

AP English Literature  
First Day Activity

Examine your text below. Then, respond as best as you can to the following questions:

- 1. What does it mean?**
- 2. How do you know?**
- 3. Why does it matter?**

**Exhibit 1: Poem**

what the cicada said to the black boy by Clint Smith

I've seen what they make of you  
how they render you a multiplicity  
of mistakes

they have undone me as well  
pulled back my shell & feasted  
on my flesh

claimed it was for their survival  
& they wonder why I only show my face  
every seventeen years

but you

you're lucky if they let you live that long  
i could teach you some things you know  
have been playing this game since before

you knew what breath was  
this here is prehistoric  
why you think we fly?

why you think we roll in packs?  
you think these swarms are for the fun of it?  
i would tell you that you don't roll deep enough

but every time you swarm they shoot  
get you some wings son  
get you some wings

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**Exhibit 2: Prose - Novel**

Excerpt from *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman

“And what about your family? she said. “Do they live close by? Any brothers or sisters?”

“No, unfortunately,” I said. “I would have loved to have had siblings to grow up with.” I thought about this. “It’s actually one of the greatest sources of sadness in my life,” I heard myself say. I had never uttered such a sentence before, and, indeed, hadn’t even fully formed the thought until this very moment. I surprised myself. *And whose fault is that, then?* A voice, whispering in my ear, cold and sharp. Angry. Mummy. I closed my eyes, trying to be rid of her.

Mrs. Gibbons seemed to sense my discomfort. “Oh, but I’m sure that must mean you’ve got a lovely close relationship with your mum and dad, then? I bet you mean the world to them, being the only one.”

I looked at my shoes. Why had I selected them? I couldn’t remember. They had Velcro fastenings for ease of use and they were black, which went with everything. They were flat for comfort, and built up around the ankle for support. They were, I realized, hideous.

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**Exhibit 3: Poetry**

Warning by Jenny Joseph

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.  
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells  
And run my stick along the public railings  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick flowers in other people's gardens  
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat  
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go  
Or only bread and pickle for a week  
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry  
And pay our rent and not swear in the street  
And set a good example for the children.  
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

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**Exhibit 4: Prose – Nonfiction**

Excerpt from *Barracoon* by Zora Neale Hurston

“I wanted to know who you are and how you came to be a slave, and to what part of Africa do you belong, and how you fared as a slave, and how you managed as a free man?”

“Again his head was bowed for a time. When he lifted his wet face again he murmured, “Thankee Jesus! Somebody come ast about Cudjo! I want tellee somebody who I is, so maybe dey go in de Afficky soil some day and callee my name and somebody dere say, ‘Yeah, I know Kossula.’ I want you everwhere you go to tell everybody whut Cudjo say, and how come I in Americky soil since de 1859 and never see my people no mo’. I can’t talkee plain, you unnerstand me, but I calls it word by word for you so it won’t be too crooked for you.

“My name is not Cudjo Lewis. It Kossula. When I gettee in Americky soil, Mr. Jim Meaher he try callee my name, but it too long, you unnerstand me, so I say, ‘Well, I yo’ property?’ He say, ‘Yeah.’ Den I say, ‘You callee me Cudjo. Dat do.’ But in Afficky soil my mama she name me Kossula.”

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**Exhibit 5: Poetry**  
Follower by Seamus Heaney

My father worked with a horse-plough,  
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung  
Between the shafts and the furrow.  
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing  
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.  
The sod rolled over without breaking.  
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round  
And back into the land. His eye  
Narrowed and angled at the ground,  
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hobnailed wake,  
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;  
Sometimes he rode me on his back  
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,  
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.  
All I ever did was follow  
In his broad shadow round the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,  
Yapping always. But today  
It is my father who keeps stumbling  
Behind me, and will not go away

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**Exhibit 6: Prose - Novel**

Excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

Miss Bingley made no answer, and soon afterwards she got up and walked about the room. Her figure was elegant, and she walked well; but Darcy, at whom it was all aimed, was still inflexibly studious. In the desperation of her feelings, she resolved on one effort more, and, turning to Elizabeth, said:

“Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude.”

Elizabeth was surprised, but agreed to it immediately. Miss Bingley succeeded no less in the real object of her civility; Mr. Darcy looked up. He was as much awake to the novelty of attention in that quarter as Elizabeth herself could be, and unconsciously closed his book. He was directly invited to join their party, but he declined it, observing that he could imagine but two motives for their choosing to walk up and down the room together, with either of which motives his joining them would interfere. “What could he mean? She was dying to know what could be his meaning?”—and asked Elizabeth whether she could at all understand him?

“Not at all,” was her answer; “but depend upon it, he means to be severe on us, and our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it.”

Miss Bingley, however, was incapable of disappointing Mr. Darcy in anything, and persevered therefore in requiring an explanation of his two motives.

“I have not the smallest objection to explaining them,” said he, as soon as she allowed him to speak. “You either choose this method of passing the evening because you are in each other’s confidence, and have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking; if the first, I would be completely in your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire.”