

2003 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 passage is an excerpt from “The Other Paris,” a short story by the Canadian writer Mavis Gallant. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, explain how the author uses narrative voice and characterization to provide social commentary.

If anyone had asked Carol at what precise moment she fell in love, or where Howard Mitchell proposed to her, she would have imagined, quite sincerely, a scene that involved all at once the Seine, moonlight, barrows of violets, acacias in flower, and a confused, misty background of the Eiffel tower and little crooked streets. This was what everyone expected, and she had nearly come to believe it herself.

Actually, he had proposed at lunch, over a tuna-fish salad. He and Carol had known each other less than three weeks, and their conversation, until then, had been limited to their office—an American government agency—and the people in it. Carol was twenty-two; no one had proposed to her before, except an unsuitable medical student with no money and eight years’ training still to go. She was under the illusion that in a short time she would be so old no one would ask her again. She accepted at once, and Howard celebrated by ordering an extra bottle of wine. Both would have liked champagne, as a more emphatic symbol of the unusual, but each was too diffident to suggest it.

The fact that Carol was not in love with Howard Mitchell did not dismay her in the least. From a series of helpful college lectures on marriage she had learned that a common interest, such as a liking for Irish setters, was the true basis for happiness, and that the illusion of love was a blight imposed by the film industry, and almost entirely responsible for the high rate of divorce. Similar economic backgrounds, financial security, belonging to the same church—these were the pillars of the married union. By an astonishing coincidence, the fathers of Carol and Howard were both attorneys and both had been defeated in their one attempt to get elected a judge. Carol and Howard were both vaguely Protestant, although a serious discussion of religious beliefs would have gravely embarrassed them. And Howard, best of all, was sober, old enough to know his own mind, and absolutely reliable. He was an economist who had sense enough to attach himself to a corporation that continued to pay his salary during his loan to the government. There was no reason for the engagement or the marriage to fail.

Carol, with great efficiency, nearly at once set about the business of falling in love. Love required only the right conditions, like a geranium. It would wither exposed to bad weather or in dismal surroundings; indeed, Carol rated the chances of love in a cottage or a furnished room at zero. Given a good climate, enough money, and a pair of good-natured, *intelligent* (her college lectures had stressed this) people, one had only to sit back and watch it grow. All winter, then, she looked for these right conditions in Paris. When, at first, nothing happened, she blamed it on the weather. She was often convinced she would fall deeply in love with Howard if only it would stop raining. Undaunted, she waited for better times.

Howard had no notion of any of this. His sudden proposal to Carol had been quite out of character—he was uncommonly cautious—and he alternated between a state of numbness and a state of self-congratulation. Before his engagement he had sometimes been lonely, a malaise he put down to overwork, and he was discontented with his bachelor households, for he did not enjoy collecting old pottery or making little casserole dishes. Unless he stumbled on a competent housemaid, nothing ever got done. This in itself would not have spurred him into marriage had he not been seriously unsettled by the visit of one of his sisters, who advised him to marry some nice girl before it was too late. “Soon,” she told him, “you’ll just be a person who fills in at dinner.”

Howard saw the picture at once, and was deeply moved by it.

(1953)

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Question 3

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

According to critic Northrop Frye, “Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning.”

Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others. Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable quality. Avoid mere plot summary.

An American Tragedy

Anna Karenina

Antigone

Beloved

Crime and Punishment

Death of a Salesman

Ethan Frome

Faust

Fences

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Frankenstein

Hedda Gabler

King Lear

Light in August

Long Day's Journey into Night

Lord Jim

Macbeth

Medea

Moby-Dick

Oedipus Rex

Phèdre

Ragtime

Sent for You Yesterday

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Things Fall Apart

END OF EXAMINATION

AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE 2003 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

Mavis Gallant’s “The Other Paris”

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, 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 offer a persuasive interpretation of how Mavis Gallant uses narrative voice and characterization to provide social commentary about love and marriage. Specifically, these writers explore the nature of Gallant’s narrative voice and her use of characterization. These essays make apt and specific references to the passage itself. Although these essays may not be error-free, they are perceptive in their analysis. They demonstrate writing that is clear, precise, and effective. Generally, the nine (9) essays reveal a more sophisticated analysis and a more effective control of language than do essays scored an eight (8).
- 7–6** These competent essays offer a reasonable interpretation of how Gallant creates social commentary through the use of narrative voice and characterization. Although not as convincing or as thoroughly developed as those papers in the highest range, they demonstrate the writer’s ability to express ideas with clarity, insight, and control. Generally, the seven (7) essays present a more developed analysis and a more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a six (6).
- 5** These essays tend to be simplistic in their analysis of how narrative voice and characterization are used to create social commentary. They often rely on paraphrase, but the paraphrase will exhibit some plausible analysis, implicit or explicit. The discussion of narrative voice and characterization may be slight and/or confusing; it may not have a coherent explication of how those literary devices are used by the author as the basis for the social commentary. These writers demonstrate control of language, but the writing may be flawed by surface errors that do not create confusion for the reader. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 papers.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or less than adequate treatment of how the devices of narrative voice and characterization provide for social commentary. The analysis of the devices may be only partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant and/or may rely on paraphrase only. The essays may demonstrate misunderstanding of some aspect of the passage. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, an accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a three (3) may contain significant misreadings and/or distracting errors in grammar and mechanics.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. They may seriously misread the passage, may be unacceptably brief, or may be incoherent. They may contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the question, the writer’s assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the passage itself. Essays scored a one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the passage. Especially inept, vacuous, and/or unsound essays must be scored a one (1).
- 0** These essays make no more than a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off-topic.