The Literature Exam
Module D and Module F

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Overview of the Exam

There are four types of questions on the exam:

- LOTS questions
- HOTS questions
- Justification questions
- A Bridging Text and Context question

Each answer is judged on:

- Content (D – 90%, F – 80%)
- Language (D – 10%, F – 20%)

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LOTS Questions

LOTS questions are basic content questions. Answers should be short and to the point. These questions can be open-ended or multiple choice.
HOTS Questions

HOTS questions are usually open-ended questions requiring students to use the higher-order thinking skills and literary terms that they have learned in class.
HOTS Questions

Tip #1:

Students should be sure to relate to the entire question. If a quote is given, they may relate specifically to the quote, but the answer should reflect a general understanding of the text, not just of the quote.

For example…
Chris says in Act III: “The cats in the alley are practical, the bums who ran away when we were fighting were practical. Only the dead ones weren’t practical.” Can Chris be seen as a practical person? Explain.

[Module F, summer 2012]

Many students answered this question by relating only to the quote ("Chris can be seen as a practical person because he says that only the dead ones weren’t practical and he’s not dead."). The question, however, required them to examine Chris’s behavior throughout the play and decide whether or not he was practical, not to base the answer solely on the quote. In fact, the only purpose of the quote here was to introduce the idea of being practical vs. being idealistic.

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HOTS Questions

Tip #2

When answering questions about literary devices, students must show understanding of the literary term.

For example…
What is the importance of the setting of the story? Explain.

[Module F, summer 2012; question relates to The Enemy]

In order to correctly answer this question, students had to first state what the setting of the story was and then discuss its importance.

Note, as well, that answers must relate to the specific text. This question was about the importance of the setting of The Enemy, not about the importance of the setting of stories in general.
HOTS Questions

• Tip #3:

Students must provide examples from the text in their answers.

For example…
The title of the story refers to the game of chess but chess is also a metaphor. Explain.

[Module F, summer 2012]

In order to correctly answer this question, students needed to:

• State what the metaphor is: “Chess is a metaphor for life.”
• Explain: “In both life and chess, you need to follow rules to succeed.”
• Give examples: “You need to be patient and think ahead.”
Tip #4

In order to be able to answer all of the questions on the exam, students must know literary terms and HOTS, even beyond the six “required” HOTS. The examples of setting and metaphor have been given above.
Justification Questions

These questions ask the student to explain why they chose a particular thinking skill to answer a HOTS question.
Justification Questions

Justification questions must be practiced in class. One suggestion for practicing them is to give the students a specific thinking skill and make them answer a question using that skill. Once they are able to do this, they can be allowed to choose a skill on their own, as they are required to do on the exam.

Let’s give it a try…
Will George Stoyonovich from *A Summer’s Reading* read all the books? Answer the question using the HOTS of Explaining Patterns.

Possible answer...
No, George will not read all of the books. He has a pattern of behavior of not completing what he starts. He dropped out of school and he quit every job he had after school. He will start to read the books, but he will stop, just like he has stopped everything else that he has started in his life.

Now let’s answer the same question using the HOTS of Inferring…
We can infer that George will read all of the books. Mr. Cattanzara is a “change maker” and we can infer that he has made a change in George. In addition, George goes to the library in the fall, which is a season of change, so we can infer that he really is a changed person.
Justification Questions

• Tip #1:

The student should *first* choose the thinking skill and *then* answer the question using that skill. Answers will vary according to the skill that has been chosen. The justification should then match the answer that has been given.

For example…
At the end of the story Waverly thinks to herself: “Opposite me was my opponent, two angry black slits. She wore a triumphant smile.” How does Waverly see her relationship with her mother at this point in the story?

[Module F, summer 2012]
Thinking skill I chose: Distinguishing different perspectives

Answer: Waverly and her mother look at Waverly’s success at chess differently. As Waverly becomes a better chess player, she sees it as a way to assert her independence, but her mother uses Waverly’s success as a way to bring honor to the family and this is why she brags about Waverly. Their different perspectives cause Waverly to see her mother as her rival.
I chose the skill of **Distinguishing different perspectives** because to answer this question, I had to look at the way that Waverly sees her success at chess and how her mother sees it and understand how that affects their relationship.
Thinking skill I chose: Explaining cause and effect

Answer: As Waverly becomes more successful at chess, she begins to assert her independence. Her mother, however, tries to control Waverly by watching over her as she practices and giving her advice. Mrs. Jong’s behavior leads to a conflict between Waverly and her mother that reaches its peak in the market, when Waverly is disrespectful and runs away from Mrs. Jong. At this point in the story, Waverly sees her mother as her rival.
I chose the skill of Explaining cause and effect because in order to answer the question, I had to show how Waverly’s success at chess caused Waverly and her mother to behave as they did and how this caused Waverly to see her mother as her rival.
Justification Questions

- Tip #2

The justification question requires the student to relate to the text. Answers that relate only to the skill ("I chose the skill of inferring because I had to read between the lines") are not acceptable.
Justification Questions

Tip #3

The answer to the justification question must do more than repeat the question. The following is not an acceptable answer:
I chose the skill of Inferring because I had to read between the lines to understand how Waverly sees her relationship with her mother.

The question was “How does Waverly see her relationship with her mother at this point in the story?” Therefore, the student who writes this answer does not show any understanding of how he actually used the skill of Inferring to answer the question. This answer simply defines the skill and then plugs in the question.
Bridging Test and Context Question

The Bridging Text and Context question requires students to connect a quote or new information to a story or poem that they have studied. The answer to the Bridging Text and Context question should be a paragraph of 80-100 words (60-80 words for Module D) and should relate only to the parts of the story or poem that are relevant to the new information.
Bridging Text and Context Question

- Tip #1:

The answer must relate to both the new information (the quote) and the text, itself. A detailed summary of the text, with no mention of the new information, is not an acceptable answer. Nor is an explanation of the new information without details from the story.
Tip #2:

Students must provide details from the text, not just general information about the theme. This information must be accurate.
Tip #3:

A complete answer will clearly demonstrate understanding of how the new information is connected to and/or reflected in the text.
Bridging Text and Context Question

- Tip #4:

Answers should only include information about the text or its author that is relevant to this particular question.
Bridging Text and Context Question

- The following are examples of elements that would be required in a complete answer (questions taken from Module F, summer 2012):

A SUMMER’S READING / Bernard Malamud

“Many first generation Americans, like Bernard Malamud, valued education as a path to opportunity for themselves and their children.” –From an interview for The Paris Review with Bernard Malamud by Daniel Stern.

Explain how this quote adds to your understanding of the story.
Good answers related to one or more of the following:

• The fact that the characters in the story, like Malamud, were first-generation Americans and therefore valued education as a path to opportunity

• The fact that Malamud wrote this story about education because he thought that it was so important as a path to opportunity
Complete answers included details of how the importance of education was reflected in the story.

Answers that talked about how the value of education is reflected in the story in general without specifically referring to Bernard Malamud and/or his characters as first-generation Americans did not receive full credit.
AS I GREW OLDER / Langston Hughes

“Poets who write about love, roses and moonlight… must lead a very quiet life. Unfortunately, having been born poor – and also colored – in Missouri, I was stuck in the mud from the beginning. Although I wanted to float off into the clouds, poverty and racism would grab me by the heels, and I would land right back on earth.” –Langston Hughes

Explain how this quote adds to your understanding of the poem.
Good answers to this question compared one or more of the following:

- Floating off “into the clouds” to “the sun” – the speaker’s dream in the poem
- Being “stuck in the mud” (being unable to reach his dream) or being grabbed “by the heels” to the wall in the poem
- The line “I am black” or the speaker’s dark hands to the fact that the poet was black, as mentioned in the quote
Points were deducted if students referred to:

- The speaker’s dream of eliminating racism (this was not his dream – the speaker, when he was a child, did not know that racism existed).

- The speaker breaking the wall with his hands (this appears in the poem, but is irrelevant to the quote).

- The poet being part of the Harlem Renaissance movement (again, correct information, but irrelevant to the quote).
Preparing students to answer the Bridging Text and Context question

Bridging text and context requires the HOTS of **Making Connections**. Students must be taught to answer this question. The first step is preparation. There are several basic questions that you can provide your students that will prepare them to answer the question. This can be done as an oral activity – it does not have to be written.

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The questions

• What is the quote about? Who is the speaker and/or who is he/she speaking to?
• Explain what the quote says in your own words.
• How does the quote connect to the text?
• Give at least one example of the connection to the text.
• How does the quote add to your understanding of the text?
Now let’s practice

This question was taken from the Moed Bet 2012 exam:

RULES OF THE GAME / Amy Tan

“I was raised by extremely strict but extremely loving Chinese immigrant parents... Western parents seem much more concerned about their children’s...self-esteem, whereas tough immigrant parents expect strength in their children and therefore behave completely differently.” -Amy Chua, from an interview in *Time Magazine*.

Explain how this quote adds to your understanding of the story *Rules of the Game*. 

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Preparing to answer the question…

What is the quote about? Who is the speaker and/or who is he/she speaking to?

The quote is about the difference between Chinese immigrant parents and Western parents. The speaker is Amy Chua, the daughter of Chinese immigrant parents.
Explain what the quote says in your own words

The quote tells us that Chinese immigrant parents are strict and expect strength in their children. Western parents, on the other hand, are concerned about their children’s self-esteem.
Preparing to answer the question…

How does the quote connect to the story?

The story *Rules of the Game* is about a girl named Waverly Jong, who is the daughter of parents who immigrated to the United States from China. Her mother is very strict with her and expects her to be strong.
Give at least one example of the connection to the story

Mrs. Jong is strict with Waverly and she teaches her the art of invisible strength in which you get the things you want by not showing your feelings. For example, at the market, when Waverly wants salted plums, her mother tells her that if she cries, she will not get what she wants. When Waverly does not ask for the salted plums and does not cry, she gets them.

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Preparing to answer the question...

How does the quote add to your understanding of the story?

The quote helps me understand why Waverly’s mother acts the way she does. It is not because she is not a loving parent, but simply because she is trying to build strength in her daughter and her behavior is typical of Chinese immigrant parents.
Putting it all together

Now that your students have answered the questions, they are ready to put it all together in one 80-100 word answer.
The “formula”

It is recommended that you teach your students the following “formula” to ensure a complete answer:

- **What the quote helps you understand in general about the text**
- **A supporting example of what the quote helped you understand about the text**
- **A clearly stated connection to the text**
What the quote helps you understand in general about the text

The quote helps me understand why Waverly’s mother acts the way she does.
Mrs. Jong is strict with Waverly and she teaches her the art of invisible strength in which you get the things you want by not showing your feelings. For example, in the story, when Waverly wants salted plums, Mrs. Jong tells her that if she cries, she will not get them. When Waverly does not ask for the salted plums and does not cry, she gets them.
Mrs. Jong is trying to build strength in her daughter and her behavior is typical of that of Chinese immigrant parents.
The complete answer:

Here it is in one 100-word answer:

The quote helps me understand why Waverly’s mother acts the way she does. She is strict with Waverly and she teaches her the art of invisible strength in which you get the things you want by not showing your feelings. For example, in the story, when Waverly wants salted plums, Mrs. Jong tells her that if she cries, she will not get them. When Waverly does not ask for the salted plums and does not cry, she gets them. Mrs. Jong is trying to build strength in her daughter and her behavior is typical of that of Chinese immigrant parents.
Let’s try again

Let’s complete all of the steps again with the other question from the Moed Bet 2012 exam:

THE ENEMY / Pearl S. Buck

“...you have taught us to see those qualities of thought and feeling which bind us all together as human beings on this earth, ...it is of the greatest importance that the peoples of the earth learn to understand each other as individuals across distances and frontiers.” – Bertil Lindblad, Director of the Stockholm Observatory at Saltsjöbaden at the award ceremony of the Nobel Prize to Pearl S. Buck.

Explain how the above quote adds to your understanding of the story “The Enemy”
What is the quote about? Who is the speaker and/or who is he/she speaking to?
The quote is about people learning to understand each other as individuals. The speaker is Bertil Lindblad, who said these words to Pearl S. Buck, the author of The Enemy, when she received a Nobel Prize.
Explain what the quote says in your own words

The quote says that all humans have similar qualities that bind us together, no matter who we are or where we are from and that Pearl Buck has taught us to see this through her stories.
How does the quote connect to the story?

The story *The Enemy* is about a Japanese doctor and his wife who save an American soldier from death during World War II when the US and Japan are at war.
Give at least one example of the connection to the story.

When the wounded soldier washes up on the beach outside their home, Sadao and Hana do not know what to do with him. Sadao decides to use his skill as a doctor to treat the soldier and while he is recovering, Sadao begins to see him as a person, rather than as the enemy. At the end of the story, Sadao, who has already done something which is against his principles as a loyal Japanese citizen, helps the soldier to escape and feels rewarded when he knows that the soldier, his enemy, is safe.
Preparing to answer the question…

How does the quote add to your understanding of the story?

The quote helps me understand what Pearl Buck was trying to teach us in her story. When Sadao got to know the American soldier as an individual instead of simply looking at him as the enemy, he realized that they had similar qualities that bound them together. This is what motivated him to save the soldier. Pearl Buck wanted to show us that when the people of the earth learn to understand one another, there will be no “enemy”.

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Putting it together

Remember, the formula for the answer is:

- What the quote helps you understand in general about the text
- A supporting example of what the quote helped you understand about the text
- A clearly stated connection to the text
What the quote helps you understand in general about the text

The quote helps me understand what Pearl S. Buck was trying to teach us in her story.
A supporting example

Sadao had to decide whether or not to treat the wounded Tom, an American prisoner of war. Maybe Sadao decided to help Tom because he was a doctor, but, while Tom was recuperating, Sadao had time to see Tom as a person rather than as an enemy and was relieved when he was able to help him escape.
Pearl Buck wanted to show us that when the people of the earth learn to understand one another, there will be no “enemy”.
The quote helps me understand what Pearl S. Buck was trying to teach us in her story. Sadao had to decide whether or not to treat the wounded Tom, an American prisoner of war. Maybe Sadao decided to help Tom because he was a doctor, but, while Tom was recuperating, Sadao had time to see Tom as a person rather than as an enemy and was relieved when he was able to help him escape. Pearl Buck wanted to show us that when the people of the earth learn to understand one another, there will be no “enemy”.
Remember:

Making connections is not something that comes naturally to everyone. Your students must be taught this skill, which will help them answer the Bridging Text and Context question on the Bagrut exam and will also help them in other aspects of their studies and in life.