

2019 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

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

Carefully read the following excerpt from William Dean Howells' novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). Then, in a well-constructed essay, analyze how the author portrays the complex experience of two sisters, Penelope and Irene, within their family and society. You may wish to consider such literary elements as style, tone, and selection of detail.

Line They were not girls who embroidered or
abandoned themselves to needle-work. Irene spent her
abundant leisure in shopping for herself and her
5 mother, of whom both daughters made a kind of idol,
buying her caps and laces out of their pin-money,¹
and getting her dresses far beyond her capacity to
wear. Irene dressed herself very stylishly, and spent
hours on her toilet² every day. Her sister had a
simpler taste, and, if she had done altogether as she
10 liked, might even have slighted dress. They all three
took long naps every day, and sat hours together
minutely discussing what they saw out of the window.
In her self-guided search for self-improvement, the
elder sister went to many church lectures on a vast
15 variety of secular subjects, and usually came home
with a comic account of them, and that made more
matter of talk for the whole family. She could make
fun of nearly everything; Irene complained that she
scared away the young men whom they got
20 acquainted with at the dancing-school sociables.
They were, perhaps, not the wisest young men.

The girls had learned to dance at Papanti's;³ but
they had not belonged to the private classes. They did
not even know of them, and a great gulf divided them
25 from those who did. Their father did not like
company, except such as came informally in their
way; and their mother had remained too rustic to
know how to attract it in the sophisticated city
fashion. None of them had grasped the idea of
30 European travel; but they had gone about to mountain
and sea-side resorts, the mother and the two girls,
where they witnessed the spectacle which such resorts
present throughout New England, of multitudes of
girls, lovely, accomplished, exquisitely dressed,
35 humbly glad of the presence of any sort of young
man; but the Laphams had no skill or courage to make
themselves noticed, far less courted by the solitary
invalid, or clergyman, or artist. They lurked helplessly

about in the hotel parlors, looking on and not knowing
40 how to put themselves forward. Perhaps they did not
care a great deal to do so. They had not a conceit of
themselves, but a sort of content in their own ways
that one may notice in certain families. The very
strength of their mutual affection was a barrier to
45 worldly knowledge; they dressed for one another;
they equipped their house for their own satisfaction;
they lived richly to themselves, not because they were
selfish, but because they did not know how to do
otherwise. The elder daughter did not care for society,
50 apparently. The younger, who was but three years
younger, was not yet quite old enough to be ambitious
of it. With all her wonderful beauty, she had an
innocence almost vegetable. When her beauty, which
in its immaturity was crude and harsh, suddenly
55 ripened, she bloomed and glowed with the
unconsciousness of a flower; she not merely did
not feel herself admired, but hardly knew herself
discovered. If she dressed well, perhaps too well, it
was because she had the instinct of dress; but till
60 she met this young man who was so nice to her at
Baie St. Joan,⁴ she had scarcely lived a detached,
individual life, so wholly had she depended on her
mother and her sister for her opinions, almost her
sensations. She took account of everything he did and
65 said, pondering it, and trying to make out exactly
what he meant, to the inflection of a syllable, the
slightest movement or gesture. In this way she began
for the first time to form ideas which she had not
derived from her family, and they were none the
70 less her own because they were often mistaken.

¹ pin-money: money used for small expenses and incidentals

² toilet: dressing and grooming

³ Papanti's: a fashionable social dance school in nineteenth-century Boston

⁴ Baie St. Joan: a Canadian resort

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Question 3

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

In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.”

Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The Alchemist
Antigone
The Awakening
The Bluest Eye
Brave New World
Brideshead Revisited
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Candide
The Catcher in the Rye
Death of a Salesman
Don Quixote
A Gesture Life
Great Expectations
The Great Gatsby
The Handmaid’s Tale
The House of Mirth

The Importance of Being Earnest
Invisible Man
King Lear
Lolita
The Mill on the Floss
My Ántonia
Native Son
Odyssey
The Portrait of a Lady
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
The Sound and the Fury
The Sun Also Rises
The Tempest
To Kill a Mockingbird
When the Emperor Was Divine

STOP

END OF EXAM

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2019 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2: William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*

The score should reflect the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the students 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 persuasive analysis of how the author portrays the experience of the two sisters within their family and society. Using apt and specific textual support, the essays demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the discussion of prose. Although these well-focused essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear and effectively organized. Essays scored a 9 have especially convincing analysis and effective control of language.

7–6 These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how the author portrays the experience of the two sisters within their family and society. Using textual support, they are organized and demonstrate control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the discussion of prose. These focused essays show some insight, and they offer clear and controlled analysis and writing. Essays scored a 7 have solidly developed analysis and consistent control of organization and language.

5 These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of how the author portrays the experience of the two sisters within their family and society, but the analysis may be superficial and thinly developed. While the essays include some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the analysis of the author’s portrayal of the experience of the two sisters or the use of literary techniques may be slight, and support from the passage may tend toward summary or paraphrase. Their analysis and discussion may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported. These essays demonstrate some control of language, but they may be marred by surface errors. These essays have difficulty presenting a cohesive idea, clear organization, or sustained development of analysis.

4–3 These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the passage. The analysis of how the author portrays the experience of the two sisters within their family and society may be partial, unconvincing, oversimplified, or irrelevant; the essays may ignore how the author portrays the experience of the sisters within their family or society or the use of literary techniques. Evidence from the passage may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely only on paraphrase. The essays often demonstrate a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

2–1 These essays compound several weaknesses. Although they make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they are often unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting their ideas. The essays may be poorly written on several counts; they may contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Ideas may be presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the passage. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the passage.

0 These essays give a response that is completely off topic or inadequate; there may be some mark or a drawing or a brief reference to the task.

— These essays are entirely blank.