

What will be on the quiz?

I've modified the format a bit from the previous quiz. Part 3 (short passages) will replace the identifications/questions sections of that quiz. You'll have a choice of passages, and will give context for some large fraction of them, and context plus commentary for some smaller fraction. As advertised, this part of the quiz will focus on the longer poems, but parts 1-2 can draw on your favorites among the shorter lyrics.

1. Memorization:

write from memory at least four lines from any one of Walcott's poems; the passage should form at least one complete sentence.

2. **Essay topic:** propose one topic for a two-page essay. Your topic should be as focused and specific as possible. For instance, "what is the role played by Homer in *Omeros*?" would be a *very* general topic.

A more specific topic would be, "why does the poet insist on his discovery of Homer's Greek name in *Omeros* III, iii?" I'm looking for something closer to the second of these two possibilities.

The topic you propose should provide good direction for a short essay on either a single poem or a short passage from a longer poem.

3. Short passages: instead of asking you to *identify*

passages by the title of the poem from which they are taken, this second quiz will do something slightly different. I will give you a selection of passages from "The Schooner Flight" and *Omeros* I-III with the source identified, and ask both for basic context (e.g., where are we, who is being spoken about) and brief comment (what should we notice about this passage).

Below, you'll find a sample passage and a sample answer (which I've made quite expansive; it would be okay to write a bit less on the quiz).

Sample:

Like pygmies they hacked the trunks of wrinkled giants
for paddles and oars. They were working with the same
concentration as an army of fire-ants. (*Omeros* book I, Chapter I, part II).

[Context] In this passage, "they" refers to Achille and the other fishermen who are cutting down trees to make canoes. The poem opens with Philoctete describing this scene to tourists after the events of the rest of the poem have taken place; it provides a sense of where things started, with Hector and Achille part of the same working community, and that community -- blessed by a priest -- still joined in their traditional work of fishing. [Commentary] The "pygmy" fishermen here do not have the same stature as the "giant" trees they are felling. On the one hand, this difference suggests that a "giant" past is being violently displaced by a "pygmy" present. (The trees are also identified in this chapter as the "gods" or "elders" of an earlier civilization).

On the other hand, the fishermen's felling of these huge, personified trees gets cast as an act of epic heroism, as men of the present conquer nature and the past, transforming them for their own use.

The comparison of the fishermen to "an army of fire-ants" makes them both insects and warriors; it also links them back to Homer's *Iliad*, where Achilles' warriors are known as "myrmidons," a word almost identical with Greek word for ant, and forward to other workers in the poem: the slaves who raised Rodney's cannon to the cliffs, or the women who once carried baskets of coal to liners for a penny.