

Gobbets Guidelines

Exam prompt:

Briefly explain the significance and context of this passage, and comment on any points of interest.

A 'gobbet' answer is a concise analytical comment on a short passage from the reading list. You will be asked to explain the significance and context of the text, and comment on any points of interest (literary, historical, linguistic, etc). Your discussion should be relevant to the passage selected, and cover each aspect of the text that you consider important. You do not need to translate the passage.

Your answer does not need to discuss *everything* about the passage; you can be selective, and play to your strengths. For example, you might choose to discuss authorship or genre, historical significance, literary style, context in the text, or specific disciplinary content (such as archaeology, philosophy, or religious practices).

Suggested time: 15-20 minutes each.

Recommendations for preparation

In preparing and practicing for the 'gobbet' assignment, you may find it useful to study short (10-15 line) passages from your reading list, with questions of authorship, context, and significance in mind.

You may wish to keep the following kinds of questions in mind. These questions are only examples: note that you do not have to answer *all* of these questions in a good gobbet answer, and you may choose to answer different questions. The assignment is consciously open-ended, and part of the exercise is selecting relevant questions to ask of your text.

- **Authorship:** What is the text? What genre (narrative history, myth, biography, poetry, philosophical work, inscription, etc.)? What audience or purpose is implied by the genre? Who wrote it? Why? In what language? When and where? What was happening when the text was written? How good was the author's knowledge of the events (s)he describes? What expectations might a reader bring to this text because of the genre (or author)? What possible bias is contained within the genre (or author)? Can anything be said about the author's attitudes from the passage? Does the author's attitude reflect or conflict with general attitudes at the time?
- **Historical content and context:** What does the text describe? When and where do the events in the text take place? Who is involved? Who were they and where did they come from? What is the larger historical context for these events, practices, beliefs, etc.? Does the text shed light on any specific discipline (such as archaeology, philosophy, or religious practices), or does any specific discipline challenge what the text says?
- **Textual context:** Where is this passage located in the text from which it is drawn? What happens before and after it in the text? How does this passage fit into the overall structure and argument of the text? Why does the author introduce this story, discussion, or description at this point? Are there any interesting textual, linguistic, or metrical features in the passage?
- **Significance:** Why is this text (and this portion of the text particularly) important? What is it telling us?