

# The GRE® Literature in English Test

**We invite you to  
take a closer look...**

Does your graduate department require or recommend that graduate applicants take the GRE® Literature in English Test?

This test can be very useful in distinguishing among candidates whose credentials are otherwise similar. The test measures undergraduate achievement and provides a common yardstick for comparing the qualifications of students from a variety of colleges and universities with different standards. Consider these factors:

## Predictive Validity

Subject Test scores are a valid predictor of graduate school performance, as confirmed by a meta-analysis performed by independent researchers who analyzed over 1,700 studies containing validity data for GRE tests.<sup>1</sup> This study showed that GRE® Subject Tests are reliable predictors of a range of outcome measures, including first-year graduate grade-point average, cumulative graduate grade-point average, comprehensive examination scores, publication citation counts, and faculty ratings. For more information about the predictive validity of the GRE tests, visit [www.ets.org/gre/validity](http://www.ets.org/gre/validity).

## Content That Reflects Today's Curricula

The test contains about 230 multiple-choice questions on poetry, drama, biography, the essay, the short story, the novel, criticism, literary theory, and the history of the language. Some questions are based on short works reprinted in their entirety, some on excerpts from longer works. A brief summary of test topics can be found on the back of this sheet. Additional information about the test and a full-length practice test are provided FREE and can be downloaded at [www.ets.org/gre/subject/prepare](http://www.ets.org/gre/subject/prepare).

<sup>1</sup> Source: "A comprehensive meta-analysis of the predictive validity of the Graduate Record Examinations®: Implications for graduate student selection and performance." Kuncel, Nathan R.; Hezlett, Sarah A.; Ones, Deniz S., *Psychological Bulletin*, January 2001, Vol. 127(1), 162-181.

## Developed by Leading Educators in the Field

The content and scope of each edition of the test are specified and reviewed by a distinguished team of undergraduate and graduate faculty representing colleges and universities across the country. Individuals who serve or have recently served on the Committee of Examiners are faculty members from the following institutions:

- Columbia University
- Emory University
- Haverford College
- John Hopkins University, Baltimore
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Iowa
- University of Virginia

Committee members are selected with the advice of the Modern Language Association of America.

Test questions are written by committee members and by other subject-matter specialists from colleges and universities across the country.

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For more information about the GRE® Literature in English Test,  
visit [www.ets.org/gre/subjecttests](http://www.ets.org/gre/subjecttests).

## Test Content

The test emphasizes authors, works, genres, and movements. The questions may be classified into two groups: factual and analytical. The factual questions may require a student to identify characteristics of literary or critical movements, to assign a literary work to the period in which it was written, to identify a writer or work described in a brief critical comment, or to determine the period or author of a work on the basis of the style and content of a short excerpt. The analytical questions test the ability to read a literary text perceptively. Students are asked to examine a given passage of prose or poetry and to answer questions about meaning, form and structure, literary techniques, and various aspects of language.

The approximate distribution of questions according to content categories is indicated by the following outline:

### **I. Literary Analysis 40-55%**

Questions that require an ability to interpret given passages of prose and poetry. Such questions may involve recognition of conventions and genres, allusions and references, meaning and tone, grammatical structures and rhetorical strategies, and literary techniques.

### **II. Identification 15-20%**

Identification of date, author, or work by style and content.

### **III. Cultural and Historical Contexts 20-25%**

Questions on literary, cultural, and intellectual history, as well as identification of author or work through a critical statement or biographical information. Also identification of details of character, plot, or setting of a work.

### **IV. History & Theory of Literary Criticism 10-15%**

Identification and analysis of the characteristics and methods of various critical and theoretical approaches.

The literary-historical scope of the test follows the distribution below:

1. Continental, Classical, and Comparative Literature through 1925 (5-10%)
2. British Literature to 1660 (including Milton) (25-30%)
3. British Literature 1660-1925 (25-35%)
4. American Literature through 1925 (15-25%)
5. American, British, and World Literatures after 1925 (20-30%)