

A+ College Ready
English Fall AP Conference
Montgomery, Alabama
October 2-3, 2017

AP English Literature and Composition
Tackling Question 3
Comments on Student Samples



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AP® SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES AND SCORING NOTES 2017 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Sample Identifier: B - *Of Mice and Men* (Score: 1)

while this scant, one-paragraph essay attempts to respond to the prompt ("*Mice of Men [sic]* had a few characters whose origins were unusual [*sic*] and mysterious"), it offers little coherent discussion of the text

comprises disjointed references to an unnamed character, claiming that that character "needed to be weird to make the novel better"

while the writing is adequate to communicate the simple claims that the essay offers, the claims are unsupported and the details about character are inaccurate

Sample Identifier: C – *Outlander* (Score: 2)

this unacceptably short, partial essay makes an attempt to respond to the prompt but offers mostly plot summary

the summary of the character's life focuses on her past rather than her origins *per se*; this suggests a misunderstanding of the prompt

mentions the character's motivation ("she must lie and deceive [*sic*] to gain the trust and help of the people around her") but does not explain what bearing the past has on the character's relationships

while this essay exhibits control of language, it does not render a sufficient or adequate response to the prompt

Sample Identifier: D - *The Great Gatsby* (Score:3)

this partial essay fails to offer an adequate analysis of how the mysterious or unusual origins of Gatsby shape him and his relationships with others or how these contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole

briefly references the text by mentioning Gatsby's background, "the people from West Egg, Nick and Gatsby are the new money generation. They were thought to be not important," but does not return to the matter of origins until the perfunctory last sentence

provides an array of irrelevant plot details which are not organized or synthesized

the writing-which features many short, underdeveloped sentences with grammatical errors as well as errors of usage and diction-is inept

Sample Identifier: E - *Moby Dick* (Score: 4)

this partial and unconvincing essay offers an inadequate analysis of how Ahab's mysterious origins shape his character and relationships and demonstrates an incomplete understanding of how these in turn contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole, concluding merely that "Melville shows how tragic and empty revenge can be"

offers details about Ahab's past that suggest an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the prompt, focusing on details of the character's past rather than specifically his or her origins; does not manage to analyze these details convincingly or explain what specific bearing they might have on Ahab's identity and relationships

offers unfocused and fragmentary observations about the novel and fails to synthesize these into a cohesive claim or statement

where the essay broaches the character's relationships with others, it does so in a cursory way and fails to link this discussion to the character's origins, offering only that "[h]is crew follows his guidance and also become [*sic*] vengeful"

the essay contains many ungainly sentences, usage errors, and grammatical errors; it does not exhibit control over the elements of composition

Sample Identifier: F – *Antigone* (Score: 5)

while this essay is plausible, it is also superficial in its analysis of the effects of Antigone's origins on her character and relationships

makes overgeneralized statements on the first page, referencing numerous characters without stating how this information illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole

attempts to analyze how Antigone's parentage shapes her relationships with her family but offers only the rather simplistic and unclear claim that it "caus[es] there to be an amount of disconnection [*sic*]"

the essay relies on plot summary, albeit with some interwoven analysis

the essay exhibits adequate control of language in the main, but it is marred by surface errors and sentences are sometimes unwieldy, e.g., "Creon causes the very tragedy that destroys the relationship between Antigone and her soon to be husband because of his disgustment [*sic*] with Antigones [*sic*] reasons for life"

the essay is not as well organized or conceived as the essays in the 7-6 range of the scoring guide, e.g., although it offers the insight that the tragedy in Antigone's origins "shapes her to be strong in all aspects of her life" on the second page of the essay, and again in the conclusion, it does not use the insight to adequately synthesize the disparate observations made in the body of the essay

Sample Identifier: G – *Frankenstein* (Score: 6)

this essay offers a reasonable analysis of how the creature's unusual origins shape his character but is rather dilatory in articulating how the creature's unusualness contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole

while the essay offers the provocative assertion that the creature's "very existence is an affront to God," it does not develop or evidence this assertion

rather than remaining tightly focused on the requirement of the prompt to consider how the origins of the creature shape him and his relationships, the discussion shifts to control: "the Monster [sic] had no affect [sic] on the situation, or the means, to [sic] which he was conceived"

a general statement about the creature's relationships progresses to a claim about the effects of Victor's response to him ("[t]he psychological impact of this abandonment explicitly affected the creation and greatly contributed to his decision" to commit murder), but the essay is less specific in supporting detail

the essay exhibits a good command of the elements of effective composition, but it sometimes lapses into the conversational, e.g., "created the perfect storm" and "they just aren't someone's type," in a way that detracts from the analysis

while this essay exhibits insight and understanding, it is less thorough and less specific in supporting its claims than the papers in the top range of the scoring guide and is less well developed, composed, and insightful than the paper scored 7

Sample Identifier: H - *Brave New World* (Score: 7)

this essay posits that in *Brave New World*, "people [who] are born from scientific process not birthed" are "brainwashed" and unable to "speak or think freely"

the strong introduction claims that Huxley uses the "unusual circumstances" under which people are created to "convey [his] beliefs that humans must use the free will they've been given to think & act for themselves"; this sets a clear direction for the essay and evidences command of a key element of effective composition

the essay references two characters, Lenina and Bernard, showing how unnatural generation effects their actions and beliefs; this provides context to launch a developed discussion of a third character, John, whose natural origins enable him to "form comlex [sic] thoughts having to do with morality, love, & emotion" and ultimately map the trajectory to his suicide

offers perceptive comments about Huxley's views on class structure, but this material is not fully developed and integrated into the body of the essay; the essay is not quite as well organized or as thorough in its analysis as the essays at the top range of the scoring guide

besides the occasional misstep (e.g., "the rampant dehumanization the government in the novel

contains"), the essay exhibits consistent control of the elements of effective composition

Sample Identifier: I - *The Importance of Being Ernest* (Score: 8)

this well-focused essay claims from the outset that the mysterious origins of Jack Worthing are instrumental to Oscar Wilde's satire; Wilde uses Worthing's origins "to inexplicitly bash superficial Victorian society"

thoroughly develops the original claim in several well-written paragraphs

clearly identifies the importance of "societal ranking" and "circumstances" to provide a context for how these shape Worthing's character and influence his relationships with other characters

chooses apt, powerful diction and figures to convey the irony of Worthing's situation concisely: though he "initially came from meager beginnings" he is corrupted by the "infectious contagion" of "Victorian superficiality" and becomes deceitful, selfish, and superficial

while the essay is not error-free and exhibits occasional compositional lapses (e.g., "[t]he point of origin from which an individual spawns" and "Worthing does not care what he has to do . . . in order to acquire the coveted goals for which he lusts after"), it does exhibit an effective control of language

draws insightful inferences, e.g., "Worthing was most likely an illegitimate child whose upper-class parents sought to abandon in an attempt to cover-up [sic] their scandalous connection" to analyze how the character's mysterious origins generate satire and thereby contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole

engages all aspects of the prompt and demonstrates insight in its claims, but does not offer as much textual evidence or the same level of detailed analysis of evidence as the essay at the very top of the scoring guide

Sample Identifier: BB - *Beloved* (Score: 9)

this well-focused and persuasive essay identifies a character whose origins are at once mysterious and directly influential to the relationships among herself and other characters

clearly states its claim: "[b]ecause of Beloved's unusual origins, she has trouble formulating a meaningful self-identity, the family is polarized because of her unexpected arrival, and the novel as a whole is able to better communicate the message that humans have a distinct and deep ability to adapt to new environments"

provides specific examples of how familial relationships are influenced by Beloved's origins and details how these relationships are complex and dynamic, e.g., Denver gradually becomes jealous of Sethe's attention to Beloved, Paul Dis ambivalent "because he wants to support Sethe's dedication, but he also needs nurturing of his own"

addresses all parts of the prompt and carefully intertwines the discussion of those parts, returning to its claim to create carefully layered analysis, e.g., Denver "is forced to mature faster than she wants" and "Sethe adopts [*sic*] to having another child to take care of" and "[elven Paul D, who leaves Sethe, shows an important aspect of this message of adaptation: sometimes the only way to adapt is to leave the environment all together [*sic*] and just adopt a new one"

embeds apt and specific references to the text to create a well-integrated analysis

while this essay is not error-free and sometimes exhibits lapses in diction and syntax, e.g., "otherized" in the second sentence, it nevertheless analyzes *Beloved* with considerable insight and makes a sophisticated, compelling, and amply-supported argument