



## AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition 2001 Sample Student Responses

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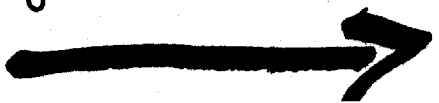
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A clever author can quickly create and characterize a person that is vibrant and realistic. In Tom Jones, Henry Fielding does just that with two rather different characters, Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Deborah Wilkins. Through the uses of diction, tone, and detail, the reader meets good-natured and even-tempered Mr. Allworthy, and his housekeeper, the prim, proper Mrs. Wilkins.

Mr. Allworthy is the master of the house, a squire, and a generally good-natured man, the model of a gentleman. Early in the passage, the reader learns through a side-note detail that he never breaks his nightly prayer ritual on any account, spending "several minutes" on his knees. As this is accompanied by a straightforward tone, it can be inferred that Mr. Allworthy is good, pious man, with no hint of overzealousness or falseness to his religion. Upon seeing the infant, he is astonished, but does not waste time worrying about its origins or even the propriety of a strange child in his bed. Instead, he feels "sentiments of compassion" for the "wretch," a word that implies pity in context, not contempt or revulsion. In short order, the reader learns that he means to provide for the child without question, of a generous action. Though Mrs. Deborah advises getting rid of the child, despite the possibility of its death, Mr. Allworthy could only have been "offended," far more mild a reaction than appalled or angry that she would question his orders. This suggests the steady temper of a man who does not upset easily, an idea compounded when the reader considers he is only "astonished" to find a strange baby in his bed, also a relatively mild reaction. Mr. Allworthy is generally portrayed as a man

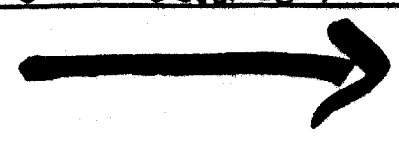


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of generosity, good-nature, and even

temper.

his servant, on the other hand, could not be more different. Mrs. Deborah Wilkins is easily excitable, prude, ridiculously proper, and has ~~attempts~~<sup>suggestions</sup> of being a gossip. The reader first learns of her that she has paused several minutes to adjust her hair out of regard for decency. This bit of detail is laden with irony as decency may be altered by clothes or by manner, but seldom by a flyaway hair. The fact that she pauses to adjust herself despite the fact her master may "lay expiring in apoplexy" only compounds her image as a ~~but~~ ludicrously proper person, so concerned about trivialities as to miss the the more important. Her prudeness is further illustrated as she opens the door to see her master undressed—coatless. This paragraph, too, is delivered ~~is~~ with Fielding's tone remaining with his tongue firmly in cheek. ~~One~~ Mrs. Wilkins has so strict a regard for decency that in fifty-two years, "she had never beheld a man without his coat." Her propriety is laughable, and her concern for societal appearances is only emphasized in her reaction to the infant. Though to Mr. Allworthy it is "sweet and profound," to Mrs. Wilkins, the child "stinks," a difference more in the person than the baby. Mrs. Wilkins' sense of propriety go so far as to consider any illegitimate child a blight, not even a fellow human being. Her reactions to and suggestions for the child, including reabandoning it, add a darker edge to her sense of right and wrong. Where her master is even-tempered, Mrs. Allworthy gets in "terrible fright," nearly swoons, chrys out, and begins a ~~is~~ sermon—



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line-long rant all in quick succession. Her excitability is a sharp contrast to her calm Mr. Allworthy, whose very name suggests a magnanimous nature. Mrs. Wilkins excessive speaking, down to her being the only quoted character in the passage, suggests even a gossipy nature, or at the very least, one who will speak endlessly just to hear her own opinions. Her passages, like her words, are exaggerated, and everything, from her ideas of decency and humanity to the length of her speeches seems excessive.

In a brief passage from the novel Tom Jones, Henry Fielding manages to create two vivid characters: the moderate, good Mr. Allworthy, whose descriptions are simple and understated, and the excessively pride and excitable Mrs. Deborah Wilkins, whose passages are ironic in tone and exaggerated in ~~their~~ ~~use~~ ~~of~~ ~~dictum~~. Through elements of style, from his overall attitude to the characters, to the words he uses to describe them, to the details the reader learns about their natures, Fielding proves himself a very very clever writer with of memorable ~~characters~~ characters.

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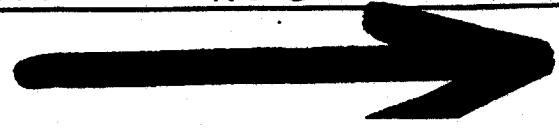
Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, relays a scene in which a baby is found in ~~the Squire~~ Squire Allworthy's bed. After calling up his woman servant, he decides to keep the baby for the night, but not after listening to his woman-servant's idea of what should be done about the baby.

Through the use of 3rd person and dialogue, Fielding clearly describes the ~~characters~~ characters of Mrs. Wilkins and

Squire Allworthy.

~~Mr. Allworthy~~ <sup>Mr. Allworthy</sup> ~~Allworthy~~, after coming home late, takes a couple of minutes praying before he decides to get ready for bed, implying that he is a religious person. He then finds the baby and is taken in by its innocent beauty. After calling in the woman-servant, he decides to keep the baby. While ~~the~~ Mrs. Wilkins was getting out of bed, ~~it~~ it is noted that she gives him enough time to be presentable, as she does to herself. She is amazed that when she walks into the room, he is only wearing a shirt. This use of 3rd person allows Mrs. Wilkins belief in being presentable at all times. By her amazement after seeing Mr. Allworthy only with a shirt on, emphasizes his requirement that decency is a must in his house. Also, by stating that Mrs. Wilkins vowed that she had never beheld a man w/o a coat further establishes her belief in being proper all the time.

Although it is now know that Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Wilkins are both sticklers for decency, nothing is known about their inner character. This is cleared up by Mrs. Wilkins dialogue while talking to Mr. Allworthy about what to do with the baby. She cries out in horror when she sees the baby and begins to advise Mr. Allworthy about what to do about it. She wants him to have a warrant put out for



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the mother's arrest and subsequent whipping and also advises Mr. Allworthy to put the baby on the steps on the church, even though it's raining outside. She also says that if the baby dies, it's not their fault and maybe it's better for the baby to die seeing as ~~the~~ it has no known mother. Through her dialogue, the reader can see how shallow and selfish she is. She doesn't want anything to do with the baby.

Mr. Allworthy, somewhat offended by her speech, chooses to keep the baby. He is compassionate whereas she is superficial to the baby's needs. Once again by the use of third person, Fielding allows the reader to go into the mind of both characters to see how they feel about their situation and one another's actions. At the end, Fielding reinforces Mrs. Wilkins' properness by stating, "her scruples gave way to his ~~per~~peremptory commands". Although she clearly objects to taking care of the baby, she will not refuse her master's request to take care of it for the night.

Henry Fielding uses dialogue and third person to allow the reader to understand the characters' personalities. Through ~~the~~ the characters' actions, he describes his characters as doing things that suggest a virtue <sup>or personality</sup> in the character. Through Allworthy's actions, the reader sees how compassionate he is to the baby and his reluctance to listen to Mrs. Wilkins' suggestions about what to do with the baby. Mrs. Wilkins' ~~story~~ dialogue provides insight to her beliefs which, for the moment, are contrary to that of Mr. Allworthy. Thus Mrs. Wilkins is characterized to be a shallow, proper old woman who is a stickler for decency whereas Mr. Allworthy, ~~is~~ although also a stickler for decency, also contains some compassion and love.

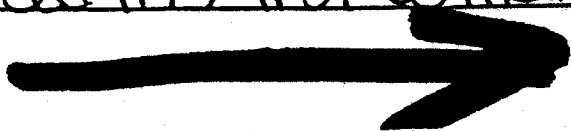


### Mrs. Wilkins' character

Fielding uses the ~~techit~~ technique of placing characters in the same situation and ~~at~~ so that by witnessing ~~each~~ the way in which each responds, the character's true nature can be seen.

The first instance in which this is used is upon the discovery of the infant. Mr. Allworthy finds the infant in his bed and immediately sends for help. He is so filled with compassion for the child that the issue of his decency seems to never cross his mind. Mrs. Wilkins on the other hand, takes her time responding to the call which for all she knows could be a serious emergency. She stands, primping away precious minutes all for the sake of decency. Her response upon viewing the infant is to one of disgust. She launches into an attack on, not only the child but the mother, saying she should be beaten. She then suggests taking the defenseless child in a basket to the doorstep of a churchwarden saying that it's only a little rainy and cold and even if the infant should die, they would have done it a favor by not letting it grow up to make the same mistake its mother did.

The technique is used a second time when the matter of what will become of the child is brought up by Mr. Allworthy. He ~~suggests~~ orders that the infant be placed in Mrs. Wilkins' bed



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and is also to be given a servant to watch over it. Upon hearing this, Mrs. Wilkins whose attitude toward the infant changes as she lovingly carries it from the room.

By using this technique of placing characters in the same situation in order to view their true nature, it is shown that Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Wilkins are very different. Mr. Allworthy can be viewed as a compassionate man who is willing to overlook a fellow creature's hardships in order to do what is best. It can be understood that Mrs. Wilkins, on the other hand, is heartless and self-centered. She can be told her opinion in order for her to keep watch out for herself.

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