



AP[®] English Literature 2003 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

Robert Bridges' "EPΩΣ" and Anne Stevenson's "Eros"

Sample E (Score 8): This sample is a wonderfully concise, well-executed essay that affirms the two concepts of Eros. The writer establishes the central idea and then analyzes how tone, diction, and method of presentation reinforce the two representations of Eros. The writer employs apt references from the poems, followed by insightful commentary or assumptions that explain how the poets' techniques contribute to meaning. The concluding paragraph alludes to the prompt in a subtle manner and refrains from summarizing the entire essay. Although the student's assumptions do not demonstrate a high level of sophistication, and the voice is not particularly creative, the essay does qualify as an eight (8).

Sample A (Score 7): This essay demonstrates from its initial paragraph that the writer is a skilled analyst of literature, one who recognizes the sympathy toward Eros present in both poems, whether expressed in a classic combination of fear and awe, or lodged in an accusation against humanity because of its continued abuse of the god of love. Each of the subsequent paragraphs competently details how the poets either "elevate Eros above the human realm" (Bridges) or display a tireless god continuing to intercede for humanity despite the "blows your lust delivered/ One by one" (Stevenson). Considerations that prevent this paper from receiving a higher score include its lack of tight expression, its needless repetition of ideas, and the general absence of a level of sophistication present in the higher-flying 8-9 essays.

Sample Y (Score 5): This sample, true to the description of the five (5) essay in the scoring guideline, clearly demonstrates writing that is "superficial in analysis of theme and technique." The writer does establish a journeyman thesis: the depictions of the god "differ greatly" with one being "perfect" and the other "overused." Unfortunately, the remainder of the essay does little to illuminate these superficial, but workable, points.

The analysis of the Bridges poem rests on three assertions: the language is "formal," Eros is presented with "great admiration," and he appears as "innocence" itself. The paragraph, however, does little to provide appropriate support from the text of the poem, nor does it explore any additional implications behind these assertions. As is often characteristic of an essay scored a five (5), the paragraph establishes a "hit and run" approach, stating the "what," but not the "so what?" of various points made.

The same issue holds true for the analysis of the Stevenson poem. Eros is "just being used" and is forced to "defend" himself, but once again the opportunity to explore ambiguity or demonstrate an understanding of the complexity behind these observations goes unfulfilled.

The essay as a whole remains, as the scoring guideline states, "vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported." More or less correct in its assertions, the paper does not offer the genuine exploration of the poems that is the foundation of the upper-half essays.

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**Question 2
Mavis Gallant's "The Other Paris"**

Sample YYY (Score 9): This essay excels because of its sophisticated grasp of Gallant's satirical, ironic narrative voice. Taking interpretive risks throughout, it precisely characterizes the passage as providing a "moronic lecture" on the practical requirements of marriage, at least as seen by Carol and Howard. The writer precisely attacks the "excessive folly" of their criteria, "none of which have to do with emotional attachment." The many succinct, accurate insights add up to a sustained, persuasive interpretation and make this a top-flight essay.

Sample CCC (Score 6): After a pedestrian opening, this essay competently delivers an interpretation of social commentary. Economical in its handling of characterization, this essay, in referring to "comical lectures," implies an understanding of narrative voice, though stronger essays were more convincing and better developed on this point. The writer goes on to employ effective parallelism to make a point about social pressures and concludes with a compact observation about "the power society holds over individuals."

Sample JJJ (Score 4): Although this essay addresses Gallant's characterization of Carol and Howard ("forced into marriage"), treatment of the central task of the prompt — to explain how narrative voice and characterization provide social commentary — remains limited. Formulaic or inexact phrases like "a certain voice" and "a personal tone" invite elaboration, but little appears. Concluding with a circular argument that again refers to social commentary, this essay ultimately provides a less than adequate treatment of what that social commentary might be.

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Question 3

Tragic Figures as Instruments of the Suffering of Others

Sample LLLL (Score 9): This well-focused and persuasive essay contains a strong introduction that hints at the tragic vision of *The Great Gatsby*. The second and third paragraphs touch on the plot, but only to illustrate Gatsby's tortured nature through carefully chosen events. The writer then explores the character of Gatsby as an instrument of others' suffering. Consistently, the writer uses apt and specific quotations from the novel as evidence for his/her position. Finally, the last paragraph pulls together the threads that were identified at the beginning of the essay: Gatsby's fall is synonymous with and illustrative of the fall of the decadent Roaring 20's. The analysis is provided with insight and stylistic flair, with ready transitions guiding the reader easily through the argument. The essay is organized and developed carefully, and the ideas are expressed clearly.

Sample C (Score 7): This competent essay describes the tragic vision of *King Lear* within the first paragraph. A focus on the notions of duty, vanity, and pride is maintained throughout the essay. The second paragraph summarizes the plot of the play, but remains centered on the ideas of pride and suffering, with one paragraph treating the suffering of Gloucester. Lastly, the writer discusses the tragic vision of the play in terms of Lear's vanity. Although generally well-organized with some insight, the essay's development is not particularly thorough. Its prose is workmanlike with few significant slips of expression.

Sample FF (Score 5): This somewhat unsophisticated essay sees McMurphy from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as a lightning rod for others' suffering, but it neglects to explore the possibility that McMurphy also brought these characters joy. Much of the essay describes the plot with some implicit yet superficial analysis, listing those who suffered at McMurphy's hands. The writer has a simplistic understanding of the work's tragic vision, mentioning "the combine" at the end of the essay rather than interweaving this concept within the essay itself. The paper's organization is basic and predictable, and the writer's use of language is generally adequate.