



AP[®] English Literature 1999 Scoring Guidelines

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**AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE
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Question 1

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General Directions**:
The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay *as a whole*. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

9-8: These well-conceived and well-ordered essays provide insightful analysis (implicit as well as explicit) of *how* Heaney creates and conveys his memory of picking blackberries. They appreciate Heaney's physically-intense language for its vivid literal description, but they also understand the meaning of the experience on a profound, metaphoric level. 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 the poem and maintain consistent control over the elements of effective composition, including the language unique 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 reflect a sound grasp of Heaney's poem and the power of its language; but they prove less sensitive than the best essays to the poetic ways that Heaney invests literal experience with strong, metaphoric implications. The interpretations of the poem that they provide may falter in some particulars or they may be less thorough or precise in their discussion of *how* the speaker reveals the experience of "blackberry-picking." Nonetheless, their dependence on paraphrase, if any, will be in the service of analysis. These essays demonstrate the writers' 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 are, at best, superficial. They respond to the assigned task yet probably say little beyond the most easily grasped observations. Their analysis of *how* the experience of blackberry picking is conveyed may be vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported. They may suffer from the cumulative force of many minor misreadings. They tend to rely on paraphrase but nonetheless paraphrase which contains some implicit analysis. Composition skills are at a level sufficient to convey the writer's thoughts, and egregious mechanical errors do not constitute a distraction. These essays are nonetheless not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers.

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Question 1 (cont.)

These lower-half essays reveal an incomplete understanding of the poem and perhaps an insufficient understanding of the prescribed task as well: they may emphasize literal description without discussing the deeper implications of the blackberry-picking experience. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant—or it may rely essentially on paraphrase. Evidence from the text 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 misreading and/or unusually inept writing.

These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the poem. Frequently, they are unacceptably brief. They are poorly written on several counts and may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics.

2-1: 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 text of the poem.

0: A response with no more than a reference to the task.

— Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

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Question 2

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General Directions**:

The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay *as a whole*. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

The writers of these well-constructed essays define the dramatic nature of the experience described in Cormac McCarthy's passage and ably demonstrate *how* the author conveys the impact of the experience upon the main character. Having fashioned a convincing thesis about the character's reaction to the death of the wolf, these writers support their assertions by analyzing the use of specific literary techniques (such as point of view, **9-8:** syntax, imagery, or diction) that prove fundamental to their understanding of McCarthy's narrative design. They make appropriate references to the text to illustrate their argument. Although not without flaws, these essays reflect the writer's ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing to provide a keen analysis of a literary text.

Developing a sound thesis, these writers discuss with clarity and conviction both the character's response to the death of the wolf and certain techniques used to convey the impact this experience has upon the main character. These essays may not be entirely responsive to the rich suggestiveness of the passage or as precise in describing the dramatic impact of the event. Although they provide specific references to the text, the **7-6:** analysis is less persuasive and perhaps less sophisticated than papers in the 9-8 range: they seem less insightful or less controlled, they develop fewer techniques, or their discussion of details may be more limited. Nonetheless, they confirm the writer's ability to read literary texts with comprehension and to write with organization and control.

These essays construct a reasonable if reductive thesis; they attempt to link the author's literary techniques to the reader's understanding of the impact of the experience on the main character. However, the discussion may be superficial, pedestrian, and/or lacking in consistent control. The organization may be ineffective or not fully realized. The **5:** analysis is less developed, less precise, and less convincing than that of upper half essays; misinterpretations of particular references or illustrations may detract from the overall effect.

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Question 2 (cont.)

These essays attempt to discuss the impact of this dramatic experience upon the main character — and perhaps mention one or more techniques used by McCarthy to effect this end. The discussion, however, may be inaccurate or undeveloped. These writers may misread the passage in an essential way, rely on paraphrase, or provide only limited attention to technique. Illustrations from the text tend to be misconstrued, inexact, or omitted altogether. The writing may be sufficient to convey ideas, although typically it is characterized by weak diction, syntax, grammar, or organization. Essays scored three are even less able and may not refer to technique at all.

These essays fail to respond adequately to the question. They may demonstrate confused thinking and/or consistent weaknesses in grammar or another basic element of composition. They are often unacceptably brief. Although the writer may have made some attempt to answer the question, the views presented have little clarity or coherence; significant problems with reading comprehension seem evident. 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.

— Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

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Question 3

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General Directions**:

The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay *as a whole*. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

Having chosen a novel or play of recognized literary merit, the able writers of these well-ordered essays focus on an appropriate character "whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences." By explaining with clarity and precision the nature of the opposing forces with which the character struggles, as well as the implications of this character's internal conflict for the meaning of the work as a whole, these writers manage to construct a compelling argument that illuminates both character and text.

9-8: Comprehensive in their grasp of their novel or play, these writers neither oversimplify the complex moral dilemmas that often result from the pull of competing forces "of equal strength"; nor do they ignore the ambiguities that make resolution of such conflicts difficult or even impossible. Specific textual references and solid literary analysis support their assertions and demonstrate their own facility with language.

The writers of these essays select both an appropriate text and character, and they provide a clear and coherent discussion of the struggle with opposing forces that goes on within the mind of a character and a persuasive explanation as to how this conflict "illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole." They display sound

7-6: knowledge of the text, as well as an ability to order ideas and to write with both clarity and creativity. However, the analysis in these essays is less perceptive, less thorough, and/or less specific than the essays above: neither substance nor style is quite so impressive as the 9-8 essays.

Although these lower-half essays are often characterized by shallow, unsupported generalizations, they provide at least a plausible argument. These writers identify apt characters in well-chosen texts. Their understanding of the concepts prompted by this question may remain inchoate and/or have little to do with literary constructions:

5: instead of focusing on the pull of opposing forces upon the mind of one character, they may discuss a conflict between two or more characters-or another sort of struggle altogether. The attempt to relate the character's conflict to the meaning of the work may be limited or non-existent. Competent plot summary may substitute for analysis, and references to the text may be limited, random, or vague. The writing in these essays does not usually demonstrate consistent control over the elements of composition.

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Question 3 (cont.)

- 4-3:** These lower-half papers convey a less than adequate comprehension of the assignment. They choose a more or less appropriate text, and they make a reasonable selection of a character from that text. Their discussion of conflicting forces will undoubtedly falter, however, and they may do little to explore the implications of the character's struggle for the meaning of the work as a whole. They seldom exhibit compelling authority over the selected text. Though these essays offer at least a rudimentary argument, support usually depends on unsubstantiated generalizations rather than specific examples. These essays may contain significant misinterpretations and displace analysis with paraphrase or plot summary. The writing may be sufficient to convey some semblance of the writer's ideas, but it reveals only limited control over diction, organization, syntax, or grammar.
- 2-1:** These essays compound the weakness of essays in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the novel or the play, or the question itself. They may choose a problematic work. They may contain little, if any, clear, coherent argument: they provide impressions rather than analysis. In addition, they are poorly written on several counts, including many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics, or they are unacceptably brief. Essays that are especially vacuous, ill-organized, illogically argued, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.
- 0:** A response with no more than a reference to the task.
- Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.