



AP[®] English Lit (Operational) 2004 Sample Student Responses

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The journey of mankind has been a long and arduous path, without the accomplishment of actually discovering the meaning of life. In the novel Candide, the young noble travels around the world in order to answer a single question, "Is this the best of all possible worlds?" Even as the world seems to be against him, Candide is unable to comprehend why this world should not be the best of all possible worlds. Why would God create a world that is not the best possible? Candide continues to travel around the world intent upon finding the answer to the age-old question.

Upon being kicked out of his castle due to his love, Candide begins his painful journey to answer the begging question, why? At first he cannot see the reason for being kicked out of his castle, and upon being drafted into a war he could not see the reason for such carnage and death. Throughout all of these adventures he is constantly parted and reunited with old friends and acquaintances. Perhaps the time he was happiest was when he found himself in the mythical land of El Dorado, where mud is gold, and rocks are precious gems. This is perhaps the place where Candide had found the model society, a place where greed and lust did not exist. But ultimately he was not satisfied, and the greed he had brought with him from the outside forced him to leave El Dorado and continue

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his hopeless search. He figured that perhaps once he had found his beloved Lady Conagal, happiness would be achieved and the best of all possible worlds would be realized. But upon their final reunion Candide was disgusted to find what age and years of labor had done to the beautiful Lady Conagal. Ultimately, Candide, Lady Conagal, and all of their companions settled down to live peacefully, their long search over and without success.

Candide's answer to the question of whether or not this is the best of all possible worlds is cryptic, neither answering nor dismissing. When asked this question, Candide simply smiles and remarks, "we must tend our garden". After searching the world, one would think that Candide had found something else! However, perhaps he did find something during his life-long quest. At the start of his journey Candide seemed intent on discovering a Utopia, an entire planet that was already at peace with itself and could not possibly become any better. It took Candide his entire life to discover that this is the best of all possible worlds, but those who inhabit this world must work to maintain it. By simply saying "we must tend our garden", Candide tells the world what they must do, simply strive to make each individual life the best possible. Some may argue that Candide was only referring to himself, and had only come to the conclusion that perfection is reached



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through selfish means. However what he means by "tending our garden", is taking small, individual steps towards creating a better world. The message is amazingly Christ-like, not calling for massive action, but simple love and hospitality to be sown amongst human beings. Ultimately it is a very simple message, but through his life's journey Candide was able to fully appreciate it.

The novel Candide does not offer the quick-and-easy answer to the meaning of life or offer the path to paradise. Rather it reemphasizes the age-old lesson that for the best of all possible worlds to fully exist, all people must accept and love one another. With that accomplished the best of all possible worlds will exist. It is not an easy task to love, for as Kahlil Gibran states in his poem The Prophet, loving also entails pain. Despite being opposite, the two are linked and absolutely vital to one another. Because of this tragic bond, massive change is impossible, doomed for failure from the beginning. But Candide's method of each person "tending" his or her own garden, is the true gateway to the best of all possible worlds.

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain raises the central question ~~about~~ "What does it mean to be free?" Twain explores this question throughout the novel by exploring the limits that slavery and civilization place upon the novel's characters.

~~At the beginning of the novel, neither Huck nor Jim are free. Though only Jim is legally enslaved, Huck is in effect enslaved by his father, who shows him no affection, and only rough treatment and exploitation. Jim and Huck run away from their physical masters, Pap in Huck's case, and Jim's owner in Jim's case, and escape on a raft.~~

At the beginning of the novel, ~~neither~~ ^{Huck} ~~neither~~ nor Jim are free. Though only Jim is legally enslaved, ~~Huck~~ ^{Huck} is in effect enslaved by his father, who shows him no affection, ~~and only rough treatment and exploitation.~~ only rough treatment and exploitation. Jim and ~~Huck~~ Huck run away from their physical masters, ~~Pap in Huck's case, and Jim's owner in Jim's case,~~ Pap in Huck's case, and Jim's owner in Jim's case, and escape on a raft.

~~Their adventures on and off the raft explore the chains that bind them and limit their freedom that are less obvious and stronger than the legal chains of black slavery and parental custody. It is only on the raft that Jim and Huck can build a friendship.~~ Their adventures on and off the raft explore the ~~chains~~ chains that bind them and limit their freedom that are less obvious and stronger than the legal chains of black slavery and ~~parental custody.~~ parental custody. It is only on the raft that Jim and Huck can ~~build~~ build a friendship. and shore



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When in town or with other people such as the "King" and "Duke", Jim and Huck must hide their feelings for each other because of society's conventions about race.

~~By the~~ By the novel's end, both Jim and Huck have been freed from the dominion of their respective "masters" by the death of these "masters", but they return to society.

~~Jim~~ Jim is still restricted by society's discriminations against blacks and Huck is restricted by ~~the~~ the conventions of modern society, clothes and manners, against which he chafes. The two are free in one sense, but they are still imprisoned by society. Huck even considers leaving again to go out west, showing evidence that he understands ~~that~~ that he is not free.

~~The~~ By questioning the nature of freedom, throughout the novel, Twain raises the question of the success of Huck and Jim's journey'. ^{the novel's entire plot} If they are not free at the end of the novel, and the point of their journey was freedom, then have they ~~been~~ succeeded?

Twain's treatment of the question of ~~freedom~~ the nature of freedom makes his novel



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truly a novel of the U.S., a country where we place so much emphasis on freedom, but still often find ourselves limited by society.

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In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, the author, Chinua Achebe, introduces a society of traditional & contemporary beliefs that reflect their culture. The village of the story during the time period has its difference & consist of contrasting views, opinions, & characteristics about life. ~~The~~ ~~author~~ Achebe establishes the village's traditional prospects & makes them well known. Especially ~~that~~ through the main character, Okonkwo. Okonkwo's stubborn attitude to prevent the village from diverging from its original standards & qualities develops ~~the question. Does anything is~~ ~~ever stay the same?~~ is relatively evident. His main goal in the novel is to "prevent things from falling apart". This principle develops the question, does anything ever stay the same?

As time progresses throughout the novel, ~~it is obvious~~ there are certain events that influence the resolution of the plot. In the beginning, the village knew their identity, but as time progressed, another society began to have influence



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on theirs. The cultural persuasions made Okonkwo upset & he fought for maintaining his ancestral traditions. The demeanor Okonkwo had to prevent change was very high & he was determined to succeed. He never believed that his village & his people would change. But as time gradually passed by, changes began to form. Whether they were small or major changes, they always happen. Achebe's use of cultural changes & development makes the work apprehendable to realize that things do change & never stay the same.

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