

**Essay I-B (90 minutes)**

Choose **one** passage of poetry from the attached possibilities and subject it to what might be called a "close reading." You are encouraged to attend to such formal elements as rhythm, meter, tone, diction, metaphor, and other aspects of prosody. At the same time, you are also encouraged to display your historical knowledge and to incorporate your understanding of literary criticism and your ability to apply exegetical techniques, traditional and/or contemporary.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet 14

Batter my heart, three-personed God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurped town, to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end.  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betrothed unto your enemy:  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Edna St. Vincent Millay  
Unnamed Sonnet V

If I should learn, in some quite casual way,  
That you were gone, not to return again--  
Read from the back-page of a paper, say,  
Held by a neighbor in a subway train,  
How at the corner of this avenue  
And such a street (so are the papers filled)  
A hurrying man--who happened to be you--  
At noon to-day had happened to be killed,  
I should not cry aloud--I could not cry  
Aloud, or wring my hands in such a place--  
I should but watch the station lights rush by  
With a more careful interest on my face,  
Or raise my eyes and read with greater care  
Where to store furs and how to treat the hair

(1917)

William Shakespeare

XXX

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:  
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,  
And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight;  
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,  
Which I new pay as if not paid before.  
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

Anne Sexton

Her Kind (1958)

I have gone out, a possessed witch,  
haunting the black air, braver at night;  
dreaming evil, I have done my hitch  
over the plain houses, light by light:  
lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.  
A woman like that is not a woman, quite.  
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,  
filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,  
closets, silks, innumerable goods;  
fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:  
whining, rearranging the disaligned.  
A woman like that is misunderstood.  
I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,  
waved my nude arms at villages going by,  
learning the last bright routes, survivor  
where your flames still bite my thigh  
and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.  
A woman like that is not ashamed to die.  
I have been her kind.

Geoffrey Chaucer  
To Rosemounde (c. 1390)

Ma dame, ye ben of al beaute shryne  
As fer as cercled is the mapamonde;  
For as the cristall glorious ye shyne,  
And lyke ruby ben your chekys rounde.  
Therwyth ye ben so mery and so iocunde  
That at a reuell whan that I se you dance,  
It is an oynement vnto my wounde,  
Thought ye to me ne do no daliance.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,  
Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;  
Your semy voys that ye so small out twyne  
Makyth my thought in ioy and blys habounde.  
So curtaysly I go, wyth loue bounde,  
That to my self I sey, in my penaunce,  
Suffyseth me to loue you, Rosemounde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliance.

Nas neuer pyk walwed in galauntyne  
As I in loue am walwed and iwounde;  
For whych ful ofte I of my self deuyne  
That I am trew Tristam the secunde.  
My loue may not refreyde nor affounde;  
I brenne ay in an amoureuse plesaunce.  
Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,  
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliance.

William Blake

London

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every black'ning Church appalls;  
And the hapless Soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born Infants tear,  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

(1794)

John Keats

Bright Star (1819)

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,  
The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,  
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.



Langston Hughes  
The Negro Speaks of Rivers  
*(To W. E. B. Du Bois)*

I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the  
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy  
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

(1926)

Robert Herrick

Night Piece, To Julia

Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee,  
The shooting stars attend thee,  
And the elves also,  
Whose little eyes glow  
Like sparks of fire befriend thee.

No will-o'th'-wisp mislight thee;  
No snake or slow-worm bite thee;  
But on, on thy way,  
Not making a stay,  
Since ghost there's none to affright thee.

Let not the dark thee cumber;  
What through the moon does slumber;  
The stars of the night  
Will lend thee their light,  
Like tapers clear without number.

Then, Julia, let me woo thee,  
Thus, thus to come unto me:  
And when I shall meet  
Thy silv'ry feet,  
My soul I'll pour into thee.  
(1814)

William Carlos Williams  
This is Just to Say

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold  
(1962)