

2018 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.)

The following interchange, excerpted from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, occurs when two characters who have been living on the Blithedale farm—a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living—are about to part ways. Read the passage carefully. In a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques.

Line Her manner bewildered me. Literally, moreover,
I was dazzled by the brilliancy of the room. A
chandelier hung down in the centre, glowing with I
know not how many lights; there were separate lamps,
5 also, on two or three tables, and on marble brackets,
adding their white radiance to that of the chandelier.
The furniture was exceedingly rich. Fresh from our
old farm-house, with its homely board and benches in
the dining-room, and a few wicker chairs in the best
10 parlor, it struck me that here was the fulfillment of
every fantasy of an imagination, revelling in various
methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease.
Pictures, marbles, vases; in brief, more shapes of
luxury than there could be any object in enumerating,
15 except for an auctioneer’s advertisement—and the
whole repeated and doubled by the reflection of a
great mirror, which showed me Zenobia’s proud
figure, likewise, and my own. It cost me, I
acknowledge, a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in
20 myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect
which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned
against her, in my secret mind, and strove so to keep
my footing. In the gorgeousness with which she had
surrounded herself—in the redundancy of personal
25 ornament, which the largeness of her physical nature
and the rich type of her beauty caused to seem so
suitable—I malevolently beheld the true character of
the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity,
not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste.
30 But, the next instant, she was too powerful for all
my opposing struggles. I saw how fit it was that she
should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased, and
should do a thousand things that would have been
ridiculous in the poor, thin, weakly characters of other
35 women. To this day, however, I hardly know whether
I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or
whether that were the truer one in which she had
presented herself at Blithedale. In both, there was
something like the illusion which a great actress flings
40 around her.
“Have you given up Blithedale forever?” I
inquired.
“Why should you think so?” asked she.
“I cannot tell,” answered I; “except that it appears
45 all like a dream that we were ever there together.”
“It is not so to me,” said Zenobia. “I should think it

a poor and meagre nature, that is capable of but one
set of forms, and must convert all the past into a
dream, merely because the present happens to be
unlike it. Why should we be content with our homely
50 life of a few months past, to the exclusion of all other
modes? It was good; but there are other lives as good
or better. Not, you will understand, that I condemn
those who give themselves up to it more entirely than
I, for myself, should deem it wise to do.”
It irritated me, this self-complacent,
condescending, qualified approval and criticism of a
system to which many individuals—perhaps as
highly endowed as our gorgeous Zenobia—had
60 contributed their all of earthly endeavor, and their
loftiest aspirations. I determined to make proof if
there were any spell that would exorcise her out of the
part which she seemed to be acting. She should be
compelled to give me a glimpse of something true;
65 some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or
wrong, provided it were real.
“Your allusion to that class of circumscribed
characters, who can live in only one mode of life,”
remarked I, coolly, “reminds me of our poor friend
70 Hollingsworth.* Possibly, he was in your thoughts,
when you spoke thus. Poor fellow! It is a pity that, by
the fault of a narrow education, he should have so
completely immolated himself to that one idea of his;
especially as the slightest modicum of common-sense
75 would teach him its utter impracticability. Now that I
have returned into the world, and can look at his
project from a distance, it requires quite all my real
regard for this respectable and well-intentioned man
to prevent me laughing at him—as, I find, society at
80 large does!”
Zenobia’s eyes darted lightning; her cheeks
flushed; the vividness of her expression was like the
effect of a powerful light, flaming up suddenly within
her. My experiment had fully succeeded. She had
85 shown me the true flesh and blood of her heart, by
thus involuntarily resenting my slight, pitying, half-
kind, half-scornful mention of the man who was all in
all with her. She herself, probably, felt this; for it was
hardly a moment before she tranquillized her uneven
90 breath, and seemed as proud and self-possessed as
ever.

* a charismatic member of the Blithedale community who assumes a leadership position

2018 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.)

Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. The gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic, or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

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

The Aeneid
Alias Grace
All the Light We Cannot See
Beloved
Beowulf
Crime and Punishment
Death in Venice
Dracula
Frankenstein
The Goldfinch
Great Expectations
Heart of Darkness
Homegoing
The Iliad
Kindred

King Lear
Madame Bovary
Mama Day
Man and Superman
The Metamorphosis
Midnight's Children
A Passage to India
The Picture of Dorian Gray
The Portrait of a Lady
The Power of One
A Raisin in the Sun
The Return of the Native
The Tempest
Things Fall Apart
To the Lighthouse

STOP

END OF EXAM

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*

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 Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. 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 Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. 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 insight in their analysis, 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 Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques, but the analysis may be superficial and thinly developed. While the essays include some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the analysis of Hawthorne’s portrayal of the narrator’s attitude 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 Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques may be partial, unconvincing, oversimplified, or irrelevant; the essays may ignore Hawthorne’s portrayal of the narrator’s attitude 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 writing 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.