

**AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Scoring Commentaries for Sample Student Responses**

Index of Scores for Samples

Sample Reference	Row A	Row B	Row C
A	1	4	1
B	1	4	0
C	1	4	0
D	1	3	0
E	1	2	0
F	0	2	0
G	0	1	0

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Sample A

Score: 6/6 points (A1—B4—C1)

Row A: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row A because it responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis: “Throughout the text, the author uses vivid imagery and symbolism to conclude that Mrs. Pritchett’s daily rituals distract her from her own mortality, and by extension, humanity’s modern behaviors distract from the universal truth of impermanence and aging, preventing Man from living life to the fullest” (paragraph 1).

Row B: 4/4

This response earns four points in Row B because it uniformly offers ample and specific evidence to support the thesis. The textual evidence is integrated smoothly within the essay, e.g., “The kitchen includes ‘immaculate granite counters, a purring Sub-Zero refrigerator, a blue ceramic bowl she made in pottery class.’ These basic material goods are generalized to be in every home filled with ‘bourgeois pleasures’” (paragraph 2). The commentary provided explicitly shows how the evidence supports the main line of reasoning of the essay: “The juxtaposition between these two mindsets in relation to the cooking of the lamb draws a comparison between Mrs. Pritchett’s modern living conditions and an animal in captivity. The author uses this comparison to prove that Man needs to be confronted with His own mortality to truly live their life meaningfully” (paragraph 3). Additionally, the commentary focuses on the importance of specific words and details, such as a “‘sugar- dusted lemon square and a decadent, oversize éclair’” (paragraph 2) and the description of Mrs. Pritchett’s life as “small and contained” (paragraph 3) in order to develop the literary argument. The essay also explains how multiple literary elements contribute to the meaning of the work. The response examines symbols, allusions, and comparisons to assert that Mrs. Pritchett’s “daily rituals,” and “by extension, humanity’s modern behaviors,” serve as distractions from the inevitability of aging. Each piece of evidence and commentary consistently advances the line of reasoning.

Row C: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row C through its demonstration of sophistication of thought. The essay explores complexities within the passage: “Mrs. Pritchett realizes that all of her cooking, vigorous note-taking for her book club, and tending of her garden (another attempt to control the path of nature) has distracted her from her own mortality...but the author also explains that her daily schedule is not inherently *bad*. The author conveys this through the elderly couple at the cafe. They still attend the café and enjoy life’s simple pleasures, but they have full knowledge of their own aging” (paragraph 3). The essay also situates the student’s interpretation of the passage within a broader context: “The author uses this comparison to prove that Man needs to be confronted with His own mortality to truly live their life meaningfully” (paragraph 3).

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Sample B

Score: 5/6 points (A1—B4—C0)

Row A: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row A as it offers a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the passage: “...Mrs. Pritchett’s reaction to the day was a combination of melancholy, being touched by their sweet relationship, and the realization that her own time with her husband will eventually (perhaps soon) come to an end” (paragraph 1).

Row B: 4/4

This response earns four points in Row B because it establishes a clear line of reasoning and then supports it through specific evidence and consistent commentary. The specific evidence provided includes the “bourgeois pleasures” (paragraph 2) that fill Mrs. Pritchett’s life and the combination of “pity and fear” (paragraph 2) that Mrs. Pritchett experiences. The essay’s commentary focuses on the contrast between Mrs. Pritchett’s simple life and the realization that her life “lacks the depth of the sweet relationship she witnessed over lunch” (paragraph 2). This commentary relates the evidence provided to the line of reasoning established in the thesis. The response also considers how the narrative voice causes ambiguity in the passage: “Viewing this from an external, omnipotent perspective gives readers additional insight to see how her simple life juxtaposes this tender relationship, yet at the same time having an external perspective creates ambiguity about why and how Mrs. Pritchett reacted” (paragraph 2). The essay examines how the narrative voice and the organization of the passage contribute to the meaning of the passage.

Row C: 0/1

This response does not earn the point in Row C because although it does address Mrs. Pritchett’s realization, it makes a single statement about that realization and does not delve into the complexities and tensions within that realization, her reaction to the day, or the passage itself.

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Sample C

Score: 5/6 points (A1—B4—C0)

Row A: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row A because it presents a defensible thesis about Mrs. Pritchett: “The author is showing that even though Mrs. Pritchett is living a financially secure life, she feels as if she is living a small, contained, and unfulfilling marriage” (paragraph 1).

Row B: 4/4

The response earns four points in this row because it offers specific evidence in support of all claims in the line of reasoning, including that although Mrs. Pritchett leads a financially secure life, she feels pity and fear when she encounters the couple in the café and realizes what she is missing in her own life. The response cites how “ and connects this evidence to commentary about her feeling “underappreciated” (paragraph 2) as a housewife. In the next paragraph, the response explores how Mrs. Pritchett’s observation of the elderly couple’s affection for each other inspires a realization about her own marriage: “What she realizes after watching this moment is that her husband would not be capable of reproducing this moment with her” (paragraph 3). The essay consistently connects the evidence and commentary to the line of reasoning about Mrs. Pritchett’s marriage and explains how specific word choice, “immaculate” and “purring,” and specific details from both the kitchen and the actions of the elderly couple contribute to Mrs. Pritchett’s complex reaction to the events of the day.

Row C: 0/4

This response does not earn a point in Row C because it falls short of a sophisticated analysis and oversimplifies the complexity of Mrs. Pritchett’s marriage: “The idea of companionship between the elderly couple makes her realize that her own bond between her husband is not like that” (paragraph 3).

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Sample D

Score: 4/6 points (A1—B3—C0)

Row A: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row A because it offers a defensible thesis in the introductory paragraph: “In the beginning [sic] of the excerpt, the protagonist, Mrs. Pritchett, displays utter content and satisfaction with her life, but the interaction Mrs. Pritchett faces in the second half of the excerpt prompts her to contemplate her life and where she will eventually be as time creeps up on her. Through extensive use of rich imagery and an abrupt shift in tone, the author is able to convey the contrasting attitudes of content and fear from Mrs. Pritchett before and after her interaction at the cafe, as well as how that interaction impacted her perspective on life with her husband” (paragraph 1).

Row B: 3/4

This response earns three of the four points in Row B because it offers specific evidence and explains how some of the evidence supports the line of reasoning. For example, while the essay points out “the reader can visualize Mrs. Pritchett ‘enjoying her cup of lemon tea’ and being surrounded by ‘immaculate granite counters’ and a bowl ‘filled with apples and pears’” (paragraph 2), the commentary that follows suggests these details “add a little flavor to the atmosphere that Mrs. Pritchett basks in” (paragraph 2) and falls short of explaining how these details support a claim about Mrs. Pritchett’s complex reaction to the events of the day. The response also strives to comment on how literary elements contribute to the meaning of the passage, as in “By establishing this initial tone of content and gratitude towards her current life, the pivot in tone in the second half of the excerpt emphasizes how her interaction in the cafe alters her perspective on her current state of living” (paragraph 2). However, the response does not fully develop the argument about the shift in tone and its connection to Mrs. Pritchett’s complex reaction. While the essay attempts to explain the effect of imagery on tone, the analysis is incomplete. The essay does examine the “shift in pace” (paragraph 3) within the passage, but, again, the evidence is not thoroughly developed.

Row C: 0/1

This response did not earn the point in Row C because it does not employ a style that is vivid and persuasive. The concluding sentence of the essay (“She is overcome by the idea that her and Mr. Pritchett are not cut out for an elderly lifestyle, causing Mrs. Pritchett to step away from her planned dinner”) oversimplifies the complexity of Mrs. Pritchett’s reaction.

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Sample E

Score: 3/6 points (A1—B2—C0)

Row A: 1/1

This response earns the point in Row A because it responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis: “The author puts extreme emphasis on this comparison and interaction Mrs. Prichett [sic] had with the elder couple, in order to enhance the reflection she has upon her own relationship and life, and the qualities she seeks of her husband” (paragraph 2).

Row B: 2/4

This response earns two of the four points in Row B because while it does offer some specific evidence from the passage and attempts to relate this evidence to the thesis, no line of reasoning is clearly established. The first sentence of the essay “Mrs. Prichett [sic] is an elder woman, who spends her days cooking and cleaning, as a housewife” is inaccurate and an oversimplification of the complexity of the character. While the concluding paragraph mentions the literary devices “diction and imagery,” no examples or explanation is provided. In paragraph two, the essay examines a comparison between “Mrs. Prichett’s [sic] life as it is, to that of another couple, in which she wished hers was.” However, the commentary about the connection of this comparison to the line of reasoning is not adequately developed: “Here she is comparing her lack of love received from her husband to that of which she saw at the cafe” (paragraph 2). The significance of this comparison is not explained.

Row 3: 0/1

This response did not earn the point in Row C because it does not demonstrate a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument; it presents vague, unspecified references to literary elements, and the argument it does offer is unclear: “The diction and imagery the author uses is also a help in this comparison, and overall reflection of her life” (paragraph 3).

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Sample F

Score: 2/6 points (A0—B2—C0)

Row A: 0/1

This response does not earn the point in Row A because it summarizes events without establishing an apparent or coherent claim: “Mrs. Pritchett [sic] days are not full of extravagant times. She starts her day with a cup of lemon tea, before she makes Mr. Pritchett his meal for his work day. While relaxing in the morning Mrs. Pritchett plans her day, she plans to pick flowers, clean the house for Mr. Pritchett’s guest, shop and maybe grab some lunch” (paragraph 1).

Row B: 2/4

The response does provide some references to the passage, but it relies solely on paraphrase and plot summary: “When they get to their table the man lets go of the woman's arm and pulls out the chair for him” (paragraph 3). The commentary that follows is simplistic: “Mrs [sic] Pritchett is impressed by this because they are both struggling to get around” (paragraph 3). While some commentary is located in the conclusion (“Mrs. Pritchett is stuck on the old couple because she hopes her future relationship will be just as beautiful”), it is simplistic and does not contribute to an argument or to a line of reasoning.

Row C: 0/1

The response fails to earn the point in Row C because it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought and oversimplifies the complexities of the passage: “Mrs. Pritchett hopes to someday have a relationship just as strong. When both her and the man she will put in the same effort to help and guide each other through the end” (paragraph 5).

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Sample G

Score: 1/6 points (A0—B1—C0)

Row A: 0/1

This brief response does not earn a point in Row A because it does not contain a defensible thesis.

Row B: 1/4

The response does earn one point in Row B because it offers some textual references: “For example she uses imagery in the part where she says ‘The couple has reached a table. The old man lets go of his wife’s arm and pulls a chair out for her. He helps her off with her coat, an action that takes some maneuvering as she shifts her cane from one hand to the other’” (paragraph 1). However, while the essay mentions a literary device (imagery), it offers no explanation of the significance of the device. The essay does not use the evidence to support an argument.

Row C: 0/1

This response does not earn the point in Row C because it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument.