

2002 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

In the following excerpt from a recent British novel, the narrator, a young man in his early twenties, is attending a play with his new girlfriend Isabel when she unexpectedly discovers that her parents are in the theater. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author produces a comic effect.

‘Oh my God, I think that’s my mum over there,’ she gasped.

‘Where?’

Line 5 ‘By the pillar. Careful, don’t look. What is she doing here? And what’s that dress? It looks like a willow tree. Where’s Dad? I hope she didn’t come with one of her gentlemen friends. She’s really too old for that.’

‘Did you tell her you were going?’

10 ‘No, I mean, I said I wanted to see the play, but I didn’t let on I had tickets for tonight.’

‘She’s talking to someone. Can you see?’

15 ‘Phew, it’s my dad. He must have gone off to buy programmes. And he’s about to sneeze. Look, there we go, aaahhtchooo. Out comes his red handkerchief. I just hope they don’t spot us and we can escape quickly at the end. With any luck, they’ll be too busy arguing to glance up here. This is prime argument territory for them, Mum will be asking Dad where he put the car park ticket and he’ll get flustered because he’ll just have dropped it into a bin by mistake.’

20 Luck was not on Isabel’s side, for a moment later, Christopher Rogers happened to glance up to the gallery and recognized his eldest daughter, in the midst of trying her best not to recognize him. So that she might cease to dwell in ignorance, Christopher stood up in the middle of the elegantly suited and scented audience, and began making the vigorous hand gestures of a man waving off a departing cruise ship. In case Isabel had not spotted this maniac, her mother was in turn informed of her eldest daughter’s location, and decided that the presence of four hundred people in the auditorium should be no impediment to her desire to shout ‘Isabel’ at top pitch and with all the excitement of a woman recognizing a long-lost friend on the deck of an in-coming cruise ship.

25 Isabel smiled feebly, turned a beetroot shade and repeated in panicked diction, ‘I can’t believe this,

40 please let them shut up.’

Not a second too soon, Lorca* came to the rescue, the lights faded, and Mr. and Mrs. Rogers reluctantly took their seats, pointing ominously to an exit sign by way of interval rendezvous.

45 An hour and a quarter of Spanish domestic drama later, we found ourselves at the bar.

‘What are you doing here, Mum?’ asked Isabel.

‘Why shouldn’t I be here? You’re not the only one who does fancy things with your evenings. Your

50 father and I have a right to go out once in a while.’

‘I’m sure, I didn’t mean it like that, it’s just I’m surprised at the coincidence.’

‘Where did you buy this dress? Is that the one I paid for at Christmas?’

55 ‘No, Mum, I got it myself last week.’

‘Oh, well, it’s very nice, pity you don’t have more of a cleavage for it, but that’s your father’s fault. You know what all the women in his family are like.’

‘How are you Dad?’ Isabel turned to ask her father,

60 who was looking up at the ceiling with an intent expression.

‘Dad?’ repeated Isabel.

‘Yes, darling, how are you, my bean? Enjoying the show?’

65 ‘Yup, and you? What are you staring at up there?’

‘I’m looking at the light fixtures they have. They’re new tungsten bulbs, Japanese things, quite wonderful, they use only a small amount of electricity but give off a very nice light.’

70 ‘Oh, great, Dad. And, ehm, there’s someone I’d like you to both meet.’

‘Delighted,’ said Mrs. Rogers, confiding in me almost at once: ‘She’s a lovely girl really,’ in case my theatre companion had inspired doubts to the contrary.

75 ‘Thanks, Mum,’ said Isabel wearily, as though the statement were no one-off.

‘Don’t mind her, bean, she’s had a hard day,’

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explained Dad, now looking more horizontally at the
80 world.

‘My day would be fine if I wasn’t lumbered with
someone who kept losing tickets to the car park,’
snapped Mrs. Rogers.

‘Dad! You haven’t?’
85 ‘Yes, I’m afraid I have. They’re so fiddly these days,
they fall right out of one’s hands.’

—Alain de Botton, *Kiss and Tell*

*Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936): Spanish poet and playwright

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Question 2

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

Read the following poem carefully. Then, taking into consideration the title of the poem, analyze how the poetic devices convey the speaker's attitude toward the sinking of the ship.

The Convergence of the Twain

(*Lines on the loss of the Titanic*¹)

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Line 5
Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine² fires,
Cold currents thrid,³ and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

10 Jewels in joy designed
 To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
15 And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?” . . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

20 Prepared a sinister mate
 For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

**AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION
2002 SCORING GUIDELINES**

Question 1

Alain de Botton's *Kiss and Tell*

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult with your table leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a three (3).

- 9-8** These well-focused essays offer a persuasive interpretation of how Alain de Botton produces comic effect in his dramatic depiction of a scene in which Isabel unexpectedly discovers that her parents are in the same theatre as she and her new boyfriend. Specifically, the writers of these essays identify techniques and analyze how the author uses them to create comic effect. These essays make apt and specific references to the passage, effectively analyzing the nature of the comic effect that the author derives from the situation itself, from the thoughts of Isabel and her conversation with her parents, and from the relationship between daughter and parents. Though these essays may not be error-free, they are perceptive in their analysis of the comic effect and demonstrate writing that is clear and precise. Generally, the nine (9) essays reveal a more sophisticated analysis and a more effective control of language than do the essays scored an eight (8).
- 7-6** These competent essays offer a reasonable interpretation of how Alain de Botton produces a comic effect. The writers identify the techniques and analyze how the author employs them. Although not as convincing or as thoroughly developed as those in the highest range, these essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas with clarity, insight, and control. Generally, the seven (7) essays present a more developed analysis and a more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a six (6).
- 5** These essays offer a plausible interpretation of how Alain de Botton achieves comic effect, but they often respond to the assigned task with a simplistic reading of the passage. They often rely on paraphrase, but the paraphrase will exhibit some analysis, implicit or explicit. The discussion of the techniques may be slight and/or formulaic. These writers demonstrate some control of ideas, but the writing may be flawed by surface errors that do not create confusion for the reader.
- 4-3** These lower-half essays offer a less than thorough treatment of the task. The analysis of the techniques used for comic effect may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant. These essays may rely on mere summary or be marked by observation rather than by analysis. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, an accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a three (3) may contain significant misreadings and/or distracting errors in grammar and mechanics.