

AP LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION EXAM REVIEW

AP LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION STUDENT PREPARATION SESSION

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## How to read “Difficult Texts”

A difficult text, by definition, is one that permits, stands up to, even insists upon interpretive works. Students cannot learn to do interpretive work in a curriculum devoid of difficult texts.

**...read like a detective and write like an investigative reporter.** -David Coleman

There are no uninteresting things in the world, only uninterested people. ~Lord Chesterton

Anything becomes interesting if you look at it long enough. ~ Gustave Flaubert

## Active Reading summarized/adapted from John Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, Chapter. 8

### **Roots of poor student reading skills**

- Assuming that reading should be speed reading, not laborious and slow
  - Experts read slowly and reread often
  - They write “gist” statements in the margins as they read
  - They question the text as they read
  - They link the text with other readings and/or personal experience
- Failing to adjust reading strategies for different texts and circumstances
  - Experts use skimming, close scrutiny, application
- Failing to perceive an argument’s structure as they read
  - Experts “chunk” the complex material into parts with describable functions
- Difficulty in assimilating or accepting the unfamiliar
  - The deep harbors the strange and sometimes terrifying
- Difficulty seeing the rhetorical/cultural context in which a text exists
  - Appreciate political biases, varying levels of scholarship, **author as real person...**
- Difficulty in seeing themselves engaged in the text’s (the author's) broader conversation
  - Carry on a silent conversation as both skeptic and believer
- Failing to know the allusions and cultural references of a text
  - Knowledge of cultural codes is often essential to making meaning of the text
- Possessing an inadequate vocabulary, and resistance to looking up words
  - How does the context affect word meanings
  - Develop an "ear" for irony and/or humor
- Difficulty in understanding difficult and unfamiliar syntax (sentence structure)
  - Isolate main clauses in complex sentence structure
- Failing to see how discourse varies from discipline to discipline
  - Need to examine highly metaphorical and/or allusive styles

**Tips for Students: Getting “Unstuck”**

1. Trust the author. Don't panic if at first the text doesn't make sense. The author will slowly reveal clues.
2. Ask questions. Someone else may have the same question. Someone else may be able to clear up confusion.
3. Slow down. Give yourself time to read, reread, and paraphrase what you've read.
4. It is okay to go back. Sometimes readers go back and reread several times before parts of the text make sense.

**Getting Started With Marking the Text**

1. Annotate in different color with each reading (silently, aloud...) or *throw away your highlighter* and **Stop, Think, and Write** a note in the margin  
Write the thinking next to the words on the page that caused you to have the thought or question
2. Don't copy the text; respond to it.
3. Merely underlining text is not enough. Thinking about the text must accompany the underlining.
4. There is no one way to respond to the text. Here are some possible options:
  - ✓ Ask a question
  - ✓ Give an opinion
  - ✓ Make a connection to something familiar
  - ✓ Draw a conclusion
  - ✓ Make a statement
5. Engage in a dialogue with the author.
6. Map, or outline, the writer's argument  
Engage in outside/independent reading of all kinds.  
Newspapers, Magazines, Internet articles, facebook, books of any kind, cereal boxes, can labels, etc.

**Writing the Essay**

1. Open with an detailed and engaging first sentence (answer the prompt, let the reader know you understand the text)  
Address the What and How of the prompt  
Explain the What of the prose and the introduce the techniques to explain the How
2. Write chronologically through the piece. You are less likely to miss something if you do
3. Support your "What" (thesis/theme) with literary elements  
Provide examples from the text to support the "What"  
Explain in detail how the examples relate to the "What"
4. Don't repeat the same ideas. State it once and move on
5. Use your best vocabulary  
Use apt verbs to describe how an author uses a particular literary technique and how that contributes to the "What" (thesis/theme)  
Use strong vocabulary for tone and mood  
Think of the exact tone/mood you are describing  
Mature analysis of mood/tone and theme requires close reading and strong vocabulary

## 2005 AP English Literature and Composition Free-Response Question 2

Printed below is the complete text of a short story written in 1946 by Katharine Brush. Read the story carefully. Then, write an essay in which you show how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose.

### The Birthday Party

They were a couple in their late thirties, and they looked unmistakably married. They sat on the banquette opposite us in a little narrow restaurant, having dinner. The man had a round, self-satisfied face, with glasses on it; the woman was fadingly pretty, in a big hat. There was nothing conspicuous about them, nothing particularly noticeable, until the end of their meal, when it suddenly became obvious that this was an Occasion—in fact, the husband's birthday, and the wife had planned a little surprise for him.

It arrived, in the form of a small but glossy birthday cake, with one pink candle burning in the center. The headwaiter brought it in and placed it before the husband, and meanwhile the violin-and-piano orchestra played "Happy Birthday to You" and the wife beamed with shy pride over her little surprise, and such few people as there were in the restaurant tried to

help out with a pattering of applause. It became clear at once that help was needed, because the husband was not pleased. Instead he was hotly embarrassed, and indignant at his wife for embarrassing him.

You looked at him and you saw this and you thought, "Oh, now don't be like that!" But he was like that, and as soon as the little cake had been deposited on the table, and the orchestra had finished the birthday piece, and the general attention had shifted from the man and woman, I saw him say something to her under his breath—some punishing thing, quick and curt and unkind. I couldn't bear to look at the woman then, so I stared at my plate and waited for quite a long time. Not long enough, though. She was still crying when I finally glanced over there again. Crying quietly and heartbrokenly and hopelessly all to herself, under the gay big brim of her best hat.

**2005 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE SCORING GUIDELINE****Question #2: Katharine Brush's "Birthday Party"**

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 essays offer a persuasive analysis of how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose. The writers make a strong case for their interpretation of the story. They explore possibilities of character and situation; consider literary elements such as characterization, point of view, syntax, diction, and tone; and engage the text through apt and specific references. Although these essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear, precise, and effectively organized. Generally, essays scored a nine (9) reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do essays scored an eight (8).
- 7-6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose. The writers provide a sustained, competent reading of the story, with attention to literary elements such as characterization, point of view, syntax, diction, and tone. Although these essays may not be error-free and may be less perceptive or less convincing than 9-8 essays, the writers present their ideas with clarity and control and refer to the text for support. Generally, essays scored a seven (7) present better developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a six (6).
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the story, but tend to be superficial or undeveloped in their treatment of how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose. While exhibiting some analysis of the story, implicit or explicit, the discussion of how literary elements contribute to the author's purpose may be slight, and support from the text may be thin or tend toward paraphrase. While these writers demonstrate adequate control of language, their essays may be marred by surface errors. Generally, essays scored a five (5) lack the more effective organization and more sustained development characteristic of 7-6 papers.
- 4-3** These essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or a less than adequate treatment of how the author uses literary devices to achieve her purpose. Often relying on plot summary or paraphrase, the writers may fail to articulate a convincing basis for understanding situation and character, or they may misread the story. These papers may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors. Generally, essays scored a four (4) exhibit better control over the elements of composition than those scored a three (3).
- 2-1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may persistently misread the story or be unacceptably brief. They may contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the writer's ideas are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the story. Essays scored a one (1) are especially inept or incoherent.
- 0** These essays make no more than a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off-topic.

**2005-Essay #2-Katharine Brush's "The Birthday Party"****Sample Essays****Sample MM**

"The Birthday Party" by Katherine Brush is truly a story with an objective to depict the cruelty of some people in the world. It does not go far enough to explain it; however her descriptions, perspective, diction and syntax portray the husband's insolence so well that its purpose to induce the reader's disgust is utterly achieved.

Initiating the short story by introducing her subjects immediately the author describes the couple of no extraordinary people but as merely a married "couple in their late thirties." She begins by describing simple physical characteristics, and then lets the reader know that it was the husband's birthday celebration at a restaurant.

Next, the author describes the situation in great detail so as to bring the reader into the shoes of a viewer of the situation. She describes the look of the birthday cake, the sound of the orchestra, the reactions of the patrons in the restaurant—almost so detailed that the reader can hear the clapping and see the lit candle. In this way, the author is able to present a typical situation which any reader can relate to, and bring him/her directly to the scene.

The last paragraph, however, is by far the most significant in assisting and evoking the reader's disgust. Primarily, the author introduces the pronoun 'you.' In this way, the reader is brought even more intimate with the situation at hand; the author realizes that almost every reader would think "Oh, now, don't be like that!" persuading the reader to keep reading to see what happens next. The next sentence is very important because it portrays a series of events all happening very quickly; and to portray this, the author deliberately uses a run on sentence. She writes, "But he was like that, and as soon as the little cake had been deposited on the table, and the orchestra [finished] . . . and the general attention had shifted. . . " to keep the reader entertained and hoping to see how the husband reacts. Just as the answer is about to be revealed, the author now does something she hasn't done yet, and this is introduce "I." The author now introduces "I" because this, again, brings the reader closer to the incident; by doing this, the reader is not only reading about it, but he is reading a personal account of it. She writes that she, "couldn't bear to look at the woman," after the husband cruelly said something to his wife because she accidentally embarrassed him, and this puts the reader in the author's shoes.

The author finishes the third paragraph with potency and by evoking the most sympathy and disgust from the reader. She includes the fragment, "Not long enough, though," to explain the misfortunate reaction of the wife, crying for a long time for simply trying to please her husband. The last sentence is extremely important because it leaves the reader with a lasting impression of sympathy for the wife and anger at the husband. This sentence includes the wife "crying quietly" (as to not make her cruel husband any angrier), "and heartbrokenly" (for she tried her best to please her husband yet was condemned), "and hopelessly" (as to explain there was no redeeming herself). The wife was "all to herself" because she was emotionally conflicting with her husband. The author then leaves us with the idea that this was meant to be a happy and special celebration, yet she was left sobbing under the "gay big brim of her best hat."

Although we as a reader do not know the husband or the wife personally, and although only a simple celebration of a birthday party is described, the detailed and fascinating use of description by the author easily places the reader into the author's shoes, viewing every facial expression, hearing every clap, and smelling the burning candle personally. In this way, the author's purpose of conveying the husband's cruelty to the point of evoking much disgust and sympathy from the reader is achieved greatly.

**Sample DD**

Katharine Brush uses literary techniques in Birthday Party to convey the sense of helplessness an abused person feels in an abusive relationship.

The point of view Brush uses keeps the reader distanced and reserved from the events in the story. The couple's thoughts are unreachable. The narrator is merely an observer to the situation; a customer in the restaurant. This point of view gives the reader a frustration at the distance between the abused woman and the narrator, as if it were impossible to be other than a removed observer.

Imagery is used to positively describe the pains the wife took to make r husband happy. Even though described as "fadingly pretty" and "shy," the woman wears a big hat to hide what she may lack in appearance. And when the cake comes out, "she beams with shy pride." And she would be prideful of the present because went through a great deal of effort to order the cake and have the orchestra play "Happy Birthday to You."

The wife's hat is used a metaphor for how the abusive relationship affects her. She tries hard to cover up her sadness by putting forth a cheerful demeanor, like putting on her best hat to celebrate not her own, but her husband's birthday. Yet when her husband criticizes her hard work, she is crushed inwardly. Her cheer and pride of hard work means nothing after her husband is "indignant" with her. The facade she put on for the benefit of her husband means nothing when she lies "heartbrokenly and hopelessly" under the "big brim of her best hat." Neither her actions or the wishes of the narrator have any effect on the husband, which adds the sense of helplessness of the abused wife in a relationship that seems impossible to mend.

**Sample EE**

In the short story Birthday Party written by Katherine Brush in 1946, she used literary devices to achieve her purpose.

Brush uses imagery in line 4 describing the couple, “The man had a round, self-satisfied face, with glasses on it; the woman was fadingly pretty, in a big hat”. This helps to visualize the couple.

When the husband let her have it, she became disappointed. “crying quietly” is the wife weeping in small volume.

The fact that the “heartbroken” woman hides behind her “gay” (happy) hat is ironic.

**Sample NN**

As clichéd as it is, many times appearances can be deceiving. People are adept at putting on a facade to cover up the true state of their lives, as putting on a happy face even when they are collapsing inside. In her short story, Katharine Brush writes about a seemingly happy incident in which a wife prepares a birthday surprise for her husband. However, the husband’s cruel ingratitude causes the facade of normalcy to collapse, and his wife is left devastated. Through the use of detailed description, anonymity of the characters, and repetition of sounds and phrases, Brush suggests that even songs and birthday cake can’t fix or hide a marriage that is broken inside, and we can’t always put on a smile.

Brush creates a very detailed description of the husband and wife at the restaurant. The man has a “round, self-satisfied face”, and the wife is “fadingly pretty.” As the author suggests, there is nothing out of the ordinary about them. Once the narrator realizes that this is actually an Occasion with a capital O, she begins to notice and describe the details that the wife tried so hard to include. The cake is glossy with a pink candle, and there is an orchestra with both violin and piano. These details suggest the time and effort the wife put into surprising her husband and it serves to make it all the more pathetic when her husband rejects her. Brush’s use of detail emphasizes that adornment cannot substitute for substance, especially in a relationship.

Another technique Brush employs is anonymity of character. We don’t know anything about the narrator, and the husband and wife have no names. They are simply an average “couple in their late thirties.” This anonymity adds universality to the situation. They are not just a husband and wife; they are every husband and wife who have tried to make their relationship seem happy and gay when it is not. There are few things more painful than making a sincere effort to reach out to someone and getting it thrown back in your face. We have all experienced this, and we project our own experiences onto this hapless wife and feel her pain as our own. At once, we are the creators and observers of a façade that just doesn’t hold up to reality, and this is made possible by the anonymity and universality of the characters.

Another technique Brush utilizes is repetition of particular phrases and sounds that add pathos to the wife’s situation. Her plans are constantly referred to in a pejorative (“Little surprise”, “Little cake”, etc.) making them seem like they lack importance, when really, they were everything to the wife. Though the surprise is little, she “beam(s) with shy pride.” The repetition of “little” foreshadows the husband’s cruel rejection later in the story and his lack of respect for wife’s efforts. Another place repetition is very effectively employed is in the last sentence of the story. Brush uses alliteration when she describes the wife crying “under the gay big brim of her best hat.” It is truly pathetic that the wife went to the effort to get dressed up fancy for her husband’s birthday, only to be reprimanded for it. The repetition of the B sound almost sounds like someone crying to themselves as their lips quiver, adding to the pain of the wife. Her efforts to add romance and fun to an already dead relationship blew up in her face.

Marriages and relationships in general can be destroyed by a lack of respect and sensitivity. Though we do not know the circumstances of the husband and wife’s relationship, his utter cruelty in rejecting her kindness could not have been an isolated event. The public display of the birthday surprise suggests that the wife was trying to convince her herself and the world that she had a healthy marriage, when clearly she did not. Through the use of specific details, anonymous characters, and repetition, brush shows that appearances really can be deceiving.

**Sample YY**

In the story, Birthday Party, the author achieved her purpose by using literary devices.

When the man was described as being “round-faced” and “self-satisfied” it made me dislike him instantly. He sounded like an arrogant aristocrat who believes he is better than anyone else. The woman who was married to him was “fadingly pretty, in a big hat” also sounded like an arrogant aristocrat at first. It made me think of someone who is no longer beautiful, but wants to maintain the guise of being a young beauty. When I learned that she was surprising him with a cake for his birthday I realized that I had underestimated the woman. This small thing gave her character some depth and made her seem more kind. If she had been arrogant she would have thrown him a huge party or simply told him to pick out his own gift. Since she was pleased, but he seemed embarrassed it proved that he thought himself too good for a simple gesture like the cake. When he muttered at her under his breath and made her cry it demonstrated that he thought a birthday cake was childish and unworthy of him. He may have also believed that getting older could be avoided by not celebrating and that being old would be seen as a weakness among his friends and colleagues. When she cried he showed that he was heartless and undeserving of such endearments by not comforting her.

The literary devices make you feel sorry for the woman and indignant at the husband.

**Sample PP**

In "Birthday Party," a wife in her late thirties hopes to surprise her husband with a glossy cake as a symbol of her love. However, the husband reacts with embarrassment and anger. The author, Katharine Brush, makes the reader feel disgusted by the man's heartlessness. Brush asserts that these small gestures of affection are of the greatest importance, and represent a potential heartbreak.

The first section of the passage creates an inconspicuous scene which is interrupted by the sweet surprise the wife has planned for her husband. The narrator uses the words "unmistakenly married" to describe the couple's relationship. They seem ordinary at first, as does the story. However, by capitalizing "Occasion," Brush reveals that this dinner has a special significance. Although the cake is small, it is also glossy. This description conveys that despite the surprise seeming small, it is entirely genuine. The narrator's intimate description of the event draws the reader into the story. One cannot help but smile when the wife "beams with shy pride over her little surprise." In other words, the poignant and sweet tone of the cake scene endears the reader to the wife. Her gesture is one of genuine, heartfelt affection. Brush employs a light but honest tone in creating a mood of endearing love for the reader.

As a result, when the husband responds with cruelty, the reader actually hates him for not acknowledging his wife's affection. The volta comes when the narrator expresses the husband's obvious displeasure. The word "Instead" seems to reveal that the husband's reaction is the opposite of what one expects. Again, Brush draws the reader into the narrator's disappointment with the repetition of "you." Additionally the wish of the narrator is an example of understatement. Therefore, Brush enhances the reader's anger at the husband. When describing the husband's nasty whisper, the narrator's words mirror the husband's tone: they are short and harsh, involving hard consonants. The reader can't bear to look at the wife along with the narrator because the experience seems somehow all too common, the pain too familiar. Brush ends with an ironic juxtaposition that highlights the despair of the wife. The dinner should have been happy and gay like her hat. Instead, the young woman is crying under it, "heartbroken and hopeless." A seemingly harmless and loving gesture has tremendous implications. The wife seems "all to herself," a subtle foreshadowing that their marriage will never be the same. Her husband has pointlessly caused irreparable emotional damage only because of his selfish fear of receiving public attention. By ending with "her best hat," Brush emphasizes the sincerity of the woman's attempt to surprise her husband. The reader finds himself absolutely disgusted by the husband.

Brush believes that these seemingly small gestures have the utmost importance. When the narrator witnesses along with the reader the husband's rejection of his wife's sincere affection, the tragedy of such heartlessness is clear.

**Sample BBB**

The story starts out in a fancy tone. The way both couples were described, the restaurant and the way the man looked when his cake came. I think her purpose was to make the reader feel sorry for the women who is trying so hard to please her husband.

She uses her word choice very carefully to describe her characters. "the wife beamed with shy pride". These words shy and pride usually do not go right next to each other. The author uses these words for the wife because it explains that she probably does not do these little thing for her husband often. She's shy because she is unsure how he will react.

The imagery the reader gets in their head is very vivid. I can almost see the couple sitting there; him "hotly embarrassed" and her with "shy pride". The author uses very descriptive words which helps the reader to picture what is going on, in their head.

Using quotation in the middle of the story was a great idea. That was what I was really thinking and it was nice to have had it said.

In the beginning it talks about the women begin fadingly pretty and wearing a big hat. The author then brings up the big hat again but not until the very end. But instead of it being something pretty she uses it to hide herself. Her hat is a metaphor for how she feels. In the beginning she feels pretty and proud, and her hat is standing tall and is a beautiful hat. Then in the end she has become heartbroken and has become smaller, just like her hat.

**Sample KK**

In her short story, "Birthday Party", author Katharine Brush uses pedestrian diction and simplistic imagery to convey her disapproval for the patriarchal traditions of society and for the lack of appreciation of a wife by her husband.

Brush's diction is not overly elevated or complex. She creates a common scene of an "unmistakably married" couple celebrating "the husband's birthday." The husband wears "glasses" and the wife is "fadingly pretty". By using such descriptions, Brush makes the situation average and common. The couple becomes an appropriate manifestation for a typical American couple. Thus, as the story progresses and the reader is presented with a cruel and unappreciative husband, the situation serves a criticism of a male-dominated society. The "hotly embarrassed" husband says something "punishing" and "unkind" to his wife. The man is cruel to the woman. He intentionally hurts her because his own pride has been damaged.

The mistreated wife resorts to “crying quietly and heartbrokenly and hopelessly” to herself. Her “indignant” and dominating husband cannot show love to anyone except for himself. He is the alpha-male, “self-satisfied” and full of pride. Brush criticizes the traditions of male-dominance by generating disgust for the husband and sympathy for the wife.

Complimenting her rather simplistic diction is Brush’s use of common imagery. She does not trouble herself (or the reader) with lengthy metaphors or allusion. Instead, she describes the “little narrow restaurant” and the small cake with “one pink candle” in a very real fashion. This enables the reader to better relate to the situation taking place. The restaurant is average, and the couple traditional and common. Again, by making the situation universal, Brush is able to point out the flaws in a male-dominated society.

### **Sample O**

Katherine Brush’s “The Birthday Party” is a short story about a wife’s birthday surprise for her husband gone terribly wrong. By the end of the story, the reader is left quite sympathetic of the woman. To achieve this effect, the writer uses diction, imagery, structure, and characters’ actions.

Brush is a quite descriptive in creating her restaurant scene, employing a wide array of words to present setting, character, and action. With words such as “unmistakably married,” “shy pride,” and “hotly embarrassed,” the reader’s attention is focused exactly when and where the author wants the reader to notice or feel something a certain way.

The diction of the story also creates vivid imagery. The entire first paragraph presents such a well formulated description of the couple sitting at the table in the restaurant that one can almost reach out and touch them. In the final scene, the woman’s heartbreak is so apparent and so real that the reader can feel genuine pity for her.

The narrator, although no significant figure by any means in the birthday story whatsoever, nonetheless plays an integral role in conveying the mood of the room surrounding the couple. When the narrator sees the man reprimand the woman, he or she instantly thinks, “don’t be like that!” - a sentiment that is also generated in the reader. The narrator is then forced to look away, and sees the woman is still crying when he or she looks up again, further emphasizing a strong sense of pity.

Finally, the very structure of the story enhances its meaning. Although only three paragraphs in length, the story brings us full circle with a build-up to a climactic point and drops into a tragic ending. The tale builds up with happy images of a couple and warm feelings generated with the birthday surprise. However, the husband’s quiet remarks and the woman’s quiet tears cause the story to collapse on itself into pity and melancholy.

Such a short story cannot easily have such a strong effect on a reader as “The Birthday Party.” Katharine Brush is able to achieve such an impact with her careful employment of literary devices turning a joyful situation into a heart wrenching tragedy.

### **Sample H**

One very overused saying in the US is “Things aren’t always what they seem”, and I think that this well-known saying describes the idea of Katharine Brush’s short story. Her use of metaphor, along with other techniques, shows just how things aren’t always what they seem.

The story starts off in a happy, light-hearted manner, describing a charming married couple. The man’s description, “round, self-satisfied face” (line 3) and the woman’s description, “fadingly pretty, in a big hat” (line 3) tell us some much about them. The imagery used to convey physical descriptions of these two also creates character descriptions. The “self-satisfied face” gives off an impression of arrogance and pulls the reader back from the man. The woman, on the other hand, pulls the reader in. Her pretty appearance is inviting & her big hat is really just a metaphor for her heart. She’s a very kind hearted woman whose eager to please. She is later on said to have “beamed with shy pride” (line 10), which also adds to her warmth. She is so simple and kind that she wouldn’t even hurt a fly.

Another technique is the tone shift. The story goes from a happy birthday surprise to an angry word ending in tears. The shift comes at line 11 when the narrator says, “It became clear at once that help was needed, because the husband was not pleased”. This is surprising, since most people would enjoy a birthday surprise. The original description of the husband was a foreshadow of how his character would come out later.

Needless to say the heart-broken & teary wife gets blamed by the husband. She is sad and now embarrassed herself. The last lines really show the woman’s characters through the use of metaphor, “Crying quietly and heartbrokenly and hopelessly, all to herself, under the gay big brim of her best hat.” (lines 20-21).

The couple that seemed so happy and perfect is now torn apart and weeping. Brush has certainly shown that things aren’t always as they seem, but also that some things never change. Whether she is “fadingly pretty” in it, or crying “under the gay big brim” the woman still had her big heart & that never changed.

**Some things to remember when reading poetry**

1. **Read the syntax literally.** What the words say literally in normal sentences is only a starting point, but it is the place to start. Not all poems use normal prose syntax, but most of them do, and you can save yourself embarrassment by paraphrasing accurately (that is, rephrasing what the poem literally says, in plain prose) and not simply free-associating from an isolated word or phrase.
2. **Articulate for yourself what the title, subject, and situation make you expect.** Poets often use false leads and try to surprise you by doing shocking things, but defining expectation lets you be conscious of where you are when you begin.
3. **Identify the poem's situation.** What is said is often conditioned by **where** it is said and by **whom**. Identifying the speaker and his or her place in the situation puts what he or she says in perspective.
4. **Take a poem on its own terms.** Adjust to the poem; don't make the poem adjust to you. Be prepared to hear things you do not want to hear. Not all poems are about your ideas, nor will they always present emotions you want to feel. But be tolerant and listen to the poem's ideas, not only to your desire to revise them for yourself.
5. **Look up anything you don't understand:** an unfamiliar word (or an ordinary word used in an unfamiliar way), a place a person, a myth, an idea—anything the poem uses. When you can't find what you need or don't know where to look, ask for help.
6. **Remember that poems exist in time, and times change.** Not only have the meanings of words changed, but whole ways of looking at the universe have varied in different ages. Consciousness of time works two ways: your knowledge of history provides a context for reading the poem, and the poem's use of a word or idea *may* modify your notion of a particular age.
7. **Find out what is implied by the traditions behind the poem.** Verse forms, poetic kinds, and metrical patterns all have a frame of reference, traditions of the way they are usually used and for what. For example, the anapest (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one, as in the word *Tennessee*) is usually used for comic poems, and when poets use it "straight" they are aware of their "departure" and are probably making a point by doing it.
8. **Be willing to be surprised.** Things often happen in poems that turn them around. A poem may seem to suggest one thing at first, then persuade you of its opposite, or at least of a significant qualification or variation.
9. **Assume there is a reason for everything.** Poets do make mistakes, but in poems that show some degree of verbal control it is usually safest to assume that the poet chose each word carefully; if the choice seems peculiar to us, it is often we who are missing something. Try to account for everything in a poem and see what kind of sense you can make of it. **Poets make choices;** try to figure out a coherent pattern that explains the text as it stands.
10. **Discuss.** Discussion usually results in clarification and keeps you from being too dependent on personal biases and preoccupations that sometimes mislead even the best readers. Talking a poem over with someone else (especially someone very different) can expand your perspective.

Thanks to Doris Rutherford for sharing.

**Some things to remember when analyzing poetry**

1. **Answer the prompt. Remember: AP means Answer the Prompt**
2. **Mark the poem** and make a plan.
3. The poet is not the speaker; the poet is not the speaker; the poet is not the speaker. The poet uses literary devices and the **speaker** speaks.
4. Write in **literary present tense**.
5. One very useful approach is to begin by identifying three key elements of the poem: the speaker, his/her subject, and the dramatic situation.
6. Make sure your topic sentences are explicit about your structural choices. Frost opens the poem (lines 1-14)... or Frost's first two stanzas...
7. Almost every poem has a series of natural divisions. Look for transitions in theme, subject matter, tone, or chronology and use those for dividing the essay.
8. You are proving a thesis in a poetry explication. Don't forget to write your paper with the central thesis in mind.
9. As you read, look for unusual, distinct or clever phrasing of words or phrases. If a poet violates an expectation of language or presents an idea in an entirely new way, there is likely a reason that you can explore.
10. Look for powerful phrases that have an impact, because of meaning or sound quality. Look for metaphor, symbolism, sound devices.
11. Identify "cool" ideas that you can write about. In other words, if a poem references a historical event or philosophical ideal that you are familiar with, you certainly want to write about it.
12. **Don't fixate on the things that you don't know**; focus on the things that you do. In a poetry explication where you are only given ten minutes to read a poem, there is no way that you can expect to get everything. Emphasize your strengths and focus on those.
13. **Weave in nuggets** from the text of the poem(s). Don't use full quotations, but brief critical nuggets from the text.
14. **Weave** in the use of poetic devices; don't force them in. You want to demonstrate knowledge of the devices and their application, but they are tools, not the **focal point** of your writing.
15. Don't write excessively about sound devices, meter, and rhythm unless you a) have little else to write about or b) are very good at it. They can be really powerful tools for analysis, but are often over-used and trite observations.
16. Make sure that you do more than identify particular devices and techniques. Readers of the essays expect analysis of how the devices function in the piece.

Organizational Structures: **Best:** Natural divisions of the poem—ideas, stanzas, themes. The best papers follow the chronological order of the poem. This ensures that you cover the essay from top to bottom and do not miss any important literary concepts in the piece. This technique also makes your essay easier for the AP readers to read and score.

Remember, the essay is not about the literary techniques or an interpretation of the poem. The essay should be an analysis of **why the poem is effective in portraying a theme**. Every

sentence that you write about the poem should be used to convince the reader that the author is working toward a particular idea.

**Only if you must:** Literary Devices

**Remember your time limit;** Make decisions accordingly

### Poetry Terms

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>language</b></p> <p><b>allusion:</b> brief reference to a person, place, thing, event, or idea in history or literature</p> <p><b>antithesis:</b> the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure</p> <p><b>hyperbole:</b> the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect</p> <p><b>image:</b> a short, vivid description that creates a strong sensory impression</p> <p><b>imagery:</b> a combination of images</p> <p><b>irony (verbal):</b> use of a word in such a way as to convey a meaning opposite to the literal meaning of the word</p> <p><b>litotes:</b> deliberate use of understatement</p> <p><b>metaphor:</b> implied comparison between two things of unlike nature</p> <p><b>metonymy:</b> substitution of some attributive or suggestive word for what is actually meant</p> <p><b>paradox:</b> A statement that initially appears to be contradictory but then, on closer inspection, turns out to make sense.</p> <p><b>parallelism:</b> similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses</p> <p><b>personification:</b> investing abstractions or inanimate objects with human qualities</p> <p><b>simile:</b> explicit comparison between two things of unlike nature</p> <p><b>synecdoche:</b> figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole</p> | <p><b>trope:</b> one of the two major divisions of figures of speech (the other being rhetorical figures) which refers to the figurative turning or twisting of some word or phrase to make it mean something else. Metaphor, metonymy, simile, personification, and synecdoche are the principal tropes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>sounds</b></p> <p><b>Accent and Duration</b></p> <p><b>foot:</b> a pair of syllables</p> <p><b>iamb or iambic foot:</b> a pair of syllables, with the first syllable less prominent than the second</p> <p><b>accent or stress:</b> the sound of a syllable as affected by a change in pitch when spoken</p> <p><b>duration or quantity:</b> shortness or length of a syllable when pronounced relative to the syllables surrounding it</p> <p><b>Syntax and Line</b></p> <p><b>line:</b> the characters that appear on a single line regardless of grammatical structure</p> <p><b>syntax:</b> the words in their arrangement, and the dynamic energy the arrangement creates</p> <p><b>syntactical unit:</b> a sentence, phrase, or clause</p> <p><b>enjambment:</b> a run-over line</p> <p><b>Technical Terms</b></p> <p><b>trochee:</b> an inverted iamb, where the first syllable is more prominent than the second, as in "Tell me"</p> <p><b>anapest:</b> the unstressed half of a foot divided into two, as in "the expense"</p> | <p><b>sprung rhythm:</b> the omission of an unstressed syllable, resulting in the jamming of two stressed syllables together, as in "saw, who" in the line "Wonders I saw, who can tell?" rather than "Wonders I saw, that who can tell?"</p> <p><b>spondee:</b> a foot of two long syllables, as in the spondaic line "And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste"</p> <p><b>caesura:</b> a pause in a line often indicated by punctuation, as in the first and third lines of "First, prepare you to be sorry/That you never knew till now,/Either whom to love, or how:"</p> <p><b>dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter:</b> lines consisting of two, three, four, five, and six feet, respectively</p> <p><b>Like and Unlike Sounds</b></p> <p><b>assonance:</b> repetition at close intervals of the vowel sounds of accented syllables or important words: <i>hat-ran-amber, vein-made</i></p> <p><b>consonance:</b> repetition at close intervals of the final consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words: <i>book-plaque-thicker</i></p> <p><b>alliteration:</b> repetition at close intervals of the initial consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words: <i>map-moon, kill-code, preach-approve</i></p> |
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## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

## Question 1

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

The poems below, published in 1789 and 1794, were written by William Blake in response to the condition of chimney sweeps. Usually small children, sweeps were forced inside chimneys to clean their interiors. Read the two poems carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the two poems, taking into consideration the poetic techniques Blake uses in each.

## The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry "'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'"\*  
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

Line  
5 There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head  
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd, so I said,  
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,  
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, & that very night,  
10 As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!  
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,  
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;  
15 Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,  
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun;

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,  
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
20 He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark  
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.  
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;  
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

\* The child's lisping attempt at the chimney sweep's street cry,  
"Sweep! Sweep!"

William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (1789; 1794; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

(1789)

## The Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow  
Crying "'weep, 'weep,'" in notes of woe!  
"Where are thy father & mother? say?"  
"They are both gone up to the church to pray."

Line  
5 "Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smil'd among the winter's snow;  
They clothéd me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe."

"And because I am happy, & dance & sing,  
10 They think they have done me no injury,  
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,  
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (1789; 1794; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

(1794)

**2005 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE SCORING GUIDELINE****Question #1: William Blake's Chimney Sweeper Poems**

**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 essays offer a persuasive comparison/contrast of the two poems and present an insightful analysis of the relationship between them. Although the writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations and choose to emphasize different poetic techniques, these papers provide convincing readings of **both** poems and demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear **and** sophisticated, and in the case of a nine (9) essay, especially persuasive.
- 7-6** These essays offer a reasonable comparison/contrast of the two poems and an effective analysis of the relationship between them. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the themes and techniques, and their analysis of the relationship between the two poems is less convincing. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly with references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9-8 papers. While essays scored 7-6 are generally well written, those scored a seven (7) demonstrate more sophistication in both substance and style.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the two poems and their relationship, but they may be superficial in analysis of theme and technique. They often rely on paraphrase, but paraphrase that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their comparison/contrast of the relationship between the two poems may be vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported by references to the texts. There may be minor misinterpretations of one or both poems. These writers demonstrate control of language, but the writing may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7-6 essays.
- 4-3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the two poems. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or may ignore one of the poems completely. Evidence from the poems may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates 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 three (3) may contain significant misreadings and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2-1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the writer's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poems themselves. They may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. These essays may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the poems.
- 0** These essays give a response with no more than a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off-topic.

**AAAA** William Blake's two poems, both titled "The Chimney Sweeper" can be compared through an analysis of Blake's use of poetic structure, rhyme scheme, religious and non-religious imagery, and rhythm and meter.

There are many remarkable similarities between the two poems. both are composed of quatrains, featuring an AABB rhyme scheme. Both poems also feature a large amount of religious reference and imagery. In his 1789 poem, Blake writes of "an Angel who had a bright key." he uses

**UU** The overall moods of both poems differ, first of all. Poem A (published in 1789) is about misery in life like Poem B (published in 1794), but unlike Poem B, Poem A ends in a happier, more joyful mood, while poem B ends in hypocritical irony and misery. Blake uses words as he describes Tom's dream that enhance feelings of happy rebirth into a new life as the children are freed from coffins by an angel. It's as if they have died and revived. Blake also uses setting of a river, and green plains covered in sunlight to further enhance feelings of happiness as the children wash filthy soot off their bodies. This action represents their passing on to new lives. Blake, however casts very sympathetic feelings on us with Poem B. The speaker who was "happy upon the heath", was "clothed in clothes of death". His/her search for happiness and result in misery gives us feelings of depression.

Poetic techniques are also used differently in both poems. In poem A, Blake maintains six stanzas with four lines in each stanza and rhyming pattern AABB. Meanwhile, poem B is only half as long, having only 3 stanzas with four lines. One Stanza's rhyming pattern is AABB, while the remaining two are of ABAB patterns.

**CCC** William Blake wrote two poems in which he displayed similar conditions that the young chimney sweepers have to live through and what brings happiness to their lives.

The first poem is formed from couplets and iambic pentameter with variations in almost every stanza. In the first stanza, Blake talks about how the boy came to be a sweeper. The next stanza introduces "Tom Dacre" who has a dream through stanzas three, four, and five. Then, in stanza six, Tom awakes with happiness and contentness that the dream has given him. This poem showed some hard times that sweepers had to go through and how they find some peace.

The second poem has a set of couplets and is also in iambic pentameter with some variations. The second poems is much different from the first in that it doesn't tell a story but instead it just tells of a chimney sweepers thoughts. In the first poem, the sweeper has a dream in which the author uses imagery to portray to the reader how "Tom awoke" to be "happy and warm" In the second poem, however, the sweeper never needs a dream to tell him to be happy because he is and no one can drag him down.

In both poems, it is made apparent that God has made the sweepers content and happy

with their lives. In the first poem, Tom has a dream in which God sends an angel to him to tell him be happy and not sad, for as long as he is good, he will "have God for his father and never want joy." In the second poem, God also provides the sweeper with happiness because he says that God "make up a heaven of our misery" which means that God will be good to those who have suffered and this thought makes the sweeper happy.

Although the two poems are very different, the author still portrays to the reader the same message that God will always watch out for the ones who suffer.

**L** William Blake portrays two young boys in his poems *The Chimney Sweeper*. These poems not only share the same title but they have similar story lines, characters, and dialect. If it had not been for the stylistic techniques, and small details these poems would be one in the same.

These poems were not written that far apart and share many of the same qualities. Both poems are about young boys who are chimney sweepers. These boys don't have parents, caused either by death or abandonment. They were both forced into this work because of their lack of family. Not only do they share similar backgrounds but their dialect is the same. Both boys are unable to say sweep. Blake shows this by using " 'weep! 'weep! "

Another thing both poems share are their view on God. The message conveyed about God through Blake's poems is that of misery and joylessness. In the first poem, line 20 says, "He'd have God for his father + never want joy." Basically if Tom has god he will never want anything more than that. He will spend his life joyless until he is in god's kingdom. This similar message is conveyed in lines 11 and 12 in the second poem, "and are gone to praise God + his Priest + King,/Who make up a heaven of our misery." God has made life miserable for this boy. There is no hope for either of these boys to change their fates, so they stay stuck in their similar situations.

Although these poems share some qualities they do vary in other aspects. For instance the boy in the first poem is not completely alone. He knows other chimney sweepers and has a friend Tom who sweeps with him. On the other hand, the second boy is alone, without a parent or a friend.

That is only the beginning the poems tones also vary. The first poem has an uplifting and positive tone toward the end. This is conveyed through "warm", "not fear harm", "happy". The second poem is ended on misery which gives the poem a negative tone.

As far as techniques go the rhyming differs between the two. The first is made up of rhyming couplets, while the second every other line rhymes. although each varies in length their stanzas are the same length at four lines.

Although these poems share the same title they do vary in their styles and stories slightly. Overall it seems you could add them together and not tell the difference.

**T** The attitudes Blake conveys in the two poems are distinctly different. The poem written in 1789 begins much like the one written in 1794 does, but then continues in a more optimistic attitude than the latter one. Both begin with the rhyme scheme AABB. In the first quatrain of each, Blake provides the background that the chimney sweepers were very young. The parents in both have abandoned their children. The speaker in the first poem, though, seeks to make the best of the circumstances he's in: "Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare/you know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair." The sweeper in the second poem resorts to "notes of woe."

The poem written in 1789 consists of rhyming couplets in six quatrains. At one point Blake conveys the image of "coffins in black," but then the angel released the children from the coffins and the poem is then sprinkled with happier imagery, such as "green plain," "sun," "clouds," and "wind." The poem ends with the optimistic line: "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm."

While in the first poem an angel had released the children from the coffins, no such freedom is bestowed upon the child in the 1794 poem. The rhyme scheme following the first quatrain is also different. In the first poem, Blake employs CCDD, but in the second switches to CDCD. The clash in attitudes is signified by the difference in the rhyme scheme following the first quatrain. In the second poem, we see the image of "a little black thing among the snow." The contrast in colors signifies the child's dark existence, a life lacking in joy. While in the first poem God was looked upon as a benefactor: "He'd have God for his father and never want joy," in the second poem God does nothing to alleviate the child's misery: ".God and his Priest..who make up a heaven of our misery."

It is apparent from the two poems that Blake's opinion regarding the employment of children as chimney sweeps had changed from 1789 to 1794. by 1794, his poem no longer expressed hope for the children. Through the use of rhyme and imagery, Blake differentiates between the attitudes he had held at the different times. The children in the 1794 poem are fated for a life of misery. Even God has abandoned these children.

**OOO** God, the all-knowing being, is often used to connect people, places, and things through a common idea. However, while comparing both "chimney Sweepers" by William Black, his mere presence divides the poems, while the true saving grace that connects the poems is structural.

"The angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy, he'd have God for his father and never want joy." "Chimney Sweeper-1789" uses religious imagery as a positive, a saving grace for young chimney sweeps everywhere. By accepting God, according to Tom's dream, their lives would improve immensely until one day they rejoined their father and "leaping" and "laughing" they would play in the great Kingdom of Heaven. By doing their duty and risking their lives in unstable conditions the boys would be "happy and warm." God in "chimney Sweeper 1789" is portrayed as a benevolent savior, while in chimney Sweeper 1794" the opposite is true.

In "Chimney Sweeper 1794," a young sweep depicts God as a malevolent, heartless character. It is He who "makes up a heaven of our misery." God destroys all happiness in the far more cynical version of "Chimney Sweeper." While Tom finds "happiness" in his "duty," the second sweep believes his work to be dangerous and full of "woe." He dresses in "clothes of death," believing he will never ascend to the kingdom that Tom believes in. The second narrator's life is far too cynical and depressing to ever believe that a benevolent God is possible. In "Chimney Sweeper 1789" and "Chimney Sweeper 1794" the very thing that should connect these poems proves to divide them and the sweeps.

The poems are divided in ideology, yet in structure they are remarkably similar. In fact they are identical! both poems employ quatrains as stanzas that help progress the respective stories of Tom and the second sweep. Both are also written in rhyming couplets with a rhyme scheme of aabbcc. Along with quatrains and rhyme schemes the poems employ the use of caesuras, for natural pauses. Yet aside from these structural similarities that most likely reflect the author's style-the poems maintain an extremely obvious similarity-both poems are entitled "Chimney Sweeper," perhaps to contrast the ideologies in both poems, employing the use of irony, but none the less both poems have the same title.

William Blake, perhaps found cynicism and atheism at a later date, within the time period of 1789 and 1794, thus explaining the ideological differences of both his "chimney sweeper" poems. Whatever the case may be, new found atheism or not, Blake retained his style and structure in both.

**LLLL** In his poems, The Chimney Sweeper, William Blake uses different poetic techniques such as employing imagery, evoking certain moods, and using different structures for each of his poems to express a common theme of pity for the chimney sweep's situation. In his first poem, 3 quatrains longer than the second, his theme is more focused on a more subtle warning to the late 18th century English public, whereas his second is a more direct and concise criticism of the practice of using children for chimney sweeps.

In his first poem, Blake's tone, which is critical of the child labor undertaken by the particular chimney sweep the poem is about, is developed by first evoking pity in lines 1-4 when the speaker relates how his mother died and his father sold him into becoming a chimney sweep. The rest of this poem, composed of Tom Dacre's dream, and the boy's resolution to be good and do what they are told are meant to be empathetic to the reader, drawing on the boy's innocent picture of death and life after death where "He'd have God for his father & never want joy" (line 20).

In contrast to the first poem, the authorial tone is much more mournful than it is empathetic and cautionary. The images of death that are present in the first poem (coffins, line 14) are also present in the second quatrain of the second poem, but the speaker's tone has

become much more mournful and pathetic as he exclaims his woeful situation. This poem can be seen as a more direct didactic, aimed at those who are either in support of child labor, or those neglectful parents whose children work as chimney sweeps.

The imagery in the first poem of bright fields, coupled with death in Tom's dream, is a contrast to the imagery in the second poem, which does not appear to be bright in any case but is all dark, also dealing with death. The bleak images in the second poem contrast the speaker's views and understanding of the life and death as a chimney with that of the first. Blake's incorporation of the Church into his poetry as an institution that encourages and espouses the child labor can be seen as a criticism of the church at the time.

The structures of the two poems, including slight differences in rhyme scheme and poem length, the first being 6 quatrains and the second poem only 3, do not add up to much of a contrast between the two poems, but the length of the first poem, coupled with Tom Dacre's dream, help to emphasize the more warning tone of the poem itself. The brevity of the second poem helps to emphasize its sharp and harsh message that is critical of the child labor of the time.

Through using different poetic techniques, William Blake was able to express his feeling of pity for chimney sweeps and his criticisms of the church and conventions of late 18th century England.

**TTTT** The chimney sweep children live a life of woe, sleeping in soot & working day after day. This life is accepted, even praised by their parents, as the children suffer their lives away with smiles on their faces.

William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" from 1789 opens in tragedy. The speaker, narrating his experiences in first person to directly relate his life to the readers, lost his mother at a very young age. He cannot turn to his father, for his father "sold" him to be a chimney sweep. This idea of being "sold" connotes the image of a slave, worthless & owned by society. If the child's own father treats his chimney sweep son as a slave then how must the rest of society regard him? Certainly not very well, as he tell us, "in soot I sleep." The child is sleeping in dirt, symbolizing his very low standing in society. sadly, the child in this position is so young that he "could scarcely cry " 'weep!" He cannot even fully pronounce his words, yet society (including his father) throws him on the street to sleep in soot.

But it seems that these children can't hold on to their youth & innocence very long, as seen in the narrator's consolation to Tom Dacre that having a bald head means that "the soot cannot spoil your white hair." The connotation of the word "spoil" is one of decay & degradation, of ruin. Not only can the soot spoil white hair, but it can also spoil lives, childhood, and innocence. In fact, the color white often symbolizes purity & innocence, something that can clearly be robbed by chimney sweeping, as seen in the soot's ability to spoil the children's white hair. This idea is reaffirmed in Tom's vision of his chimney sweeping companions "lock'd up in

coffins of black." Opposite white, black is a symbol of death & loss, portraying once again the lives of these boys wasting away.

Also in this vision, we see an angel, who tells Tom that, "if he'd be a good boy,/He'd have God for his father & never want joy." This seems to be almost bribery for the children to comply with their poor state of living, coming from an Angel of God! In addition, the lack of a need for joy is portrayed as a reward almost as if you won't want it, so you'll be content," a promise of a sad life paired with a request for compliance. In the end, the narrator says "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm, advocating an obedience to the duty he had previously described as black & spoiling, as if he had been brainwashed by the Angel, representative of those above him.

5 years later, in Blake's other "The Chimney Sweeper," we are introduced to "a little black thing." The connotation of "thing" here is rather negative, not really considering the boy as a human being. This seems to dually represent society's lack of concern for the sweep and the inability to recognize him under the soot from his job. As in the first poem, the boy is crying "weep, 'week," with "crying" portraying a sadness for his predicament. Yet unlike the first poem, this boy cries "in notes of woe," with an even more despairing connotation. This boy has a mother & father (unlike the first), but they have "gone up to the church" in order to "praise God & and his Priest & King," reminiscent of the angel that seemed to brainwash the first boy; now the parents are the ones brainwashed by a higher power despite the fact that they "taught" their son "the notes of woe." (they must have known them themselves to be able to teach them.).

Like the "happy & warm" Tom, this second boy also appears happy, causing his parents to "think they have done (him) no injury." But they clearly think wrong as they worship those who are a "heaven of our misery." Unlike the first boy, this chimney sweep cannot be brainwashed by a higher power; he knows of the pain of his job, yet cannot convince those above him of it.

**YYY** William Blake's two poems entitled "The Chimney Sweeper" both illustrate the injustice of forcing children to perform some of the dirtiest work in British cities: sweeping the black soot out of chimneys. Both also contain religious imagery and a consistent rhyme scheme. But, the anonymity of the second poem cause it to serve as a more universal condemnation of the practice, and the hypocrisy behind it, than the longer version.

Upon first glance, an immediate difference between the two poems is in their length; while the first poem is over twenty lines long, the second version is barely ten. After looking more closely, though, certain striking similarities present themselves to the reader. In the first stanza of each, the youth of the subject is made apparent. The first poem begins, "When my mother died I was very young," (ln. 1) while the second starts, "A little black thing." (ln. 1). The use of "little" and "young" establish the youth and vulnerability of both subjects. Both first stanzas also include the line "crying ' weep! 'weep! 'weep!" The lisp, combined with the

similarity between the speakers "weep" and the very "to weep" or "to cry," also highlight the helplessness and sadness of the child's situation.

After establishing the age of the subject, though, the poems start to differ substantially in terms of narrative perspective and their impact upon the reader. The first version starts off as a first person narrative whose speaker is speaking of himself. He says, "When my mother died I was young.my father sold me.I sweep.I sleep." (lns. 1-4). The use of so many "i"s and "me"s immediately establishes an intimacy between reader and speaker; we feel as if we are becoming involved in his experiences. After the first stanza, the speaker shifts the subject from himself to "Tom Dacre", a friend of his. While the poem has shifted to a third person perspective, the use of the name "Tom Dacre" (ln. 5) keeps the reader intimately connected with the story; we are personally attached not to an anonymous figure, but to a boy with a name. The bond is strengthened by further characterization of Tom. The speaker says, ".little Tom..cried when his head was shaved.the soot cannot spoil your white hair." (lns. 5-8). Now, the reader understands physical aspects of Tom such as his recently shorn white hair. The imagery created by the specific details of Tom allows the reader to form a mental picture of Tom or put a specific face to this name. More names are mentioned in subsequent lines. Boys such as "Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack," are also now involved in the story. The personalization and familiarization created by the use of names draws the reader in, making the horror of chimney sweeping feel much stronger and hit "closer to home". In a dream of Tom's, not arbitrary children, but "Tome and Dick" are "locked up in coffins of black." (ln. 12).

The second poem maintains an anonymity that, while distancing the reader from one individual subject, universalizes the plight of the children. No names are mentioned; the subject is not "tom" but "A little black thing among the snow." (ln. 1) After the first stanza, this version, too, switches perspective. Here, the switch is to first person but the use of quotations keeps the story distant. In this version, the real impact comes from the contrasting images in the speaker's lines. The child says, "Because I was happy.they clothed me in clothes of death.Because I am happy.they think they have done me no injury and are gone to praise God." (lns. 5-8). The contrast between "happy" and "death" highlight the irrationality of essentially condemning innocent children to the dirty, black, almost deadly, as implied by the negative, death-related religious imagery in the first version in lines like ".an Angel.opened the coffins." (lns 13-14), labor. The hypocrisy of the adults is brought through in these lines as well. They manage to go to church, pray to God for benevolence and mercy, and think themselves pious while they simultaneously ignore what they have done to their children. In the first version, the child was "sold" (ln. 2) like a slave into the black deadly profession.

The combination of pure, white religious imagery, such as the angel's "bright" key and the naked, white children in Tom's dream, and the dark, sooty, deadly images of chimney sweeping along with the contrast between the dark labor the children perform and the play, "leaping and laughing. in the sun." (version 1, lns. 15-16) in which they should be engaged is used in both

versions to highlight the injustice of the treatment of the children. The first poems personalization through the use of names and vivid description heightens the impact of their injustice on the reader while the second poem accomplishes a universalization of the injustice by omitting such names.

**Multiple Choice General Instructions:** The multiple choice section of the recent exams consists of 50-55 questions on four to six passages which have to be answered in one hour. Strategies that help students consist of reading comprehension practices and familiarity with the exam structure.

1. Quickly survey ALL of the reading passages and note the number of questions attached to each one. Start with the passage that you think you might understand the best AND has a significant number of questions attached to it. After you have worked through that passage, attack the passage that is your second favorite, and so on. This means that you might complete the last passage first if you think that is your best passage, while leaving the first passage for last (because you feel it is your weakest).
2. Skim the questions, not the choices or distracters, to identify what the constructors of the test think is important in the passage.
3. The directions are always the same for each section: "Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answer." **Remember** that the questions that say "Not, Least, and Except are really well crafted true/false or yes/no questions which are **time bandits**.
4. Aggressively attack the questions. Remember that questions do NOT become more difficult as they progress.
5. Don't be afraid to use the test as a source of information. Sometimes, another question will help you answer the one you are stuck on.
6. Read the questions CAREFULLY! Many wrong answers stem from misreading the question; know what is being asked.
7. Read the introductory paragraph and the last paragraph and mark the key topic.
8. Mark any rhetorical shifts usually identified with conjunctions such as But, Although, Since, etc.
9. Read the passages actively by circling the items that seem to be addressed in the questions. Draw lines from the question to the line reference in the passage to save time finding the lines later.
10. Read a few lines before and a few lines after a line question (usually a sentence) to make sure your inference is correct.
11. Be deliberate in your reading; words are there for a reason. Do not imagine what isn't there.
12. Read the questions crossing out obvious wrong answers: a question that contradicts the passage, is irrelevant to the passage, or repeats the same information in more than one question. Remember: Read all the choices, but there is only **one right answer**: mark and move on.
13. All questions follow the order of appearance in the passage; nothing is out of sequence.
14. In paired passages the first questions address the first passage; then, the second passage is addressed. Questions that deal with both passages are at the end of the selection.

15. Watch your time by avoiding a re-reading the passage. READ CAREFULLY the first time.
16. Do not linger, obsess, or dither over any one question. You should move at a brisk, but comfortable pace throughout the questions.
17. Go over the test when you are finished. When you go over the test, make sure you read the question correctly and that you answered what it asked. Do not change answers unless you are certain that you made a mistake. If you are not absolutely sure the answer you want to change is incorrect, go with your first impression. Almost without fail, first associations are correct.
18. With approximately 90 seconds left to go in this one-hour section, pick a letter and bubble in any remaining answers. You should complete the test as thoughtfully as possible for 58-59 minutes and then fill in any remaining empty bubbles in the last 90 seconds.

Since this is a **skill-based test**: there is little chance that you will have seen the passages before, but the questions the test asks focus on **higher-level reading skills**.

**Helpful Reminder:** Until your brain is warm and focused, you will have a tendency to miss questions. So, be very careful with your first few questions of the test and your first couple of questions on a new passage.

**Reminder Two:** Students tend to lose focus and confidence during this section of the test. As a result, students will miss a series of questions because of lost concentration and internal doubts.

For this first section of the AP Literature exam, you are allotted 1 hour to answer between 45 and 55 objective questions on five to seven prose and poetry selections. The prose passages may come from works of fiction or drama. You can expect the poems to be complete and from different time periods and of different styles and forms. In other words, you will not find two Shakespearean sonnets on the same exam.

These are not easy readings. They are representative of the college-level work you have been doing throughout the year. You will be expected to:

- Follow sophisticated syntax
- Respond to diction
- Be comfortable with upper-level vocabulary
- Be familiar with literary terminology
- Make inferences
- Be sensitive to irony and tone
- Recognize components of style

The multiple choice questions are designed to assess your understanding of:  
The meaning of the selection,  
Your ability to draw inferences,  
Your ability to see implications,  
How a writer develops ideas;  
Therefore, the questions will be **factual, technical, analytical, and inferential**

### **Some Other Tips for Multiple-Choice Tests**

Multiple choice items consist of a question or an incomplete statement, called the "stem," followed by five choices. Most often only one is the correct or "best" answer and the others are called distracters or decoys. A few strategies can help you do your best on multiple choice tests.

First, cover the answers to an item and read only the stem of the question. See if you can provide the correct answer without having to be prompted by the choices. If an answer comes to mind, then look at the choices and select it if it is listed there.

If you apply the first strategy and no answer pops into your head, try the second: join each choice to the question or the stem and consider it as a true/false item. The answer that sounds most valid or "most true" should be your choice.

And third, test designers are often limited in their "supply of decoys," and as a result will make up terms to use for that purpose or utilize obscure terms. If you have been studying regularly and have done a good job of preparing for the test, you should not choose an answer that sounds totally new to you.

Remember that the "distracters" are usually written as almost correct. It is your task to effectively think through the question to make sure that you select the correct answer.

If you find yourself having to guess on multiple-choice items, you might keep the following tip in mind.

If two of the choices have balanced phrasing or echo each other, choose one or the other. Again, human nature comes into play in this tendency. If the correct answer on a nursing test on the effect of a given drug is "lowers body temperature," it might be logical for the first decoy item that pops into the teacher's mind to be "raises body temperature." When researchers analyzed a wide range of teachers' tests, they found that the correct answer is often one of the phrases that has a parallel or "echoed" decoy item.

**Types of Questions**

Below are broad categories of AP Literature and Composition multiple-choice questions and question stems. Examine the list. Determine which types of question give you the most difficulty.

***Literary Technique***

Questions about technique ask that students examine devices and style.

- What dominant technique/rhetorical strategy is the speaker using in lines...
- All of the following may be found in the passage EXCEPT
- The rhetorical strategy employed in lines...is best described as....
- The style of the passage is best determined as...

***Main Ideas***

Questions about main ideas often require students to make a generalization about the passage or section of a passage based on key details presented. Examine the first and last sentence of each paragraph and the first and last paragraph. Read around key details mentioned in a passage to put the phrases in context.

- The speaker is concerned with...
- The first seventeen lines deal with...
- The narrator would argue that...
- The first paragraph highlights which of the following concerns of the narrator...
- The point of the speaker's statement is...
- The speaker's primary purpose in the passage is...

***Inference***

Inference questions ask students to define words, read for main ideas and understand tone. Words, Phrases, Lines

Remember to read around the line numbers in order to establish context.

- In context line 28 most nearly means...
- In line 22, the word "other" most probably refers to...

***Paragraphs/Sections***

These questions require close reading over the course of a section.

- The metaphor developed in the second paragraph suggests primarily that...
- The speaker emphasizes in lines 20-30 that...

***Tone/Mood/Style***

Examine the first and last sentence of each paragraph and the first and last paragraph.

- The tone of the passage is best described as...
- The atmosphere established in the passage is mainly one of...

***Organization/Grammar***

Questions of this sort examine the patterns, order and grammar in the passage.

- The phrase \_\_\_\_\_ signals a shift from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_....
- The phrase \_\_\_\_\_ refers to which of the following?

| Projected Score | Multiple Choice Correct | Weighted Score MC | Multiple Choice % | Essay 1 Score | Essay 2 Score | Essay 3 Score | Composite Score | Possible/Impossible |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 3               | 42                      | 51.5424           | 76.4%             | 3             | 3             | 3             | 79              | <b>Impossible</b>   |
| 3               | 44                      | 53.9968           | 80%               | 3             | 3             | 3             | 81              | Possible            |
| 3               | 36                      | 44.1792           | 65.6%             | 4             | 4             | 4             | 81              | Possible            |
| 3               | 29                      | 35.5888           | 52.7%             | 5             | 5             | 5             | 81              | Possible            |
| 3               | 26                      | 31.9072           | 47.3%             | 5             | 5             | 6             | 81              | Possible            |
| 4               | 45                      | 55.224            | 81.8%             | 4             | 5             | 5             | 98              | Possible            |
| 4               | 38                      | 46.6336           | 69.1%             | 5             | 6             | 6             | 99              | Possible            |
| 4               | 37                      | 45.4064           | 67.3%             | 5             | 6             | 6             | 97              | <b>Impossible</b>   |
| <b>4</b>        | <b>37</b>               | <b>45.4064</b>    | <b>67.3%</b>      | <b>6</b>      | <b>6</b>      | <b>6</b>      | <b>100</b>      | <b>Possible</b>     |
| 4               | 37                      | 45.4064           | 67.3%             | 7             | 6             | 6             | 103             | Possible            |
| 5               | 41                      | 50.3152           | 74.5%             | 7             | 7             | 7             | 114             | Possible            |

**To Calculate your Score**

Multiple-Choice

Number Correct \_\_\_\_\_ x 1.2272 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (out of 55) (Do not round)

Question 1 \_\_\_\_\_ x 3.0556 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Do not round)

Question 2 \_\_\_\_\_ x 3.0556 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Do not round)

Question 3 \_\_\_\_\_ x 3.0556 = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Do not round)

Sum = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Do not round)

Composite Score \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
                                     Multiple Choice                      Essays                      Composite Score

## AP Score Conversion

| Composite Score Range | AP Score |
|-----------------------|----------|
| 114-150               | 5        |
| 98-113                | 4        |
| 81-97                 | 3        |
| 53-80                 | 2        |
| 0-52                  | 1        |