



## AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature 1999 Sample Student Responses

**The materials included in these files are intended for non-commercial use by AP teachers for course and exam preparation; permission for any other use must be sought from the Advanced Placement Program. Teachers may reproduce them, in whole or in part, in limited quantities, for face-to-face teaching purposes but may not mass distribute the materials, electronically or otherwise. These materials and any copies made of them may not be resold, and the copyright notices must be retained as they appear here. This permission does not apply to any third-party copyrights contained herein.**

These materials were produced by Educational Testing Service (ETS), which develops and administers the examinations of the Advanced Placement Program for the College Board. The College Board and Educational Testing Service (ETS) are dedicated to the principle of equal opportunity, and their programs, services, and employment policies are guided by that principle.

The College Board is a national nonprofit membership association dedicated to preparing, inspiring, and connecting students to college and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 3,900 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves over three million students and their parents, 22,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges, through major programs and services in college admission, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>™</sup>, the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>), and Pacesetter<sup>®</sup>. The College Board is committed to the principles of equity and excellence, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

Copyright © 2001 by College Entrance Examination Board. All rights reserved. College Board, Advanced Placement Program, AP, and the acorn logo are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board.

In Seamus Heaney's poem "Blackberry-picking," the use of juicy diction, clear and vivid imagery, slant rhyme and conversational rhythm, along with casual form, illustrate the poet's message that the childhood experience of picking berries holds a deeper metaphor for life; that is, childish hopes continue to exist despite the <sup>also</sup> continual slap of reality.

The casual and childish hopefulness in the poem is clearly embodied in the conversational tone, forced by the irregular sentence structure found within the rhythm and the slant rhyme usage throughout the work. By organizing sentences in such a way that perpetuates variance of stressed and unstressed syllables, the narrative tale of berry-picking is seen in a casual light. The additional use of slant rhyme or off rhyme ("sweet/it" 5-6) also adds to the elimination of the sing-song feel that so often causes distraction of the reader in other poems. The poem's form in an ABB... rhyme scheme separated into almost rhyming couplets keeps a sense of organized structure throughout.

The use of descriptive, content-filled diction is as juicy as the blackberries in the story; this description adds

not only to the literal childish experience of berry-picking, but also to the adult acknowledgement of the significance of the experience. The clear imagery of the berries' "flesh" (5) sweetened "like thickened wine" (6) brings vivid images and striking comparisons between the berry flesh and human flesh, filled with "summer's blood" (6). The fact that the memory of the adult, reflecting back upon the childhood experience is so strong as to remember all of the "milk cans, pea tins, [and] jam pots" (9) provides an additional link through repetitive diction to the metaphor that is to come. Imagery is also solidified through such literary elements as consonance "tricked and picked" (12) alliteration "big dark blobs burned" (14), and personification as it is "hunger" (8) that sent the children out to gather all of the berries.

Through the childhood experience of gathering berries, the speaker uses literary elements to show the deeper metaphor for idealistic hope and its survival despite realistic confinements. The structure of the poem, by separating the initial tale of the berry picking into 8 couplets and the reflection upon the fermentation and rot into four couplets indicates the

speaker's belief that the childish, innocent hope for sweetness and goodness continues on. This is paradoxically established further in the speaker's description of "all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot" (13) as the hopes of sweet, luscious blackberries are destroyed by the inevitable natural decay of what was sweet and good in the berries. This grim picture, of the natural decay and destruction of the things we cherish enough to go search after even "where briars scratched" (10) and when "our hands were peppered / with thorn pricks" (15-16), presents a depressing image of the world around us. We sacrifice for the "lust for / picking" (7-8) and are yet denied the fruits of our labor. This destruction of what people materialistically search for, however, does offer hope. Although the human possessions do not keep forever, the hope that nature's goodness will continue on is ~~present~~ mirrored in the childish hope that the berries will keep despite the knowledge that the berries themselves will rot. More important than actually saving the berries then, is the value placed on nature and the triumph in the berry-pick. The fact that the berries were picked every year despite the knowledge that they would spoil is the finishing

touch on the role that hope has in our society.

The ideals of natural preservation, although tainted by inevitable decay of what is worked for, are perpetuated not by the physical salvation of nature's goods, but by the internal value that is placed on nature. In "Blackberry Picking" the adult reflection upon the childhood innocence of that hope is reflected poignantly by the lush descriptions and imagery of a memory that in some way, ~~is~~ true to us all.

In Keats's poem "Blackberry-Picking" a deeper ~~and~~ understanding of life's ceaseless cycles is conveyed as the poem shifts from lustful and unsatisfied to disappointed and destitute. The poem was divided into two sections. The first one physically described the fall's harvest of ~~B~~ blackberry blackberries while it symbolically described life. The vigor and youthful air given to the poem was inherent through the poet's diction. The blackberries were vividly described using strong visual, and tactile images such as "glossy purple clot", (3) "red, green, hard as a knot" (4) and "big dark blobs burned" (14). The ~~re~~ repetition of 'b's' in line 14 further emphasizes the importance of the chosen words, it strengthens the language. ~~The poem's lustfulness~~ ~~lustfulness~~ ~~of the poem was portrayed through similes and metaphors.~~ ~~It~~ Phrases such as "its flesh was sweet / Like thickened wine: Summer's blood was in it" (lines 5-6) make references to a physical body, the words 'flesh' and 'blood' in particular. The simile "like thickened wine" draws images of drunkenness, almost an irresistible force creating a "lust for / Picking" (lines 7-8). The tone of the poem remains unsatisfied.

The second section of the poem physically describes the decay of the blackberries, yet symbolically ~~describes~~ stands as an elaboration of death. The ~~seem~~ eighteenth line insinuates a surplus, "when the bath was filled". Strong visual descriptions of the decay were used such as "rat-grey fungus" (19) and ~~an~~ olfactory <sup>image</sup> with "stinking" (20) and "lovely carefuls smell of rot" (23). The poet "always felt like crying" (12) and "hoped they'd keep, knew they would not" (24). He was trying to defy life's natural cycles while knowing he was powerless against them. The poem's second half was dissapointing, destitute and full of false hope. The over all contrast between <sup>the</sup> life and death of the blackberries, with the poet's powerlessness over natural cycles are what combine to convey a deeper understanding of the whole experience. A powerful, rhyming comparison was drawn through the lively "clot" (3) and "knot" (4) at the end of those lines, and the words "rot" (23) and "not" (24) at the end of the last two

lines. 'Rot' and 'not' are strong negative influences on the poem, whereas 'clot' and 'knot' are positive influences. A sharp contrast is drawn, further emphasizing and strengthening the overall understanding portrayed in the poem.



Seamus Heaney's poem "Blackberry - Picking" conveys more than just a literal description of the process of harvesting blackberries. Through the form and structure of the poem, and through the author's choice of words and metaphors a deeper explanation of the experience is attained. The process of blackberry harvesting is ~~shown as a~~ ~~process~~ shown as a deep psychological process of love and loss.

The poem is divided into two sections. This division separates the feelings of love in the first part from the feelings of loss in the second part. The poem describes the process of picking the blackberries in the first stanza. This is the longer of the two stanzas, illustrating the long, labor intensive harvest driven by love. The second stanza is about the fermentation of the blackberries soon after picking them. This stanza is short because the berries rot quickly after they have been picked. This poem structure contrasts the long labors of love ~~and~~ and the short time in which all can be lost.

The diction in the poem also contributes to its deeper meaning. While the author describes the picking, he uses certain words and phrases which demonstrate the love of blackberry harvesting. "Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it /

Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for Picking" (lines 6-8). This statement describes the joy and fulfillment the author finds through ~~the~~ the picking, because of the use of the words "lust", and "thickened wine". The diction in the second stanza changes to show the loss felt when the berries ferment. Words such as "glutting" (line 14) and "shinking" (line 20), and the phrase, "I always felt like crying" (line 22) show this sad tone. The <sup>change of the</sup> author's words and phrases between the first and second stanza once again convey a the deeper psychological feelings associated with picking black berries.

Finally, the metaphors of the poem also show the love and loss of the process. The author describes the taste of the first berry as "sweet like thickened wine" (lines 5-6). This metaphor is a clear statement of the love involved through the description of the taste. The loss involved is once again portrayed in the second stanza, through metaphors. The author ~~says~~ compares the moldy blackberries to "rat-grey fungus" (line 19). This comparison ~~now shows~~ shows the once delicious, wonderful berries, have been ruined.

The poem portrays blackberry-picking as more than just a simple labor. It ~~is~~ is a deeper experience of love and anticipation followed by sadness and a ~~to~~ sense of loss.