



AP[®] English Literature 2003 Sample Student Responses

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Gallant's "The Other Paris" provides a brilliant social commentary through satire, irony, glorious characterization of two soon-to-be-married feds, and a thinly veiled tone of underlying contempt. Every action of the two "lovers" is what society dictates, though they would both surely intend otherwise. The entire passage ridicules the awkward and ~~awkward~~ misplaced (not to mention ludicrous) stress society and culture places on proper marriage.

That a man would propose to a woman after only three weeks and having never spoken to her about anything other than the office is outweighed in preposterousness only by the fact that she accepted. It is surely a desperate time for her because she was at the ancient age of twenty-two and "no one had proposed to her before," except an 'unsuitable' medical student who most likely loved her deeply and would have made her happy, but did not fulfill the artificial requirements placed by a morose lecture on marriage, like an interest in Irish settlers. Because love is a slight ~~thing~~ imposed by the film industry, of course! The tone throughout the second and third paragraphs is an amused contempt and open satirization of her excessive foolishness. Belonging to the same church is one of the pillars of the married union, but (of course) any such discussion would be far too embarrassing for either of them. And even though they both were fully aware champagne would be

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more than perfectly appropriate, their distance and detachment from one another makes that possible.

One of the most important recurring themes is that of pressure by society to get married soon, for all the wrong reasons. The supreme irony of the entire concept is that a set of criteria, none of which have to do with emotional attachment, have been developed for a successful marriage. Since these are fleeting, it is extremely important to get married as soon as possible and not fool around with any of that love business. And when these silly, stupid, morose, transient, economically-driven criteria are no longer met, the marriage falls apart due to a lack of emotional attachment and the whole thing is blamed on not meeting the initial conditions: circular logic at its best. Howard and Carol were pushed into marriage thusly, and will undoubtedly join the ranks of the divorced in a few years - all of which are blamed on marriage for love, of course.

And even love itself is inverted by these poor misguided cattle. Even though love is an illusion, Carol gets about the business of faking love "with great efficiency." Another wonderful irony of inversion, Carol and Howard believe the conditions of life - the fleeting, transitory ones - are the basis of lifelong happiness, while love can be cultural easily. It would make much more sense to marry for love - which lasts forever - and adapt ^{the} current circumstances to fit married life, but logic has no

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place in today's society (of course).

By illustrating these ironies, inversions, follies, inconsistencies, circular logic, and downright absurdity, Gallant succeeds in ~~the~~ crafting a delicious mockery of ~~the~~ not the institution of marriage, but the institution surrounding marriage. The exceptional character development and witty, biting tone serve to blast holes the size of Iowa into that poorly guided institution.

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The passage from "The Other Paris" by Mavis Gallant illustrates society's expectations and the power they hold over individual's actions through the use of characterization and satire.

This passage details the engagement of a couple who have known each other for a matter of weeks before deciding to marry. Neither Carol nor Howard are in love, but the pressure of society encourages them to rush into marriage as soon as an acceptable person comes along. The local college offers marriage lectures emphasizing "a common interest - such as a liking of for Irish setters" as the true basis for a happy, lasting marriage. This conical lecture claims that something as insignificant as liking the same dog is the key to happiness for the rest of your life while true love is something made up by the movies. Even ~~more~~ more pathetic is the fact that many people believe this information and use it to plan their lives.

Society's expectations dictate many people's actions and cause them to disregard their true feelings in order to conform to those around them. Both Carol and Howard are characterized as sensible, intelligent people who allowed their own feelings to be



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ignored as society's expectations took over. ~~They allowed themselves to be~~ Society told them they must marry young or be alone forever. Society told them they must marry someone successful. Society told them marriage is not about love but rather it is about common interests. Society told them love is not important. Howard and Carol allowed "helpful" college lectures and stray comments from family members to move them to action in order to avoid being the "person who fills in at dinner." They both know they are not in love, but feel the time has come where they must do something to conform to society's expectations of marriage.

This passage illustrates the power society holds over individuals and the individual's willingness to disregard his own feelings in order to conform to society.

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In the excerpt from "The Other Paris," Maris Callant presents the characters of Carol and Howard Mitchell. Throughout the excerpt, their ~~marriage and their feelings toward it~~ ^{forced decision of marriage is} explained by the narrator and their feelings toward it. Through narrative voice and characterization, the author provides social commentary in the excerpt.

~~The~~ The narrator in the excerpt from "The Other Paris" uses a certain voice in order to show the character's positions. The diction used by the narrator ~~is~~ is simple and concrete throughout the entire passage to give it a personal tone. Through the voice the narrator uses, the social conflict in the characters becomes evident as personal from society. The narrator's personal tone helps the reader to understand the social concerns of the characters.

The author also uses characterization in the excerpt to create social commentary. From the beginning of the passage, the characters are both brought out by the author as insecure about being single at an old age. The author develops the character of Carol by saying, "She was under the illusion that in a short time ~~no one would~~ she would be so old no one would ask her again." This statement alone



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creates Carol's insecurity in society. The author develops Howard's character saying, "he was discontented with his bachelor households." Also ~~affects~~ insecure about his standing in society for obvious reasons, Howard ~~also~~ is forced into marriage ^{by society}. The two characters jump into marriage ^{for the wrong reasons} because of society, ~~for~~ which provides social commentary in the work.

In the excerpt from "The Other Paris," the author provides social commentary through narrative voice and characterization. Through the personal tone of the narrator and ~~insecurity of characters, the excerpt~~ forced decisions of characters through insecurity, social commentary is provided for in the passage.

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