



## **AP<sup>®</sup> English Language (Operational) 2004 Sample Student Responses**

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 1 HERE.

Lord Chesterfield's letter to his son is by no means the vessel for simple or good-intentioned advice that Chesterfield would pretend it is. Veiled in its brief paragraphs are constant reminders to his son of his obligations and responsibilities (i.e. as per to his education.) But within even these subtle reminders, one can clearly see Chesterfield's own morals and values; through strategies of understatement, ~~subtle~~ contradiction, rhetorical questions, and even simple guilt, Chesterfield leaves no doubt in his son's mind what this letter was really about.

The first paragraph of the letter is riddled with now-too-subtle understatement. Chesterfield, if taken literally, spends the first seventeen lines discrediting his own opinion and the value of his morals. He uses this first paragraph as a means to set up the later strategies of rhetorical, supposedly harmless questions. As he feigns insignificance as in lines 5-7, where he acknowledges the common belief that parental advice is nothing more than the "moroseness... of old age." Chesterfield uses "harmless" syntax in this paragraph by framing his sentences cordially and by complimenting his son at every turn—as in lines 8-12, where he seems to idly state his faith in his son's ability to discern good advice, while clearly meaning that his advice is the best to receive. In this sense, Chesterfield also uses a rhetoric of constant contradiction.

The contradictory attitude does not stop once Chesterfield stops the false compliments. He clearly threatens in lines 25 through 34 that his son would have no means in life, were he to disregard his father's opinion.

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"I do not, therefore, so much as hint to you, how absolutely dependent you are upon me..." (line 25-6), Chesterfield writes, although one can imagine it said through a false smile. This opens the way for him to introduce the beliefs that his son is obviously obligated to follow, beliefs his father pretends to only vaguely believe.

Having set up his son to pay attention through these threats and fake pleasantries, Chesterfield reveals the true purpose of his letter in the second paragraph. Here there are no more contradictions hiding intimidation, but rhetorical questions with obviously implied answers; he writes in lines 39 through 41 that there "is no" greater pleasure than to be universally allowed to excel those of one's own age and manner of life? A simple translation of this is easily inferred from ~~the~~ its context: You had better not waste your opportunities, son. Chesterfield simplifies further in lines 44-47 where he says straightforwardly that his son has been given more opportunities than most, and he had better make use of them.

This semi-intimidation can be used to identify one of Chesterfield's own values: do not waste what others have provided you. In the second paragraph he also similarly reveals that whenever possible one should excel others - again, by understating its importance and nearly brushing it aside - and that, even more importantly, one should not make only half-attempts on ~~the~~ anything one strives to learn. He says

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quite clearly in lines 52-3 that "one may as well not know a thing at all, as know it but imperfectly."  
In this seemingly simple letter, Chesterfield conveys not only the fate of his son, should he ignore the letter, but also those morals Chesterfield holds most dear. By contradicting himself with politeness and asking provocative questions, and even using sarcastic syntax, Chesterfield leaves no doubt as to what he feels.

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A commonly accepted fact is that all parents want to see their children succeed. Parents, however, do not all have the same reasons for wanting their children succeed. Lord Chesterfield, in his letter to his son, suggest that his reason for wanting his son to succeed is personal. A child's life reflects his upbringing and parents. Therefore, it is critical that Lord Chesterfield appear a successful father. Through his ~~diction~~, selection of detail, diction, and use of irony, Lord Chesterfield reveals how highly he values obedience and reputation.

To persuade his son to "act right" Lord Chesterfield carefully selects two important details. The first detail is the son's dependence on his father financially. By referencing the fact that his son cannot "have a shilling in the world but from" him, Lord Chesterfield indirectly threatens his son. He next mentions that he has no "womanish weakness" (i.e. affection) for his son and that his "kindness" (i.e. allowance) is dependent on his son's merit. Lord Chesterfield is subtly reminding his son that he will only give money to his son if his son does what he deems is meritable. ~~The second significant detail~~ Lord Chesterfield, therefore, is threatening his son to obey by reminding him of this fact. The second detail Lord Chesterfield mentions is his son's education. This detail appeals to his son's own value for reputation. Lord Chesterfield reminds his son that it would be embarrassing to fail when he has had the advantages of a superior education.

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Lord Chesterfield's diction enhances the indirect threats he ~~made~~ makes in his letter. Lord Chesterfield threatens to cut his son off financially if he does not obey him. He uses the word "merit" to mean that he judges his generosity by his son's merit. He then connects the word merit to "right," "noble," and "generous." By implying that his son must do right out of "affection and gratitude to" him, he alerts his son that he must obey orders. Lord Chesterfield reminds his son of the possibility of humiliation by using words such as, "disgrace," "ridicule" ~~and~~ "shame," and "modifying." Lord Chesterfield writes these words to clearly underline his son's possibility of ~~losing~~ gaining a bad reputation.

Lord Chesterfield utilizes irony to ~~clearly~~ remind his son of his authority position as a father. Lord Chesterfield often writes one thing but means another. For example, "I do not, therefore, so much as hint to" actually means that he is hinting. By saying that he is not hinting, ~~As~~ Lord Chesterfield's irony calls more attention to the fact that he is alluding to. Indeed, Lord Chesterfield is not hinting but plainly calling attention to the fact. Lord Chesterfield calls himself "a friend and an indulgent one too." Lord Chesterfield, however, is not a friend as he later plainly says he has no "womanly weakness" for his son. ~~By~~ Writing that he is a friend, ironically



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alerts his son that he is not a friend but  
an authority figure to be obeyed.

Lord Chesterfield successfully uses rhetorical  
devices to warn his son to consider his advice.

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Just like parents of today, Lord Chesterfield worried about his son leaving home. In an effort to guide him and warn him about the effects of bad behavior, Chesterfield wrote a letter, which, by maintaining a parental tone masquerading as that of a friend, effectively conveyed Chesterfield's wishes.

From the beginning, Chesterfield ~~tried to~~ established that he understood how his son was feeling while abroad ~~and~~ <sup>as well as</sup> how he would feel about receiving the letter. A long stream of sentences, <sup>each</sup> beginning with "I know," state how his son feels. With this, ~~the~~ Chesterfield hoped to give his writing credence: if he understands "how unwelcome advice generally is" and, yet, he still ~~write~~ continues with the letter, then there must be something terribly important that he has to say.

However, after stating the feelings of his son, Chesterfield goes on to assert how he feels about the situation. Showing both sides of the issue, he says that he hopes to ~~say~~ sway his son's opinions. Chesterfield establishes his authority even more in lines 9-10 by saying that his son is too young to know what is best for him. Consistently trying different ways to give the letter credibility to his <sup>son</sup> ~~son~~, Chesterfield then says he has nothing ~~but his~~ ~~best interest~~ to gain by writing to his <sup>him</sup> ~~son~~. By thus showing a variety of reasons for Chesterfield's son to respect what he writes, Chesterfield gains ~~his~~ ~~son's~~ respect.

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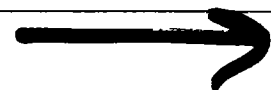
To appease any final wariness of his son, Chesterfield repeatedly asserts that he is only speaking as an "indulgent" friend or as a "guide, not the censor." However, this tone is sharply refuted when, in the following lines, Chesterfield reminds his son of how dependent he is on his father. All of this is said in a tricky manner, by saying all which he says that he will not hint, thus trying to make it seem that his son, "Boy", came up with the ideas on his own.

A final sentence ends the first paragraph with a play on his son's emotions. Chesterfield ~~is~~ hopes to show his son that he should ~~do~~ right out of respect for his father. This provides a strong conclusion ~~conclusion~~ to the first paragraph, ~~in~~ in which Chesterfield used every trick possible to gain his son's respect.

~~then~~ After assuring that his son will respect what Chesterfield has to say, he goes about making suggestions on how to live. Every statement is ~~backed~~ backed up by hypothetical questions or expanded upon by examples. It is obvious that Chesterfield values education, which would make sense considering he is a writer, because that is the focus of his writings.

In his letter, Chesterfield compellingly shows his son that what he says is worth listening to and is correct. ~~He~~ He establishes his right to speak out, and then by showing the implications of acting

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otherwise, he shows that he is correct.

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