BEGC-110
BRITISH LITERATURE: 19th CENTURY
Assignment for July 2026 and January 2027 Sessions
(Based on Blocks 1-4)

Section A

Q.1 Explain the following lines with reference to context:

(4x5=20)

a. "Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more."

b. "I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers…"

c. Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

d. "For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

Section B

Q. 2 Answer the following questions in about 300 words each:

(4x5=20)

a. Explain the significance of Elizabeth- Jane in revealing the moral character of Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.
b. Write a short note on Duke's character in the poem "My Last Duchess."
c. Discuss how Dickens portrays Lucie Manette as a symbol of home and domestic harmony in *A Tale of Two Cities*.
d. Write a short note on the theme of the poem "The Windhover".

Section C

Q. 3 Answer the following questions in about 600 words each. 4 x 15 =60

a. "Happiness is an occasional episode in a general drama of pain." Discuss this statement with reference to the portrayal of Henchard's character in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.
b. Explain the significance of the line "I am half sick of shadows" in "The Lady of Shalott."
c. Compare and contrast the themes explored in "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning."
d. Critically analyse Dickens' portrayal of the two worlds of London and Paris in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

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Answer

These lines occur near the end of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “*The Lotos-Eaters*,” a poem inspired by the episode of the Lotus-eaters in Homer’s Odyssey. Odysseus and his sailors reach a strange island where eating the lotus produces forgetfulness and a desire to remain. Tennyson gives the weary sailors a collective voice through the “Choric Song.” Instead of continuing their difficult voyage home, they try to justify a permanent life of rest. The quoted lines bring their argument to its final, decisive declaration.

The mariners first imagine human beings struggling through the same exhausting pattern of work and suffering until death. They refer to classical ideas of the afterlife: some souls suffer punishment, while others rest in the Elysian fields, among the flowers called asphodel. Their reasoning is that, if rest is the reward for a life of hardship, there is little sense in delaying it through further hardship. They contrast “slumber” with “toil” and the safety of “the shore” with labour in the dangerous ocean. “Wind and wave and oar” gathers the physical effort of rowing and the threats of nature into a memorable image.

The repeated “surely” makes the sailors sound convinced, while their invitation, “O, rest ye, brother mariners,” turns private weariness into a communal decision. The slow, musical movement of the verse itself creates an atmosphere of drowsiness and surrender. Yet their reasoning is not entirely trustworthy: the lotus has weakened their resolve and made them forget family, home and responsibility. The poem therefore explores a genuine human longing for peace while questioning the temptation to escape all duties. Its final words, “we will not wander more,” sound comforting but also reveal a dangerous loss of purpose.