

PETERHOUSE THOMAS CAMPION ENGLISH PRIZE (funded by the Friends of Peterhouse)

Writing your essay

Write an essay of between 1,500 and 2,500 words on one of the following questions. Include a bibliography and ensure all sources are referenced. **Essays must be submitted as a PDF** via the online form. Please ensure that the pages in your essay are numbered and that your name and school appears on every page. Please also name the pdf file in the following format: Prize-Question number-Surname-Initial e.g. *Campion-2-Smith-F.pdf*.

Competitors are advised to focus on one or two particular literary texts in answering their chosen question, but may wish to refer comparatively to other works. The main texts chosen for comment should **not** be works either previously or currently being studied by the entrant as part of their sixth form (or equivalent) studies. They may be texts which the entrant will work on in future so long as, at the time of the closing date, the entrant has received no formal tuition on the texts in question. Alternatively, entrants may well choose to write about works of literature which fall entirely outside their school/college syllabuses. In any event, all entries must be verified by a Head of Sixth Form or Head of English confirming that the essay is the entrant's own work and that the main focus of the essay is not something which s/he has hitherto studied in the sixth form classroom. Good luck!

How to submit

A maximum of **two entries** per competition per school can be accepted, except by prior arrangement with your school. All entries must be approved by a teacher, so make sure your English teacher and Head of Department know you are entering and you have the relevant email address to hand when you create your account. Once essays are uploaded to our system, it is not possible to make changes – please ensure you are happy with your work before pressing 'submit'. It is unfortunately not possible to provide feedback on essays.

The deadline for you to submit your essay is 16:00 GMT on **14th March 2016**. Essays which are not submitted by this time will not be considered under any circumstances. Your teacher will then receive emails from Peterhouse asking them to confirm that you are eligible and that the work complies with our guidelines, as listed in this document and on our website. They must do this by 16:00 GMT on **18th March 2016** – please inform them of this. Essays which have not been approved by a teacher will not be considered. For this reason, submission by post, fax or email will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, and only by prior arrangement.

Prizes

All three competitions have a top prize of £500 and a second prize of £250; several further essays will be highly commended. Winners will be contacted by post - please make sure your postal address and other contact details are entered correctly!

Thomas Campion English Prize Questions 2016

1. "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more". (*Macbeth*).

Are playing and playfulness "poor"?

2. "The novel, which is a work of art, exists, not by its resemblances to life, which are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant, and is both the method and the meaning of the work". (Robert Louis Stevenson).

Do you agree?

3. "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness". (Beckett). Discuss.

4. "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all". (Wilde).

Do you agree?

5. "Never flinch,
But still unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age". (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

How do writers "catch" their "Age"?

6. *Lear*. Yet you see how this world goes.
Gloucester. I see it feelingly. (*King Lear*).

Explore the role of sight **or** touch in literature, **or** the relationship between the two.

7. "My readers... will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are hastening together to perfect felicity". (Jane Austen)

How far does our awareness of a book as a physical object affect our reading of a text?

PTO for more questions

8. 'The poet's voice is not the voice of the person who happens to be the poet.' What is it then?
9. How do these two sonnets by William Wordsworth construct space?

Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room;
And Hermits are contented with their Cells;
And Students with their pensive Citadels:
Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,
Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find short solace there, as I have found.

Composed Upon Westminster Bridge

SEPT. 2, 1802

Earth has not any thing to shew more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could not pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor valley, rock or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will;
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!