

Humanities University

Study Guide

LIT 533 Indian Literature

Required Texts

Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Books 1-6. Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2004.

| UNIT | WEEKS | TOPICS | READINGS |
|----------|-------------------|---|--|
| I | | Ancient Literature | |
| | 1 | India: Ancient Literature Vedic Literature | Book 1, 1323-1331 Book 1, 1332-1350 |
| | Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: shruti, smirti | |
| | Essay Topics | E1: What are the works contained in Vedic literature? E2. In Indra, what natural power is shared by Indra and Vrtra? E3. What agriculturally significant event occurs as a result of Indra's deed? E4. In Purusha-Sukta, from whom did Purusha come? | |
| | 2 | The Ramayana | Book 1, 1351-1433 |
| | Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| | Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: literary epic | |
| | Essay Topics | E1: Describe the contexts of The Ramayana. E2. What is the structure of The Ramayana? E3. By whom or what can Ravana be killed? Why? E4. Who gave birth to Rama? What is the significance of this? | |
| | 3 | The Mahabharata | Book 1, 1434-1487 |
| | Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| | Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: Sanskrit | |
| | Essay Topics | E1: Describe the times and the context of The Mahabharata. E2: What is the structure of the Mahabharata? E3: How does the Mahabharata explore the concept of heroism? E4. How does the work illustrate human strength and weakness? | |
| | 4 | Bhagavad-Gita | Book 1, 1488-1514 |
| | Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: kama | |
| | Essay Topics | E1: What is the significance of the Bhagavad-Gita? E2. When, where and how did the Bhagavad-Gita emerge? Why was it important? E3. What kinds of powers do the gods have in the Bhagavad-Gita? | |

E4. What does the work say about human perception and the mind? What should one focus on when controlling the senses?

| II Middle Period | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 5 | India's Middle Period Tamil Anthologies | Book 2, 207-211 Book 2, 212-223 |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: akam, puram | |
| Essay Topics | <p>E1. Please describe the character of Tamil poetry.</p> <p>E2. What are the subject of Tamil poetry?</p> <p>E3. In the poem, "#25: What She Said," who is the voice, and what is happening, according to her? How does this illustrate the relationship between men and women?</p> <p>E4. In Kapilar's "#109: His Hill," what does the speaker's suggestion for taking the hill imply? What is the view of the character of the soldier who guards the hill? How does the poem that it is sometimes more effective to use seduction than force?</p> <p>E5. In the poem, "#325: What She Said," how does it describe feelings of sadness, regret, and longing?</p> <p>E6: In the poem, "#60: A King's Double Nature," how does the author describe and praise the king? What are the attributes he values?</p> <p>E7: In "74: A King's Last Words," how does the poem express the king's sadness and humiliation upon being imprisoned?</p> <p>E8: In "255: A Woman and Her Dying Warrior," how does the poem display the mother's role and feelings in a warrior society?</p> <p>E9: Please describe the behavior, beliefs, and feeling displayed in In "278: Mothers." Why does she first feel fear, and the joy, after she quarters the body of her son with her sword.</p> | |
| 6 | Kalidasa Shakuntala and the Ring of Recollection | Book 2, 224-229 Book 2, 230-292 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: nataka, rasa | |
| Essay Topics | <p>E1: How does the work explore the nature of cause and effect, and consequences of action?</p> <p>E2. What is the structure of Shakuntala?</p> <p>E3. What is the function of "forgetting" in the play?</p> <p>E4. What does the work have to say about the idea of destiny, fate, or predestination?</p> | |
| III Early Modern | | |
| 7-8 | Spiritual Devotion Indian Devotional Poetry | Book 3, 913-928 Book 3, 929-972 |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: Sufi, Bhakhti, kirtan, raga | |
| Essay Topics | <p>E1 Please provide an overview of Bakhti literature.</p> <p>E2. In Mirabai's "Life without Hari Is No Life, Friend," how does the poem express the strength of love and attachment, despite society's barriers?</p> <p>E3. Please write an overview of Tamil Songs to Shiva.</p> <p>E4. Please write an overview of the Kannada Songs to Shiva.</p> <p>E5. In "What of It That You Have Read So Much?" by Basavanna,</p> | |

how does the author view the claims of the Brahman caste? How does this reflect the philosophy of Bakhti literature with respect to the notion of the importance of intermediaries in one's spiritual journey?

E6. Describe Jayadeva's life and works.

E7. In Jayadeva's poem, what is happening in "from Ecstatic Krishna"? Describe Krishna's feelings and actions toward Rada.

Describe Krishna's entreaties to Radha. What impact will that have on the mortal? How does Indian literature suggest that God can be in love with a mortal? How might that influence a person's sense of God being far away or close?

E8. Please write an overview of the Bengali Songs to Krishna.

E9. Please provide an overview of the life and works of Kabir.

E10. Describe Kabir's attitudes and feeling in "Pundit, How Can You Be So Dumb?" How is he criticizing the person who claims to be a pundit?

| | | |
|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 9 | The Mughal Empire Ramprasad Sen | Book 4, 607-611 Book 4, 612-624 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: shakti, tantra | |
| Essay Topics | E1: Describe the life and context of literature in the Mughal Empire. E2. What does the presence of deities mean in the work? E3. How do the poems illustrate certain beliefs about life and death? E4. What is the tantric tradition? What is the function of poetry in the tantric tradition? | |
| V | Modern Period | |
| 10 | Colonial India Ghalib | Book 5, 955-959 Book 5, 960-972 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description for each poem: poetic form, subject, figurative language, and impression on the reader. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: ghazal, sufi | |
| Essay Topics | E1: What does Ghalib write about in his poems? E2. How do Ghalib's poems explore the difficulties of life? E3. How do Ghalib's poems engage the life of the mind, and the challenges of disciplining the mind? E4. In "Don't Skimp with Me Today," to what is life compared? | |
| 11 | Tagore | Book 5, 973-1034 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: | |
| Essay Topics | E1: What is life like in India at the time that Tagore was writing? E2. What is the structure of Tagore's work? E3. How does Tagore create a framing narrative in "The Hungry | |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| | Stones" and how does it make the reader approach the story? E4. What, above all, makes Satish stand out from his classmates? What does Damini ask of Satish? What does Srivilas Babu become? | |
| 12 | Rokeye Sakhawat Hossain Sultana's Dream | Book 6, 320-322 Book 6, 323-330 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key terms: feminist | |
| Essay Topics | E1: Describe the way that Hossain critiques the roles and relations of men and women in his work. E2. What kind of woman is Sultana? What kind of relationship does she have with her husband and her family? E3. How is Sultana's Dream a satire? What kinds of role reversals occur? E4. How does the story critique the certain social practices, such as the purdah? | |
| 13 | R. K. Narayan A Horse and Two Goats | Book 6, 781-784 Book 6, 785-796 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: short story | |
| Essay Topics | E1: When the man in the khaki wants to buy the horse at the gate, why does Muni think that he wants to purchase his goats? E2. What does Muni do for a living? What kind of situation is he in? Does his situation make him more enthusiastic about communicating with the foreigner than he would ordinarily be? E3. What kind of commentary is the story making about colonialism? E4. Who does the horse belong to? What story did the horse represent? How did it explain actions at the end of time? According to the belief, what would the horse do? How does the confusion between the horse and the goats occur? What does the story suggest about communication and assumptions? | |
| 14 | Anita Desai The Farewell Party | Book 6, 1193-1195 Book 6, 1196-1204 |
| Author | Please write a brief author biography. | |
| Literary Analysis | Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes. | |
| Literary Terms | Please briefly define key literary terms: | |
| Essay Topics | E1: What is the story saying about people, their sense of identity, and their need for affiliation? E2. How does the narrative address the feeling of alienation and of homesickness? How does it create a feeling of "coming home"? E3. What is the relationship of the narrator's family to the guests? E4. How do the guests start to feel comfortable? How does it reinforce a certain culture and way of life? What is that? | |

| | | |
|----|---|-------------------|
| 15 | Crossing Cultures, The Example of India | Book 6, 1278-1326 |
| | Q1. Describe the life and historical contexts of postcolonial India. | |
| | Q2. What are key trends? | |
| | Q3. List three key writers from post-colonial India. What are some of their themes? | |
| | Q4. What occurs in Gandhi's "On the Way to Pretoria"? | |

VI**Finals**

| | |
|----|---------------------|
| 16 | Review, Essay, Exam |
|----|---------------------|