

Part A: Approaching the text

Exercise 1: *This text is made up of 6 paragraphs: match each of the sub-headings given below with its corresponding paragraph.*

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a) Fielding opened the central tradition of English fiction | par. _____ |
| b) Minor novelists may be important for their historical position | par. _____ |
| c) The great names of English fiction | par. _____ |
| d) One needs to make decisive judgments in criticism | par. _____ |
| e) A definition of 'Tradition' | par. _____ |
| f) It is necessary to distinguish between good and great writers | par. _____ |

Exercise 2: *Match each connective given below with the function it performs in the text. Fill in the corresponding blank with either*

- A** (for ADDITIVE)
B (for CONCESSIVE)
C (for CONTRASTIVE)

(N.B.: do not write more than ONE LETTER in each blank. The reference line is given within brackets.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| 1. in spite of (l. 6) | _____ |
| 2. However (l. 12) | _____ |
| 3. Then (l. 28) | _____ |
| 4. Of course (l. 45) | _____ |
| 5. In fact (l. 52) | _____ |

Part B: Intensive reading

Exercise 3: *Read the text carefully and circle the appropriate answer:*

1. What is the overall function of the text?
 - a) To illustrate the differences between Victorian and Modern fiction.
 - b) To explain how a novel should be written.
 - c) To identify a central tradition in the English novel.
 - d) To explain about Jane Austen's centrality.

2. Who is this text for?
 - a) fellow critics
 - b) university students or academics
 - c) average readers
 - d) secondary school students

3. Judging from what the author says, which author would you expect NOT to be treated in his book?

- a) Jane Austen
- b) George Eliot
- c) Henry James
- d) Joseph Conrad

Exercise 4: Making reference to the text, decide whether the statements below are TRUE (T), FALSE (F), or INCOMPLETE (I) paraphrases of the information conveyed. (N.B.: the statements follow the order in which the information is presented in the text)

- 1. Trollope is a major novelist _____
- 2. 'The English novel' is just what it happens to be each time someone writes a new novel in English _____
- 3. Fielding is only important because he turned the language of journalism into the language of fiction _____
- 4. The great novelists are those that make it into the literary histories _____
- 5. The author does not like the Romantic poets _____
- 6. The rest of the book will be about Victorian fiction _____

Exercise 5: find words/expressions in the text which match the synonyms given below, and write them in the blanks also indicating their respective line number. The paragraph containing each word is given in brackets.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|
| 1. relatively | (par. 1) | _____ |
| 2. useful | (par. 2) | _____ |
| 3. distinctions | (par. 2) | _____ |
| 4. radio | (par. 2) | _____ |
| 5. state | (par. 3) | _____ |
| 6. most important | (par. 3) | _____ |
| 7. lately | (par. 4) | _____ |
| 8. completely | (par. 4) | _____ |
| 9. assign to | (par. 5) | _____ |
| 10. allow | (par. 5) | _____ |
| 11. inaugurating | (par. 6) | _____ |
| 12. statements | (par. 6) | _____ |

Part C: writing

Exercise 6: Choose ONE of the two topics below and write a paragraph of approx. 100 words.

- 1. Describe your own idea of tradition in English literature, or explain why you do not think the term is useful.
- 2. Argue for or against inclusion of another writer in the canon of English literature.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST

The Great Tradition

5 The great English novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph
Conrad – to stop for the moment at that comparatively safe point in history. Since Jane
Austen, for special reasons, needs to be studied at considerable length, I confine myself
in this book to the last three. Critics have found me narrow, and I have no doubt that my
opening proposition, whatever I may say to explain and justify it, will be adduced in
reinforcement of their strictures. It passes as fact (in spite of the printed evidence) that I
pronounce Milton negligible, dismiss ‘the Romantics’, and hold that, since Donne, there
is no poet we need bother about except Hopkins and Eliot. The view, I suppose, will be
as confidently attributed to me that, except Jane Austen, George Eliot, James and
10 Conrad, there are no novelists in English worth reading.

The only way to escape misrepresentation is never to commit oneself to any
critical judgment that makes an impact – that is, never to *say* anything. I still, however,
think that the best way to promote profitable discussion is to be as clear as possible with
oneself about what one sees and judges, to try and establish the essential discriminations
15 in the given field of interest, and to state them as clearly as one can (for disagreement, if
necessary). And it seems to me that in the field of fiction some challenging
discriminations are very much called for; the field is so large and offers such insidious
temptations to complacent confusions of judgment and to critical indolence. It is of the
field of fiction belonging to Literature that I am thinking, and I am thinking in particular
20 of the present vogue of the Victorian age. Trollope, Charlotte Yonge, Mrs. Gaskell,
Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, Charles and Henry Kingsley, Marryat, Shorthouse – one
after another the minor novelists of that period are being commended to our attention,
written up and publicized by broadcast, and there is a marked tendency to suggest that
they not only have various kinds of interest to offer but that they are living classics (Are
25 not they all in the literary histories?) There are Jane Austen, Mrs. Gaskell, Scott, ‘the
Brontës’, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope and so on, all, one gathers,
classical novelists.

It is important to insist, then, that there are important distinctions to be made,
and that far from all of the names in the literary histories really belong to the realm of
30 significant creative achievement. And as a recall to a due sense of differences it is well
to start by distinguishing the few really great – the major novelists who count in the
same way as the major poets, in the sense that they not only change the possibilities of
the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of the human
awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.

35 To insist on the pre-eminent few in this way is not to be indifferent to tradition;
on the contrary, it is the way towards understanding what tradition is. ‘Tradition’, of
course is a term with many forces – and often very little at all. There is a habit
nowadays of suggesting that there is a tradition of ‘the English novel’, and that all that
can be said of the tradition (that being its peculiarity) is that ‘the English novel’ can be
40 anything you like. To distinguish the major novelists in the spirit proposed is to form a
more useful idea of tradition (and to recognize that the conventionally established view
of the past of English fiction needs to be drastically revised). It is in terms of the major
novelists, those significant in the way suggested, that tradition, in any serious sense, has
its significance.

45 To be important historically is not, of course, to be necessarily one of the
significant few. Fielding deserves the place of importance given him in the literary
histories, but he hasn’t the sort of classical distinction we are also invited to credit him

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with. He is important not because he leads to Mr. J.B. Priestley but because he leads to Jane Austen, to appreciate whose distinction is to feel that life isn't long enough to permit of one's giving much time to Fielding or any to Mr. Priestley.

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Fielding made Jane Austen possible by opening the central tradition of English fiction. In fact, to say that the English novel began with him is as reasonable as such propositions ever are. He completed the work begun by *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, in the pages of which we see the drama turning into the novel – that this development should occur by way of journalism being in the natural course of things.

[F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 1948]