

2009 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

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

A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning.

Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit.

As I Lay Dying
The Awakening
Beloved
Bleak House
Cat's Eye
The Cherry Orchard
The Color Purple
Crime and Punishment
The Crossing
The Crucible
A Doll House
Equus
A Farewell to Arms
Fences
The Glass Menagerie
The Golden Bowl
The Grapes of Wrath
The Hairy Ape
Heart of Darkness
Invisible Man
Jude the Obscure

The Kite Runner
Lady Windermere's Fan
Macbeth
Madame Bovary
The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Moby-Dick
The Namesake
Nineteen Eighty-four
Our Town
The Plague
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
A Prayer for Owen Meany
A Raisin in the Sun
Reservation Blues
Snow
A Streetcar Named Desire
Things Fall Apart
Waiting for Godot
Wise Blood
The Women of Brewster Place

STOP

END OF EXAM

AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2009 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 3

(A Symbol)

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a well-focused and persuasive analysis of how a symbol functions to reveal characters or themes in a novel or play. Using apt and specific textual support, the essays fully explore the symbol and its significance. Although not without flaws, these essays make a strong case for their interpretation and discuss the literary work with insight and understanding. Generally, essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do essays scored an 8.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how a symbol functions to reveal characters or themes in a novel or play. The essays explore the symbol and demonstrate its significance. While the responses show insight and understanding, their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific in supporting detail than that of the essays in the 9–8 range. Generally, essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a 6.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading, but they tend to be superficial or underdeveloped in analysis. They often rely upon plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Although students attempt to discuss the symbol's significance and how it functions to reveal characters or themes, they may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the work. Typically, these essays reveal unsophisticated thinking and development. They demonstrate adequate control of language but may lack effective organization and be marred by surface errors.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or a less than adequate treatment of it. They reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the work, or they may fail to establish the relationship between the symbol and the work's characters or themes. The essays may not address or develop the symbol's significance, or they may rely on plot summary alone. Their assertions may be unsupported or even irrelevant. Sometimes wordy or repetitious, these essays may lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may reflect serious misreading and demonstrate incompetent writing.
- 2–1** Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of essays in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or are incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Remarks are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Particularly incompetent and/or incoherent essays are scored a 1.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.