

2000 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following passage from her autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty recalls early experiences of reading and books that had later impact on her craft as a writer of fiction. In a well-organized essay, analyze how Welty's language conveys the intensity and value of these experiences.

I never knew anyone who'd grown up in Jackson without being afraid of Mrs. Calloway, our librarian. She ran the Library absolutely by herself, from the desk where she sat with her back to the books and facing the stairs, her dragon eye on the front door, where who knew what kind of person might come in from the public? SILENCE in big black letters was on signs tacked up everywhere. She herself spoke in her normally commanding voice; every word could be heard all over the Library above a steady seething sound coming from her electric fan; it was the only fan in the Library and stood on her desk, turned directly onto her streaming face.

As you came in from the bright outside, if you were a girl, she sent her strong eyes down the stairway to test you; if she could see through your skirt she sent you straight back home: you could just put on another petticoat if you wanted a book that badly from the public library. I was willing; I would do anything to read.

My mother was not afraid of Mrs. Calloway. She wished me to have my own library card to check out books for myself. She took me in to introduce me and I saw I had met a witch. "Eudora is nine years old and has my permission to read any book she wants from the shelves, children or adult," Mother said. "With the exception of *Elsie Dinsmore*,"* she added. Later she explained to me that she'd made this rule because Elsie the heroine, being made by her father to practice too long and hard at the piano, fainted and fell off the piano stool. "You're too impressionable, dear," she told me. "You'd read that and the very first thing you'd do, you'd fall off the piano stool." "Impressionable" was a new word. I never hear it yet without the image that comes with it of falling straight off the piano stool.

Mrs. Calloway made her own rules about books. You could not take back a book to the Library on the same day you'd taken it out; it made no difference to her that you'd read every word in it and needed another to start. You could take out two books at a time and two only; this applied as long as you were a child and also for the rest of your life, to my mother as severely as to me. So two by two, I read library books as fast as I could go, rushing them home in the basket of my bicycle. From the minute I reached our house, I started to read. Every book I seized on, from *Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue at Camp Rest-a-While* to *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, stood for the devouring wish to read being instantly granted. I knew this was bliss, knew it at the time. Taste isn't nearly so important; it comes in its own time. I wanted to read *immediately*. The only fear was that of books coming to an end.

My mother was very sharing of this feeling of insatiability. Now, I think of her as reading so much of the time while doing something else. In my mind's eye *The Origin of Species* is lying on the shelf in the pantry under a light dusting of flour—my mother was a bread maker; she'd pick it up, sit by the kitchen window and find her place, with one eye on the oven. I remember her picking up *The Man in Lower Ten* while my hair got dry enough to unroll from a load of kid curlers trying to make me like my idol, Mary Pickford. A generation later, when my brother Walter was away in the Navy and his two little girls often spent the day in our house, I remember Mother reading the new issue of *Time* magazine while taking the part of the Wolf in a game of "Little Red Riding Hood" with the children. She'd just look up at the right time, long enough to answer—in character—"The better to eat you with, my dear," and go back to her place in the war news.

(1983)

*Elsie Dinsmore was the long-suffering young heroine in a popular series of children's books written by Martha Finley and first published in 1868.

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Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following passage, George Orwell uses the example of Gandhi to make an argument for choosing human imperfection over “sainthood.” As you read Orwell’s remarks, note his choice of details and his tone. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Orwell criticizes Gandhi’s position and assess how effectively Orwell develops his own position.

Line
Close friendships, Gandhi¹ says, are dangerous, because “friends react on one another” and through loyalty to a friend one can be led into wrong-doing. This is unquestionably true. Moreover, if one is to love God, or to love humanity as a whole, one cannot give one’s preference to any individual person. This again is true, and it marks the point at which the humanistic and the religious attitude cease to be reconcilable. To an ordinary human being, love means nothing if it does not mean loving some people more than others. The autobiography² leaves it uncertain whether Gandhi behaved in an inconsiderate way to his wife and children, but at any rate it makes clear that on three occasions he was willing to let his wife
5 or a child die rather than administer the animal food prescribed by the doctor. It is true that the threatened death never actually occurred, and also that Gandhi—with, one gathers, a good deal of moral pressure in the opposite direction—always gave the patient the
10 choice of staying alive at the price of committing
15
20

a sin: still, if the decision had been solely his own, he would have forbidden the animal food, whatever the risks might be. There must, he says, be some limit to what we will do in order to remain alive, and
25 the limit is well on this side of chicken broth. This attitude is perhaps a noble one, but, in the sense which—I think—most people would give to the word, it is inhuman. The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up
30 by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one’s
35 love upon other human individuals. No doubt alcohol, tobacco, and so forth, are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is also a thing that human beings must avoid.

(1949)

¹ Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948). Political and spiritual leader in India

² Gandhi’s autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

2000 English Language Scoring Guidelines

Question 1

- 9: Essays earning a score of 9 meet all the criteria for 8 papers and, in addition, are especially full or apt in their analysis or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.
- 8: Essays earning a score of 8 effectively analyze how Welty's language conveys the intensity and value of her childhood experiences of reading. They refer to the text, explicitly or implicitly, assessing how specific elements such as concrete detail, anecdote, hyperbole, juxtaposition, and figurative language help Welty capture the intensity and value of this experience. Their prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not flawless.
- 7: Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but provide more complete analysis or demonstrate a more mature prose style.
- 6: Essays earning a score of 6 demonstrate an understanding of the relationship of Welty's language to the intensity and value it conveys, but their discussion is more limited. While the essays refer to the text, explicitly or implicitly, they offer a less convincing explanation of how its language functions. A few lapses in diction or syntax may be present, but generally the prose demonstrates control of ideas and writing.
- 5: Essays earning a score of 5 analyze Welty's use of language, but their discussion is uneven or inconsistent. They may treat her style in a superficial way or demonstrate unsophisticated ideas about the relationship between language and the intensity and value it conveys. These essays may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but their prose conveys the writer's ideas.
- 4: Essays earning a score of 4 offer an inadequate response to the prompt. They may misrepresent or merely touch on the relationship between Welty's language and the way in which it conveys intensity and value or identify techniques without providing relevant discussion about their function. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.
- 3: Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but are less perceptive about the techniques Welty uses to convey intensity and value or less consistent in controlling the elements of writing.
- 2: Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in analyzing how Welty's language conveys intensity and value. These essays may offer vague generalizations about her use of language. They may lack development or substitute simpler tasks such as summarizing the passage or simply listing techniques. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as a lack of development or organization, grammatical problems, or a lack of control.