

2017

**AP**<sup>®</sup> CollegeBoard

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# AP English Literature and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2017 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3: Mysterious Origins

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 well-focused and persuasive analysis of how unusual or mysterious origins shape the character and his or her relationships, and how these origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole. Using apt and specific textual support, these essays analyze how unusual or mysterious origins affect the character, his or her relationships, and the meaning of the work as a whole. Although these essays may not be error-free, they make a strong case for their interpretation and discuss the literary work with significant insight and understanding. Essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do essays scored an 8.

**7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how unusual or mysterious origins shape the character and his or her relationships, and how these origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole. While these papers have insight and understanding, their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific in supporting detail than that of the 9–8 essays. 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 reading, but they tend to be superficial or thinly developed in analysis. They often rely upon plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Although the students attempt to analyze how unusual or mysterious origins shape the character and his or her relationships, and how these origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole, they may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the significance of the origins, and support from the text may be too general. While these students demonstrate adequate control of language, 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 how unusual or mysterious origins shape the character and his or her relationships, and how these origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant; the essays may reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the character’s origins. These essays may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas or an accumulation of errors; they may lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Evidence from the text may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on plot summary only. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

**2–1** Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The student’s remarks may be presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the text.

**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.

#3

3A

1 of 3

Many works in American literature feature characters whose origins are ~~of~~ unusual, often foreign, or perhaps even alien to ~~those around~~ other characters in the work. Ceremony by Silko ~~is~~ skillfully depicts ~~one~~ a character that resembles ~~the~~ the above qualities. Tayo, unlike the ~~the~~ traditional people in his village, comes from a mixed background, having parents of both native, and white origins. His unusual origin in this case, reflects his personal struggle, ~~his~~ especially as he lingers upon a personal identity between being white, or being native, and thus, suggests Silko's take on a solution for the status quo she witnesses regarding cultural integration between natives and whites throughout the twentieth century.

As a "mixed child," ~~she~~ Tayo continuously face rejections of his identity from ~~both~~ the natives ~~and whites~~, generating an urge to rediscover, perhaps reconstruct a personal identity for himself. Since his youth, Tayo is often rejected by natives for having "green eyes," repeatedly shamed, and even shunned by those in his community, slandering his mother's "willingness to sleep with whitemen." Moreover, even as he returns from a mentally damaging war, suffering from ~~the~~ various effects of the white culture, including PTSD and alcoholism, his friends, such as Emo, continuously criticize him for being only "half-Indian." ~~Rejection~~ The rejection natives, or those representative of the native American culture, ~~with respect to~~ of Tayo's unusual origin, regardless of ~~his mother's~~ ~~background~~ he, and his mother, both having, and playing incredibly important roles in their very own culture, in this ~~case~~ case, reflects Tayo's hardships faced for being half-white in the native community, urging himself to rediscover a personal story, integrating the two cultures of his heritage for the better.



#3

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

3A

2 of 3

On the other hand, Tayo continuously lingers upon his belonging in the white community, struggling to ever fully settle, or comprehend the hatred whites cast on the other half of his identity. Since young, Tayo ~~repeated~~ is repeatedly told by his teachers ~~to~~ to "not believe in Native stories," that they simply aim to teach natives ~~the~~ the wrong beliefs about life. ~~But the~~ ~~teaching~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~the~~ ~~best~~ ~~because~~ ~~of~~ ~~these~~ ~~lessons~~, however, though implemented into his mind, reflects the false sense of belonging Tayo feels, especially regarding his white heritage. Teachers tell Tayo, perhaps even mislead him into believing that "only brown-skinned people stole, that the white man always had money to buy whatever he wants." ~~As~~ ~~the~~ ~~white~~ ~~man's~~ ~~false~~ ~~beliefs~~ ~~casted~~ ~~in~~ ~~his~~ ~~reflection~~ at the white man's ranch, in this case, highlights the significance of a mixed heritage, especially of two cultures that are at clash, on his inability to formulate a personal identity, ~~thus~~ portraying a need for the creation of a new culture.

Tayo, throughout his self-discovery process, encounters many of both heritages, and many others of his mixed nature as well. For instance, ~~for~~ ~~instance~~, a traditional medicine man who is also of mixed race, for instance, shows Tayo that he, in fact, can incorporate parts of both his personal heritages in a cure to finally realize, perhaps identify a personal identity for himself. Tayo, therefore, as he conducts his final ceremony to normalize an identity as a mixed race, curing his struggles, destroying white destruction, bringing ~~back~~ ~~back~~ ~~to~~ his people at the "uranium mine," a ~~physical~~ ~~physical~~ physical emblem of cultural ~~integration~~ ~~integration's~~ effects of the native's culture and connection with nature, highlights Silko's message about the power, perhaps even advantages of an unusual origin, in this case, of mixed heritage, in profoundly ~~effect~~ ~~positively~~ ~~affecting~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ for the better. Tayo uses a traditional ceremony, harnessed by his ability to



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

#3

3A

3 of 3

neglect hate, ~~and~~ "not killing Emo" for his clattness, gained from growing up ~~part of~~ as part of both the native, and white cultures to complete his search of a ~~random~~ mine unlike introduced uranium mine, suggesting Silko's personal take, perhaps even advice to solving the issues of cultural integration, that those of mixed heritage like Tayo, instead of being neglected, ~~or~~ perhaps even misled by his or her culture, should be utilized to integrate the world for the better.

works in American literature often revolve around a character whose unusual origin empowers the author's central message regarding an issue, perhaps an observation she sees he shows. In  Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko, Silko skillfully portrays Tayo's unusual origin, his ~~mixed~~ biracial nature, as a significant factor in his contemplation of a personal identity. ~~After~~ Tayo's rejection by both natives ~~and~~ whites, alongside his vulnerability to ~~what~~ the white culture's misleading messages, ~~therefore~~, highlights Silko's critical take on the obstinate nature she sees in natives, and ~~exploiting~~ overly-exploitative she witnesses in whites. Tayo's successful ceremony involving aspects from both culture harnessed by his origin's lessons regarding the importance of embracing ~~each~~ different culture, ~~therefore~~, highlights Silko's personal offer ~~for~~ for a solution to the problems regarding cultural integration.

#

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

3

3B

1 of 3

~~When a character's truth is unknown, they become little more than a vessel for the empathetic reader or~~

It happens often in literature that a character will have some horrifically uncommon experience befall them, which leaves them forever changed. In Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Captain Ahab as he appears in the novel "originates" from the freak incident of the white whale, Moby Dick, attacking his vessel and biting off one of his legs. Perhaps there was an Ahab before this act, but he is not the same Ahab who so tyrannically commands the *Pequod* in <sup>his</sup> single-minded revenge quest. This event drives Ahab mad; he is focused only on killing Moby Dick at the expense of the crew, the ship, and anything in his way. He views people as nothing more than either tools or obstacles in his chase. The ultimate ~~meaning~~ effects of Ahab's monomania tie in to <sup>two</sup> *Moby-Dick*'s themes of vengeance, and choice.

Ahab is consumed wholeheartedly ~~for~~ by his desire to kill Moby Dick. His reign over the *Pequod* is simply a means to an end; he does not care about the job of whaling nor the safety of his crew. ~~Because of~~ His single bloody encounter with Moby Dick completely



3

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

3B

2 of 3

shaped him into the remorseless, hate-driven captain we experience him as. The people he keeps closest to him present the most threat - Starbuck, the mutinous mate, and Fedallah, the mysterious ~~fire-worshiper~~ fire-worshiper. Ahab has to have total control over these characters particularly, to ensure they do not impede him. The rest of the crew, he rules by fear; this ensures their submissiveness to his will. In games with other ships, Ahab is indifferent past gaining knowledge pertaining to Moby Dick.

Ultimately, as Moby-Dick pans out, we comprehend more of Ahab's origin: he had (and continued to have) a choice pertaining to his vengeful ways. At any point following the loss of his leg up to that final third day of the chase, Ahab could have given the order to turn the Pequod around and go back to port. Starbuck is the greatest proponent of this course of action, but it rests only on Ahab to issue the command. There was no reason for his vengeance to consume him, following his encounter, save that he let it. And in the end, that vengeance consumed him, his ship, and all but one of his crew. This presents the reader



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

3

3B

3 of 3

with universal ideas of choice as it relates to vengeance. We all must choose a course of action following a great tragedy or loss. ~~But if~~ We may move on, we may sink into despair — or, like Ahab, we may power ahead on blind revenge — but in the end, that choice may consume us, and ~~may~~ everyone we meet along with us.

Ahab's initial attack at the teeth of Moby Dick leaves him with a monomaniac lust for Moby's blood. In his quest, he drives himself and his crew into the ground. We are all faced with tragedies and losses akin to Ahab's, but like Ahab, we remain in control, and we have a choice on how to proceed. The wrong choice, though — the wrong choice may be our doom.

#

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

Q 3

3C

1 of 1

In "The Great Gatsby" the reader does not know much about Gatsby's past. We don't know how he became rich or how his childhood was. This affects his relationships because now Gatsby is mysterious and people want to hang around because of the mystery and not because they actually want to be his friend.

However, the writer wants to actually be his friend and starts to get to know him. Unlike Daisy who is just using him while he is in love with her. Towards the middle we start to discover who Gatsby is and how he is actually trying to relive the past that he had with Daisy and believes that maybe since he has money now she would leave her husband to be with him.

This mystery of who Gatsby is makes up the novel yet he dies with no one except the writer knowing who he truly is.

##

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2017 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 3

#### Overview

For Question 3, the “open” question, students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

Select a novel, play, or epic poem that features a character whose origins are unusual or mysterious. Then write an essay in which you analyze how these origins shape the character and that character’s relationships, and how the origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole.

Students were expected to complete three tasks successfully:

- They were to select an appropriate work given the parameters of the prompt.
- They were to analyze how origins shape a character and that character’s relationships and how those origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole.
- They were to write an essay.

The three tasks are, of course, interdependent and are actually one unified task; selection leads to analysis leads to writing.

- Selection of a work for Question 3 has been the focus of much rumor and conjecture in the wider AP community. Contrary to popular belief, no choice of text automatically consigns a student to a particular score point or set of score points. Some texts, however, by their nature are self-limiting and, if chosen, create an added demand on the student’s ability to complete the task. Selection of appropriate works should be an outgrowth of a student’s ability to read, identify, and understand complexity within a text and not simply the result of a list or single rule.
- 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 were asked to analyze character by examining relevant aspects of a character’s origins. Students were given latitude on how they understood and explained what constituted unusual or mysterious origins. The emphasis was on how well they were able to identify how those origins contributed to the development of the character and that character’s relationships within the work. Finally, they were also asked to show how those elements contributed to “the meaning of the work as a whole.” That phrase, common in Question 3 prompts, points the students to making an assertion about a possible meaning and supporting that assertion with evidence. That completes the two-part analysis task. Again, students had latitude; some reached the meaning of the work as a whole implicitly by exploring the character and the character’s relationships. Others were more explicit in their statements.
- Finally, writing a well-organized essay means understanding how their own thoughts 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.

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**Question 3 (continued)**

**Sample: 3A — *Ceremony***

**Score: 9**

This well-focused and persuasive essay on Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* addresses all parts of the prompt and carefully intertwines its discussion of those parts to show how the central character's unusual origins are integral to the meaning of the work as a whole. It makes the sophisticated claim that Silko uses Tayo's biracial heritage, his "mixed background," to emblemize the need for integration and the means to that end: "those of mixed heritage like Tayo, instead of being neglected, or perhaps even misled by his or her culture, should be utilized to integrate the world for the better." The essay identifies several ways in which the character's identity and his relationships with others — his teachers, his mother, his friends, a medicine man — are shaped by his unusual origins, as well as by the negative effects of the dominant white culture. It embeds apt and specific references to the text to create fluid, well-integrated analysis. The essay's analysis of the traditional rain ceremony is particularly pertinent to the discussion of Tayo's unusual origins, his struggle with an emerging understanding of his own identity, and how that struggle reveals the negative effects of integration "on the native's [*sic*] culture and connection with nature" — and the essay handles this material with subtlety and considerable insight. While this essay is not error-free, it analyzes the novel with considerable insight in clear, well-organized prose and makes a compelling, amply supported argument; the essay thus earned a score of 9.

**Sample: 3B — *Moby Dick***

**Score: 6**

This essay offers the claim that in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, "Captain Ahab as he appears in the novel 'originates' from the freak incident of the white whale, Moby Dick, attacking his vessel and biting off one of his legs. Perhaps there was an Ahab before this act, but he is not the same Ahab who so tyrannically commands the Pequod in his single-minded revenge quest." It proceeds to reasonable analysis detailing how Ahab and his relationships are shaped by this experience: "Ahab is consumed wholeheartedly by his desire to kill Moby Dick. His reign over the Pequod is simply a means to an end; he does not care about the job of whaling nor the safety of his crew" and keeps closest to him certain members of the crew, "Starbuck, the mutinous mate, and Fedallah . . . to ensure they do not impede him." Elsewhere, the essay is less perceptive and less thorough: "At any point following the loss of his leg up to that final third day of the chase, Ahab could have given the order to turn the Pequod around and go back to port. Starbuck is the greatest proponent of this course of action, but it rests only on Ahab to issue the command. There was no reason for his vengeance to consume him . . . save that he let it." While the essay begins promisingly with reasonable statements about how the character and his relationships are shaped by a single originary moment, it is less specific and insightful in supporting these statements. The essay's conclusions about the meaning of the work as whole are likewise somewhat general: "We may move on, we may sink into despair — or, like Ahab, we may power ahead on blind revenge — but in the end, that choice may consume us, and everyone we meet along with us." Overall, this essay presents a reasonable analysis of the novel in reasonably well-controlled prose; it therefore earned a score of 6.

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**Question 3 (continued)**

**Sample: 3C — *The Great Gatsby***

**Score: 2**

This unacceptably brief essay makes an attempt to respond to the prompt by offering some information about Gatsby’s origins and how they affect his relationships with other characters: “Gatsby is mysterious [*sic*] and people want to hang around because of the mystery and not because they actually want to be his friend.” However, the essay does not advance this idea. It offers little textual evidence to clarify its claims and instead provides a series of unevidenced statements about characters’ motives, for example, Daisy “is just using [Gatsby],” and “[t]owards the middle we start to discover who Gatsby is and how he is actually trying to relive the past that he had with Daisy.” The final sentence reflects the lack of clarity in the essay as a whole: “This mystery [*sic*] of who Gatsby is makes up the novel yet he dies with no one except the writer knowing who he truly is.” The essay shows an oversimplified understanding of the character of Gatsby and fails to address the meaning of the work as a whole. These weaknesses, combined with inept writing, compound the errors of essays in the 4–3 range of the scoring guide; this essay thus earned a score of 2.