up the novel’s exploration of the contrast between change and continuity?

2. What would you say are the most important recurring motifs in Julian Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, and why? How do they relate to the novel’s exploration of history and historiography?


4. Write a short commentary on the use of reverse chronology in Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow: or the Nature of the Offence* and state what impact(s) you find that this type of narration has on the content.

5. What do you consider to be the main themes of Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia*? Look at the attached extract from *Arcadia*. What possible topics or themes are introduced here?

**Section B (essay section)**
Answer **one** of the following two questions. You should avoid repetition of material from your answers to Section A. Both essay questions require reference to relevant secondary literature (from the reading list).

1. Below you will find a quote from Michael Frayn’s *Copenhagen*. Write an essay in which you use that quote as a starting point for a commentary on how the play makes use of the scientific principle of uncertainty. How, for example, does *Copenhagen* problematize interpretation and narration of history?

   **Heisenberg**  Now we’re all dead and gone, yes, and there are only two things the world remembers about me. One is the uncertainty principle, and the other is my mysterious visit to Niels Bohr in Copenhagen in 1941. Everyone understands uncertainty. Or thinks he does. No one understands my trip to Copenhagen. Time and time again I’ve explained it. To Bohr himself, and Margrethe. To interrogators and intelligence officers, to journalists and historians. The more I’ve explained, the deeper the uncertainty has become. Well, I shall be happy to make one more attempt. Now we’re all dead and gone. Now no one can be hurt, now no one can be betrayed.

   or

2. Write an essay in which you discuss how **at least two** of the fictional works from the reading list are influenced by the Second World War.
Attachments

1. The third week of June, and there it is again: the same almost embarrassingly familiar breath of sweetness that comes every year about this time. I catch it on the warm evening air as I walk past the well-ordered gardens in my quiet street, and for a moment I’m a child again and everything’s before me – all the frightening, half-understood promise of life.

   It must come from one of the gardens. Which one? I can never trace it. And what is it? It’s not like the heartbreaking, tender sweetness of the lime blossom, for which this city’s known, or the serene summer happiness of the honeysuckle. It’s something quite harsh and coarse. It reeks. It has a kind of sexual urgency to it. And it unsettles me, as it always does. I feel … what? A restlessness. A longing to be over the woods at the end of the street and away, away. And yet at the same time I have a kind of homesickness for where I am. Is that possible? I have a feeling that something, somewhere, has been left unresolved, that some secret thing in the air around me is still waiting to be discovered.

   Another hint of it as the summer breeze stirs, and I know that he place I should like to be off to is my childhood. Perhaps the home I’m homesick for is still there, after all. I can’t help noticing, as I do every summer in late June, when that sweet reek comes, that there are cheap flights to that far-off nearby land. Twice I pick up the phone to book; twice I put it down again. You can’t go back, everyone knows that …

2. A room on the garden front of a very large country house in Derbyshire in April 1809

   Nowadays, the house would be called a stately home. The upstage wall is mainly tall, shapely, uncurtained windows, one or more of which work as doors. Nothing much need be said or seen of the exterior beyond. We come to learn that the house stands in the typical English park of the time. Perhaps we see an indication of this, perhaps only light and air and sky

   The room looks bare despite the large table which occupies the centre of it. The table, straight-backed chairs and, the only other item of furniture, the architect’s stand or reading stand, would all be collectable pieces now but here, on an uncarpeted wood floor, they have no more pretension than a schoolroom, which is indeed the main use of this room at this time. What elegance there is, is architectural, and nothing is impressive but the scale. There is a door in each of the side walls. These are closed, but one of the french windows is open to a bright but sunless morning

   There are two people, each busy with books and paper and pen and ink, separately occupied. The pupil is Thomasina Coverly, aged 13. The tutor is Septimus Hodge, aged 22. Each has an open book. Hers is a slim mathematics primer. His is a handsome thick quart-to, brand new, a vanity production, with little tapes to tie when the book is closed. His loose papers, etc., are kept in a stiff-backed portfolio which also ties up with tapes
Septimus has a tortoise which is sleepy enough to serve as a paperweight. Elsewhere on the table there is an old-fashioned theodolite and also some books stacked up.