AP® English Literature and Composition
2006 Free-Response Questions

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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.)

Read the following poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the poet uses language to describe the scene and to convey mood and meaning.

Evening Hawk

From plane of light to plane, wings dipping through
Geometries and orchids that the sunset builds,
Out of the peak’s black angularity of shadow, riding
The last tumultuous avalanche of
Light above pines and the guttural gorge,
The hawk comes.

His wing
Scythes down another day, his motion
Is that of the honed steel-edge, we hear
The crashless fall of stalks of Time.

The head of each stalk is heavy with the gold of our error.

Look! look! he is climbing the last light
Who knows neither Time nor error, and under
Whose eye, unforgiving, the world, unforgiven, swings
Into shadow.

Long now,
The last thrush is still, the last bat
Now cruises in his sharp hieroglyphics. His wisdom
Is ancient, too, and immense. The star
Is steady, like Plato,* over the mountain.

If there were no wind we might, we think, hear
The earth grind on its axis, or history
Drip in darkness like a leaking pipe in the cellar.

—Robert Penn Warren

*Greek philosopher (427?–347? B.C.)

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The following passage is an excerpt from *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, a play by Oscar Wilde, produced in 1892. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the playwright reveals the values of the characters and the nature of their society.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK *(shaking hands)*. Dear Margaret, I am so pleased to see you. You remember Agatha,¹ don’t you? How do you do, Lord Darlington? I won’t let you know my daughter, you are far too wicked.

LORD DARLINGTON. Don’t say that, Duchess. As a wicked man I am a complete failure. Why, there are lots of people who say I have never really done anything wrong in the whole course of my life. Of course they only say it behind my back.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Isn’t he dreadful? Agatha, this is Lord Darlington. Mind you don’t believe a word he says. No, no tea, thank you, dear. *(Sits on sofa.)* We have just had tea at Lady Markby’s. Such bad tea, too. It was quite undrinkable. I wasn’t at all surprised. Her own son-in-law supplies it. Agatha is looking forward so much to your ball tonight, dear Margaret.

LADY WINDERMERE *(seated)*. Oh, you musn’t think it is going to be a ball, Duchess. It is only a dance in honour of my birthday. A small and early.

LORD DARLINGTON *(standing)*. Very small, very early, and very select, Duchess.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Of course it’s going to be select. But we know that, dear Margaret, about your house. It is really one of the few houses in London where I can take Agatha, and where I feel perfectly secure about dear Berwick. I don’t know what society is coming to. The most dreadful people seem to go everywhere. They certainly come to my parties—the men get quite furious if one doesn’t ask them. Really, some one should make a stand against it.

LADY WINDERMERE. I will, Duchess. I will have no one in my house about whom there is any scandal.

LORD DARLINGTON. Oh, don’t say that, Lady Windermere. I should never be admitted. *(Sitting.)*

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. Oh, men don’t matter. With women it is different. We’re good. Some of us are, at least. But we are positively getting elbowed into the corner. Our husbands would really forget our existence if we didn’t nag at them from time to time, just to remind them that we have a perfect legal right to do so.

LORD DARLINGTON. It’s a curious thing, Duchess, about the game of marriage—a game, by the way, that is going out of fashion—the wives hold all the honours² and invariably lose the odd trick.³

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. The odd trick? Is that the husband, Lord Darlington?

LORD DARLINGTON. It’s a curious thing, Duchess, about the game of marriage—a game, by the way, that is going out of fashion—the wives hold all the honours and invariably lose the odd trick.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK. What does he mean? Do, as a concession to my poor wits, Lord Darlington, just explain to me what you really mean.

LORD DARLINGTON. I think I had better not, Duchess. Nowadays to be intelligible is to be found out. Good-bye! *(Shakes hands with DUCHESS)*. And now—Lady Windermere, good-bye. I may come tonight, mayn’t I? Do let me come.

LADY WINDERMERE. Yes, certainly. But you are not to say foolish, insincere things to people.

LORD DARLINGTON *(smiling)*. Ah! you are beginning to reform me. It is a dangerous thing to reform any one, Lady Windermere. *(Bows and exit.)*

¹ the Duchess’s daughter

² high cards
³ round of a card game
Question 3

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

Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

You may choose a work from the list below or another appropriate novel or play of similar literary merit.

- Adam Bede
- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- All the Pretty Horses
- Anna Karenina
- As I Lay Dying
- As You Like It
- The Bear
- Black Boy
- Bless Me, Ultima
- The Bonesetter’s Daughter
- Ceremony
- The Cherry Orchard
- David Copperfield
- Don Quixote
- East of Eden
- Ethan Frome
- For Whom the Bell Tolls
- Frankenstein
- The Grapes of Wrath
- House Made of Dawn
- King Lear
- Madame Bovary
- Mansfield Park
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream
- Obasan
- O Pioneers!
- Out of Africa
- The Scarlet Letter
- Tess of the D’Urbervilles
- Their Eyes Were Watching God
- A Thousand Acres
- Tom Jones
- The Vicar of Wakefield
- The Way We Live Now
- The Winter’s Tale
- Wuthering Heights

STOP

END OF EXAM