ASSIGNMENT
BRITISH LITERATURE: EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
BEGC-112

Programme: BAEGH /2026-2027
Course Code: BEGC 112

Max. Marks:100

Answer all questions in this assignment.

SECTION A

I Explain the following passages with reference to the context.

10x4=40

1. "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

2. "We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death."

3. "Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way."

4. "Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these names are fêted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre."

SECTION B

II. Write short notes on the following:

4x5=20

1. Characteristics of modernism.

2. Issues of gender in *Sons and Lovers*.
3. The character of Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*.
4. The poetry of Stephen Spender

III. Write short essays on the following:

10x2=20

1. On the basis of your reading of texts prescribed in your course, explain how early twentieth century British writing reflected the effects of World War 1 on the lives of the British people.

2. Explain the biblical and historical contexts of Yeats's the poem 'The Second Coming.'

SECTION C

IV. Explain how Virginia Woolf uses the stream of consciousness technique to delve into the inner lives of her characters in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*.

20

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Answer

These lines are taken from W. B. Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming,” written in 1919 and published in 1920. The speaker surveys a world in which familiar political, moral and spiritual values have lost their power. Rather than describing a single incident, Yeats presents the atmosphere of a whole civilisation in crisis. The poem was composed soon after the First World War, at a time when revolution, political violence and social upheaval made the future deeply uncertain. The passage occurs in the first part of the poem and establishes the frightening conditions that lead to its vision of an approaching new age.

The opening statement suggests the collapse of an organised social order. The “centre” is the principle that keeps a community or civilisation united: shared beliefs, responsible leadership, moral restraint and accepted institutions. Once this centre fails, separate forces no longer obey any common authority. The image connects with the poem’s opening picture of a falcon flying too far from the falconer. It also reflects Yeats’s idea that history moves through widening and narrowing cycles, or gyres. As one historical cycle approaches its end, its established values become unable to control the forces they have released.

The next images transform social disorder into a scene of terrifying violence. The word “anarchy” describes the disappearance of control and the spread of chaos. A “blood-dimmed tide” suggests war, killing and the destructive power of events that overwhelm ordinary human life. A tide cannot easily be stopped; therefore the image makes violence appear widespread and irresistible. The drowning of the “ceremony of innocence” implies that innocence, decency and social customs are being swallowed by brutality. The word “ceremony” is significant because it suggests not merely personal goodness but the civilised practices that protect and honour it. In such conditions, even the possibility of a peaceful and trustworthy common life is threatened.

Yeats then identifies a disturbing imbalance between ethical hesitation and aggressive certainty. Those who might act thoughtfully and responsibly seem uncertain or passive, whereas extremists possess fierce energy and absolute conviction. This contrast does not mean that the loudest people are right. On the contrary, it exposes the danger created when intensity is separated from wisdom