The questions that have been set for the Gould Prize are deliberately open and wide-ranging. There is no single way of answering these questions. Rather, we hope that they will encourage a broad field of responses. Please view them as an opportunity to try out ideas and to write about works that you have been reading beyond the school syllabus. We are looking forward to reading your thoughts about these subjects.

(1)

‘Accordingly, he took the paper and lowered his spectacles, measured the space at his command, reached his pen and examined it, dipped it in the ink and examined it again, then pushed the paper a little way from him, lifted up his spectacles again, showed a deepened depression in the outer angle of his bushy eyebrows, which gave his face a peculiar mildness (pardon these details for once - you would have learned to love them if you had known Caleb Garth), and said in a comfortable tone – ’ (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*)

Either:
(a) Do details in a literary work really need an apology?
Or
(b) With reference to at least two works, discuss how fiction can ask us to contemplate our inability to know its characters.

(2)

‘Now one of the differences between doing philosophy and writing poetry is that in the former activity you defeat your object if you imitate the confusion inherent in an unsystematic view of your subject, whereas in the second you must in some measure imitate what is extreme and scattering bright, or else lose touch with that feeling of bright confusion.’ (Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*)

Either:
a) Do you agree with this account of the difference between philosophy and poetry?
Or:
b) Describe how one or more works of literature attempt to capture a ‘feeling of bright confusion’. You do not have to limit yourself to poetry in your answer.

(3)

‘Bad translations communicate too much.’

(George Steiner, *After Babel*)

Do you agree?
Their age was the Elizabethan; their morals were not ours; nor their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different. [...] The withered intricacies and ambiguities of our more gradual and doubtful age were unknown to them.’

(Virginia Woolf, Orlando)

Either:
a) How far do works of literature set in the past reflect the preoccupations of the present? You may talk about any kind of literary work from any period.
Or:
b) Is it possible to appreciate the literature of an ‘age’ in which ‘everything was different’? You may refer to the literature of any ‘age’ in your answer.

The writers against clichés […] find that they themselves can illuminate clichés by – can do so only by – calling up clichés to aid them. By using clichés. But using is the nub. Not being used by them.’ (Christopher Ricks, ‘On Clichés’)

What value do clichés have in literary works?

‘Writing has this disadvantage of speaking. one cannot write a wink, or a nod, or a grin, or a purse of the lips, or a smile – O law! One can-not put ones finger to one’s nose, or yerk ye in the ribs, or lay hold of your button in writing–’ (John Keats)

Write about how any writer or writers tries to minimise the distance between speech and writing. Or how they draw attention to it.