

AP Literature and Composition Section II: Free-Response

The second section of the AP English Literature and Composition Exam includes three questions.

Free-Response Question 1: POETRY ANALYSIS

Free-response Question 1 presents students with a passage of poetry of approximately 100 to 300 words. This question assesses your ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Examine how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating the argument.

Sample Question

In the following poem *“Plants”* by Olive Senior (published in 2005), the speaker *portrays the relationships among plant life and the implied audience*. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Senior uses *poetic* elements and techniques to *develop those complex relationships*.

Stable Prompt Wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Poetry Analysis essay questions.

In the following poem [or excerpt from poem] by [author, date of publication], the speaker [comment on what is being addressed in the poem]. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how [author] uses [poetic or literary] elements and techniques to [convey/portray/develop a thematic, topical, or structural aspect of the poem that is complex and specific to the passage of the poem provided].

Free-Response Question 2: PROSE FICTION ANALYSIS

Free-response Question 2 presents students with a passage of prose fiction of approximately 500 to 700 words. This question assesses your ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Examine how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Sample Question

The following excerpt is from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne. In this passage, *two characters who have been living on the Blithedale farm—a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living—are about to part ways*. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne uses literary elements and techniques to *portray the narrator’s complex attitude towards Zenobia*.

Stable Prompt Wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Prose Fiction Analysis essay questions.

The following excerpt is from [*text and author, date of publication*]. In this passage, [*comment on what is being addressed in the passage*]. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how [*author*] uses literary elements and techniques to [*convey/portray/develop a thematic, topical, or structural aspect of the passage that is complex and specific to the passage provided*].

Free-Response Question 3: LITERARY ARGUMENT

Free-response Question 3 presents students with a literary concept or idea, along with a list of approximately 40 literary works. Students are required to select a work of prose fiction either from their own reading or from the provided list and analyze how the literary concept or idea described in the question contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. This question assesses your ability to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning..
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Sample Question

Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. The gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the gift and its complex nature contribute to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Stable Prompt Wording

The text in italics will vary by question, while the remainder of the prompt will be consistently used in all Literary Argument essay questions.

[*Lead that introduces some concept or idea that students will be asked to apply to a text of their choosing.*]

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which [*some aspect of the lead is addressed*]. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how [*that same aspect of the lead*] contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.