

2017

AP®

 CollegeBoard

AP English Literature and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

Inside:

- Free Response Question 1**
- Scoring Guideline**
- Student Samples**
- Scoring Commentary**

AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2017 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1: Rachel M. Harper, “The Myth of Music”

The score should reflect the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the students for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. A poorly written essay may not be scored higher than a 3.

9–8 These essays offer a persuasive analysis of how the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family is conveyed through elements such as imagery, form, and tone. The writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide convincing readings of the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories and Harper’s use of elements such as imagery, form, and tone. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a 9 essay, especially persuasive.

7–6 These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family is conveyed through elements such as imagery, form, and tone. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of how the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family is conveyed through elements such as imagery, form, and tone. Their analysis of the relationship and the use of elements is less thorough or convincing. These essays demonstrate the student’s ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9–8 papers. Essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a 6.

5 These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible analysis of how the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family is conveyed through elements such as imagery, form, and tone, but tend to be superficial or pedestrian in their analysis of the relationship and the use of elements. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the relationship between music and memory or of Harper’s use of such elements as imagery, form, and tone may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These students demonstrate some control of language, but their essays may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 essays.

4–3 These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or may ignore the relationship between music and memory or Harper’s use of elements. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

2–1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the student’s assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poem.

0 These essays give a response that is completely off-topic or inadequate; there may be some mark or a drawing or a brief reference to the task.

— These essays are entirely blank.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering
on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1

1A

1 of 4

According to recent neurological studies, the two senses connected most directly to the amygdala (responsible for memory storage) are smell and hearing. However, as Rachel M. Harper's poem "The Myth of Magic" can attest, humans have been implicitly aware of the link between memory and familiar sounds for decades.

Through her use of ~~auditory imagery and comparative metaphorical language~~, comparative, metaphorical language and auditory imagery, Harper conveys the timeless and uniquely personal nature of music in its ability to evoke the emotionality of her childhood to her father.

In the poem, Harper uses metaphorical comparison in order to introduce and explicate the part that music plays in her familial history. Her initial supposition "if music can be passed on... this melody is my inheritance" associates music with genetics through a metaphorical comparison. This serves to convey the inherent, almost ingrained importance of music to Harper's family and piques the reader for Harper's strong emotional connection to it. The further explications of music as "lineage tracked through a fire track" and "oral history taught on a record player" make further use of metaphorical language in order to emphasize the initial point, and continue intertwining the relevance of familial history and musical themes, as indicated by the



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1

2 of 4

comparisons to traditionally musical objects like the tracks and record players. The second stanza continues to incorporate metaphorical comparison in order regarding "the sound of [her father's] typewriter" as his "own accompaniment, multiphonics disguised as chords." Harper's is particularly meaningful that Harper chose to use musical comparisons to introduce her father because he is the intended audience of this poem, as indicated by the dedication "for my father," this comparison extends throughout the stanza, where she regards the "speakers set on high" as "filling the house with [her father's] spirit, [his] call as a declaration of love." In past comparisons, Harper used music as a means of accessing the emotions of her lineage; in this stanza, she specifically extends it to mean a demonstration of her father's love and spirit. Once again, Harper is able to compare the mundane—"typewriter," "speakers"—to the ~~mundane~~ ^{reduced} musical, and therefore to the personal. Clearly, Harper's use of metaphorical comparison serves to define and link the importance of music to the concrete happenings and entities of her childhood.

In regards to imagery, Harper uses extensive auditory imagery to link the music of her childhood



Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1

1A

3 of 4

to the emotions and nostalgia. The first stanza is heavier on the introductory metaphorical language than the more analytical imagery, but it does include a reference to "collective memory cut in rough textured tones". This description is in line with the previous references to "hardwood floors in a damp November" and "an incomplete deck", and serves to both more clearly evoke the haphazard hominess of Harper's childhood as well as an initial connection to the jazz music that ~~occurred~~ is the focus of the poem. The second stanza uses a shorter form of auditory imagery, combining the homey ~~reassurance~~ "security of [her mother's] footstep" and "sound of typewriter" with the "speaker set on high" and "multiphonics aligned as chords". By describing all of these aspects of sound in ~~Harper's~~ ^{her} childhood memories, Harper manages to incorporate the reader into her own childhood and further solidify the connection between her childhood and her music. However, it is the subtle but impactful imagery of the last stanza that must contributes to the Harper's portrayal of the relationship between music and her childhood; the stanza is peppered with more abstract auditory references, such as "the timeless notes of jazz", which directly reflect the impact that music has.



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and will always have on Harper's memory. Equally relevant are the writer references which weave together and solidify the auditory sensations of Harper's mixed home life and jazz music. This is particularly visible in her phrases "rhythm of childhood", which evokes nostalgic bumps and crashes of childhood, or the phrases "words of a lullaby" and "saxophone's blow", which link the most common musical element of childhood—a lullaby—to Harper's more specific form of childhood music—a saxophone. Harper ends the poem with the auditory imagery of a "delicate breath", which she finally brings back to the main audience of her father by sharing her inclination to "not share that air with anyone but [him]".

Clearly, Harper's use of metaphorical language serves to clearly introduce and explicate on how Harper's life was linked to and impacted music, while her auditory imagery emphasized that connection in a more emotionally relevant way to the reader and specified the main audience of the poem as her father. By incorporating both these literary techniques, Harper conveys the ability of music to recall her childhood memories and provides a fitting address to the father who brought her that association.

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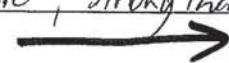
Write in the box the number of the question you are answering
on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1

1B

1 of 2

Harper shows how specific music carries her identity and family essence by using metaphor and symbolism to reveal ~~the~~ the music's unique and intimate nature.

Harper portrays the one-to-one fit jazz songs have with her family by showing how engraved the "DNA" of her family is in songs. She uses metaphor to compare the features of music to genetic inheritance. She begins the poem comparing music to traits like "brown eyes", to show ~~how~~ she is so fundamentally rooted in this music that it is ~~as~~ like a physical ~~trait~~ characteristic for her. She again shows the undisputable truthful nature of the music being so tightly knit with her family values by saying, "the lessons sealed into the grooves like fact." This metaphor shows not only how unique the jazz songs are to her family, because every record has different grooves to play different songs, it also shows the unchangeable presence of music in Harper's life by saying "fact" like wise, Harper says, "The notes like fingerprints" to further ~~show~~ show the unique and one-to-one fit of ~~the~~ jazz music in her life, as every fingerprint is distinct and based off the genes of a person. She emphasizes this notion by using diction like, "This is my song" and "I will not share this air with anyone but you", with you referring to her father. This shows extreme ownership and pride of the music, strengthening 

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1B

2 of 2

her family bonds with the music.

Harper also shows the intimate relationship she had with jazz by showing its influence on her childhood. She uses the music to symbolise a part of her past when her family was together and close. This is seen when she says, "You (her father) present in the sound", which shows how the music is a piece of her father she can always carry with her. This notion is furthered when she says, "speakers set on high to fill the whole house with your spirit, your call as a declaration of love"; which shows how her father could basically directly talk to her ~~through~~ through his music, which further bonded her to jazz. She also shows just how long jazz has been present in her life by having jazz represent her childhood, by saying, "the ~~jazz~~ rhythm of my childhood, memories fading like the words of a lullaby". Lullabies are typical song to babies, which signifies how jazz has been a constant presence through her whole life.

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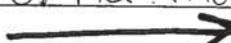
Question 1

1C

1 of 2

Many say that music is the universal language. Every genre, album and song is unique. From a young age, everyone can recognize a song that brings to mind a memory. Whether or not the memory is cheerful or painful is discussed in The Myth of Music by Rachel M. Harper.

The speaker begins by stating that a specific melody has been passed down to her compared to genes. "Like brown eyes or a strong left hook" (lines 2-3). In using this comparison, the author makes an immediate connection to herself and the music. She then goes on to describe a fond memory which has been linked to the music. "I sit on the hardwood floors of a damp November, my brother dealing cards from an incomplete deck" (lines 12-14). She recalls this happy time with her brother and realized that this is what family is about. Contrary to the joy she felt, she also remembers when her mother had left. She used music that her father had played to her. "Speakers set so high to fill the whole house with your spirit, your call as a declaration of love" (lines 37-40). The sound of jazz music brings up many complex feelings and memories for the author. As it reminds her of the love for her brother, the betrayal of her mother,



Question 1

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1C

and love ~~the~~ she and her father share for each other and the music.

2 of 2

One of the main purposes of music is to display thought and emotion in a way that anybody can understand. Every song is different just like every person. The relationship between a person and their connection to music is vastly complex and impossible to limit.

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AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE 2017 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

For Question 1, the poetry question, students were asked to read “The Myth of Music” by Rachel M. Harper and respond to the following prompt:

The following poem is by Rachel M. Harper. Read the poem carefully. Then, considering such elements as imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family.

Students were expected to accomplish three tasks successfully:

- They were to read carefully.
- They were to analyze the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family.
- They were to write a well-organized essay on the topic.

The three tasks, of course, are interdependent; reading leads to analysis leads to writing leads to discovery leads to more development.

- Reading carefully means employing the techniques practiced during their Advanced Placement class and engaging with qualities, terms, and characteristics related to the study of poetry.
- Analysis means identifying the important parts of a larger whole and being able to explain how those parts connect to and function within that whole. In this case, students needed to identify the parts of the text that led to an understanding of the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of family. The word “complex” here is a cue to the students that they might see complicated, shifting, paradoxical, or even opposing elements of those memories that were connected to the image of music. Students then had to articulate how those parts contribute to an overall “relationship.”
- Finally, writing a well-organized essay means understanding how their own thoughts about the text are connected, being able to support those assertions with clear, concrete examples, and cueing the reader with the appropriate compositional techniques, such as establishing a thesis and using transitional devices.

Sample: 1A

Score: 8

This essay offers a persuasive analysis of metaphor and imagery, treating each of these figures substantively in its argument about the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family. The essay clearly establishes a metaphorical link between music and memory in the poem and then develops this idea — summoning Harper’s opening lines as evidence — to argue the “inherent, almost ingrained importance of music to Harper’s family.” It is insightful in its identification of the speaker’s two audiences: the speaker’s father and the reader of the poem. It analyzes the father’s emotional impact on the speaker through the analogical link between the keys of the father’s typewriter and the music filling the speaker’s childhood house, adding the insight that Harper uses “music as a means of accessing the emotions of her

**AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE
2017 SCORING COMMENTARY**

Question 1 (continued)

lineage.” Throughout the analysis the essay references small and specific domestic details from the poem that create nostalgia for the childhood house, e.g., invoking “the homey ‘security of [her mother’s] footsteps’” to argue that “a subtler form of auditory imagery” both allows the reader to access the childhood experience and serves to “solidify the connection” between memory and sound. The analysis of auditory imagery is multifaceted and rich: auditory imagery forms the “‘rhythm of childhood,’ which evokes nostalgic bumps and crashes of childhood” and the poem “link[s] the most common musical element of childhood — a lullaby — to Harper’s more specific form of childhood music — a saxophone.” While this essay convincingly demonstrates the role of music in recalling memories in the poem, its language is sometimes uneven (e.g., “continue intertwining the relevance of familial history and musical themes” and the wording of the last paragraph), and its argument is less persuasive than one would expect of an essay at the top of the scoring guide; this essay therefore earned a score of 8.

Sample: 1B

Score: 5

This essay responds to the task with a plausible analysis of the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family but largely offers superficial claims, such as the claim that Harper “begin[s] the poem comparing music to traits like ‘brown eyes’, to show she is so fundamentally rooted in this music that is like a physical characteristic for her.” Some specific textual support is provided, for example, Harper “again shows the undisputable truthful nature of the music being so tightly knit with her family values by saying, ‘the lessons sealed into the grooves like fact.’” Some analysis is also present, but the analysis tends to remain superficial: “[t]his metaphor shows not only how unique the jazz songs are to her family, because every record has different grooves to play different songs, it also shows the unchangeable presence of music in Harper’s life is [sic] by saying ‘fact.’” While this is textual reference, it does not develop the claim or offer deeper insight and results in a plausible but pedestrian reading. The final paragraph of the essay is vague and, like much of the essay, expressed in writing that is somewhat uncontrolled: “[Harper] also shows just how long jazz has been present in her life by having jazz represent her childhood, by saying, ‘the rhythm of my childhood, memories fading like the words of a lullaby.’ Lullabies [sic] are typical song [sic] to babies, which signifies how jazz has been a constant presence through her whole life.” Although the essay makes plausible observations about important moments in the text, overall it is not quite as well conceived and its language not quite as well controlled as one would expect to see in essays earning scores in the 7–6 range.

Sample: 1C

Score: 3

This essay fails to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. It is partial and unconvincing, offering broad generalizations (e.g., “Many say that music is the universal language” and “[e]very song is different just like every person”) and a summary of the speaker’s recollections in place of analysis. The essay mentions complex emotions but does not develop any specific claim related to that subject: “The sound of jazz music brings up many complex feelings and memories for the author. As it reminds her of the love for her brother, the betrayl [sic] of her mother, and love she and her father share for each other and the music.” Instead, it uses textual reference to support paraphrase rather than analysis. Although it attempts to work with the text and attempts to address the prompt, this essay is unfocused and poorly written. Because of its accumulation of errors, this essay earned a score of 3.