



AP[®] English Literature and Composition 2002 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

Alain de Botton's Kiss and Tell

Sample PP – Score 4

This four (4) essay offers only a partial treatment of the task and is marked by observation rather than analysis. While it asserts that de Botton's passage is funny, it cannot marshal an effective analysis to support this claim. Imprecise diction and clumsy transitions ("also" used repetitively in paragraphs three, four, and five) lend the sense that this argument proceeds by an accumulation of mere observation, rather than by an accumulation of interpretive insight. This is particularly apparent in the total absence of supporting quotations in the second half of the piece.

Sample TTT – Score 6

Although less developed in analysis and less consistent in control of language than essays in the 8-9 range, TTT, a six (6), does offer a reasonable interpretation of de Botton's comic scene. The analysis notes Isabel's distress by the author's choice of words and stresses that her exaggerated reaction in the theater creates almost as big a scene as her parents do through their verbal and physical quirks. While the single paragraph essay challenges readers to discover transitions for themselves ("also," "though," and "then" embedded in the sentences), it does intersperse its analysis with a discussion of comic techniques and good — though brief — use of examples.

Sample CCCC – Score 8

This essay effectively analyzes the nature of the comic effect, with consideration of technique functioning as a vehicle for interpretation and not as an end in itself. Apt, economical references to and quotations from the passage maintain the clear focus on absurdity and universality. Just as importantly, the writer's control of language turns each sentence into an interpretive moment. In de Botton's passage, Isabel's mother's past "indiscretions" are here "acutely foreshadowing absurdities to come." The cruise ship "underscores the ridiculousness" of the parents and "of the situation itself," and the nickname "bean" is "humorously incongruous with the very grown-up Lorca play." An eight (8) essay need not accomplish everything; no essay can. But this essay's focus on situation and character, marked by clarity and insightfulness in language, results in a strong performance.

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Question 2

Thomas Hardy’s “The Convergence of the Twain”

Sample E – Score 5

The essay mentions two valid points: (1) human vanity and (2) the “dark marriage.” However, both supporting paragraphs drift into unsupported, undeveloped assertions. The final paragraph, while moving in the right direction, misses much of the complexity of Hardy’s poem. Superficial and pedestrian, then, are appropriate descriptors for this essay.

Sample III – Score 7

The opening paragraph of this essay is quite good — it is well focused and the writer demonstrates a rather sophisticated level of language facility. However, the essay does not live up to its promise because of its less than full development. It is nevertheless a competent essay although it does not belong in the top tier.

Sample LLLL – Score 9

This essay excels more because of its ideas than for its treatment of rhetorical devices. It is very sophisticated in its use of and facility with language, as evidenced in the opening paragraph. The recurring motif of the ship’s sinking being of divine will is nicely sustained and particularly persuasive. While the paragraphs are not as full as the topflight 9s, the essay is nonetheless satisfying.

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Question 3

Morally Ambiguous Characters

Sample JJJ – Score 4

The writer has a limited, over-simplified understanding of Gatsby and an inability to discuss moral ambiguity. One paragraph discusses the “good” side of Gatsby (he loves Daisy; he can make friends). The next paragraph discusses the “evil” in Gatsby (he asks Daisy to leave her husband; he’s selfish, and he lies). The final paragraph attempts to address the significance of the character’s moral ambiguity to the work, but the writer does not finally understand the task. In other words, Gatsby causes certain “affects” in the characters in the novel as well as in the readers, but these “affects” convey no larger significance. This writer misses the mark.

Sample T – Score 6

This writer does attempt analysis while outlining plot. A series of rhetorical questions helps the student with the analysis of Rochester’s behavior. This writer sees moral ambiguity as behavior that fluctuates, and, in the last paragraph of the essay, the writer attempts to connect the character’s moral ambiguity to the work as a whole. Although this essay is not as thorough or perceptive as the seven (7), eight (8), or nine (9) papers, it is still competent. At the sentence level, the idiomatic slips merely annoy the reader. The prose is workmanlike.

Sample QQQQ – Score 9

This well-focused essay discusses and intertwines the moral ambiguity of McMurphy with his relationship to the work as a whole. The thesis is controlled and the essay is well organized, containing specific textual references. Insightful, clear, and particularly persuasive, this writer manages to convince us of McMurphy’s moral ambiguity. Although there are a few language slips, this full essay rarely falters.