

AP® SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES AND SCORING NOTES
2016 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE & COMPOSITION

Question 2

Sample Identifier: D

Score: 9

- The introduction to this cogent and persuasive essay beautifully distills the complex relationship between father and daughter; it identifies how Elizabeth-Jane “valiantly attempts to please” her father and notes that Henchard’s shame about his daughter’s social status “is indicative of his shame in regards to his failings as a father and his past.”
- The essay delivers on the promise of the introduction to analyze the root causes of the “increasing . . . distance between father and daughter”; elegantly builds and supports this strong argument in clear, precise prose to explain what makes the relationship complex
- Precisely analyzes characterization and conflict (e.g., Elizabeth-Jane’s “pretty and picturesque” use of dialect, Henchard’s “belief that dialect words are ‘terrible marks of the beast’”) to build the argument and draw sophisticated inferences about the reason for Henchard’s gruffness: “Perhaps it is because he was not always rich that Henchard tries so hard to associate himself with the upper-class and adopt their elite and condescending notions. He cannot bear to look upon his daughter, as she reminds him . . . of the social class he once belonged to”
- Elegantly analyzes Elizabeth-Jane’s shifts in diction for the information they provide about characterization: “Hardy shows Elizabeth’s humility and obedience by listing her changes in lexicon, including ‘greggles’ to ‘wild hyacinths’”
- Summons multiple observations about textual detail, diction and tone (especially Henchard’s apparent contempt for Elizabeth-Jane) to establish Henchard’s complexity as a character; analyzes how this complexity exacerbates the tension between father and daughter; Henchard’s bitter criticism of his daughter is ironic and hypocritical and reveals that his views are “partially built on unfair and misogynistic standards . . . his expectations for his daughter are based just as much on her ‘failures’ as they are on his own. He is ashamed by his own ‘uncultivated’ nature”
- This well written essay is elegant and offers a sophisticated analysis of the passage; it exhibits all the qualities that one would expect to find in an essay at the top of the scoring range

Sample Identifier: F

Score: 8

- This persuasive essay immediately focuses on the complex relationship between Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane by identifying the tensions within their relationship and exploring its paradoxical nature: “as her father begins to transform her, he feels increasingly estranged to [*sic*] Elizabeth”
- Develops its focused argument through apt and specific textual references
- Explains persuasively why Henchard behaves as he does and how his actions shape Elizabeth’s actions: Henchard “tries to model himself after the upper-echelons [*sic*],” dominates Elizabeth and so engenders her “deference to and respect for him”

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- Sees “duality” in the father-daughter power paradigm as a feature of its complexity and supports this claim by referencing the father’s “sharp reprimands” and veiled “affection for his daughter”
- Misnames irony as paradox at times, but does make the astute observation that Henchard’s endeavors to gentrify his daughter are telling since “the ‘common’ daughter he had . . . was closer to his true identity”
- Although the language of this essay is not as sophisticated or as graceful as that of the essay scored 9, it nevertheless offers a perceptive analysis of the complex relationship between the two characters

Sample Identifier: E

Score: 7

- This competent upper-half essay claims that the fraught relationship between father and daughter is complicated further by “Henchard’s varying degrees of ‘passion’ and ‘coldness’ and Elizabeth’s meek nature” and that this in turn results in “a relationship devoid of real communication where [*sic*] neither person really understands the other”
- Develops this claim throughout the essay by analyzing how each character generates responses in the other
- Shows how the tenor of the characters’ interactions complicates the relationship: e.g., “Henchard . . . possesses a penchant for pointing out the pettiest of Elizabeth’s mistakes, so often . . . that with her obedient humble nature, she begins to believe that speaking and acting the way she does is . . . a ‘grievous failing’”
- Explores both Elizabeth-Jane’s perspective that “her father does not care for her” and speculates intelligently (perhaps from the contextualizing information that precedes the prompt) upon Henchard’s motivations: “having risen from rags to riches himself, he may want the same for his daughter”
- While the essay does not develop its assertions (e.g., what Henchard may wish for his daughter or the idea that “Henchard tends to hide his emotions or be unable to express them”) as thoroughly as the 8 and 9 essays develop theirs, it does accomplish a clear, reasonable analysis of the passage and exhibit compositional control

Sample Identifier: H

Score: 6

- This upper-half essay offers a competent and reasonable argument that Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane’s relationship is “unhealthy” and negative and supports this claim with the astute observation that “the stark difference between Elizabeth’s tone and Henchard’s tone . . . reveals the lack of balance in the relationship”
- Sustains this central argument throughout most of the essay

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- Competently evidences this point and shows how it is derived by analyzing dialogue in which Henchard's tone and diction are "like that of a ruler or master" and "inappropriately harsh and violent, and unapologetically so"
- The latter half of the essay is less well developed and less convincing than the 7 essay because it does not fully develop good observations (e.g., about Elizabeth-Jane's "low, humble voice") and repetitively states other points (e.g., that Hardy devotes an "entire paragraph" to a list of dialect words Elizabeth-Jane must modify to "show us all of the details of Elizabeth's misery")
- While the writing is clear and controlled, the analysis in the latter part of the essay is less perceptive and draws less purposefully on the text than does the essay scored 7

Sample Identifier: A

Score: 5

- This upper-half essay uses a clear, if formulaic, structure and offers the plausible claim that "social upbringing can cause . . . tension and hatred"
- Develops ideas in the body paragraphs with some evidence and some explicit analysis, e.g., that Henchard's actions arise from his "ardour and . . . agitation," but development of this point is limited and resorts to cliché ("the relationship between the two is not all roses") and overstatement ("almost hatred"), while never explaining how these constitute complexity
- Controls ideas adequately, e.g., in paragraph four, which discusses Elizabeth-Jane's efforts to alter her vocabulary, but the conclusion drawn from this observation is superficial: "her vocabulary changing . . . showed that Elizabeth went from taking [*sic*] in a past, proper english [*sic*] sense, to the more modern english [*sic*] that we use today"
- While the essay does present some ideas about the nature of the father-daughter relationship, its discussion of how elements such as tone, word choice, and detail contribute to the portrayal of a complex relationship is thin
- Attempts to establish connections between assertions and evidence (e.g., in phrases such as "[t]his shows" and "which helps show") but offers less sustained and less well supported analysis than that of the essay scored 6

Sample Identifier: G

Score: 4

- This lower-half essay identifies Henchard's "demeaning criticism" of Elizabeth from the outset but then merely repeats this point (e.g., "We see this criticism from Michael almost every time Elizabeth talks" and "Through this passages tone we can also see his demeanings") rather than developing this initial insight to build to an argument
- Offers an inadequate discussion of the complexity of the relationship, offers very little focused analysis, and does not develop ideas in a way that leads to conclusions

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- does not always make explicit transitions between ideas or linkages between paragraphs (e.g., in spite of the numerous assertions about Henchard demeaning Elizabeth, the final body paragraph states that “Most of the criticism spouts from how different [Elizabeth and Henchard’s] jobs are”
- the unfocused presentation of ideas results in a partial, unconvincing essay
- the language of the essay often lacks the control of the upper half essay, e.g., “Any time he talks to her, whether it be for speaking wrong or having her write up an agreement, he talks with a tone is that of chiding and demeans her to something less than what she is” and “Word choice is another major point, not by the author, but by the characters”

Sample Identifier: C

Score: 3

- this lower-half essay opens promisingly by referring to “tone, diction, and detail” as “a key part of understanding this complex relationship,” but the body of the essay does not adequately analyze these features of the passage or show how they are key components of meaning
- while the essay offers some long quotations from the passage in order to set up a discussion of contrasts in language, it does not demonstrate how the contrasts help to elaborate meaning, saying instead that these contrasts “make the reader think twice”
- the writing itself is not always clear or skilled, e.g., “Both incidents mentioned above imply both love and hate or kindness and egotism, very opposite feelings or actions”
- this essay is stronger than the essay scored 2, but it is nevertheless unconvincing, unfocused and offers partial analysis of the passage

Sample Identifier: I

Score: 2

- this unacceptably brief lower-half essay makes some attempt to respond to the prompt; it notes, for example, the background of each character and the fact that Henchard is “a man of power”
- offers an inaccurate and contradictory explanation of Henchard’s behavior toward his daughter as “indifference” while simultaneously observing that Henchard is “ashamed of her”
- sometimes offers speculative statements without support from the passage rather than conducting close textual analysis, e.g., “Henchard’s way of speaking turned from slang to formal”
- the essay compounds the weaknesses of the essays in the 4-3 range; it is incomplete and disorganized, its ideas are presented unclearly, and it contains pervasive errors that interfere with understanding

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Sample Identifier: B

Score: 1

- this lower-half essay attempts to respond to the prompt and offers slightly more than a brief reference to the task
- compounds the weaknesses of a typical 4-3 response, as the limited information that is offered in the essay is especially unclear, vague and poorly worded, e.g., "Their relationship doesn't show connection between the two"
- misunderstands the nature of the two characters' relationship and the father's purpose in interacting with his formerly estranged daughter, e.g., states that Henchard "uses his daughter for work porpses [*sic*]"
- Confuses Hardy and Henchard and makes the inaccurate claim that "Hardy is to [*sic*] caught up in his own world that he doesn't stop to spend time with his daughter"
- Comprised of five scant sentences, the essay is unacceptably brief and offers little coherent discussion of the passage