



AP[®] English Literature 2003 Sample Student Responses

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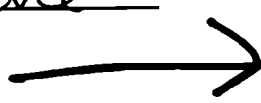
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People's attitudes toward Eros, the Greek god of love, often mirror their ^{own} opinions about love itself. Thus, since many are perplexed and frustrated ~~with~~ love, they have mixed feelings about Eros. Both Robert Bridges and Anne Stevenson express this confusion in their poems addressed to Eros; however, they ^{clearly} have different underlying assumptions about love.

Bridges begins his poem, EPIC, with a question. This pointed inquiry, "why hast thou nothing in thy face?," sets the tone of the entire poem - one of curiosity. Bridges has difficulty ⁱⁿ reconciling Eros's seemingly conflicting characteristics, as evidenced by ~~his~~ ^{his} calling him "tyrant of the human heart." The human heart is supposed to be sensitive, whereas a "tyrant" connotes brutality and apathy toward emotions. However, after this attack on Eros, Bridges calls him "an image of eternal Truth." By capitalizing truth, Bridges indicates his reverence for the god of love. Bridges returns to an attitude of wonderment in the second stanza, noting that "shadows neither love nor guile... thy unchristened smile." Thus, by using the metaphor of shadows on Eros's face, Bridges illustrates the



god's moral ambiguity - shadows "neither love nor quile" him. Bridges demonstrates that his ^{initial} question has not been answered by repeating a similar one at the beginning of the third stanza: "what is thy thought?" Bridges again brings up Eros's conflictory nature by speaking of "[the] victim of ~~his~~ ^{his} grace." The word "victim" carries many negative connotations, while "grace" connotes godliness. Thus, Bridges ends EP25 as curious as he began it.

Stevenson, too, questions Eros from the start. She is not nearly as complimentary of Eros's appearance as Bridges was; she calls him a "thug with a broken nose and squinty eyes." Not only does the word "thug" bring to mind many negative connotations, it is also slang. Using slang in addressing a god obviously brings him down ^{a peg or two} ~~as does~~ in the reader's eyes. The speaker then addresses Eros as "my bully boy," continuing the casual tone which has so far characterized the ^{poem} ~~poem~~. Eros responds to her question about his appearance by saying, "the brute you see is what long ~~overuse~~ ^{having Eros} has" made me. By ~~refer~~ ^{referring} to himself in the third person, Stevenson




shows that Eros can no longer relate to himself, let alone other people. He doesn't even seem to believe in love, blaming his current state on the "blows [her] lust delivered." Clearly, Eros doesn't see people (or at least the speaker) as capable of true love - only "lust." In addition, the end of the stanza is a forced rhyme ("sum" and "one") indicating Eros's feelings about his duties - one of obligation. Eros shows the speaker why he is needed, however, at the end of the poem by presenting the alternatives to him: "love dissolved in loss or left to rot." This negativity and bleak imagery seems to mirror the author's feelings about love and the love god himself.

While both Bridges and Stevenson question the god of love, they have differing attitudes towards ^{love}him, and love itself. Bridges seems to ~~be~~ demonstrate honest curiosity, but Stevenson seems bitter and mocking in her questions. In the end, the poets seem as unsatisfied as they began.

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Stevenson and Bridges present Eros in different ways but with similar methods. While Bridges' poem "EPΩΣ" is a more classic praise of Eros's endurance, "Eros" is a modern criticism of what humans have done to love. Therefore, while both poems evoke sympathy for the god of love, Bridges' "EPΩΣ" focuses on praising Eros's immortality and "Eros" ~~now~~ criticizes ~~that~~ the way humans have abused love.

In "EPΩΣ" Bridges moves from attitude of awe and praise to a more sympathetic attitude toward the unappreciated god of love. His praise begins with the paradox presented in lines 2 and 3. The idea that Eros is both an "idol" and a "tyrant" ~~gives~~ provokes a feeling of respect for the god. He is seen as someone people worship and fear which emphasizes this idea of respect. The respectability of Eros, in turn, emphasizes Bridges' overall awe toward Eros. Bridges continues his praise with very praiseworthy and spiritual diction like "flower of lovely youth", "exuberant flesh so fair", and "image of eternal Truth". These phrases evoke a sense of wonder in the reader and elevate Eros above the human realm. This elevation is another key element in expressing Bridges' overall praise of Eros. Additionally, Bridges uses Eros's smile as a symbol for "shameless will and power immense, in secret sensuous innocence." This symbol and the diction describing it again evokes

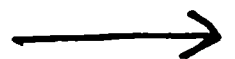


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an image of great power and might. Such an image demands reverence from the reader. This reverence and respect is exactly what Bridges uses to convey his overall attitude of praise and awe.

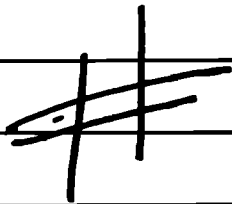
A2
In addition to his praise of Eros, Bridges also evokes sympathy for Eros as does Stevenson in her poem. The ~~stagnant~~ syntax that ends Bridges poem is abrupt and unsatisfying which mirrors its message that Eros is not satisfied in his appreciation. Bridges describes those who have yearned for love do not even bother to look at Eros's face when he brings love before them. This suggests the underappreciation Eros feels when people do not appreciate his gift. This, in turn, evokes sympathy from the reader. This sympathy is mirrored in Stevenson's poem. Stevenson presents an image of Eros as a battered and beaten immortal "slave". Throughout her poem, Stevenson creates this image to portray the pain Eros has suffered. In turn, this pain evokes sympathy from the reader for the Greek god. Therefore, both poets strive to show the reader that Eros has a thankless and dangerous job and that he deserves sympathy for doing it.

Stevenson, however, continues this sympathy into criticism of people for ~~the~~ treating Eros like this. She uses an imagined conversation between the speaker and Eros so that the reader can directly see the thoughts of Eros. In this conversation, Eros expresses his thoughts about how human lust has delivered blows



to him "one by one". This shifts the tone from a sympathy for Eros's suffering to an accusation and criticism of human abuse of love. Additionally, Eros's final comments show the reader that Eros continues to survive and aid humans which not only evokes sympathy for the enduring god, but worsens the criticism of humans. Not only have humans continued to abuse love, but Eros still attempts to help them. This finalizes Stevenson's criticism of humans.

Both poems evoke a great deal of sympathy for Eros. ~~But~~ Bridges takes a more classic view, however, and shows a great deal of praise for Eros. Stevenson, on the other hand focuses more on criticizing humans for treating love the way they have.



Robert Bridges' "EROS" and Anne Stevenson's "Eros" both depict the god of love in Greek mythology, Eros; however, Bridges' and Stevenson's depiction of the god differ greatly. Eros in Bridges' poem is described more as a god; he is perfect, while in Stevenson's poem, Eros is described as an overused source for people.

One of the differences of the poems is the author's writing style. Bridges' poem is titled "EROS", the Eros name written in Greek; Stevenson decides to use simply "Eros."

The language used by Bridges is much more formal than the language used by Stevenson.

Bridges opens his poem with, "Why hast thou nothing in thy face?," while Stevenson chooses to use modern English throughout "Eros."

In Bridges' poem the speaker discusses Eros with great admiration. Eros is thought to be so perfect that "With thy exuberant flesh so fair, that only Pheidias might compare."

The speaker believes that the people do not appreciate Eros and the joy he brings to them.

Bridges writes "None who e'er long'd for thy embrace, Hath cared to look upon thy face."

The speaker of Bridges' poem believes that Eros is innocence, "The flower of lovely youth thou art," and "But shameless will and power immense, In secret sensuous innocence."

The speaker of Stevenson's poem depicts Eros



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~~much~~ very differently than the speaker of Bridges' poem does. Eros, in Stevenson's poem, is described as a god who is just being used and who is not appreciated. The speaker describes Eros as "This thug with broken nose And squinty eyes" and "With boxer lips And patchy wings askew." In the poem Eros defends himself with "Know the brute you see is what long overuse Has made of me. My face that so offends you is the sum Of blows your lust delivered One by one." Eros is not the beautiful god that the caller, "Madam," expected to find. The speaker writes that although Eros is battered and does not look beautiful anymore, he should still be greatly appreciated because he does not ~~stay~~ give up and ~~leave~~ & leave love to rot.

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