

Question 3

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

Many works of literature feature a character who may be reluctant to make a decision, unable to make a decision, or is resistant to doing so. This indecision can have broader implications for that character or other characters. Such implications may include changes to a character’s relationships, social and/or financial stability, well-being, or any other aspects of the character’s existence.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character delays or avoids making a decision. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the impact of this indecision contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

The Age of Innocence
An American Marriage
Anna Karenina
The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman
Beloved
Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage
Corelli's Mandolin
Dubliners
Emma
Frankenstein
George Washington Gómez
Indian Horse
Interior Chinatown
Jane Eyre
The Kite Runner
Little Fires Everywhere
A Long Petal of the Sea
Love in the Time of Cholera
Madame Bovary

The Metamorphosis
The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez
The Namesake
The Night Watchman
North and South
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Pipeline
The Professor's House
Quicksand
A Raisin in the Sun
Rebecca
A Room with a View
The Stranger
A Tale of Two Cities
Tess of the d'Urbervilles
Topdog/Underdog
Waiting
Whereabouts
Wuthering Heights

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

Question 3: Literary Argument

6 points

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Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no defensible thesis. • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. • There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the selected work.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only restate the prompt. • Make a generalized comment about the selected work that doesn't respond to the prompt. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a defensible interpretation of the impact of a character's indecision. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a claim about how the impact of a character's indecision contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. 	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Decisions are often hard to make. In literature, some characters can't or won't make a decision, and this affects them or the people around them."</i> Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment about the selected work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Characters often make mistakes in literature. Victor Frankenstein allows himself to get swept up in misguided ideas."</i> • <i>"Delaying a decision is often easier than confronting a problem. Many works of literature involve characters who have difficult decisions to make."</i> • <i>"Many of the decisions made in <u>Madame Bovary</u> are made out of boredom."</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. • A thesis that offers a defensible claim about the impact of a character's indecision in the selected work may earn the point; any reasonable student interpretation of "indecision" is acceptable. • For a thesis to be defensible, the selected work must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. • The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. • A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student's argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes					
Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a selected work rather than specific details. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. 	
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response must address the interpretation of the selected work as a whole. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see...</i>” OR “<i>Though the text could be said to...</i>”). Oversimplify complexities of the topic and/or the selected work. Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument. 		Responses that earn this point may demonstrate a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the selected work. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the text. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 		