

**2002 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.)

Morally ambiguous characters—characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good—are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit.

The Age of Innocence
All the King's Men
Anna Karenina
The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man
The Awakening
Billy Budd
Crime and Punishment
Faust
Fences
The Glass Menagerie
Great Expectations
The Great Gatsby
Heart of Darkness
Hedda Gabler

Henry V
The Mayor of Casterbridge
The Merchant of Venice
Mrs. Warren's Profession
Père Goriot
The Picture of Dorian Gray
The Plague
Poccho
The Scarlet Letter
Silas Marner
Sister Carrie
Sula
The Turn of the Screw
Typical American

END OF EXAMINATION

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2002 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 3

Morally Ambiguous Characters

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but for cases in which it seems problematic or inapplicable, please consult your table leader. The score that you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. **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 identify a morally ambiguous character, that is, a character who is neither purely evil nor purely good, showing how that character plays a pivotal role in an appropriate novel or play and analyzing how that character's moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Using apt and specific textual illustrations, these essays fully explore the nature of the character's moral ambiguity. They need not be flawless; nonetheless, they exhibit the writer's ability to discuss a literary work with insight and understanding, to sustain control over a thesis, and to write with clarity and — in the case of a nine (9) essay — with particular persuasiveness and/or stylistic flair.
- 7-6** These competent essays identify a morally ambiguous character in an appropriate novel or play and analyze the significance that his/her behavior has to the work as a whole. Not without insights, the analysis provided by the 7-6 essays is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific than that of the 9-8 essays; references to the text may not be as apt or as persuasive. Essays scored a seven (7) will demonstrate more sophistication in both substance and in style, though both 7's and 6's will be generally well-written and free from significant or sustained misinterpretations.
- 5** These essays tend to be simplistic in analysis even though they may respond to the assigned task and may offer a plausible interpretation of an appropriate novel or play. They often rely upon plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. They may discuss a character's moral ambiguity in a limited manner, or not fully develop its significance to the work as a whole. Typically, these essays reveal unsophisticated thinking and/or immature writing.
- 4-3** These lower-half essays reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the work discussed, or they may fail to establish how a character's moral ambiguity functions throughout the work and informs the work as a whole. They may rely on plot summary, or the work itself may be an inappropriate choice. Their assertions may be unsupported or even irrelevant. Often wordy, elliptical, or repetitious, these essays lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a three (3) exhibit multiple stylistic problems; they may also be marred by significant misinterpretations and/or poor development.

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Question 3 (cont'd.)

- 2-1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief and/or demonstrate a very limited understanding of the task. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. The writer's observations are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored a one (1).
- 0** Indicates a response with no more than a reference to the task.
- Indicates a blank paper or completely off-topic response.