

PART I. Short Answer Questions

100

Answer the following 5 questions, using approximately **two** sentences for each answer (7 points each).

1. In "Yuki Onna" (both the story and film) why does the snow woman spare the woodcutter's life in the initial snowstorm? What promise does she extract from him?

- She spares him because he's a very young, handsome boy who has a lot more time left in his life than the older woodcutter.
- She says she won't kill him if he promises not to tell anyone about the incident, including how she killed the older woodcutter.

2. In "Child's Play," how does Midori change at the end of the work? How does the adult world influence the world of childhood in the story?

- Midori loses her enthusiasm after being disillusioned by what she is really supposed to do as a geisha who entertains men, and she wears a shimada hairstyle and more elegant clothes like a woman.
- The adult world casts a dark shadow on childhood; Midori and Nobu both feel distraught as they leave their happy childhood lives to become a geisha and monk, respectively.

3. What does Kanbei's rescue of the boy at the beginning of *Seven Samurai* tell us about his character? At the end of the film, why does Kanbei (the leader of the samurai) say that this was a losing battle for the samurai?

- Kanbei's character represents compassion and humility — compassion because he saves the boy without any compensation for his time, and humility after cutting the top knot of his hair, which symbolizes his samurai status.
- He says it was a losing battle because about half of the samurai were killed, with no concrete compensation.

Part I Continued

4. What values are associated with the samurai in "Incident at Sakai"? What is the reaction of those who are spared execution?

→ The samurai value honor, loyalty to the emperor, and the display of bravery (by not fearing death), all of which are shown by their willingness to commit seppuku in front of the French.

→ Those who are spared become distressed because they wanted to follow in the deaths of the eleven other brave samurai; one of them is so distraught that he attempts suicide by biting his tongue.

5. In *Kokoro*, why is the narrator drawn to Sensei? What is the meaning of the Japanese word *kokoro*?

→ The narrator is drawn to Sensei because both individuals share characteristics, like a lack of interest / nonconformism to modern society and loneliness; as a result, the narrator becomes intrigued, especially by Sensei's mysterious nature, and wishes to learn more about him.

→ *Kokoro* means heart, mind, soul, spirit (inner aspects of a person that are central to his individualism).

Part II. IDs (3 points each)

For each of the following passages taken from works of literature, identify the author (first and last name) and the title.

1. Even now when I recall his eyes I can't help but tremble. Even though he could not speak, he said everything in his heart with that one look. It was not a look of anger or even sadness, but one of icy contempt. It was that look, rather than the man's kick, that made me cry out and finally lose consciousness.

"In a Grove" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa

2. I hated the kind of guests that came to a country dinner party. They came with one end in view, which was to eat and drink, and they were the sort of people that waited eagerly for any event which might provide a break in the monotony of their lives. Since childhood, I had hated to see them at our house and to have to behave respectfully towards them.

Kokoro by Natsume Soseki

3. The French consul, his eyes riveted on Shinoura from the start, was increasingly overcome by a mixture of shock and fear. Unable to stay in his seat after hearing Shinoura's overwhelming cry during what was for him a totally new experience, he finally stood up, looking as if he were going to faint.

"The Incident at Sakai" by Mori Ogai

4. Customs here are indeed a little different. You won't find many women who tie their sashes neatly behind their waists. It's one thing to see a woman of a certain age who favors gaudy patterns, or a sash cut immoderately wide. It's quite another to see these barefaced girls of fifteen or sixteen, all decked out in flashy clothes and blowing on bladder cherries, which everybody knows are used as contraceptives. But that's what kind of neighborhood it is.

"Child's Play" by Ichiyo Higuchi

5. This was because during the past several years the city of Kyoto had been devastated by one calamity after another, including earthquakes, cyclones, fires, and famine. Hence the capital had become desolate beyond imagining. Ancient chronicles note that Buddhist statues and altars were chopped into pieces and piled by the roadside, still showing signs of lacquer and goldleaf, to be sold as firewood.

"Rashomon" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa

Part III. Essay Question (50 points)

Answer ONE of the following two questions, using approximately 1 page, drawing upon specific details from the relevant works to support your answer.

1. Yōkai (spirits) have been described as "liminal" creatures, inhabiting the borderlines between different spaces and times. In what way can this description apply not only to Yōkai, but also to other images and figures we have studied in the first half of the quarter? Choose **two** characters from different works of literature or film that we have studied and explain how they could be understood as liminal or borderline figures. Between what two worlds, spaces, or times do these characters exist? What are the characteristics that mark them as borderline figures? *Koboro narrator, "Child's Play" Midori*
2. What are the main differences between "In a Grove" and Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*? How do the changes that Kurosawa made alter the meaning of Akutagawa's original work?

Koboro

- countryside / Tokyo (city)
- character:
 - not fixed in either
 - isolated
 - distress - unsure about plans
 - anxiety

Child's Play

- childhood / adulthood
- character:
 - phys/mental
 - also distressed

One central theme present in Japanese literature is the dwelling and, sometimes even crossing of borders between two very different boundaries. Yokai indeed cross borderlines frequently, but human characters also follow this pattern as well, as the reader can see from an analysis of both the narrator from Kokoro and Midori from "Child's Play".

The narrator of Kokoro is very much a liminal character in that he dwells in two different worlds: his countryside family home and his modern, urban university setting in Tokyo. In the former world live his family members, and in the latter lives Sensei. These two distinct settings have a significant impact on the narrator, who does not seem fully comfortable or fixed in either place. For example, the narrator watches over his dying father while physically present at home, but his mind is concentrated on the suicide letter he receives from Sensei, showing that he is mentally present in another world. Another characteristic is that his "ninjo" (inner self) is distressed by a combination of anxiety and isolation as he feels detached to Japan's transition into modernism during the Meiji period of the late 1800s. Borderline figures feel this mix of emotion because they live in two worlds and are not firmly nor comfortably established, and this is common in transitional periods, such as the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the rise of Meiji imperialism, which themselves are two boundaries in history.

Midori from "Child's Play" is also liminal but in a different way^{than Kokoro's narrator} because instead of dwelling in both worlds, she crosses the borderline between childhood and adulthood and does not return. This crossing of borders is very evident in both mental and physical forms. Mentally, Midori loses her liveliness and cheerfulness after being disillusioned by the reality of serving men as a geisha, and physically, she wears much more elegant clothes along with the "shimada" hairstyle symbolic to young women. The crossing of borders is also evident in the ending of childhood relationships: she finds →

her closest friend immature, and ^{her potential relationship with} Nobu is officially over after he becomes a monk (who cannot marry). Lastly, Midori is also characterized by emotions similar to the narrator of Kokoro but more extreme: the transition from childhood to adulthood casts a very dark shadow over her life, and since the story ends in a dark mood, it is implied that she can never return to her past innocent and happy world.

Great work!