



AP[®] English Literature and Composition 2002 Free-Response Questions

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2002 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following excerpt from a recent British novel, the narrator, a young man in his early twenties, is attending a play with his new girlfriend Isabel when she unexpectedly discovers that her parents are in the theater. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author produces a comic effect.

Oh my God, I think that's my mum over there,' she gasped.
'Where?'
Line 5 'By the pillar. Careful, don't look. What is she doing here? And what's that dress? It looks like a willow tree. Where's Dad? I hope she didn't come with one of her gentlemen friends. She's really too old for that.'
'Did you tell her you were going?'
10 'No, I mean, I said I wanted to see the play, but I didn't let on I had tickets for tonight.'
'She's talking to someone. Can you see?'
'Phew, it's my dad. He must have gone off to buy programmes. And he's about to sneeze. Look, there
15 we go, aaahhtchooo. Out comes his red handkerchief. I just hope they don't spot us and we can escape quickly at the end. With any luck, they'll be too busy arguing to glance up here. This is prime argument territory for them, Mum will be asking Dad where he put the car park ticket and he'll get flustered because he'll just have dropped it into a bin by mistake.'
20 Luck was not on Isabel's side, for a moment later, Christopher Rogers happened to glance up to the gallery and recognized his eldest daughter, in the midst of trying her best not to recognize him. So that she might cease to dwell in ignorance, Christopher stood up in the middle of the elegantly suited and scented audience, and began making the vigorous hand gestures of a man waving off a departing cruise
30 ship. In case Isabel had not spotted this maniac, her mother was in turn informed of her eldest daughter's location, and decided that the presence of four hundred people in the auditorium should be no impediment to her desire to shout 'Isabel' at top pitch and with all the excitement of a woman recognizing a long-lost friend on the deck of an in-coming cruise ship.
35 Isabel smiled feebly, turned a beetroot shade and repeated in panicked diction, 'I can't believe this, please let them shut up.'
40 Not a second too soon, Lorca* came to the rescue, the lights faded, and Mr. and Mrs. Rogers reluctantly took their seats, pointing ominously to an exit sign by way of interval rendezvous.
45 An hour and a quarter of Spanish domestic drama later, we found ourselves at the bar.
'What are you doing here, Mum?' asked Isabel.
'Why shouldn't I be here? You're not the only one who does fancy things with your evenings. Your father and I have a right to go out once in a while.'
50 'I'm sure, I didn't mean it like that, it's just I'm surprised at the coincidence.'
'Where did you buy this dress? Is that the one I paid for at Christmas?'
55 'No, Mum, I got it myself last week.'
'Oh, well, it's very nice, pity you don't have more of a cleavage for it, but that's your father's fault. You know what all the women in his family are like.'
'How are you Dad?' Isabel turned to ask her father,
60 who was looking up at the ceiling with an intent expression.
'Dad?' repeated Isabel.
'Yes, darling, how are you, my bean? Enjoying the show?'
65 'Yup, and you? What are you staring at up there?'
'I'm looking at the light fixtures they have. They're new tungsten bulbs, Japanese things, quite wonderful, they use only a small amount of electricity but give off a very nice light.'
70 'Oh, great, Dad. And, ehm, there's someone I'd like you to both meet.'
'Delighted,' said Mrs. Rogers, confiding in me almost at once: 'She's a lovely girl really,' in case my theatre companion had inspired doubts to the
75 contrary.
'Thanks, Mum,' said Isabel wearily, as though the statement were no one-off.
'Don't mind her, bean, she's had a hard day,'

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explained Dad, now looking more horizontally at the
80 world.

‘My day would be fine if I wasn’t lumbered with
someone who kept losing tickets to the car park,’
snapped Mrs. Rogers.

‘Dad! You haven’t?’

85 ‘Yes, I’m afraid I have. They’re so fiddly these days,
they fall right out of one’s hands.’

—Alain de Botton, *Kiss and Tell*

*Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936): Spanish poet and playwright

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Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Read the following poem carefully. Then, taking into consideration the title of the poem, analyze how the poetic devices convey the speaker's attitude toward the sinking of the ship.

The Convergence of the Twain

(Lines on the loss of the Titanic¹)

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Line 5 Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine² fires,
Cold currents thrid,³ and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

10 Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

15 Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

20 Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

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IX

25 Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
30 On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said “Now!” And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

—Thomas Hardy

¹ On the night of April 14, 1912, the British White Star liner Titanic, the largest ship afloat, collided with an iceberg and sank on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York. Fifteen hundred of the 2,206 passengers lost their lives.

² Bright red. The salamander was supposed to be able to live in the midst of fire.

³ Thread

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Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Morally ambiguous characters—characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good—are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit.

The Age of Innocence
All the King's Men
Anna Karenina
The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man
The Awakening
Billy Budd
Crime and Punishment
Faust
Fences
The Glass Menagerie
Great Expectations
The Great Gatsby
Heart of Darkness
Hedda Gabler

Henry V
The Mayor of Casterbridge
The Merchant of Venice
Mrs. Warren's Profession
Père Goriot
The Picture of Dorian Gray
The Plague
Poccho
The Scarlet Letter
Silas Marner
Sister Carrie
Sula
The Turn of the Screw
Typical American

END OF EXAMINATION