

淡江大學 100 學年度博士班招生考試試題

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系別：英文學系 A 組

科目：美國文學

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本試題共 5 大題， 1 頁

Answer FOUR of the following questions. 25% each.

1. Comment on the following passage from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*: "Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say characters were engraven on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang to this effect: 'Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again.' I can understand that."
2. In his Preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman, echoing Emerson, wrote: "The Americans of all nations upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem." His mission as a poet is, therefore, to celebrate the United States and her people: "The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. . . . His spirit responds to his country's spirit. . . ." Use "Song of Myself" to illustrate how Whitman's poetry, as one critic puts it, "was a passionate gesture of identification with his land."
3. William Dean Howells famously defined realism as "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material." What is your reaction to this definition? How did his contemporaries (Henry James, Edith Wharton, Mark Twain, or others) respond to or revise the definition in their works?
4. As critic Helen Taylor argues, "the 'Local Color' fictional movement recorded the nation's diverse regional characteristics, peoples, and dialects, but mostly in such terms that these could be patronized and thus marginalized by a northeastern literary establishment and the readers for whom it was aiming." In other words, the term "local color" is far from ideologically neutral. Choose one late 19th-century or early 20th-century U.S. local color writer to elaborate on this point.
5. What characterizes William Faulkner's fictional techniques in *The Sound and the Fury* OR *As I Lay Dying*? Faulkner was fond of saying that *The Sound and the Fury* was a single story several times told, and one critic observes that both novels are "about failures of telling." Please comment.