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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Literature and Composition — Practice Exam 1

Exam Overview

SECTION	QUESTION TYPE	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	TIME	PERCENT OF EXAM SCORE
I	Multiple choice (four answer choices each)	55	1 hour	45%
II	Free response	3	2 hours	55%

Total testing time: 3 hours.

Format: This practice exam follows the structure of the current digital AP English Literature and Composition Exam. Section I contains five passages (two poems, two prose fiction excerpts, and one drama excerpt) with eleven questions each. Section II contains a poetry analysis essay, a prose fiction analysis essay, and a literary argument essay. In the testing application you type your essays; on this printed practice exam you may handwrite them or type them in a separate document.

How to use this exam: Take it in one sitting under timed conditions if you can. Do not look at the answer key until you have finished both sections. When you finish, use the companion document, *Practice Exam 1 - Answer Key, Explanations & Sample Essays*, to score yourself.

A note on the passages: The three poems in this exam (Passages 1 and 3 in Section I, and the poem in Section II, Question 1) are public-domain works by their named authors. The prose and drama passages in Section I, and the prose passage in Section II, Question 2, were written for this practice exam in the manner of the periods indicated; they are not by the authors of any published work.

Directions for Section I

Section I consists of selections of literature and questions on their content, style, and form. After you have read each passage, choose the answer that best answers each question. Each question has four answer choices, (A) through (D). There is no penalty for incorrect answers, so you should answer every question.

Section I: 55 questions — Time: 1 hour

Answer Sheet

Q	ANSWER	Q	ANSWER	Q	ANSWER	Q	ANSWER	Q	ANSWER
1	___	12	___	23	___	34	___	45	___
2	___	13	___	24	___	35	___	46	___
3	___	14	___	25	___	36	___	47	___
4	___	15	___	26	___	37	___	48	___
5	___	16	___	27	___	38	___	49	___
6	___	17	___	28	___	39	___	50	___
7	___	18	___	29	___	40	___	51	___
8	___	19	___	30	___	41	___	52	___
9	___	20	___	31	___	42	___	53	___
10	___	21	___	32	___	43	___	54	___
11	___	22	___	33	___	44	___	55	___

Pacing guide for Section I. You have about 60 minutes for 55 questions and five passages, which is roughly 12 minutes per passage. The table below is a suggestion, not a rule.

PASSAGE	GENRE	QUESTIONS	SUGGESTED TIME
1	Poem	1–11	11 minutes
2	Prose fiction	12–22	12 minutes
3	Poem	23–33	12 minutes
4	Drama	34–44	12 minutes
5	Prose fiction	45–55	12 minutes
	Review of skipped items		1 minute

Strategies that help. Read the introductory note before the passage; it often supplies the situation or the date. Mark shifts, repeated words, and punctuation as you read. When a question cites lines, reread those lines together with a line or two before and after. For questions that ask about the passage as a whole, such as the speaker's attitude or the structure, answer them after the line-specific questions. Eliminate choices that are too extreme, that are true but do not answer the question asked, or that name a device correctly but misstate what it does.

Section I: Multiple-Choice Questions

Questions 1–11

Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers. The poem is by William Shakespeare and was published in 1609.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

(5) In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire

(10) That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

1. The speaker of the poem is best described as

- A. a young lover anxious that a rival will win the beloved
- B. an aging person addressing a beloved about the nearness of death
- C. a poet describing the changing seasons to a general audience
- D. a mourner recalling a friend who has recently died

2. In context, the phrase "Bare ruined choirs" (line 4) most nearly refers to

- A. singers who have abandoned a damaged church
- B. the speaker's memories of vanished companions
- C. the sound of wind moving through the branches
- D. bare branches that once held singing birds

3. The structure of the poem is best described as

- A. three parallel self-portraits, each introduced by "in me," followed by a couplet that draws a conclusion for the listener
- B. three images of decline that culminate in a couplet in which the speaker reverses his despair and asserts hope
- C. a dialogue in which each quatrain answers an objection that the beloved is imagined to have raised
- D. a single narrative of one autumn evening that moves from the last light of dusk through darkness to the glow of a hearth

4. Taken in order, the three comparisons in the quatrains (lines 1–12) present the speaker's decline as occurring

- A. gradually, then suddenly, then reversibly
 - B. in nature, then in the supernatural, then in the home
 - C. over ever shorter spans of time and toward an ever more final ending
 - D. with increasing pain and increasing resistance
5. Which of the following does the comparison developed in lines 5–8 evoke?
- I. The fading of light
 - II. The approach of sleep or death
 - III. The promise of renewal at dawn
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
6. The phrase “Death’s second self” (line 8) personifies night as
- A. a double of death that brings an enclosing stillness
 - B. an enemy that overcomes death
 - C. a servant that carries out death’s orders
 - D. a guardian that delays death’s arrival
7. The shift that occurs in line 13 is best described as a shift from
- A. memory of the past to hope for the future
 - B. resignation to defiance
 - C. images of nature to images of the household
 - D. the speaker’s self-portrait to the effect of that portrait on the beloved
8. The speaker’s attitude toward his own aging and toward the beloved is best described as
- A. bitter and accusatory
 - B. defiant and proud
 - C. resigned and tender
 - D. clinical and detached
9. Line 12 (“Consumed with that which it was nourished by”) most directly suggests that
- A. the speaker’s love for the beloved will outlast his life
 - B. the very substance that sustains a life also brings about its end
 - C. youth is more valuable than age
 - D. death is a punishment for earlier excess
10. A student is writing an essay arguing that the speaker presents his decline as a loss that also brings an unexpected gain. Which of the following lines from the poem would best support the “gain” portion of the claim?
- A. “When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang” (line 2)
 - B. “Which by and by black night doth take away” (line 7)
 - C. “Consumed with that which it was nourished by” (line 12)

D. "This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong" (line 13)

11. The speaker compares his condition to each of the following EXCEPT

- A. a river nearing the sea
- B. a tree in late autumn
- C. the last light of evening
- D. a fire dying among its ashes

Questions 12–22

Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers. The following passage was written for this practice exam in the manner of a novel published in the 1850s. In this passage, a young woman recalls her arrival at the house where she is to work as a governess.

It was past five o'clock of a November afternoon when the fly¹ set me down at Marlow Court, and the light, which had been failing for an hour, seemed to me then rather withdrawn than lost, as though the day had stepped aside to watch what I would do. I had been twelve hours upon the road, and eleven **(5)** of them in the company of my own resolutions, which I had examined so often between Carlisle and the moor that they had grown threadbare, and I could no longer have said whether they were courage or only habit. The driver, a man who had not honoured me with a remark since the last toll-gate, lowered my box to the gravel as one lowers a thing not quite paid for, and having **(10)** received his shilling and found it exactly a shilling, went away into the rain without a word.

The house stood before me with its face to the weather. I had formed, during the long solitude of the journey, a picture of it drawn partly from Mr. Ashcombe's letter, which described it as "a plain, commodious house, **(15)** much retired," and partly from the novels of my girlhood; and I confess I stood a full minute upon the step comparing the two, and finding the latter the more alarming. It was commodious; there could be no doubt of that. It was commodious as a vault is commodious. Of its retirement I should have judged more cautiously, for the lamp over the door was lit, and a lamp so **(20)** punctually lit argues a household that expects somebody, whatever the household may feel on the subject of that somebody's arrival.

I was admitted by the housekeeper, a Mrs. Pellow, who held her candle a little higher than was necessary and looked at me beneath it for so long that I began to apologise, inwardly, for being younger than my letters. **(25)** "You are the new young lady," said she. "You are very welcome, I am sure." She said it as one reads a notice posted upon a wall: not unkindly, but as a thing written by someone else, which must be delivered whether or not it is true. I was too tired to resent it; and it was not until some days afterwards, when I had learned how seldom Mrs. Pellow said anything that **(30)** was not a notice of one kind or another, that I understood how much the sentence had cost her.

The hall was large and cold, and in it, upon a table against the wall, stood three clocks, no two of which agreed. I observed this at once, being by nature and by profession an observer of small disorders; and I remember **(35)** that I said, with the foolish brightness of the fatigued, "How very curious, that they should all be wrong!" "They are not wrong, miss," said Mrs. Pellow. "They are only stopped." And she led me forward over the flags² without further explanation, so that I was left to carry the distinction up the stairs with me, like a parcel I had not asked to be **(40)** given, and could neither open nor set down.

Of my pupil I saw nothing that night, though I heard her; for as we passed along an upper gallery, a door at its farther end, which I had supposed shut, admitted for a moment a small sound, neither laughter nor weeping, but the sound a child makes when she has been listening for a long time and **(45)** is afraid of being found out. Mrs. Pellow did not turn her head. I resolved, with a firmness that I now find touching, that I would say nothing of it till morning. My room was a pleasant one (I put that down fairly, for I have been accused of making the house darker in the telling than it was), with a fire burning, a bed hung in faded green, and upon the **(50)** dressing-table a single sprig of holly in a glass, which someone had placed there, I supposed, to say what Mrs. Pellow could not. I sat down before the fire in my wet things, and was more nearly happy than I had been in a twelvemonth; and it is that, I think, which I find hardest, now, to forgive.

¹ fly: a light, hired, one-horse carriage

² flags: flagstones; paving stones

12. The narrator's account of her arrival is best described as

- A. a record written on the night it occurred
- B. an impartial report by an observer outside the events
- C. a retrospective first-person account shaped by knowledge of what followed
- D. a letter meant to reassure the family she left behind

13. The narrator's description of the failing light in lines 2–4 ("as though the day had stepped aside to watch what I would do") primarily serves to

- A. give the arrival a sense of being observed and awaited
- B. emphasize the physical discomfort of her journey
- C. suggest that the narrator is eager to begin her duties
- D. contrast the gloom of the weather with the warmth of the house

14. The narrator's statement that her resolutions "had grown threadbare" (lines 5–6) suggests that she

- A. has lost faith in her decision to take the position
- B. regrets leaving a more comfortable situation
- C. is impatient to put her plans into action
- D. has rehearsed her determination so often that she can no longer judge its strength

15. The comparison "commodious as a vault is commodious" (lines 17–18) primarily serves to

- A. praise the generous size of the house
- B. turn a reassuring word into an ominous one
- C. imply that the house has been neglected
- D. mock Mr. Ashcombe's lack of taste

16. The narrator's observation about the lamp over the door (lines 19–21) suggests that the household

- A. is wealthier than the letter implied
- B. greets her with obvious warmth
- C. has prepared for her coming, though its feelings about it remain unclear
- D. is afraid of an unwelcome visitor

17. By comparing Mrs. Pellow's greeting to "a notice posted upon a wall" (lines 26–27), the narrator suggests that the greeting was
- A. dutiful and impersonal, though not without cost to the speaker
 - B. deliberately cold and meant to discourage her
 - C. a poorly disguised insult
 - D. dictated word for word by Mr. Ashcombe
18. Which of the following does the narrator's description of the three clocks (lines 32–40) accomplish?
- I. It exposes Mrs. Pellow's carelessness as a housekeeper.
 - II. It suggests that some event has halted the household's ordinary life.
 - III. It contributes to the narrator's unsettled sense of the house.
- A. I only
 - B. II and III only
 - C. I and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
19. The sound that the narrator hears in the upper gallery (lines 41–45) suggests that the child is
- A. mischievous and defiant
 - B. weeping from loneliness
 - C. delighted by the newcomer
 - D. watchful and apprehensive about being discovered
20. A student is writing an essay arguing that the older narrator regards her younger self with affectionate irony. Which of the following sentences from the passage would best support this claim?
- A. "It was past five o'clock of a November afternoon when the fly set me down at Marlow Court" (lines 1–2)
 - B. "'They are not wrong, miss,' said Mrs. Pellow. 'They are only stopped.'" (lines 36–37)
 - C. "I resolved, with a firmness that I now find touching, that I would say nothing of it till morning." (lines 45–47)
 - D. "I sat down before the fire in my wet things" (lines 51–52)
21. The parenthetical remark in lines 47–49 ("I put that down fairly . . . than it was") suggests that the narrator
- A. wishes to excuse Mrs. Pellow's behavior
 - B. anticipates and answers a suspicion that hindsight has darkened her account
 - C. is unsure what she actually saw that night
 - D. intends to persuade the reader that the house was pleasant
22. The final sentence of the passage (lines 51–54) suggests that the narrator now
- A. views her earlier contentment with self-reproach because of what happened afterward
 - B. still feels the contentment she felt that night
 - C. resents Mrs. Pellow's attempt at kindness
 - D. blames the child for her later troubles

Questions 23–33

Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers. The poem is by Emily Dickinson and was written in the early 1860s.

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

(5) We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove

(10) At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –

(15) For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle¹ –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –

(20) The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

¹ Tulle: a fine, thin netting used for veils and light garments. Tippet: a short cape or scarf covering the shoulders. Gossamer: an extremely fine, light fabric.

23. The speaker of the poem is best described as

- A. a young bride remembering her wedding day
- B. a traveler describing a ride through the countryside
- C. a woman fearfully imagining her own death
- D. a dead woman looking back on her passage toward death

24. Death is characterized in the poem by each of the following EXCEPT

- A. kindness
- B. aggressive urgency
- C. unhurried patience
- D. formal courtesy

25. The word "Civility" (line 8) primarily suggests that the speaker regards Death's conduct as
- A. insincere flattery meant to deceive her
 - B. warm personal affection
 - C. formal courtesy appropriate to a social call
 - D. cold indifference to her feelings
26. The speaker's statement that she "had put away / My labor and my leisure too" (lines 6–7) suggests that she
- A. set aside all of her ordinary activities in accepting the journey
 - B. was forced to abandon her duties against her will
 - C. valued work more highly than leisure
 - D. felt guilty for neglecting her responsibilities
27. The repetition of "We passed" in lines 9, 11, and 12 primarily serves to
- A. convey the speaker's impatience with the journey
 - B. suggest that the carriage is moving faster than expected
 - C. imply that the speaker is a stranger to the places she sees
 - D. create a steady, unhurried rhythm in which familiar scenes are left behind
28. Taken together, the images in lines 9–12 ("School," "Fields of Gazing Grain," "the Setting Sun") most strongly suggest
- A. places the speaker disliked in life
 - B. the stages of a life seen in passing, from childhood through maturity to decline
 - C. a particular village the speaker remembers
 - D. a contrast between country and city life
29. The self-correction in line 13 ("Or rather – He passed Us –") primarily serves to
- A. correct a factual error about the route
 - B. signal that the carriage has slowed
 - C. revise the speaker's sense of who is moving, implying she has already left the living world's rhythms
 - D. express anger at Death's carelessness
30. The details in lines 14–16 ("Dews," "quivering and Chill," "only Gossamer," "only Tulle") chiefly convey the speaker's
- A. pleasure in the beauty of the evening
 - B. vanity about her appearance
 - C. resentment of Death's lateness
 - D. physical vulnerability and lack of preparation
31. In context, "A House" (line 17) is best understood as
- A. a grave
 - B. the speaker's childhood home
 - C. Death's residence
 - D. a church

32. The final stanza differs from the preceding stanzas in that it

- A. abandons the image of the carriage
- B. introduces a new speaker
- C. shifts from narrating the journey to reflecting on how time has been experienced since
- D. reveals that the journey was a dream

33. A student is writing an essay arguing that the speaker's understanding of her destination develops gradually and is completed only in retrospect. Which of the following lines best supports the claim that the speaker's recognition came late?

- A. "He kindly stopped for me –" (line 2)
- B. "I first surmised the Horses' Heads / Were toward Eternity –" (lines 23–24)
- C. "We slowly drove – He knew no haste" (line 5)
- D. "We passed the School, where Children strove" (line 9)

Questions 34–44

Read the following scene carefully before you choose your answers. The following scene was written for this practice exam in the manner of a play first performed in the early 1910s. In this scene, a solicitor calls on the widow of a client.

SCENE: The drawing-room of the Ambler's house, a wet afternoon in March. A fire burns low. MRS. AMBLER, a woman of fifty, sits at a small table arranging a tea-service with great exactness. MR. STRAND, a solicitor, stands with his back to the fire, holding his hat, which no one has asked **(5)** him to put down.

STRAND. You are looking very well, Hester.

MRS. AMBLER. [Not looking up.] Am I? It is the light. Everything looks well in this light; it is the only kindness the March weather does us. Sit down, Percival. You will wear out the rug, and I have only the one.

(10) STRAND. [Sitting, the hat upon his knee.] I have come on a matter of—

MRS. AMBLER. Sugar?

STRAND. Thank you; no.

MRS. AMBLER. You used to take two. [She pours.] Henry always said that a man who gave up sugar had either found religion or lost money, and that he **(15)** was prepared to forgive the first.

[A pause. STRAND turns the hat a quarter-turn upon his knee.]

STRAND. I would not have you think, Hester, that I take any pleasure in the errand.

MRS. AMBLER. I never suppose that anyone takes pleasure in anything, **(20)** Percival. It saves so much disappointment. [She hands him his cup.] You have come to tell me the Burnley shares are worth nothing.

STRAND. [Startled.] Who has spoken to you?

MRS. AMBLER. No one has spoken to me. You are wearing the face you wore at Henry's funeral, the face of a man who has been left to say something. [She **(25)** sits.] I have been expecting it these three weeks. I had hoped, I confess, that it would be a Thursday, when Dorothea is at her aunt's. I see you have chosen a Tuesday. It is thoughtless of the creditors to keep such regular hours.

STRAND. There is the house, you understand. And the furniture, in part. It **(30)** need not be a ruin, Hester. If the lease were disposed of by Lady Day—

MRS. AMBLER. Dorothea is to be married in June.

STRAND. Yes. Wetherby has written to you, I believe. Twice.

MRS. AMBLER. Mr. Wetherby writes a very fine hand. I have kept both letters for the sake of it. Mr. Fenwick's people think us comfortable. [She looks, **(35)** for the first time, at the room.] I have taken some trouble that they should. The pearls went in January, you know. I told Dorothea the clasp was broken and I had sent them to be mended. She has asked after them twice. I find it is quite easy to be asked after a thing. It is only the answering that wants practice.

(40) STRAND. [Setting down his cup.] Why did you not come to me? I am not a stranger to this house.

MRS. AMBLER. Because you would have been kind. [A silence. The fire settles. She rises abruptly and goes to the bell.] And I could not have borne it, Percival, not from you; you who sat in that very chair the day **(45)** they were married and told Henry he was the luckiest man in England. [She rings.] There. They will bring more hot water, and we shall be able to talk of the lease like two sensible people.

STRAND. Hester—

MRS. AMBLER. [At the window, her back to him, quite steady.] Lady Day, you **(50)** said. It is a very pretty name for a quarter-day. I wonder who thought of it.

34. Mrs. Ambler's opening remarks in lines 7–9 reveal that she

- A. steers the conversation toward trivial matters to avoid Strand's purpose
- B. is delighted by Strand's visit
- C. is angry that he arrived so late
- D. has misunderstood the reason for his visit

35. The stage direction in lines 4–5 ("holding his hat, which no one has asked him to put down") primarily serves to

- A. show that Strand intends to leave soon
- B. indicate that Strand is poor
- C. signal that this is an uneasy business visit rather than a welcome social call
- D. provide comic relief before the serious conversation

36. Which of the following does Mrs. Ambler's remark about Henry and sugar (lines 13–15) accomplish?

- I. It hints that she suspects Strand has come to report financial loss.
- II. It recalls her late husband's humor with evident affection.
- III. It expresses her contempt for Henry's judgment.

- A. I only
- B. III only
- C. II and III only
- D. I and II only

37. The characters' use of first names ("Hester" in lines 6, 17, and 48; "Percival" in lines 8, 20, and 46) indicates that Mrs. Ambler and Strand are

- A. newly acquainted and cautious with each other
- B. old friends whose familiarity is restrained by propriety
- C. adversaries who address each other mockingly
- D. bound by a professional duty that excludes personal feeling

38. Mrs. Ambler's remark that it is "thoughtless of the creditors to keep such regular hours" (lines 27–28) is best described as

- A. an ironic joke that masks her anxiety
- B. a sincere complaint about the creditors' rudeness
- C. a literal accusation against Strand
- D. an expression of her confusion about the nature of the debts

39. Mrs. Ambler's reply in line 31 ("Dorothea is to be married in June") serves primarily to

- A. ask Strand to delay the sale until after the wedding
- B. accuse Strand of ignoring her daughter's feelings
- C. show that her concern is for what the news means for her daughter's future
- D. announce a recent decision about the wedding

40. A student is writing an essay arguing that Mrs. Ambler places her daughter's welfare above her own comfort. Which of the following lines best supports the claim?

- A. "You will wear out the rug, and I have only the one." (line 9)
- B. "Henry always said that a man who gave up sugar had either found religion or lost money" (lines 13–14)
- C. "I see you have chosen a Tuesday." (lines 26–27)
- D. "The pearls went in January, you know. I told Dorothea the clasp was broken and I had sent them to be mended." (lines 36–37)

41. The shift in lines 42–47 (beginning "Because you would have been kind") is best described as a shift from

- A. mockery to anger
- B. controlled wit to an unguarded expression of feeling that she quickly reins in
- C. denial to confession of guilt
- D. despair to hope

42. Mrs. Ambler's explanation "Because you would have been kind" (line 42) suggests that she regards kindness as

- A. a sign of weakness in the giver
- B. an insult from a man of lower rank
- C. a form of dishonesty
- D. a threat to the self-possession she has maintained

43. Mrs. Ambler's act of ringing the bell (lines 44–47) primarily serves to

- A. return the conversation to routine matters and restore her composure
- B. summon a servant to remove Strand
- C. signal that the interview is over

D. express her anger at Strand

44. A student is writing an essay arguing that Mrs. Ambler uses wit to protect herself from disappointment. Which of the following lines best supports the claim?

- A. "Dorothea is to be married in June." (line 31)
- B. "I never suppose that anyone takes pleasure in anything, Percival. It saves so much disappointment." (lines 19–20)
- C. "She has asked after them twice." (line 37)
- D. "The pearls went in January, you know." (line 36)

Questions 45–55

Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers. The following passage was written for this practice exam in the manner of an American short story of the 1920s. In this passage, a soldier returns to his hometown after the First World War.

Lund got off the train at Whitcomb at ten minutes past four in the afternoon. It was the same station. The platform was the same and the water tank was the same and the agent was a different man, younger, with a celluloid collar. Lund stood on the platform with his bag and looked at the **(5)** elms. They had been cut back along Depot Street. He noticed that first. He noticed it the way he used to notice a gap in a hedgerow, and then he made himself stop noticing.

"Need a hand with that?" the agent said.

"No."

(10) "You're one of the Lund boys."

"Yes."

"Welcome home," the agent said. He said it carefully. Lund thought he had been practicing it for the soldiers.

He walked up Depot Street. It was eleven blocks to the house and he counted **(15)** them. Nobody was out. A woman on Maple took in a sheet from a line and went inside and did not look at him, and he understood that she had looked at him from inside the house, through the curtain, before he had come level with her gate. That was all right. He would have done the same. There was a smell of cut grass and coal smoke and he stopped on the walk by the **(20)** Methodist church and stood in it. It did not mean anything. It was only a smell. He had thought on the boat that it would mean something.

His mother was on the porch. She had been on the porch, he saw, for some time, because the chair was drawn up to the rail and the sewing in her lap had not been sewn. She stood up when he opened the gate. She put her hands **(25)** against her apron and took them away again.

"Edward," she said.

"Hello, Ma."

"You're thin."

"I'm all right."

(30) "I have a pot roast," she said. "I didn't know what time. I kept it back." She laughed, a short sound, and stopped it. "I've been keeping it back since Tuesday."

"That's fine, Ma."

They went into the house. It was cooler inside and the hall clock ticked, **(35)** and he stood with his bag in the front hall under the stairs, where the hat tree was, and could not think where to put it. His mother watched him. In the parlor the good chairs were in their places with the lace on their arms. On the table by the window there was a photograph of him in the uniform, taken at Camp Sheridan, in a frame he did not know. He did not **(40)** look at it for long.

"Your father's at the store till six," she said. "He said I wasn't to make a fuss."

"No."

"I'm not making a fuss."

(45) "No, Ma."

"Ruth's been after me all week to put flowers. I said, he's not company." She stopped. She turned the sewing over in her hands. "I put flowers," she said.

There were flowers on the table, asters, in the blue pitcher. He looked at **(50)** them. They were purple and there were too many of them, and the pitcher was the one with the chip in the lip, and he saw that she had turned the chip to the wall. He went and stood by the table. He put out a hand, and touched the pitcher at the place where the chip was, and turned it a little toward himself, and then, because it seemed to him that he had done something he **(55)** could not explain, turned it back.

"They're nice," he said.

"They're only asters."

"They're nice, Ma."

Upstairs the room was as he had left it except that the bed had been made **(60)** with a spread he did not remember. He set the bag on the floor by the closet. Out the window he could see the back lot and the Dunning's barn, and beyond the barn the line of the tracks. A freight was going through. He counted the cars. He got to thirty-one and then his mother called from the foot of the stairs that supper would be at six and there was hot water if **(65)** he wanted it, and he said that he did, and went on counting, and lost the number, and began again.

45. The point of view of the passage is best described as

- A. first-person narration by Lund as an older man
- B. omniscient narration that comments critically on Lund's behavior
- C. third-person narration closely aligned with Lund's perceptions
- D. objective narration that records only external actions and speech

46. The short declarative sentences in lines 1–5 ("It was the same station. The platform was the same . . .") primarily convey

- A. Lund's guarded, controlled way of registering a scene while suppressing feeling
- B. the dullness of a long train journey
- C. the narrator's boredom with the setting

D. the childlike simplicity of Lund's thought

47. The statement that Lund noticed the cut elms "the way he used to notice a gap in a hedgerow" (lines 5–7) suggests that

- A. he misses the rural life he knew before the war
- B. he resents the changes made to his hometown
- C. he can no longer recall what the town looked like
- D. habits of vigilance from the war persist, and he tries to suppress them

48. The statement that the agent "said it carefully" and that Lund "thought he had been practicing it for the soldiers" (lines 12–13) suggests that Lund perceives the greeting as

- A. a mocking imitation of a soldier's speech
- B. an expression of hostility toward veterans
- C. well meant but rehearsed and awkward
- D. a sincere outpouring of feeling

49. The incident of the woman on Maple Street (lines 15–18) primarily illustrates

- A. the town's open hostility toward returning soldiers
- B. the townspeople's indirect, uneasy way of acknowledging him, which Lund understands and accepts
- C. Lund's suspicion of ordinary people
- D. the woman's guilt at neglecting a returning soldier

50. The sentences "It did not mean anything. It was only a smell. He had thought on the boat that it would mean something." (lines 20–21) primarily convey

- A. the gap between Lund's expectations of homecoming and his actual numbness
- B. Lund's dislike of the town's church
- C. a lapse in Lund's memory
- D. irritation at being delayed on the walk

51. The mother's remarks in lines 30–32 ("I kept it back . . . since Tuesday") chiefly indicate that she

- A. resents his late arrival
- B. has prepared in a hurry
- C. feels indifferent about his return
- D. has been waiting anxiously and is embarrassed by how much

52. Each of the following contributes to the portrayal of strain between Lund and his mother EXCEPT

- A. her hands, which she "put against her apron and took . . . away again" (lines 24–25)
- B. Lund's account of his experiences at the front
- C. the repeated denials that she is "making a fuss" (lines 41–45)
- D. the chipped pitcher she "had turned . . . to the wall" (lines 51–52)

53. Lund's handling of the pitcher (lines 52–55) most nearly suggests

- A. contempt for his mother's decorations
- B. a wish to damage the pitcher

- END OF SECTION I**

ROW	POINTS	WHAT READERS LOOK FOR
B: Evidence and commentary	0–4	Specific evidence that supports a line of reasoning, and commentary that explains how the evidence supports it. For Questions 1 and 2, the commentary must also explain how literary elements and techniques create meaning. For Question 3, the commentary must address the interpretation of the work as a whole.
C: Sophistication	0–1	A sustained, complex argument: exploring tensions or complexities, placing the interpretation in a broader context, accounting for alternative interpretations, or writing in a consistently vivid and persuasive style.

Planning tips. Spend the first five to eight minutes reading and planning. For Questions 1 and 2, look for the turn or shift, repeated words, and the way sentences are built, and decide what is complex about the speaker's or character's experience before you write your thesis. For Question 3, choose a work you can discuss with specific scenes and details, define the key term in a sentence of your own, and keep returning to the work as a whole rather than retelling its plot. Leave a minute or two to reread.

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total Section II score.)

In the following poem by Thomas Hardy, published in 1900, the speaker stands in a wintry landscape as the nineteenth century draws to a close. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Hardy uses literary elements and techniques to convey the speaker's complex response to the song of the thrush.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use 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.

The Darkling Thrush³

Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice¹ gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.

(5) The tangled bine-stems² scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be

(10) The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,

(15) And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead

In a full-hearted evensong

(20) Of joy illimited;

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,

Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

(25) So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through

(30) His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

¹ coppice: a small wood or thicket of trees that are regularly cut back

² bine-stems: the twining stems of climbing plants

³ darkling: in the dark; growing dark

Planning space (optional; not scored). Before you write, jot brief answers to these prompts:

1. Who is speaking, to whom (if anyone), and in what situation?
2. Where does the poem turn or shift, and what changes?
3. Which words, images, sounds, or structural choices carry the most weight?
4. What is *complex* here, and how would you state it in a single sentence?

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total Section II score.)

The following passage is from a novel written for this practice exam in the manner of American fiction of the 1890s. In this passage, Mrs. Prentiss steps out onto the gallery of her house while guests dine inside. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the author uses literary elements and techniques to portray Mrs. Prentiss's complex response to the evening.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use 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.

Mrs. Prentiss was in the habit, at the hour when the lamps were carried in, of slipping out through the long window of the morning-room to stand a few minutes on the gallery, where the honeysuckle had grown so thick as to make a dim green chamber of one end of it. Nobody remarked upon this. Her **(5)** husband, who was a man of regular habits and expected them in others, took it for a form of digestion; the servants took it for a form of piety; and Mrs. Prentiss, who knew it to be neither, took care that it should never be called anything at all.

This evening there were guests within. Judge Aldous and his sister had **(10)** driven out from town, and the dining-room, which Mrs. Prentiss had spent the better part of three days arranging, now glittered with a hard, expectant brilliance, like a face that has been told it is admired. She had heard the Judge, as she left, begin upon the subject of the levee; she had heard her husband's laugh come in on it, at precisely the right interval, **(15)** as a good horse takes a fence. It was a very creditable dinner. She did not doubt it. She stood among the honeysuckle with her hands folded before her and marvelled at how little she was needed to it.

The bayou lay below the garden, black and slow, and across it, in the cottage where old Célestine took in the town's washing, a lamp had been lit **(20)** also; and out of that small yellow window there came, thin and not quite true, the sound of a girl singing. Mrs. Prentiss knew the girl, Marthe, a child of sixteen, who came on Mondays with the basket and kept her eyes upon the floor. She knew the song too, or its tune, which was some foolish air of the country that nobody had ever thought it worth while to write **(25)** down. It rose, faltered, and rose again, and the singer, supposing herself unheard, did not trouble to be pretty. She sang as one talks to oneself in an empty room.

Mrs. Prentiss listened. She would have said, had anyone asked her, that she was not moved; she was merely attentive, as one is to a clock that has been **(30)** long silent and has begun, without apparent cause, to strike. But she found that she had unfolded her hands. She found, too, with a mild surprise, that she was envying the child; not her youth, which she had not much valued while she had it, nor her poverty, of which she had a lady's vague and tender notion, but the circumstance, so simple and so impossible, of **(35)** singing a thing for no one at all.

"Louisa!" Her husband's voice, genial and enquiring, came through the window. "The Judge is asking whether you hold with the new school-house."

"I am coming, Edmund," said Mrs. Prentiss. She was surprised at the readiness of her own voice, which came out as smooth and bright as a coin. **(40)** "Tell him I hold with whatever he holds with. It is so much the safest course."

There was a burst of laughter at this, and she heard Edmund say, to the company at large, that she was a perfect diplomat. She stood a moment longer. Across the water the singing had stopped, and the little window **(45)** went dark all at once, as if someone had put a hand over it. Then she smoothed her gown, and went in to the lamps,

and took her place at the table, and was admired; and it was observed by the Judge's sister, who observed everything, that Mrs. Prentiss laughed a good deal that night, and at the right places, and never once looked at her own hands.

Planning space (optional; not scored). Before you write, jot brief answers to these prompts:

1. Who is narrating, from what distance, and what does the narrator notice or withhold?
2. Where does the passage turn or shift, and what changes?
3. Which words, images, sounds, or structural choices carry the most weight?
4. What is *complex* here, and how would you state it in a single sentence?

Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total Section II score.)

Many works of literature feature characters who keep a secret. The secret may protect the character or someone else, may be a source of power or shame, and may shape the character's relationships with others in ways that are visible or hidden, intended or unintended.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character keeps a secret. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the secret and its consequences contribute to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should 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.

Suggested works:

- *Americanah*
- *Atonement*
- *Beloved*
- *The Bluest Eye*
- *Brooklyn*
- *Crime and Punishment*
- *A Doll's House*
- *Emma*
- *Ethan Frome*
- *Fences*
- *Frankenstein*
- *The Glass Menagerie*
- *The God of Small Things*
- *Great Expectations*
- *The Great Gatsby*

- *Hamlet*
- *The Handmaid's Tale*
- *Heart of Darkness*
- *The House of Mirth*
- *Invisible Man*
- *Jane Eyre*
- *The Kite Runner*
- *The Lowland*
- *Madame Bovary*
- *Mrs. Dalloway*
- *The Namesake*
- *Native Son*
- *Never Let Me Go*
- *Pachinko*
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
- *Rebecca*
- *The Remains of the Day*
- *The Scarlet Letter*
- *Sula*
- *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- *Things Fall Apart*
- *The Turn of the Screw*
- *Wide Sargasso Sea*
- *Wuthering Heights*

Planning space (optional; not scored). Before you write, jot brief answers to these prompts:

1. Which work will you choose, and who keeps the secret?
2. What does the secret protect, and what does it cost?
3. Which two or three scenes or details will you use as evidence?
4. How do the secret and its consequences shape your reading of the work as a whole?

END OF EXAM

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