



AP English Literature 2000 Scoring Guidelines

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Question 1

- 9-8: These essays are ordered by a persuasive interpretation that forms an effective basis for comparing the Sirens. They recognize variations in perspective and approach that differentiate Atwood's contemporary treatment of the Sirens from Homer's ancient version of the temptresses, and their analysis is insightful and provocative. Although the writers of these essays may offer a range of interpretations and/or choose different poetic elements for emphasis, these papers provide convincing readings of both poems and maintain consistent control over the elements of effective composition, including the language appropriate to the criticism of verse. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, they demonstrate the writers' ability to read poetry perceptively and to write with clarity and sophistication.
- 7-6: These essays convey a sound grasp of both poems. However, they may prove less adept than the best essays at shaping a thesis to define the distinctions and/or similarities that make the juxtaposition of these two treatments of the Sirens a telling exercise. The interpretations may falter in some particulars, or they may be less thorough or precise in their discussion of how the poems portray the Sirens. Nonetheless, their dependence on paraphrase, if any, will be in the service of analysis. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly, but they do not exhibit the same level of mastery, maturity, and/or control as the very best essays. These essays are likely to be briefer, less incisive, and less well-supported than the 9-8 papers.
- 5: These essays tend to over-simplify: they respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the texts, yet they perhaps say little beyond the most readily grasped observations. They often rely on paraphrase, but nonetheless paraphrase that contains some implicit analysis. Their discussion of how the portrayals of the Sirens compare may be vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported by references to the text. They may suffer from the cumulative force of many minor misinterpretations. Composition skills are at a level sufficient to convey the writer's thoughts, and surface errors do not constitute a distraction. However, these essays are not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers.
- 4-3: These lower-half essays reveal an incomplete understanding of either or both texts and perhaps an insufficient understanding of the prescribed task as well: they may not succeed in forging a basis for the comparison of the portrayals of the Sirens. One poem may be discussed to the exclusion of the other; the poetic analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant. The essay may rely essentially on paraphrase. Evidence from the texts may be meager or misconstrued. The writing demonstrates uncertain control over the elements of composition, often exhibiting recurrent stylistic flaws and/or inadequate development of ideas. Essays scored 3 may contain significant misreadings and/or unusually inept writing.

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- 2-1: These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the texts, and frequently are unacceptably brief. They are poorly written on several counts and may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt may have been made to respond to the question, the writer's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the texts. Essays scored 1 contain little coherent discussion of the texts.
- 0: A response with no more than a reference to the task.
- A blank paper or completely off-topic response.

Question 2

- 9-8: The writers of these well-ordered essays prove themselves astute readers of this satiric passage. Obviously appreciative of Addison's wit, they persuasively convey his skill in creating a diarist whose habit of daily notations marks the triviality of his own humdrum life as well as the superficiality of the society with which he is associated. These writers identify with clarity and precision several of the ways that Addison uses language to characterize the diarist and his society, and they illustrate these strategies by means of apt and specific references to the excerpt. Further, they underscore the implications of these characterizations by providing a convincing explanation of Addison's satiric purpose. Although not without flaws, these student essays demonstrate consistent control over the elements of effective composition. The 9 essays may be especially precise in the diction used in literary analysis.
- 7-6: These essays identify and illustrate effective strategies of language by which Addison characterizes the diarist and his society, though their analysis will be less incisive, developed, or aptly supported than that found in 9-8 papers. The response of these student writers to Addison's satire may seem uncertain: their discussion of the satiric purpose of Addison's characterizations, although suggestive, is not as convincing or as thorough as that of papers in the highest range. Although these essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly, they do so with less maturity and precision than the best papers. Generally, 7 papers present a more developed analysis and a more consistent command of the elements of effective college-level composition than do essays scored 6.
- 5: Although these essays seem cognizant of the satiric nature of the passage, they are probably not very clear, convincing, or entirely accurate in their attempts to explain Addison's particular satiric purpose. Their discussion of the literary strategies by which Addison succeeds in drawing his diarist is probably pretty thin; and, although they may contain telling observations, these essays may not convey significant understanding of the purposes behind the characterizations of either the diarist or his society. Analysis attempted in these essays is likely to be vague, mechanical, or overly generalized. Although the writing is adequate to convey the writer's thoughts and is without important

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errors in composition, these essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers. Usually, they reveal simplistic thinking and/or immature writing.

- 4-3: These lower-half papers try to address the task, but they have not been written by individuals who have a good ear for satire. They reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of Addison's purpose in characterizing his diarist as he does — or they may even ignore any obligation to identify such a purpose. Their description of Addison's characterization of his diarist and his diarist's society may be limited, incomplete, or indeed off base. Their discussion of the author's use of language may be misguided, unclear, or undeveloped. These papers often paraphrase rather than analyze the text. Analysis of technique found in these essays is typically meager and unconvincing; the essays lack persuasive reference to the text. Generally the writer demonstrates limited control of diction, organization, syntax, or grammar.
- 2-1: These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Although some attempt may have been made to answer the question, the writer's views typically are presented with little clarity, organization, coherence, or supporting evidence. These writers may seriously misunderstand satire and its uses; they may misread the passage, misconstrue the character of the diarist, or fail to see any point to Addison's characterizing him and his society. They seem unable to identify the techniques that Addison relies on to create and convey a portrait of his diarist, and/or they cannot shape their several observations into a coherent argument. Frequently, these essays are unacceptably brief, repetitious, or vague. Often poorly written on several counts, they may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.
- 0: A response with no more than a reference to the task.
- A blank paper or completely off-topic response.

Question 3

- 9-8: The writers of these well-focused essays identify the mystery confronted by a character or characters in an appropriate novel or play, and they persuasively explain how the knowledge that results from the investigation of this mystery, even if unsolved, illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Using apt and specific textual illustration but without belaboring the plot, they fully explore not only the nature of the mystery but also the ways in which its pursuit provides enlightenment to characters and/or the reader. These essays need not be flawless: nor must they accomplish all aspects of this complex task equally well. Nonetheless, they exhibit the writer's ability to discuss a literary work with insight and understanding, to sustain control over a thesis, and to write with clarity and perhaps — in the case of some 9 essays — even stylistic grace.
- 7-6: The writers of these competent essays also clearly describe a mystery in an appropriately chosen work. Directed by a well-defined thesis, their essays discuss the knowledge that

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results from the investigation of the mystery and convey its importance to the work as a whole. Although not without worthwhile insights, the analysis provided by the 7-6 essays is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific than that of 9-8 papers: references to the text may not be as numerous or as persuasive. Relative to the 6 essays, the papers scored 7 will demonstrate slightly more sophistication in both substance and style, though both 7's and 6's should be generally well written and free from significant or sustained misinterpretation.

- 5: Superficiality characterizes these essays. They may refer to the mystery within a work and offer limited discussion of the knowledge that comes as a consequence of its investigation; they may attempt to explain how the investigation of the mystery illuminates the work as a whole. However, these essays will not accomplish all-- or perhaps any--of these tasks with sufficient depth or development. The work itself may be poorly chosen for this essay question; the mystery identified may not provide a sound or provocative focus for the essay. Discussion in these papers, though not perhaps inaccurate, tends to be thin and often relies on plot summary or unsubstantiated generalizations. Typically these essays reveal unsophisticated thinking and/or immature writing.
- 4-3: These lower-half papers reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the work discussed or any mysteries to which it gives rise. Their assertions may be unsupported or even irrelevant. Often wordy, elliptical, or repetitious, the writing reveals uncertain control over the elements of college-level composition; it may contain recurrent stylistic errors. Essays scored 3 exhibit more than one of the above infelicities; they are marred by significant misinterpretation, poor development, and/or serious omissions.
- 2-1: These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Often they are unacceptably brief. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The writer's observations are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.
- 0: A response with no more than a reference to the task.
- A blank paper or completely off-topic response.