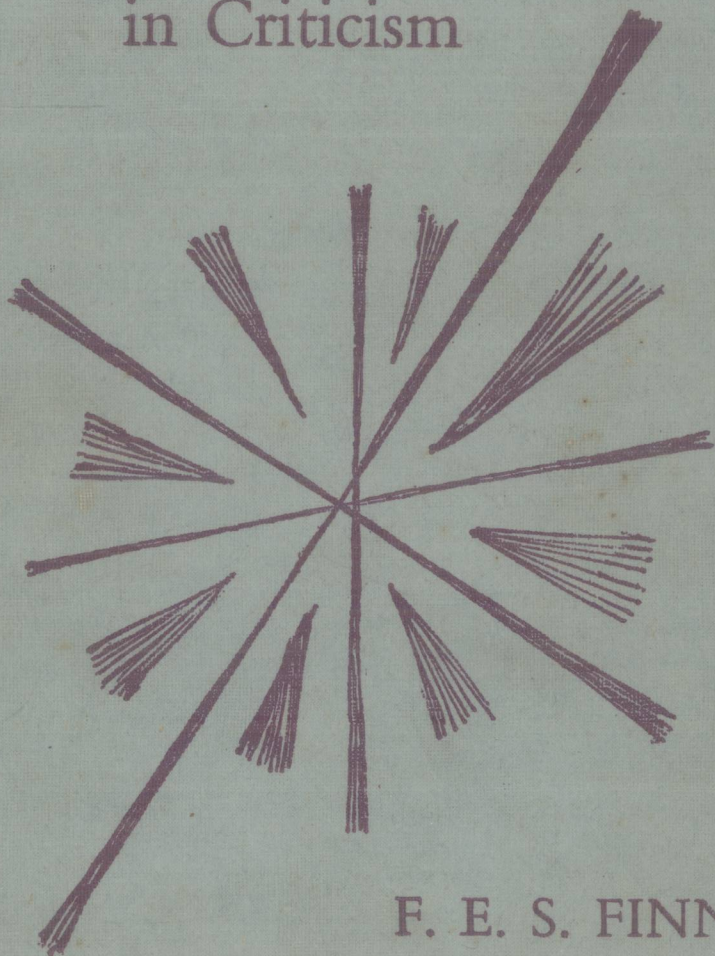


Advanced Exercises in Criticism



F. E. S. FINN, BA

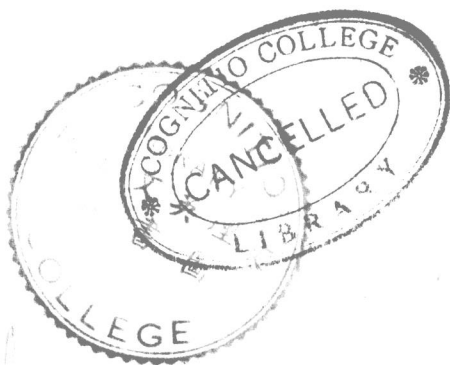
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Advanced Exercises in Criticism

F. E. S. FINN, B.A.

Senior English Master at
Exmouth Grammar School



JOHN MURRAY

Fifty Albemarle Street London

Sir.

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*Printed in Great Britain by
Cox & Wyman Ltd, London, Fakenham and Reading
and published by John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.*

ADVANCED EXERCISES IN CRITICISM

By F. E. S. Finn, B.A.

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MODERN ADVENTURE (an anthology)

By F. E. S. Finn, B.A. and F. E. Oxtoby, M.A.

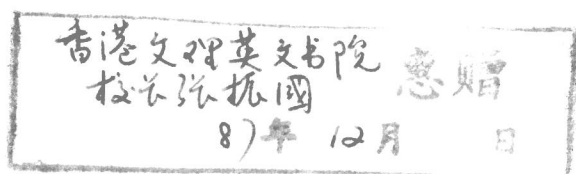
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INTRODUCTION

These exercises are designed to meet the needs of candidates at 'A' level who take a paper or questions involving interpretation and comprehension. Questions to meet the requirements of most of the examining boards have been included, and there is sufficient material to last a two-year course and to provide some assistance with scholarship work.

In the verse section the first twenty-three questions involve comparison and contrast of poems with related themes: experience suggests that with beginners this is a most fruitful approach. In the later questions, which contain single poems, it will be found that there is still a link between the passages chosen. For example, questions 24 to 28 involve an appreciation of metre and rhythm; questions 27 to 29 have related themes; and questions 31 and 32 are closely connected in their ideas. The principle of comparison is continued into the next section, where prose and verse are involved.

The questions requiring the translation of passages of early modern English are preceded by question 58, which contains relevant extracts from various authors on the art of translation.

In the prose section, questions 69 to 86 contain passages of criticism of the arts, including poetry and drama. It is hoped that these extracts will provide ideas for the later questions which include passages from varied sources and periods. The last six questions (115 to 120) involve comparison of extracts from essays, diaries and novels.

At least half of the questions contain modern copyright material, but in the verse section care has been taken not to include poems too difficult or obscure for 'A' level candidates.

The exercises involve 'appreciation' primarily, rather than 'comprehension', although 'comprehension' questions are included. Above all, the passages have been selected to stimulate thought and discussion. Whenever possible complete poems have been used rather than extracts; where extracts have been found necessary, completeness of thought has been aimed at. This should allow the approach approved by many teachers, namely the consideration of theme, subject matter, style, mood and intention separately before a complete appreciation is attempted.

Two indexes have been provided for the convenience of teachers: an alphabetical index of authors with question numbers, and an index of authors and dates in question order. These may be extracted from the book before use if desired.

F.E.S.F.

July 1960

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following, who have kindly permitted the reproduction of copyright material.

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Advanced Exercises in Criticism

F. E. S. FINN, B.A.

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF AUTHORS WITH QUESTION NUMBERS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Addison, 82, 107 | Flecker, 48 | Meredith, 14, 91 |
| Anonymous, 17, 43 | Froude, 100 | Milne, 52 |
| Anouilh, 73 | | Moore, 120 |
| Arnold, 11, 101 | Gibbons, 31 | Peacock, 103 |
| Ascham, 61 | Gildon, 75 | Pickering, 5 |
| Auden, 17, 41 | Gowers, 105 | Pope, 18, 58 |
| Austen, 120 | Grahame, 97 | |
| | Graves, 58 | Raleigh, 23, 68 |
| Bacon, 114 | Greville, 39 | Ransom, 53 |
| Beaumont, 24 | | Reed, 5 |
| Belloc, 26 | Harington, 65 | Rieu, 58 |
| Bennett, 95 | Hartog, 69 | Rochester, 18 |
| Benson, 83 | Hayward, 64 | Ruskin, 94 |
| Berners, 63 | Hazlitt, 80 | |
| Best, 4 | H.D., 20 | Sackville-West, 36 |
| Betjeman, 54 | Henley, 45 | Sassoon, 6, 19 |
| Bradbury, 98 | Hewlett, 84 | Shaftesbury, 86 |
| Bright, 99 | Hogg, 2 | Shakespeare, 12, 55 |
| Brooke, 32 | Holinshed, 55 | Shaw, 72, 119 |
| Browne, 115 | Hood, 14 | Shelley, 4, 79 |
| Browning, 49 | Hopkins, 11, 30, 47, 118 | Shenstone, 2 |
| Byron, 10, 18 | Housman, 15, 21 | Sidney, 4, 74, 78 |
| | Hudson, 89 | Still, 5 |
| | Huxley, 104 | Suckling, 28 |
| | | Sullivan, 102 |
| Campbell, 50 | Jefferies, 90 | |
| Carew, 29 | Jennett, 44 | Taylor, 115 |
| Caxton, 59, 60 | Johnson, 77 | Tennyson, 57 |
| Chesterton, 106 | Jones, 70 | <i>The Times</i> , 92, 111, 116 |
| Clough, 16 | | Thomas, 113 |
| Clutton-Brock, 81 | Keats, 13, 25, 88 | Thompson, 96 |
| Collins, 6 | Keyes, 8 | Thomson, 16 |
| Corby, 10 | Kinglake, 93, 117 | Tomlinson, 87 |
| Cummings, 51 | Kingsmill, 21 | |
| Cunningham, 33 | | Vaughan, 7 |
| | | |
| Daniel, 13 | Lamb, 112 | Walpole, 120 |
| Dickens, 120 | Latimer, 66 | Walton, 110 |
| De la Mare, 7, 9, 20, 35 | Lawrence, 108 | Wells, 120 |
| De Quincey, 109, 119 | Lewis, A, 46 | Whistler, 85 |
| Dobrée, 71 | Lewis, C. Day, 1, 2, 3, 22, | White, 38 |
| Donne, 37, 40 | 23, 27 | Willy, 8 |
| Doughty, 117 | Lodge, 67 | Winchelsea, 34 |
| Drayton, 12 | Lucas, 116 | Wordsworth, D., 56, 118 |
| | | Wordsworth, W., 3, 13, |
| Elliott, 22 | MacNeice, 42 | 15, 56 |
| | Malory, 57 | Wright, 58 |
| Farquhar, 76 | Marlowe, 23 | |
| Farren, 20 | Marvell, 9 | Young, 1, 9 |
| Fenner, 62 | | |

INDEX OF AUTHORS AND DATES

- 1 A *A Hard Frost*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
B *Hard Frost*: Andrew Young, 1885–
- 2 A *Song: The Sky-Lark*: William Shenstone, 1714–63
B *The Ecstatic*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
C *The Skylark*: James Hogg, 1770–1835
- 3 A *When Nature Plays*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
B *The Tables Turned*: William Wordsworth, 1770–1850
- 4 A *A Sonnet of the Moon*: Charles Best, circa 1602
B *The Moon*: Sir Philip Sidney, 1554–86
C *To the Moon*: Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822
- 5 A *Song*: John Pickering, circa 1567
B *From Merciless Invaders*: John Still, 1542–1607
C *Lessons of the War: I. Naming of Ports*: Henry Reed, 1914–
- 6 A *Ode*: William Collins, 1721–59
B *Memorial Tablet*: Siegfried Sassoon, 1886–
- 7 A *Man*: Henry Vaughan, 1622–95
B *Haunted*: Walter de la Mare, 1873–1956
- 8 A *An Old Labourer*: Margaret Willy, 1919–
B *William Wordsworth*: Sidney Keyes, 1922–43
- 9 A *An Epitaph Upon —*: Andrew Marvell, 1621–78
B *An Epitaph*: Walter de la Mare, 1873–1956
- 10 A *The Lost*: Herbert Corby, 1911–
B *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: Lord Byron, 1788–1824
- 11 A *On Growing Old*: Matthew Arnold, 1822–88
B *The Leaden Echo*: Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844–89
- 12 A *Sonnet*: William Shakespeare, 1564–1616
B *Sonnet*: Michael Drayton, 1563–1631
- 13 A *To Sleep*: John Keats, 1795–1821
B *Care-Charmer Sleep*: Samuel Daniel, 1562–1619
C *To Sleep*: William Wordsworth, 1770–1850
- 14 A *Sonnet*: Thomas Hood, 1799–1845
B *Dirge in the Woods*: George Meredith, 1828–1909
- 15 A *The Night is Freezing Fast*: A. E. Housman, 1859–1936
B *Lines*: William Wordsworth, 1770–1850
- 16 A *The Spirit's Song*: Arthur Hugh Clough, 1819–61
B *The City of Dreadful Night*: James Thomson, 1834–82
- 17 A *O What is that Sound*: W. H. Auden, 1907–
B *Lord Randal*: Anonymous, circa 15th century
- 18 A *The Vision of Judgment*: Lord Byron, 1788–1824
B *An Epistle to Lord Bathurst*: Alexander Pope, 1688–1744
C *A Satyr Against Mankind*: The Earl of Rochester, 1648–80
D *The Rape of the Lock*: Alexander Pope, 1688–1744
- 19 A *Prehistoric Burials*: Siegfried Sassoon, 1886–
B *Wiltshire Downs*: Andrew Young, 1885–
- 20 A *Blue-Geese, White-Geese, You May Say*: H. D., 1886–
B *All That Is, and Can Delight*: Robert Farren, 1909–
C *Memory*: Walter de la Mare, 1873–1956
- 21 A *Reveille*: A. E. Housman, 1859–1936
B *A Parody* (after A. E. Housman): Hugh Kingsmill, 1889–1949
- 22 A *Lament for Flodden*: Jane Elliott, 1727–1805
B *Two Songs*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
- 23 A *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*: Christopher Marlowe, 1564–93
B *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*: Sir Walter Raleigh, 1552–1618
C *Two Songs*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
- 24 *The Gnat*: Joseph Beaumont, 1616–1699
- 25 *Song from Endymion*: John Keats, 1795–1821
- 26 *Tarantella*: Hilaire Belloc, 1870–1953
- 27 *Hornpipe*: C. Day Lewis, 1904–
- 28 *Song*: Sir John Suckling, 1609–42
- 29 *A Song*: Thomas Carew, 1598–1639
- 30 *Spring and Fall*: Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844–89

- 31 *Lullaby for a Baby Toad*: Stella Gibbons, 1902—
- 32 *Heaven*: Rupert Brooke, 1887–1915
- 33 *Evening*: John Cunningham, 1727–1773
- 34 *A Nocturnal Reverie*: Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, 1661–1720
- 35 *Solitude*: Walter de la Mare, 1873–1956
- 36 *Beauty's not always in a Scarlet Robe*: Victoria Sackville-West, 1892—
- 37 *Holy Sonnet*: John Donne, 1572–1631
- 38 *Night and Death*: Joseph Blanco White, 1775–1841
- 39 *Mysteries*: Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554–1628
- 40 *Holy Sonnet*: John Donne, 1572–1631
- 41 *As I Walked Out One Evening*: W. H. Auden, 1907—
- 42 *Entirely*: Louis MacNeice, 1907—
- 43 *What Is't To Us*: Anonymous
- 44 *I Was a Labourer in the Smoky Valley*: Seán Jennett, 1912—
- 45 *Vigil*: William Ernest Henley, 1849–1903
- 46 *The Jungle*: Alun Lewis, 1915–44
- 47 *The Sea and the Skylark*: Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844–89
- 48 *The War Song of the Saracens*: James Elroy Flecker, 1884–1915
- 49 *'De Gustibus—'*: Robert Browning, 1812–89
- 50 *Washing Day*: Roy Campbell, 1902–1957
- 51 *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town*: E. E. Cummings, 1894—
- 52 *The Norman Church*: A. A. Milne, 1882–1956
- 53 *Piazza Piece*: John Crowe Ransom, 1888—
- 54 *Sunday Morning, King's Cambridge*: John Betjeman, 1906—
- 55 A *Macbeth*: William Shakespeare, 1564–1616
- B *History of Scotland*: Raphael Holinshed, d. 1580
- 56 A *The Grasmere Journal*: Dorothy Wordsworth, 1771–1855
- B *Alice Fell*: William Wordsworth, 1770–1850
- 57 A *Le Morte D'Arthur*: Sir Thomas Malory, d. 1471
- B *The Passing of Arthur*: Lord Tennyson, 1809–92
- 58 A *Introduction to Robert Graves's translation of 'The Golden Ass of Apuleius'*: Robert Graves, 1895—
- B *Preface to Alexander Pope's translation of 'The Iliad'*: Alexander Pope, 1688–1744
- C *Introduction to E. V. Rieu's translation of 'The Odyssey'*: E. V. Rieu, 1887—
- D *A Note on David Wright's translation of 'Beowulf'*: David Wright, 1920—
- 59 *Preface to the De Consolacione Philosophiae of Boethius*: William Caxton, 1422–91
- 60 *Epilogue to Book III of the Recuyell of Troy*: William Caxton, 1422–91
- 61 *The Schoolmaster*: Roger Ascham, 1515–68
- 62 *Letter to Sir F. Walsingham (1588)*: Thomas Fenner, d 1590
- 63 *Froissart's Chronicles*: translated by Lord Berners, 1467–1532
- 64 *Annals (1612)*: Sir John Hayward, 1564–1627
- 65 *Nugae Antiquae*: Sir John Harington, 1561–1612
- 66 *Last Sermon Preached before King Edward VI*: Hugh Latimer, 1485–1555
- 67 *Rosalynde*: Thomas Lodge, 1588–1625
- 68 *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isle of the Azores betwixt the 'Revenge' and an Armada of the King of Spain*: Sir Walter Raleigh, 1552–1618
- 69 *On the Relation of Poetry to Verse*: Sir Philip Hartog, 1864–1947
- 70 *Introduction to English Critical Essays of the Twentieth Century*: Phyllis M. Jones, —
- 71 *On (Not) Enjoying Shakespeare*: Bonamy Dobrée, 1891—
- 72 *Poor Shakespeare*: Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950
- 73 *Antigone*: Jean Anouilh (translated by Lewis Galantière), 1910—
- 74 *An Apologie for Poetrie*: Sir Philip Sidney, 1554–86
- 75 *A Complete Art of Poetry*: Charles Gildon, 1665–1724

- 76 *Discourse upon Comedy*: George Farquhar, 1678-1707
- 77 *Preface to Shakespeare*: Samuel Johnson, 1709-84
- 78 *An Apologie for Poetrie*: Sir Philip Sidney, 1554-86
- 79 *A Defence of Poetry*: Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822
- 80 *Lectures on the English Poets*: William Hazlitt, 1778-1830
- 81 *Modern Essays*: Arthur Clutton-Brock, 1906-50
- 82 *Periodical Essays*: Joseph Addison, 1672-1719
- 83 *The Art of the Essayist*: A. C. Benson, 1862-1925
- 84 *The Maypole and the Column*: Maurice Hewlett, 1861-1923
- 85 *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*: James Abbot McNeill Whistler, 1834-1903
- 86 *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*: Lord Shaftesbury, 1671-1713
- 87 *The Earth Being Troubled*: Philip Tomlinson
- 88 *Letters*: John Keats, 1795-1821
- 89 *A Traveller in Little Things*: W. H. Hudson, 1841-1922
- 90 *Last Essays: Field and Hedgerow*: Richard Jefferies, 1848-87
- 91 *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*: George Meredith, 1828-1909
- 92 *Winter Walks*: from *The Times*, 1928
- 93 *Eothen*: A. W. Kinglake, 1809-91
- 94 *The Stones of Venice*: John Ruskin, 1819-1900
- 95 *Books and Persons*: Arnold Bennett, 1867-1931
- 96 *Essay on Shelley*: Francis Thompson, 1859-1907
- 97 *The Wind in the Willows*: Kenneth Grahame, 1859-1932
- 98 *A Sound of Thunder*: Ray Bradbury, 1920-
- 99 *Speech on the Crimean War*: John Bright, 1811-89
- 100 *History of England*: J. A. Froude, 1818-94
- 101 *Culture and Anarchy*: Matthew Arnold, 1822-88
- 102 *The Values of Science*: J. W. N. Sullivan, 1886-1937
- 103 *Headlong Hall*: Thomas Love Peacock, 1785-1866
- 104 *Beyond the Mexique Bay*: Aldous Huxley, 1894-
- 105 *Some Thoughts on New Words*: Sir Ernest Gowers, 1880-
- 106 *A Defence of Skeletons*: G. K. Chesterton, 1864-1936
- 107 *Female Orators*: Joseph Addison, 1672-1719
- 108 *Twilight in Italy*: D. H. Lawrence, 1885-1930
- 109 *Suspiria de Profundis*: Thomas De Quincey, 1785-1859
- 110 *Compleat Angler*: Izaak Walton, 1593-1683
- 111 *To the Dead and to the Living*: from *The Times*, 1927
- 112 *Old China*: Charles Lamb, 1775-1834
- 113 *Broken Memories*: Edward Thomas, 1878-1917
- 114 *Of Studies*: Francis Bacon, 1561-1626
- 115 A *Christian Morals*: Sir Thomas Browne, 1605-82
- B *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying*: Jeremy Taylor, 1613-67
- 116 A *Meals in the Train*: from *The Times*, 1928
- B 'R.C.': E. V. Lucas, 1868-1938
- 117 A *Travels in Arabia Deserta*: Charles Doughty, 1843-1926
- B *Eothen*: A. W. Kinglake, 1809-91
- 118 A *Journal Written at Alfoxden*: Dorothy Wordsworth, 1771-1855
- B 'Journal': Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844-89
- 119 A *Joan of Arc*: Thomas De Quincey, 1785-1859
- B *Preface to Saint Joan*: Bernard Shaw, 1856-1950
- 120 A *Bealby*: H. G. Wells, 1866-1946
- B *Northanger Abbey*: Jane Austen, 1775-1817
- C *Brensham Village*: John Moore, 1907-
- D *A Tale of Two Cities*: Charles Dickens, 1812-1870
- E *The Cathedral*: Hugh Walpole, 1884-1941
- F *The History of Mr. Polly*: H. G. Wells, 1866-1946

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vii</i>
VERSE	I
VERSE AND PROSE	72
TRANSLATION	79
PROSE	92

*An alphabetical Index of Authors, in question
order, is provided as a loose inset*

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VERSE

(Questions 1 to 54)

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## A

### *A Hard Frost*

- A frost came in the night and stole my world  
And left this changeling for it—a precocious  
Image of spring, too brilliant to be true:  
White lilac on the windowpane, each glass-blade  
5 Furred like a catkin, maydrift loading the hedge.  
The elms behind the house are elms no longer  
But blossomers in crystal, stems of the mist  
That hangs yet in the valley below, amorphous  
As the blind tissue whence creation formed.
- 10 The sun looks out, and the fields blaze with diamonds.  
Mockery spring, to lend this bridal gear  
For a few hours to a raw country maid,  
Then leave her all disconsolate with old fairings  
Of aconite and snowdrop! No, not here  
15 Amid this flounce and filigree of death  
Is the real transformation scene in progress  
But deep below where frost  
Worrying the stiff clods unclenches their  
Grip on the seed and lets our future breathe.

## B

### *Hard Frost*

- Frost called to the water 'Halt!'  
And crusted the moist snow with sparkling salt;  
Brooks, their own bridges, stop,  
And icicles in long stalactites drop,  
5 And tench in water holes  
Lurk under gluey glass like fish in bowls.

In the hard-rutted lane  
 At every footstep breaks a brittle pane,  
 And tinkling trees ice-bound,  
 10 Changed into weeping willows, sweep the ground;  
 Dead boughs take root in ponds  
 And ferns on windows shoot their ghostly fronds.

But vainly the fierce frost  
 Interns poor fish, ranks trees in an armed host,  
 15 Hangs daggers from house-eaves  
 And on the windows ferny ambush weaves;  
 In the long war grown warmer  
 The sun will strike him dead and strip his armour.

- 1 Summarize the thought of each of the poems.
- 2 Compare and contrast them, paying special attention to the imagery and metre.
- 3 For special comment.
  - (a) Poem A: put into your own words the passage 'No, not here . . . our future breathe' (ll. 14-19).
  - (b) Poem B: explain (i) 'Brooks, their own bridges, stop', (l. 3); (ii) 'At every footstep breaks a brittle pane,' (l. 8).



## A

### *Song: The Sky-Lark*

Go, tuneful bird, that glad'st the skies,  
 To Daphne's window speed thy way;  
 And there on quiv'ring pinions rise,  
 And there thy vocal art display.

5 And if she deign thy notes to hear,  
 And if she praise thy matin song,  
 Tell her, the sounds that soothe her ear,  
 To Damon's native plains belong.

Tell her, in livelier plumes array'd,  
 10 The bird from Indian groves may shine;  
 But ask the lovely partial maid  
 What are his notes compared to thine?

Then bid her treat yon witless beau  
And all his flaunting race with scorn;  
15 And lend an ear to Damon's woe,  
Who sings her praise, and sings forlorn.

## B

### *The Ecstatic*

Lark, skylark, spilling your rubbed and round  
Pebbles of sound in air's still lake,  
Whose widening circles fill the noon; yet none  
Is known so small beside the sun:

5 Be strong your fervent soaring, your skyward air!  
Tremble there, a nerve of song!  
Float up there where voice and wing are one,  
A singing star, a note of light!

Buoyed, embayed in heaven's noon-wide reaches——  
10 For soon light's tide will turn—oh stay!  
Cease not till day streams to the west, then down  
That estuary drop down to peace.

## C

### *The Skylark*

Bird of the wilderness,  
Blithesome and cumberless,  
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!  
Emblem of happiness,  
5 Blest is thy dwelling-place—  
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,  
Far in the downy cloud.  
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.  
10 Where, on thy dewy wing,  
Where art thou journeying?  
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.



O'er fell and fountain sheen,  
 O'er moor and mountain green,  
 15 O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,  
     Over the cloudlet dim  
     Over the rainbow's rim,  
 Musical cherub, soar singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,  
 20 Low in the heather blooms  
 Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!  
     Emblem of happiness,  
     Blest is thy dwelling-place—  
 Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

- 1 Compare and contrast the poems, paying special attention to theme and treatment of theme, imagery and diction.
- 2 For special comment.
  - (a) Poem B: the imagery of stanza 3.
  - (b) Poem B: the meaning of ll. 1-3.
  - (c) Poem C: the metre.



## A

### *When Nature Plays*

When nature plays hedge-schoolmaster,  
 Shakes out the gaudy map of summer  
 And shows me charabanc, rose, barley-ear,  
 And every bright-winged hummer,

5 He only would require of me  
     To be the sponge of natural laws  
 And learn no more of that cosmography  
     Than passes through the pores.

Why must I then unleash my brain  
 10 To sweat after some revelation  
 Behind the rose, heedless if truth maintain  
     On the rose-bloom her station?