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— THE CLAT COMBAT —
THE LOGIC PRO



LOGICAL REASONING

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Logical Reasoning1

Boccaccio's *Donne* is of an upperclass milieu where girls and young men can meet socially at ease and move thanks to wealthout of plague stricken Florence. In fact, it daringly reverses the standard form of morality, well summed up nearly contemporaneously by Traini's famous *Triumph of Death* fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa. There, an upperclass, amorous, hedonistic group of young people is depicted as doomed to die. Boccaccio's group consists very much of stylish survivors. Almost more scandalous than any of the tales they tell among themselves, is their clear-eyed common sense. Since they can do nothing about the plague, they seize the chance of the general disruption of the normal covenances and the absence or loss of parents and guardians, to go off and enjoy themselves, for which they are not punished.

The code of behavior they assume and also promulgate is impressively liberal, civilized and unprudish. Love is a natural bond between them, neither coarse nor etherealized. Seven girls who have met by chance at Mass at Santa Maria Novella plan their adventure and then co-opt three young men who happen to enter the church. The three are already known to them, but it is the girls who take the initiative, in a tactful, wellbred way, making it clear from the start that this is no invitation to rape. One has only to try to imagine Victorian girls—in fiction or in fact—behaving with such a degree of sophistication to see that society by no means advances century by century. Boccaccio is a highly complex personality who, like any other writer, may have felt that his most famous work was not his best. But the *Decameron* became famous early on, and was avidly read and frequently translated throughout Europe.

Today, only scholars settle down to read his more high flown romances and classical compilations, or even his "life" of Dante, whom he profoundly admired. The *Decameron* is a thoroughly Florentine book and a thoroughly social one, down to its structure. After the poetry of the *Divine Comedy*, it is very much prose, in every way. It glories in being undidactic, entertaining and openly—though by no means totally—scabrous. Eventually it shocked and frightened its creator, who thus unwittingly or not recognized the force of its literary power. He repented and turned moralist and academic, leaving Florence for the small Tuscan town of Certaldo where he had probably been born and where in 1375 he died.

Part of his religious repentance was perhaps expressed by commissioning two altarpieces (sadly, not extant) for a local church. Whatever the medievalism enshrined in the *Divine Comedy*, the *Decameron* speaks for a robustly changed, relaxed vision, one set firmly upon earth. It is the opposite of lonely and ecstatic. It is a vision closer to that of *Canterbury Tales* than to the spiritual one of *Piers Plowman*.

It has female protagonists who seem mundane if not precisely modern compared with the real women mystics and saints of central Italy of a few generations before, women whose fierce, intense, sometimes horrifyingly palpable and semi-erotic visions read like real-life cantos from Dante's poem. It is Boccaccio who should more correctly have been painted beside Giotto, for in a certain sense they share standards that are *al naturale*. No doubt Boccaccio has idealized a little, but he puts forward a calm, sane case for freedom and humor and good manners between the sexes which, however palely, foreshadows the Shakespearean world of Beatrice and Benedick.

The theme of the stories his group exchange is human behavior—often as it is manifested under the pressure of lust or love. But the group is also shown indulging in chess and music and dancing (even bathing though separated by sex). The ladies frequently laugh and occasionally blush, while never losing their selfpossession and their implicit command of the situation. Never could they be mistaken for allegorical nymphs or bloodless abstractions.

That the diversions of the *Decameron* are set brightly against the gruesome darkness of the Black Death is effective and also realistic. The plague begins the book. It is seen working psychologically as well as physically, horribly corrupting manners and morals, in addition to destroying life. Diversion and escape seem not frivolous but prudent, especially when provided by a pleasantly sited, well-stocked villa outside Florence, with amenities that extend to agreeable pictures in its rooms. In sharing the group's diversions the reader should be diverted, and Boccaccio says that he is thinking particularly of women, lovelorn women. Their lives are restricted: in love they cannot, unlike men, find relief in sport, travel, and business. It adds another, non-idealistic touch to his portrait of society, just as the retreat to the country is no literary convention but a reminder of the pleasant villas in the hills around the city.

1.. Some disagree with the author's opinion of the *Decameron*. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's opinion?

- (a) Boccaccio felt that the *Decameron* was his best work.
- (b) It was not until the eighteenth century that the *Decameron* became widely read.

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- (c) Boccaccio intended the Decameron to be read ironically.
(d) Additional chapters that spell the death of several lead characters have recently been discovered.
2. Suppose that the author claimed that the Decameron was more structurally similar to Canterbury Tales than to Dante's Divine Comedy. If true, this assertion would most likely be used in the passage to:
- (a) draw a more detailed correlation between both stories as examples of a new humanism.
(b) reinforce the notion of the Decameron as a sophisticated work atypical of Boccaccio's oeuvre.
(c) more fully describe the Decameron as a prototype of Italian humanist literature.
(d) approach an argument that also links both stories through verse form and rhyming scheme.
3. The contrast of Boccaccio's heroines to Victorian girls is noted in paragraph 2 to support all of the following conclusions EXCEPT:
- (a) an age of liberalism of thought and action went into decline with the Victorian era.
(b) society advances in a logical progression from century to century.
(c) Boccaccio's heroines display a seemingly anachronistic amount of courage and practicality not of their era.
(d) the Decameron's sophisticated interaction between the sexes foreshadowed that of Shakespeare's plays.
4. According to the author, the Decameron "daringly reverses the standard form of morality" presented in contemporary writing and art. Given that opinion, which of the following conclusions must be true?
- (a) The Decameron was one signal of a new era of humanism.
(b) The Decameron was a robust, entertaining literary work
(c) The Decameron was preceded by didactic, religious themes in medieval literature. (d) The Decameron was not followed in suit by other works of secular humanism.
5. The author chooses to strongly contrast Traini's Triumph of Death fresco in Pisa with the Decameron because:
- (a) they represent a correlation between the content of art and literature in medieval Italy.
(b) Traini's fresco marks the departure of medieval art from pure religious content. (c) the Decameron's subjects depict chastity rather than the wanton behavior depicted in Triani's fresco.
(d) their subjects are so markedly different in representation, despite their roughly contemporary installation.
6. According to the author, the Decameron differs markedly from its Italian predecessor The Divine Comedy. From the information presented in the passage, which of the following statements can the reader NOT assume about The Divine Comedy?
- (a) It is written in poetic verse.
(b) It is set in Florence. (c) It is written in a didactic style. (d) It has a tendency to be tedious.

1.Ans: (c)

Sol: Option (c) is correct. This is a weakening one as can be understood from the lines of the first and the second paragraphs. 'Since they can do nothing about the plague, they seize the chance of the general disruption of the normal covenances and the absence or loss of parents and guardians, to go off and enjoy themselves, for which they are not punished. The code of behavior they assume and also promulgate is impressively liberal, civilized and unprudish. Love is a natural bond between them, neither coarse nor etherealized.' The last line of the second paragraph also will eliminate the word 'ironically' used in the option (c). Hence (c).

2.Ans: (a)

Sol: Option (a) is correct. If there is structural similarity to Canterbury Tales it would mean that there is a correlation, and both stories are being used as examples of new humanism (behaviour).

3.Ans: (b)

Sol: Option (b) is correct. The rest of the points are supported, but 'advances in a logical progression' is misfit according to what is given in the passage.

4.Ans: (c)

Sol: Option (c) is correct. It can be understood from these lines of the third paragraph, 'The Decameron is a thoroughly Florentine book and a thoroughly social one, down to its structure. After the poetry of the Divine Comedy, it is very much prose, in every way. It glories in being undidactic, entertaining and openly—though by no means totally—scabrous. Eventually it shocked and frightened its creator, who thus unwittingly or not recognized the force of its literary power.' Hence (c).

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5.Ans: (d)

Sol: Option (d) is correct. It is understood from the first paragraph, 'In fact, it daringly reverses the standard form of morality, well summed up nearly contemporaneously by Traini's famous Triumph of Death fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa. There, an upperclass, amorous, hedonistic group of young people is depicted as doomed to die. Boccaccio's group consists very much of stylish survivors. Almost more scandalous than any of the tales they tell among themselves, is their clear-eyed common sense.' Hence (d).

6.Ans: (b)

Sol: Option (b) is correct. It is understood from the third paragraph, 'scholars settle down to read his more high flown romances and classical compilations, or even his "life" of Dante, whom he profoundly admired. The Decameron is a thoroughly Florentine book and a thoroughly social one, down to its structure. After the poetry of the Divine Comedy, it is very much prose, in every way. It glories in being undidactic, entertaining and openly—though by no means totally—scabrous. Eventually it shocked and frightened its creator, who thus unwittingly or not recognized the force of its literary power.' Hence (b).