BEGC-105

American Literature

July 2026 & January 2027 Sessions

(Based on Blocks 1 - 4)

TMA 01/2026-27

Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions.

Section A

Answer with reference to the context: **5×4=20**

(i) "Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –

(ii) O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

(iii) Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.

(iv) Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

Section B

Answer the following in about 300 words each: **5×4=20**

1. Comment on the use of symbols in *The Scarlet Letter*.
2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem "Because I could not stop for Death".
3. Discuss Hemingway's "iceberg" technique of narration with reference to his short stories.
4. Write a short note on the beginnings of American drama and the influences that shaped its growth.

Section C

Answer the following questions in about 600 words each: **4×15=60**

1. Discuss *All My Sons* as a critique of the American Dream.

2. Analyse the character of Hester Prynne and trace her transformation in the course of *The Scarlet Letter*.

3. Trace the growth and development of the American short story, referring to some of its prominent practitioners.

4. How does the Native American experience find expression in Sherman Alexie's poetry? Discuss with reference to the poem prescribed in your course.

(i) “Hope” is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –

Answer

These lines are from Emily Dickinson’s poem “Hope” is the Thing with Feathers. Dickinson is a major nineteenth-century American poet who often explores large human experiences through a small, striking image. Here she compares hope to a bird that lives within the human soul. The comparison is an extended metaphor: hope does not literally have feathers, but it resembles a bird because it is light, resilient and capable of singing through hardship.

The word “perches” suggests that hope finds a quiet home inside every person. Its song has no words because hope is not necessarily a reasoned argument or a promise that everything will turn out well. It is an inner confidence that can remain alive even when we cannot explain it. The repetition in “never stops – at all –” strengthens the idea of endurance. Dickinson’s dashes create pauses, allowing us to feel both the delicacy and persistence of this song.

The image also prepares us for the rest of the poem, where the bird continues singing during a storm and in the coldest circumstances. The harsher the weather, the more valuable hope becomes. It is especially meaningful that the bird asks nothing in return. Hope is presented as a free gift or a natural spiritual strength, not as something that can be bought. By personifying an abstract emotion, Dickinson makes it immediate and memorable.

These lines express one of her central concerns: the ability of the human spirit to survive suffering and uncertainty. Their simplicity is deceptive. The small bird represents a powerful form of moral and emotional courage, and its wordless music suggests that some of our deepest experiences go beyond ordinary language.