Answer one of the following seven questions. In your answer, make detailed reference to at least one work of literature.

1. ‘We choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition’ (David Hume)

In what ways can reading be comparable with friendship?

2. ‘… the minor character’s interesting distinction cannot be based simply on the brief moment during which he stands out; in fact, it is precisely the opposite. The minor character is always drowned out within the totality of the narrative; and what we remember about the character is never detached from how the text, for the most part, makes us forget him.’ (Alex Woloch)

Either (a) Write about any aspect of this claim about characterization that interests you, with reference to at least two works of fiction. Or (b) Can we always distinguish between major and minor character in this way? Write about any fiction in which you feel they are interestingly indistinct.

3. When asked if she felt able to imitate her favourite painters in her poetry, Denise Riley replied that her attempts ‘are always going to end in tears; black and white typography on the page is so remorselessly different.’

Do you agree that poetry, or any other kind of literature, is ‘remorselessly different’ to painting or the visual arts?

4. ‘A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.’
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?
(William Shakespeare, Midsummer Night’s Dream)

Discuss how plays test the conventions of dramatic genre
5. ‘Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling. But if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. Elocution supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet’s utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet’s mind. Elocution is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavouring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action.’

(J.S. Mill, ‘Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties’)

Do you agree that poetry does not or should not ‘influence belief’, or move readers ‘to passion or to action’?

6. ‘There is no way at all of focusing on either the original privacy or the public place of the writer without examining how each of them comes to us, whether by curricular canon, intellectual or critical frameworks provided by a presiding authority [...] or a massive range of debate as to whose tradition this is’

(Edward Said, ‘The Return to Philology’)

Discuss how your own reading of a writer can be shaped by an examination of how that writer ‘comes to us’.

7. ‘What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat
and breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.’

(Elizabeth Barett Browning, ‘A Musical Instrument’)

What *are* the gods of Greece and Rome doing in English poetry?