

# Texas Christian University

2013 APSI for English

Prose/MC Camp – Helping Students  
prepare for the Literature test



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## **Step 1: Analyze the Prompt.**

### **WHAT?**

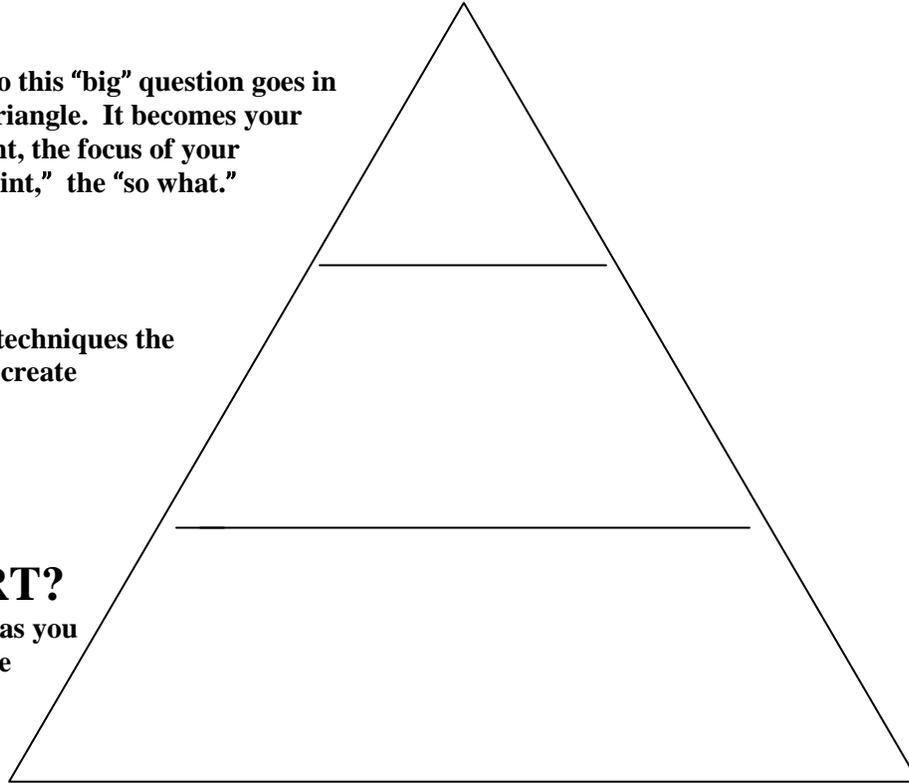
Your answer to this “big” question goes in the tip of the triangle. It becomes your thesis statement, the focus of your essay-your “point,” the “so what.”

### **HOW?**

Make a list of techniques the author uses to create meaning.

### **SUPPORT?**

Jot notes here as you read and notice techniques the author uses.



**Remember to answer “So what?”**

## The Prose Essay

### First Step: Read The Prompt

1. Read the prompt carefully, underlining every part of the task.
  1. Pay special attention to the specific literary elements (Imagery, Characterization, Narration, etc) the prompt asks you to analyze; the prompt very often points you in the right direction as far as which literary elements are the most relevant!
2. The prompt implores readers to consider some deeper meaning of the piece, such as an assertion made about humanity, sin and transgression, friendship, etc.
3. Once you have this general frame of reference, your job is two-fold:
  1. Elaborate on the theme presented in the prompt.
    1. Add depth by making it **specific** and **meaningful**
    2. It is **superficial** to simply say that a piece "discusses sin and transgression." Use your analytical skills and make a **specific** assertion about sin and transgression
    3. Example: "The sins of a person's past may haunt one into adulthood"
    4. The bottom line is, don't take the prompt at face-value!
  2. Reread the prompt to ensure understanding before moving on to the prose itself. Keep the theme and techniques presented by the prompt in mind as you read.

### Second Step: Read the Prose selection

1. Read the title and any historical background before starting.
  1. Consider how the historical context influences the wider meaning of the work as a whole.
    1. A novel published in the 1920s, for example, may be influenced by the post-WWI societal fragmentation evident in works such as Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.
    2. A piece of prose published in the 1960s may have some red-scare elements.
    3. You might want to review general historical time period/developments before the exam!
2. Read the prose all the way through once. This reading is simply for general **UNDERSTANDING** of the passage, so read it fluidly and quickly.
3. Do not stop at challenging words or phrases, taking minutes at a time to decipher confusing lines. Such an arduous process is simply too time consuming.
4. For this first reading, you want a basic understanding....
  1. What is the setting? Who's narrating? What's the basic theme expressed? General mood/tone words? Any interesting/bizarre characters? Which literary elements jump out at you?
5. Now, read the prose a second time, this time with greater scrutiny and with pen in hand marking as you read. Keep literary elements in mind. In prose, the elements to watch out for are...
  1. Imagery
    1. Visual
    2. Tactile
    3. Gustatory
    4. Olfactory
    5. Auditory

2. Symbolism / Symbolic Action
3. Figurative Language
  1. Hyperbole
  2. Litotes/other forms of understatement
  3. Metonymy / Synecdoche
  4. Metaphor
  5. Simile
4. Setting
  1. How is the setting portrayed? What type of *mood* does the description of the setting evoke? What types of words and images are used to establish setting? Think of Charles Dickens' London, or Hosseini's Kabul...both of these settings are built through lots of descriptive language and imagery. Is this the case in your prose?
5. Narration
  1. *Who* is narrating the story? Does the narrator's perspective color the reader's interpretation of events?
  2. Is the narration omniscient? limited omniscient? first, second, third person? How may these different types of narration influence our perception of the prose?
6. Syntax
  1. Are the sentences curt and choppy? Long and grandiloquent? Heavily or sparsely punctuated? Any humor in the writing? How may these writing styles reflect the themes of the work, or impact the reader's interpretation?
  2. Also note changes in syntax, as they often illicit changes in mood and thus indicate pivotal points of a story.
7. Diction
  1. Don't go "diction" happy, labeling everything that has to do with words as diction. If a city, for example, is described by the words "dirty, degraded, gray, overcast, deserted," and other negative words, it is not correct to assert that "the author uses negative diction to describe the city as a lonely, depressing place." This is not diction. Simply choosing certain words to facilitate a description is not diction.
  2. Rather, diction has to do with the overall *style* of the writing. Does the author use colloquialisms, or is the writing formal and lofty? Is there a particular dialect used to enhance characterization or setting description? Is the writing pedantic, or lazy and informal? Is a particular lexicon used, or childish language perhaps?
8. Irony
  1. Is there a difference between the literal meaning of the words on the page, and the implied or actual meaning?
  2. Do we know more than the speaker in the story? (Dramatic Irony)
  3. Do situations turn out differently than we and most people would expect?
  4. Is a character the victim of fate? (cosmic irony/irony of fate)
9. Tone, Theme, Mood
  1. These are separate from the other literary elements because they are "bigger picture" elements.
  2. They don't fall into the "how" portion of analysis, but rather, they fall into the "what" portion of analysis. A theme is conveyed *through* some other literary element, or, the "what" is conveyed through the "how." It is awkward to say

"the overall meaning is conveyed/captured/demonstrated by the theme of..."  
Mood and tone are the same way.

3. These elements do not stand alone, but rather, are built through the combined effects of other literary elements.
  6. With so much to think about while reading, it is necessary to *mark up your paper!* **Underline important passages. Make notes in the margins. Write down whatever arbitrary thoughts come to mind somewhere on your sheet.** Point out literary elements when you see them. This will help organize your thoughts and will provide a great springboard for essay writing.
  7. Once you've read through the prose a second time, you should have a more thorough understanding of the most important literary elements for this piece of prose. You're ready to write your essay.
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## Writing the Prose Essay

**Introduction** (This is not absolutely necessary, but you will find that the majority of high scoring essays have a good introduction.)

- Begin the introduction with a detailed and engaging first sentence.
  - For example: Try to avoid "Kate Chopin was a feminist who wrote about the subjugation of women in her novel *The Awakening*." instead write something similar to... "Just as the ball and chain of misogyny and subjugation seemed most snugly fit around the ankles of American women, Louisiana-born Kate Chopin published a novel that would revolutionize gender relations, empower generations of feminists, and tear the social status quo asunder..."
  - In other words, give your writing some flair, some of your own unique style. This hopefully will captivate your reader and keep them hooked.
- Use the introduction to address the What and How of the prompt.
- Write a clear and well-stated sentence that explains the **What** of the prose and introduce the techniques that are used to explain the **How** of the prompt. A clearly state thesis statement with this format can be utilized: **In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley utilizes setting (character, point of view, style, etc.) and character (point of view, style, etc.) to express the theme that monsters aren't only a figment of the imagination or of the grotesque, but an ugly truth that resides in the nature of man.**
- Make sure you write in literary present tense. The selection is happening for you right now, not in the past.

## Body

- There are two general organizational formats one could follow when writing the essay.

**Flow chronologically through the Prose Piece.** This is the preferred method. If you examine the high scoring essays, the majority of them will follow this format.

**In Case of Emergency: Break Glass:** Sort paragraphs by literary technique. Use this method if you feel it will work better for you. You will find essays in the 6 and even 7 categories that use this method.

- Make sure you begin each paragraph with a strong introductory sentence. The introduction should outline exactly what that paragraph will prove. It should reveal something about the larger meaning of the prose, the theme you are attempting to analyze, and the literary element(s) through which that theme is demonstrated.
- Introduce the “WHAT” (thesis/ theme) of the essay.
- Support the theme/ thesis with **apt** (*suited to a purpose--being to the point*) literary elements- (imagery, personification, symbols...)
- Provide examples to back up the “WHAT”- at-least 3-4 examples. These examples could be direct quotes from the prose, **woven** seamlessly into the body paragraph.
- Explain how the examples relate to the “WHAT” in detail.
- Restate the thesis or topic sentence (rephrase).
- **Make sure the body answers the prompt!**
- Don’t repeat the same ideas. Say it once and move on.
- Use your best vocabulary.
  - In particular, use **apt** (*suited to a purpose--being to the point*) vocabulary in two ways:
    - Use active verbs to describe **how** an author uses certain literary techniques and how that technique contributes to a theme. Instead of saying "the author uses," for example, one could say that the author...employs, utilizes, depends on, makes frequent use of, relies on, affords insight through, displays apt command of, shows a capacity for, and many other phrases. (Always keep in mind you are discussing writing and not speaking. Do not say the “writer talks about”.) See: <http://www.webresume.com/resumes/verbs.shtml> and [http://www.oberlin.edu/career/students/documents/resume\\_action.pdf](http://www.oberlin.edu/career/students/documents/resume_action.pdf) These are intended for resume writing, but they will certainly work in your analytical writing.
    - Strong vocabulary is also necessary for tone/mood words in your writing. To utilize words such as "mad, sad, happy, jealous" are detrimental to an essay. While it is impossible to provide a complete list of "good" tone/mood words, there are better and more specific words out there, you just have to think about **why** a character feels a certain way and/or **why** the author created such a mood, and a better word may come to mind.
      - Sardonic, for example, is a more effective and more specific word than "sarcastic." Melancholy > Sad. Grisly > sad/mad. Ominous/Foreboding > scary. Vitriolic > harsh. For a more comprehensive list of mood/tone words, check this link at my web site <http://jerrywbrown.com/?portfolio-item=tone>
      - Look for moods may also be created by the intermingling of two different emotions. Authors used contrast and **antithesis** in their writing. Consider, for example, the difference between *fond reminiscence* and *bitter remembrance*. Both may seem the same on paper, since they both involve a character looking back on the past, but these two moods are actually very different. A mood may also be one of welcomed acquiescence, such as the act of succumbing to a formidable opponent after a long, gruesome battle. If you feel there are contrasting elements of mood/tone, then say it! (Most of the time, you are right!) Rather than choosing one mood/tone, say something like "The mood is one of elevating danger offset by playful banter."

- Mature analysis of mood, theme, and tone therefore requires strong mood/tone vocabulary and close reading.

**Conclusion** (again, not absolutely necessary, but high scoring essays usually have one)

- The conclusion should just be summing up what you wrote and bringing your essay to a close
- Do **not** introduce any new ideas
- Restate and stress the importance of your thesis
- You may echo (don't just repeat) the introduction and bring the reader full circle
- It is important to have a conclusion to bring a sense of completeness to your essay, **so if you are pressed for time it isn't vitally important to make it fancy, just try to have one!**

"Essay Prose Tips." *Alexander Hamilton High School*. N.p.. Web. 5 Mar 2013.  
<[http://apenglishwiki.wikispaces.com/Essay Prose Tips](http://apenglishwiki.wikispaces.com/Essay+Prose+Tips)>.

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.

| <b><i>The Birthday Party</i></b>  | Annotation, Questions, Comments |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <p>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.</p> <p>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,</p> |                                 |

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 his 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.

“Grandmother”—1987 Exam ©College Board/ETS

When we were all still alive, the five of us in that kerosene-lit house, on Friday and Saturday nights, at an hour when in the spring and summer there was still abundant light in the air, I would set out in my father’s car for town, where my friends lived. I had, by moving ten miles away, at last acquired friends: an illustration of that strange law whereby, like Orpheus leading Eurydice, we achieved our desire by turning our back on it. I had even gained a girl, so that the vibrations were as sexual as social that made me jangle with anticipation as I clowned in front of the mirror in our kitchen, shaving from a basin of stove-heated water, combing my hair with a dripping comb, adjusting my reflection in the mirror until I had achieved just that electric angle from which my face seemed beautiful and everlastingly, by the very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about our home, beloved.

My grandmother would hover near me, watching fearfully, as she had when I was a child, afraid that I would fall from a tree. Delirious, humming, I would swoop and lift her, lift her like a child, crooking one arm under her knees and cupping the other behind her back. Exultant in my height, my strength, I would lift that frail brittle body weighing perhaps a hundred pounds and twirl with it in my arms while the rest of the family watched with startled smiles of alarm. Had I stumbled, or dropped her, I might have broken her back, but my joy always proved a secure cradle. And whatever irony was in the impulse, whatever implicit contrast between this ancient husk, scarcely female, and the pliant, warm girl I would embrace before the evening was done, direct delight flooded away: I was carrying her who had carried me, I was giving my past a dance, I had lifted the anxious care-taker of my childhood from the floor, I was bringing her with my boldness to the edge of danger, from which she had always sought to guard me

1. The speaker might best be described as someone who is
  - a. unwilling to forsake his family in order to gain his freedom
  - b. long overdue in obtaining maturity and acceptance in the adult world
  - c. struggling to find his own identity and sense of purpose
  - d. disturbed by the overbearing attentiveness and attitudes of his family
  - e. defining his passage from the role of protected to that of protector

2. The mythological reference in lines 6-7 reinforces the “strange law” (line 6) that
  - a. wishes are often best fulfilled when they are least pursued
  - b. conflict between youth and old age is inevitable
  - c. anticipation is a keener emotion than realization
  - d. in our search for heaven, we may also find hell
  - e. to those who examine life logically, few things are exactly as they seem to be

3. The effect of the words “vibrations” (line 8) and “jangle” (line 9) is most strongly reinforced by which of the following?
- “adjusting my reflection” (lines 11-12)
  - “electric angle” (lines 12-13)
  - “frail brittle body” (line 21)
  - “irony was in the impulse” (line 25)
  - “implicit contrast” (lines 25-26)
4. Which of the following best restates the idea conveyed in lines 11-15?
- There are moments in youth when we have an extravagant sense of our own attractiveness.
  - We can more easily change people’s opinions of ourselves by adjusting our behavior than by changing our appearances.
  - Vanity is a necessary though difficult part of the maturing process.
  - How others see us determines, to a large degree, how we see ourselves and our environment.
  - Adolescence is a time of uncertainty, insecurity, and self-contradiction.
5. In line 13, “everlastingly” modifies which of the following words?
- “I” (line 12)
  - “my face” (line 13)
  - “beautiful” (line 13)
  - “lay” (line 14)
  - “beloved” (line 15)
6. The image of the “very volumes of air and sky and grass that lay mutely banked about our home” (lines 14-15) is used to show the speaker’s
- desire to understand his place in the universe
  - profound love of nature
  - feelings of oppression by his environment
  - expansive belief in himself
  - inability to comprehend the meaning of life
7. The attitude of the speaker at the time of the action is best described as
- understanding
  - exuberant
  - nostalgic
  - superior
  - fearful
8. The passage supports all of the following statements about the speaker’s dancing EXCEPT:
- He danced partly to express his joy in seeing his girl friend later that night.
  - His recklessness with his grandmother revealed his inability to live up to his family’s expectations for him.
  - In picking up his grandmother, he dramatized that she is no longer his caretaker.
  - He had danced that way with his grandmother before.
  - His dancing demonstrated the strength and power of youth.
9. The description of the grandmother in lines 21 and 26 emphasizes which of the following?
- Her emotional insecurity
  - The uniqueness of her character
  - Her influence on the family
  - Her resignation to old age
  - Her poignant fragility
10. Which of the following statements best describes the speaker’s point of view toward his grandmother in the second paragraph?
- Moving to the country has given him a new perspective, one that enables him to realize the importance of his grandmother.
  - Even as a young man, he realizes the uniqueness of his grandmother and her affection for him.
  - He becomes aware of the irony of his changing relationship with his grandmother only in retrospect.
  - It is mainly through his grandmother’s interpretation of his behavior that he becomes aware of her influence on him.
  - Comparing the enduring love of his grandmother to his superficial feelings for the young girl heightens his appreciation of his grandmother.

11. Which of the following patterns of syntax best characterizes the style of the passage?
- a. Sparse sentences containing a minimum of descriptive language
  - b. Long sentences interspersed with short, contrasting sentences
  - c. Sentences that grow progressively more complex as the passage progresses
  - d. Sentences with many modifying phrases and subordinate clauses
  - e. Sentences that tend toward the narrative at the beginning, but toward the explanatory at the end of the passage
12. In this passage, the speaker is chiefly concerned with
- a. presenting the grandparents as symbols worthy of reverence
  - b. demonstrating the futility of adolescent romanticism
  - c. satirizing his own youthful egocentricity
  - d. considering himself as an adolescent on the brink of adulthood
  - e. revealing his progression from idealism to pragmatism

| <p>The “What”<br/>What is he literally saying?<br/><i>In other words, Dickens says...</i></p> | <p>The “How”<br/>Mark the stylistic devices: diction, details, imagery, syntax, allusions, etc.</p>  | <p>The “Meaning”<br/>What is he saying about Coketown?<br/><i>Dickens says that Coketown is...</i></p> |
|---|--|--|
|   | <p>COKETOWN, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself. Let us strike the key-note, Coketown, before pursuing our tune.</p> <p>It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.</p> <p>These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off, comforts of life which found their way all over the</p> |  |

**Prose Analysis Prewriting Activity for Charles Dickens’ “Coketown”**

**Prompt: Read the following passage carefully. Write an essay in which you analyze some of the ways in which Dickens expresses his impression of Coketown. Pay close attention to point of view, metaphor, and unifying elements.**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <p>world, and elegancies of life which made, we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.</p> <p>You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there - as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done - they made it a pious warehouse of red brick, with sometimes (but this is only in highly ornamental examples) a bell in a birdcage on the top of it. The solitary exception was the New Church; a stuccoed edifice with a square steeple over the door, terminating in four short pinnacles like florid wooden legs. All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M'Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the relations between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchaseable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen.</p> |  |
|--|--|--|

**Prose Analysis Prewriting Activity for Charles Dickens' "Coketown"**

**Prompt: Read the following passage carefully. Write an essay in which you analyze some of the ways in which Dickens expresses his impression of Coketown. Pay close attention to point of view, metaphor, and unifying elements.**

1. As used in this passage, *fact* means most nearly the
  - (A) true
  - (B) unconcerned
  - (C) functional
  - (D) important
  - (E) helpless
  
2. The point of view of the passage is that of
  - (A) a sardonic and omniscient observer
  - (B) an objective and omniscient observer
  - (C) an uninvolved minor character with restricted vision
  - (D) an unbiased major participant in the action who wants the best for his town
  - (E) an involved minor character is us unaware of the significance of what he says
  
3. The metaphor of the key-note in the first paragraph indicates chiefly that
  - (A) Coketown was probably a one time a happy place
  - (B) the description of Coketown is a digression from the main subject
  - (C) there is a need for music in an industrial town
  - (D) one needs to know more about Coketown to understand and appreciate Mrs. Gradgrind
  - (E) Mrs. Gradgrind is particularly proficient in the arts and Coketown admires her abilities
  
4. In line 9 “serpents” is used primarily as
  - (A) a sign that pride leads to a fall
  - (B) an emblem of industrial blight
  - (C) a symbol of the creeping progress of industry
  - (D) a symbol of man’s animal nature
  - (E) a representation of the world of illusions
  
5. In the second paragraph, which qualities of the town receive the greatest emphasis?
  - (A) Its savagery and incipient wickedness
  - (B) Its apathy and sameness of color
  - (C) Its dinginess and predictability
  - (D) Its failure to live and its wastefulness
  - (E) Its indifference and its withdrawal from reality
  
6. The third paragraph links what comes before and what follows by which of the following pairs of words?
  - (A) “attributes” and “comforts”
  - (B) “world” and “features”
  - (C) “sustained” and “elegancies”
  - (D) “Coketown” and “life”
  - (E) “inseparable” and “voluntary”
  
7. The parody at the very end of the passage does which of the following?
  - (A) Suggests a hidden hope.
  - (B) Adds irony.
  - (C) Ignores the hypocrisy prevalent.
  - (D) Reveals the Christian character of the town.
  - (E) Suggests the sinfulness of the town.
  
8. Which of the following functions as the unifying element for the passage?
  - (A) The repetition of the word *fact*
  - (B) The animal imagery
  - (C) The reference to the spiritual life of the town
  - (D) The characters of Gradgrind and Bounderby
  - (E) The contrasts between luxury and poverty
  
9. Which of the following best describes the overall method of development in the passage?
  - (A) Progression by the repeated used of thesis and antithesis
  - (B) General statement followed by specific illustrations
  - (C) Progression from the literal to the symbolic
  - (D) Circular reasoning
  - (E) Frequent use of analogies
  
10. The passage can best be described as
  - (A) a personal essay commenting on the social environment
  - (B) a character sketch with political overtones
  - (C) a social commentary within a work of fiction
  - (D) an allegorical analysis of domestic problems
  - (E) a political tract for the times