

# 2001 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

## 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.)

The letter below was written in 1866 by the English novelist Marian Evans Lewes (who used the pen name George Eliot) in response to a letter from an American woman, Melusina Fay Peirce.

Read the letter carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Lewes uses to establish her position about the development of a writer.

My dear Madam

I do not usually answer letters unless they demand an answer, finding the days too short for much correspondence; but I am so deeply touched by your words of tenderness and by the details you tell me about  
Line 5 yourself, that I cannot keep total silence towards you.

My consciousness is not of the triumphant kind  
your generous joy on my behalf leads you to imagine.  
Exultation is a dream before achievement, and rarely  
comes after. What comes after, is rather the sense  
10 that the work has been produced within one, like  
offspring, developing and growing by some force  
of which one's own life has only served as a vehicle,  
and that what is left of oneself is only a poor husk.  
Besides, the vision of something that life might be  
15 and that one's own ignorance and incompleteness  
have hindered it from being, presses more and more  
as time advances. The only problem for us, the only  
hope, is to try and unite the utmost activity with the  
utmost resignation. Does this seem melancholy?  
20 I think it is less melancholy than any sort of self-flattery.

I want to tell you not to fancy yourself old because  
you are thirty, or to regret that you have not yet  
written anything. It is a misfortune to many that they  
25 begin to write when they are young and give out all  
that is genuine and peculiar in them when it can be  
no better than trashy, unripe fruit. There is nothing  
more dreary than the life of a writer who has early  
exhausted himself. I enter into those young struggles  
30 of yours to get knowledge, into the longing you feel  
to do something more than domestic duties while yet  
you are held fast by womanly necessities for neatness  
and household perfection as well as by the lack of  
bodily strength. Something of all that I have gone  
35 through myself. I have never known perfect health,  
and I have known what it was to have close ties

making me feel the wants of others as my own and to  
have very little money by which these wants could be  
met. Before that, I was too proud and ambitious to

40 write: I did not believe that I could do anything fine,  
and I did not choose to do anything of that mediocre  
sort which I despised when it was done by others.  
I began, however, by a sort of writing which had no  
great glory belonging to it, but which I felt certain  
45 I could do faithfully and well. This resolve to work  
at what did not gratify my ambition, and to care only  
that I worked faithfully, was equivalent to the old  
phrase—"using the means of grace." Not long after  
50 that, I wrote fiction which has been thought a great  
deal of—but the satisfaction I have got out of it has  
not been exactly that of ambition. When we are young  
we say, "I should be proud if I could do that." Having  
done it, one finds oneself the reverse of proud.

I will say no more about myself except that you  
55 must not imagine my position to be at all like  
Romola's.<sup>1</sup> I have the best of husbands, the most  
sympathetic of companions; indeed, I have more than  
my share of love in a world where so many are pining  
for it. Mr. Lewes,<sup>2</sup> who cares supremely for science,  
60 is interested in what you say of your husband's  
labours; and he is so delighted when anything good or  
pretty comes to me that I think he is more grateful to  
you than I am for your generous, affectionate words.  
Yet I too am not insensible, but shall remain always

Yours in grateful memory  
M. E. Lewes.

<sup>1</sup> Romola: the isolated, unhappily married main character in one of Eliot's novels

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lewes: Eliot's common-law husband, a prominent philosopher

## 2001 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

### Question 2

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

Carefully read the following passage from “Owls” by Mary Oliver. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Oliver’s style conveys the complexity of her response to nature.

When the great horned [owl] is in the trees its  
razor-tipped toes rasp the limb, flakes of bark fall  
through the air and land on my shoulders while  
*Line* I look up at it and listen to the heavy, crisp, breathy  
5 snapping of its hooked beak. The screech owl I can  
imagine on my wrist, also the delicate saw-whet that  
flies like a big soft moth down by Great Pond. And  
I can imagine sitting quietly before that luminous  
10 wanderer the snowy owl, and learning, from the white  
gleam of its feathers, something about the Arctic. But  
the great horned I can’t imagine in any such proximity  
—if one of those should touch me, it would be to the  
center of my life, and I must fall. They are the pure  
15 wild hunters of our world. They are swift and  
merciless upon the backs of rabbits, mice, voles,  
snakes, even skunks, even cats sitting in dusky yards,  
thinking peaceful thoughts. I have found the headless  
bodies of rabbits and bluejays, and known it was the  
20 great horned owl that did them in, taking the head  
only, for the owl has an insatiable craving for the taste  
of brains. I have walked with prudent caution down  
paths at twilight when the dogs were puppies. I know  
this bird. If it could, it would eat the whole world.  
25 In the night, when the owl is less than exquisitely  
swift and perfect, the scream of the rabbit is terrible.  
But the scream of the owl, which is not of pain and  
hopelessness, and the fear of being plucked out of  
the world, but of the sheer rollicking glory of the  
30 death-bringer, is more terrible still. When I hear it  
resounding through the woods, and then the five black  
pellets of its song dropping like stones into the air,  
I know I am standing at the edge of the mystery, in  
which terror is naturally and abundantly part of life,  
part of even the most becalmed, intelligent, sunny life  
35 —as, for example, my own. The world where the owl

is endlessly hungry and endlessly on the hunt is the  
world in which I live too. There is only one world.

Sometimes, while I have stood listening to the  
owl’s auguring song drifting through the trees, when  
40 it is ten degrees above nothing and life for any small  
creature is hard enough without *that*, I have found  
myself thinking of summer fields. Fields full of  
flowers— poppies or lupines. Or, here, fields where  
the roses hook into the dunes, and their increase is  
45 manyfold. All summer they are red and pink and  
white tents of softness and nectar, which wafts and  
hangs everywhere—a sweetness so palpable and  
excessive that, before it, I’m struck, I’m taken, I’m  
conquered, I’m washed into it, as though it was a  
50 river, full of dreaming and idleness—I drop to the  
sand, I can’t move; I am restless no more; I am  
replete, supine, finished, filled to the last edges with  
an immobilizing happiness. And is this not also  
terrible? Is this not also frightening?  
55 Are the roses not also—even as the owl is—  
excessive? Each flower is small and lovely, but in  
their sheer and silent abundance the roses become an  
immutable force, as though the work of the wild roses  
60 was to make sure that all of us who come wandering  
over the sand may be, for a while, struck to the heart  
and saturated with a simple happiness. Let the mind  
be teased by such *stretches* of the imagination, by  
such balance. Now I am cringing at the very sound of  
65 the owl’s dark wings opening over my head—not  
long ago I could do nothing but lounge on the sand  
and stare into the cities of the roses.

Excerpt from “Owls” in BLUE PASTURES, copyright © 1995,  
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## 2001 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 1

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General Directions**:

- This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read. If it seems inappropriate for a specific essay, ask your Table Leader for assistance. Always show your Table Leader books that seem to have no response or that contain responses that seem unrelated to the question.
- Your score should reflect your judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write. Therefore, the essay is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards that are appropriate for out-of-class writing assignments. Instead, evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain that you reward students for what they do well.
- All essays, even those scored 8 and 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. These lapses should enter into your holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case should you score an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics higher than a 2.

- 9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet 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 the rhetorical strategies that Marian Lewes uses to establish her position. They refer to the passage explicitly or implicitly and explain the function of specific strategies. 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 a more complete analysis or demonstrate a more mature prose style.
- 6** Essays earning a score of 6 adequately analyze the rhetorical strategies that Marian Lewes uses to establish her position. They refer to the passage, explicitly or implicitly, but their explanation of specific strategies is more limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.
- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 analyze Lewes' strategies, but they may provide uneven or inconsistent explanations of how these strategies work. While the writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, it usually conveys ideas adequately.
- 4** Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt inadequately. They may misrepresent Lewes' position, analyze her strategies inaccurately, or offer little discussion of specific strategies. 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 Lewes' strategies or less consistent in controlling the elements of writing.

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SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 1 (cont'd.)**

- 2** Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in analyzing Lewes' strategies. These essays may offer vague generalizations, substitute simpler tasks such as summarizing the passage, or simply list techniques. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.
- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their discussion, or weak in their control of language.
- 0** Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.
- Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.