

2002 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Read the following poem carefully. Then, taking into consideration the title of the poem, analyze how the poetic devices convey the speaker's attitude toward the sinking of the ship.

The Convergence of the Twain

(Lines on the loss of the Titanic¹)

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Line 5 Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine² fires,
Cold currents thrid,³ and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

10 Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

15 Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

20 Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

IX
25 Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X
Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
30 On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI
Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

—Thomas Hardy

¹ On the night of April 14, 1912, the British White Star liner Titanic, the largest ship afloat, collided with an iceberg and sank on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York. Fifteen hundred of the 2,206 passengers lost their lives.

² Bright red. The salamander was supposed to be able to live in the midst of fire.

³ Thread

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION
2002 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

Thomas Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain"

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult with your table leader. 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 above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a three (3).

- 9-8** These well-focused essays offer an effective analysis of the poetic devices used by the author to convey the speaker's attitude toward the sinking of the ship. They also take into consideration, directly or indirectly, the title of the poem. Although the writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations or choose different poetic elements for emphasis, they provide convincing readings of the poem and demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though these essays may not be error-free, they are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated and, in the case of a nine (9) essay, especially persuasive.
- 7-6** These competent essays offer a reasonable analysis of the poetic devices used to convey the speaker's attitude toward the sinking of the ship, including the implications of the title. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the poem, and their analysis of the title and the poetic devices is less thoughtful. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express and support ideas clearly, but they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9-8 essays. Although essays scored 7-6 will be generally well written, those scored a seven (7) will demonstrate more sophistication in both substance and style.
- 5** These essays tend to be superficial in analysis even though they may respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the poem. They often rely on paraphrase, but paraphrase that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their interpretation of the poem may be simplistic or inadequately supported by references to the text, or there may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These writers demonstrate control of ideas, but the writing may contain surface errors.
- 4-3** These lower-half essays reveal an incomplete understanding of the task required by the prompt: they may demonstrate a misunderstanding of the speaker's attitude, or they may fail to develop a coherent analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant. These essays may rely on paraphrase alone or merely list poetic devices. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, an accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a three (3) may contain significant misreadings and/or demonstrate weak control of language.
- 2-1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may contain serious misreadings of the poem, be unacceptably brief, or be incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be characterized by multiple errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the writer's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem itself. Essays scored a one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the poem.
- 0** Indicates a response with no more than a reference to the task.
- Indicates a blank paper or completely off-topic response.

In "The Convergence of the Twain," Thomas Hardy discusses ~~the~~ the ill-fated sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Through various literary devices such as ~~personification~~ ^{personification} and ~~personification~~ ^{metaphors}, Hardy portrays the sadness associated with the tragic sinking of the Titanic.

As the Titanic lies at the bottom of the sea, it serves as a dwelling place for many creatures of the sea. Although the ship was deemed "unsinkable," it now lies sunken, "... In a solitude of the sea, / Deep from human vanity..." (line 1-2) Hardy is commenting on the fact that people were too vainly ~~and~~ thinking that the Titanic was indestructible. Hardy personifies the fish to prove this point: "... Dim moon-eyed fishes near / Gaze at the ~~the~~ gilded gear / And query: 'What does this vaingloriousness do down here?'..." By personifying the sea life Hardy ~~shows~~ points out that even the sea life felt that the Titanic was unsinkable, yet they also felt that ~~it~~ too much vanity went into making this ship, instead of steel.

Aside from using personification, the ~~the~~ other important poetic device is the use of metaphors. Hardy compares the collision of the Titanic and the iceberg to a dark wedding: "... The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything / Prepared a sinister mate / For her - so gaily great - ..." (lines 18-20) Hardy's epic comparison paints a

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E2

twisted picture about how this collision was fated. Hardy often draws in the fact that there is an ~~higher~~ ^{higher} being in charge, the force that controls all: "... Till the Spinner of the Years / Said 'Now!' And each one hears / And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres." (lines 31-33) Hardy once ~~again~~ again compares the crash to ~~marriage~~ ^{death} marriage - one full of hurt and pain, ultimately ending in death.

By using such poetic devices, Hardy ~~portrays~~ portrays the attitude that although the Titanic was a great ship, it was deemed with a high standard. And although something may seem indestructible, one must always remember, "Man proposes, but God disposes."

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As tragic as the loss of fifteen hundred lives is, Thomas Hardy takes a different ^{stance} ~~take~~ on the sinking of the Titanic in the poem "The Convergence of the Twain." Hardy emphasizes the inevitability of the event by noting the arrogance of man, the ~~powerful~~ forcefulness of nature, as well as the ~~powerful~~ ^{influence} ~~impact~~ of fate.

Hardy ~~describes~~ ^{describes} the process through which the "smart ship grows" ^{to show the wastefulness of man. The ship} is filled with all of ~~the~~ ^{the} luxuries that Hardy argues, ~~are~~ ^{are} not meant for a ship. He creates images of extravagant mirrors, exquisite jewels, and other "gilded gear," which he refers to as coming, "Deep from human vanity." Also, Hardy ~~says~~ ^{ironically} refers to the ~~the~~ Titanic as the "smart ship," noting its growth in stature, grace, and awe. However, the builders of the ship, as well as its inhabitants, had not even considered that ~~the~~ ^{the} ship was not as invincible and protected as it was gaudy.

Hardy's disdain of man's vanity is ~~re~~ ^{re}affirmed by images ^{of nature which} contrasting those of the ship. He portrays the ship as being ~~the~~ ^{the} sunken, and instead of "wealthy and affluent looking into the mirrors and jewels, it is the ^{and 'dingy' moon-eyed fishes.} sea-worm ~~the~~ ^{He personifies the fish to ask, "What does the ungloriousness down here?"} Through the use of alliteration, Hardy also describes these jewels as being "lightless, all their sparkles bleared, ~~bleared~~ and black and blind." ~~These~~ ^{Such} blatant contrasts in imagery ~~the~~ makes the statement that man ^{has} ~~has~~ been too proud, and accordingly, nature has put man back in his place.

The sinking of the Titanic is further portrayed as being inevitable through the presence of a fatalistic force. Hardy ~~states~~ ^{makes} an allusion to destiny and God

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through his reference to "The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything." A similar allusion is made in the last stanza in which the "Spinner of the Years / Sward "Now!" " thereby causing the paths of the ship and the iceberg to cross. In the ninth stanza, Hardy also foreshadows the influence of a supernatural being by contrasting it with the use of the word "mortal." While no "mortal eye could see / The intimate welding of their later history," it was destined to be.

The poem depicts a battle between "the "Pride of Life" and a "Shape of Ice," ^{through the use of imagery, alliteration and personification} based on man's excessive ~~weak~~ hubris and nature's incomparable strength. Ultimately, ~~these~~ such circumstances, in conjunction with a godlike power, ~~was~~ made the sinking of the Titanic unavoidable.

#

To Hardy, the loss of the Titanic was no frustrating result of combined ~~vanity and~~ human vanity and human fragility before tremendous natural forces. Instead, it was Destiny, the realization of some grandiose, divinely-conceived cosmic drama.

The precise ~~and simple~~ ^{Syntax}, almost Biblical in its simplicity, lends an air of dignity and grandeur to the poem. The reader is never distracted by superfluous diction. Images burn through, undiluted. ~~by~~

The trim, regular meter contributes to this effect as well. The stanzas do not ramble, or stand beside each other in disharmony. They are pillars, clean, uniform and imposing. Their sequential numbering, in Roman numerals, recalls Biblical verse, or some other passage of exceeding dignity.

Next, the elevated, sometimes archaic diction, removes the poem to a level higher than that of a simple man's account of the disaster. The ship didn't 'go down burnin'' rather it sunk alight with 'Salamandric fires.' The ocean's current on the sea floor is described as by 'rhythmic tidal lyres.' Instead of 'what the heck?' or some similarly colloquial expression the fishes 'query' about the 'vaingloriousness.'

As important as the descriptive diction — 'gilded gear' and so forth — and the elevated verbs — 'couches,' 'thrid' — is the speaker's use of epithets. The 'boat wasn't built,' rather 'planned' by the 'Pride of Life,' the 'Immanent Will,' the 'Spinner of Years.' Invoking Fate or God as

responsible for the sinking elevates the disaster above a terrible accident. It makes that night transcendent, something of superlunary design. (This, also why the ship's resting place is portrayed in an ethereal light, with 'moon-eyed' fishes.)

stanzas 6-11. Carry on the idea of the ship's sinking being of divine will ~~that~~ that iceberg wasn't just 'out there'; it was 'prepared' for an 'intimate wedding of later history.' ~~Its~~ Its fate, and that of the ship (the ship, rather than the passengers, because the ship is larger than life, a thing 'gaily great') are 'twin halves of one august event.' They are the 'twain' fated to 'convergence.'

So the ship sails grandly, but is stalked 'in shadowy silent distance' by the iceberg. When 'consummation comes' at the ~~Spinner's~~ Spinner's command, it is a huge, cosmic convergence. It 'jars two hemispheres.'

Other devices, chiefly persistent alliteration and ~~A-A-A~~ A-A-A rhyme, contribute to the poem's symmetry, harmony and order.

Like the Titanic and the iceberg, what the speaker says and how he says it are 'twin halves of one.' The poetic devices outlined above establish symmetry, harmony and order; these three elements are vital to the poem's dignity; this dignity is demanded by the elevated, cosmic theme the poem speaks of.

**AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
2002 SCORING COMMENTARY**

Question 2

Thomas Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain"

Sample E – Score 5

The essay mentions two valid points: (1) human vanity and (2) the "dark marriage." However, both supporting paragraphs drift into unsupported, undeveloped assertions. The final paragraph, while moving in the right direction, misses much of the complexity of Hardy's poem. Superficial and pedestrian, then, are appropriate descriptors for this essay.

Sample III – Score 7

The opening paragraph of this essay is quite good — it is well focused and the writer demonstrates a rather sophisticated level of language facility. However, the essay does not live up to its promise because of its less than full development. It is nevertheless a competent essay although it does not belong in the top tier.

Sample LLLL – Score 9

This essay excels more because of its ideas than for its treatment of rhetorical devices. It is very sophisticated in its use of and facility with language, as evidenced in the opening paragraph. The recurring motif of the ship's sinking being of divine will is nicely sustained and particularly persuasive. While the paragraphs are not as full as the topflight 9s, the essay is nonetheless satisfying.