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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Literature and Composition — Practice Exam 2: Answer Key, Explanations & Sample **Essays**

Part 1: Answer Key (Section I)

Skill codes: **NAR** = Narrator/Speaker (4.A–4.D); **CHR** = Character (1.A–1.E); **STR** = Structure (3.A–3.F); **FIG** = Word Choice, Imagery, Symbol, Comparison (5.A–5.D, 6.A–6.D); **SET** = Setting (2.A–2.C); **LAN** = Literary Argumentation (7.A–7.E). Difficulty: E = easy, M = medium, H = hard.

Q#	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
1	B	STR 3.C	P1 Keats	M
2	A	FIG 6.B	P1 Keats	M
3	D	FIG 5.B	P1 Keats	M
4	B	LAN 7.B	P1 Keats	M
5	B	FIG 5.B	P1 Keats	H
6	D	STR 3.C	P1 Keats	E
7	A	NAR 4.C	P1 Keats	M
8	C	FIG 5.A	P1 Keats	H
9	D	FIG 5.D	P1 Keats	M
10	A	NAR 4.C	P1 Keats	M
11	B	LAN 7.A	P1 Keats	H
12	C	NAR 4.B	P2 Austen	E
13	C	LAN 7.A	P2 Austen	M
14	D	STR 3.B	P2 Austen	M

Q#	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
15	B	CHR 1.E	P2 Austen	M
16	C	CHR 1.D	P2 Austen	H
17	A	FIG 5.A	P2 Austen	E
18	D	CHR 1.E	P2 Austen	M
19	C	LAN 7.D	P2 Austen	E
20	C	FIG 6.C	P2 Austen	M
21	A	NAR 4.B	P2 Austen	M
22	D	CHR 1.A	P2 Austen	M
23	B	NAR 4.A	P3 Dunbar	E
24	A	FIG 5.B	P3 Dunbar	M
25	D	FIG 5.B	P3 Dunbar	M
26	C	NAR 4.C	P3 Dunbar	H
27	B	STR 3.C	P3 Dunbar	M
28	A	STR 3.C	P3 Dunbar	M
29	D	FIG 5.D	P3 Dunbar	E
30	B	FIG 5.A	P3 Dunbar	H
31	C	NAR 4.C	P3 Dunbar	M
32	A	STR 3.D	P3 Dunbar	E
33	B	LAN 7.A	P3 Dunbar	M
34	B	NAR 4.B	P4 Widow	M
35	D	NAR 4.C	P4 Widow	M
36	B	STR 3.C	P4 Widow	H
37	A	SET 2.C	P4 Widow	E
38	C	FIG 6.B	P4 Widow	M
39	D	FIG 5.A	P4 Widow	M
40	A	STR 3.C	P4 Widow	M
41	C	FIG 6.A	P4 Widow	M
42	C	CHR 1.E	P4 Widow	M
43	A	LAN 7.D	P4 Widow	H

Q#	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
44	D	CHR 1.B	P4 Widow	H
45	B	SET 2.A	P5 River	E
46	D	NAR 4.C	P5 River	M
47	A	CHR 1.A	P5 River	M
48	A	CHR 1.A	P5 River	E
49	B	NAR 4.B	P5 River	H
50	D	STR 3.C	P5 River	H
51	A	NAR 4.C	P5 River	M
52	B	CHR 1.E	P5 River	H
53	C	SET 2.B	P5 River	M
54	D	NAR 4.C	P5 River	M
55	C	STR 3.D	P5 River	E

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

Letter balance: A = 14, B = 14, C = 13, D = 14. No letter repeats more than twice in a row.

Skill balance: NAR 13, CHR 9, STR 10, FIG 14, SET 3, LAN 6. **Formats:** EXCEPT items = 22, 43, 55; Roman-numeral items = 27, 52; student-claim/argument items = 4, 11, 13, 19, 33, 43. **Difficulty:** 14 easy (about 25%), 28 medium (about 51%), 13 hard (about 24%).

Part 2: Section I Explanations

Passage 1 — Keats, “When I have fears that I may cease to be” (Questions 1–11)

1. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C – function of structure in a text.] The poem is a single sentence built from three parallel “When” clauses (lines 1–4, 5–8, 9–12) that pile up fears about unfinished writing, unreadable “symbols of a high romance,” and lost love; the main clause arrives only with “then on the shore / Of the wide world I stand alone, and think” (lines 12–13). (A) is wrong because the poem is a Shakespearean sonnet (three quatrains and a couplet), not a Petrarchan octave/sestet, and no resolution arrives. (C) is wrong because the clauses are not independent assertions; they are grammatically subordinate, and the couplet does not summarize them but culminates the sentence. (D) is wrong because the first line is a “When” clause, not a question.

2. Answer: A. [Skill 6.B – metaphor.] “Gleaned” and “ripened grain” make the speaker’s “teeming brain” a field whose crop is full but not yet gathered into the “rich garner” of books. (B) is wrong because the books, not the mind, are the storehouses and they are not overfull but still imagined. (C) is wrong because the harvest is not yet

in the granary; the speaker fears dying before it gets there. (D) is wrong because the pen is the tool of gleaning, not the thing compared to the mind.

3. Answer: D. [Skill 5.B – function of words.] To glean is to gather what has already grown, so “gleaned” presents writing as a patient collecting of the mind’s ripened thoughts. (A) is wrong because gleaning is gentle, not violent. (B) reverses the sense; gleaning is deliberate. (C) is wrong because the “teeming brain” is the source of the material, so the act is not independent of thought.

4. Answer: B. [Skill 7.B – defensible thesis.] Only (B) makes an interpretive claim, traces a line of reasoning (harvest, then sky, then the final line), and addresses “complex attitude” by pairing longing with futility. (A) names devices and a topic without a claim. (C) is a description of form and tone with no argument. (D) is a paraphrase of the first quatrain and ignores the prompt’s focus on ambition.

5. Answer: B. [Skill 5.B.] “Magic hand of chance” implies that tracing the “cloudy symbols” depends on something like luck or inspiration that the poet cannot command. (A) adds study of earlier poets, which the poem never mentions. (C) confuses this quatrain with the next one, which introduces the beloved. (D) is a literal, worldly reading of “chance” that the romantic imagery does not support.

6. Answer: D. [Skill 3.C – shift.] Line 9 (“And when I feel, fair creature of an hour”) moves from the poet’s literary ambitions (the harvest of books and the sky of romance) to the human beloved and love. (A) is wrong because the mood remains anxious. (B) is wrong because the poem never turns outward to society. (C) is wrong because both sections use figurative language.

7. Answer: A. [Skill 4.C.] “Creature of an hour” calls the beloved fleeting, so she shares the transience that threatens the speaker. (B) invents unfaithfulness. (C) is a mistaken reading of “creature.” (D) is the opposite: “of an hour” excludes the eternal.

8. Answer: C. [Skill 5.A – literal vs. figurative meaning in context.] “Unreflecting love” is love not weighed or analyzed, a spontaneous delight of the “faery power.” (A) is a literal optical reading of “reflect.” (B) is the familiar negative sense (“thoughtless and irresponsible”), which does not fit a phrase the speaker treats as precious. (D) misreads “reflecting” as “returning.”

9. Answer: D. [Skill 5.D – imagery.] The “shore / Of the wide world” places the speaker at the edge of something vast and unreachable, matching “stand alone.” (A) takes the shore literally and invents a voyage. (B) is wrong because the shore image is new; it does not recall the grain. (C) is wrong because the setting evokes isolation, not familiarity.

10. Answer: A. [Skill 4.C.] “Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink” suggests that prolonged thought about mortality reduces even the greatest desires to nothing. (B) says he has resolved to abandon both, but the line describes a feeling, not a resolution. (C) overreaches: love and fame are cherished through the poem, and the sinking is the effect of thought, not a revelation of prior illusion. (D) is wrong because “nothingness” is not consoling.

11. Answer: B. [Skill 7.A – evidence for a claim.] Line 2’s “Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain” states the fear in terms of work left undone; “Before” governs the sentence, so the fear is of dying before completion. (A) states only the fear of death. (C) refers to the sky, a symbol of unrealized romance and not directly of incompleteness. (D) describes solitude, not incompleteness.

Passage 2 — Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Chapter 1 (Questions 12–22)

12. Answer: C. [Skill 4.B – narration and irony.] The sentence states a “truth universally acknowledged,” but what follows shows that the “truth” is a belief held by families who want to marry off daughters; the tone invites skepticism. (A) takes the sentence at face value. (B) is wrong because the novel does not “disprove” the proverb; it exposes the motive behind it. (D) is far too narrow: the sentence is general and Bingley is not yet named.

13. Answer: C. [Skill 7.A.] “Considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters” treats the man as an item to be possessed, which supports the claim about acquisition. (A) names his wealth but not the families’ attitude. (B) and (D) refer to what is unknown about him and where he arrives, not to ownership.

14. Answer: D. [Skill 3.B – function of a sequence/detail.] The short, dry sentence after Mr. Bennet’s “I have no objection to hearing it” understates Mrs. Bennet’s eagerness: she needs no real invitation. (A) misreads Mr. Bennet’s ironic compliance. (B) is wrong because the setting is unchanged. (C) is wrong because Mrs. Long was already introduced, and nothing after this sentence makes her significant.

15. Answer: B. [Skill 1.E.] Mr. Bennet takes “design” literally to tease his wife about her scheme: Bingley need not have a design, but she does. (A) is wrong because he already knows what she thinks. (C) invents a concern about reputation. (D) is the opposite of his teasing resistance.

16. Answer: C. [Skill 1.D – relationships.] The “compliment” is mock flattery; Mrs. Bennet answers, “you flatter me,” accepting it, while the reader (and the later line “a woman has not often much beauty to think of”) hears the mockery. (A) takes the flattery at face value. (B) is wrong because she is not offended at this point. (D) is not what he is doing, since he suggests the girls go alone only to avoid going himself.

17. Answer: A. [Skill 5.A.] “What an establishment it would be for one of them” refers to a secure position through marriage. (B), (C), and (D) are other denotations of the word, none of which fits a conversation about daughters’ prospects.

18. Answer: D. [Skill 1.E.] She cites the Lucases’ intention to visit as social proof: if the Lucases will go, the Bennets must. (A) is wrong because she does not disdain them. (B) is wrong because the point is deliberate. (C) is wrong because wealth is not compared.

19. Answer: C. [Skill 7.D – select relevant evidence.] “Quickness” means mental agility. (A) is Mrs. Bennet’s claim. (B) compares looks, but Mr. Bennet does not say it. (D) shows that he wishes to favor Lizzy, but not why.

20. Answer: C. [Skill 6.C – personification.] “Old friends” personifies her nerves; the irony is that, over twenty years, they have become a standard feature of her complaints rather than a real illness. (A) takes the metaphor as sincere. (B) mislabels it as hyperbole conveying alarm. (D) is the same mistake as (A): the reader is meant to hear the dryness.

21. Answer: A. [Skill 4.B.] Nearly all of lines 1–69 are dialogue, with only brief narrative tags; the final paragraph is narrator summary of both characters. (B) is wrong because the narrator’s voice, not Mrs. Bennet’s, is present. (C) is wrong because the daughters are not individually described. (D) is wrong because the paragraph is ironic (“sarcastic humour,” “fancied herself nervous”).

22. Answer: D. [Skill 1.A – EXCEPT.] The narrator never blames Mr. Bennet for her suffering. (A) is supported by “When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous.” (B) is supported by “Her mind was less difficult to develop,” in contrast to his “odd mixture.” (C) is supported by “The business of her life was to get her daughters married.”

Passage 3 — Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask” (Questions 23–33)

23. Answer: B. [Skill 4.A – identifying the speaker.] “We” speaks for a group whose experience is shared (“our cheeks,” “our cries”). (A) is wrong because “the world” is the audience being kept at a distance, not the group the speaker represents. (C) is wrong because the speaker is included in the suffering. (D) is wrong because “let them only see us” and “the world” imply a general audience.

24. Answer: A. [Skill 5.B.] A “debt” is owed to someone; the speakers pay it “to human guile,” so the mask is a cost imposed by a deceitful world. (B) reverses the direction of the transaction. (C) is wrong because the guile belongs to others, not to the speakers. (D) is wrong because a debt is not a reward.

25. Answer: D. [Skill 5.B.] To “mouth” is to utter words without feeling; “myriad subtleties” suggests rehearsed pleasantries. (A) is the literal, irrelevant meaning. (B) is the opposite, since the speech is guarded. (C) is wrong because the speech is not sincere prayer.

26. Answer: C. [Skill 4.C.] “Why should the world be over-wise, / In counting all our tears and sighs?” implies that the world has no right to such knowledge and would not use it kindly; the next lines (“Nay, let them only see us”) confirm the refusal. (A) takes the question literally. (B) is wrong because the speaker has no hope the world will count the tears, only that it will not. (D) is wrong because the question shows the speakers care very much about being seen.

27. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C – function of structure.] I is true: line 9 ends with a period and line 15 with an exclamation point. II is true: line 9 is four syllables, much shorter than the other lines. III is false: the mask is never removed. Only I and II are correct, (B).

28. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C – shift.] Through line 9, the speakers address “the world” in the third person; at line 10, “O great Christ” turns the address to God. (B) is wrong because the mood does not become joyful. (C) is wrong because “we” persists. (D) is wrong because there is no command.

29. Answer: D. [Skill 5.D – imagery.] “Clay is vile” and “long the mile” evoke a degrading, tiring road. (A) takes “clay” as sculptors’ material. (B) is wrong because the setting is figurative, not rural. (C) is wrong because “vile” and “long” exclude pleasure and choice.

30. Answer: B. [Skill 5.A.] “Let the world dream otherwise” means “let the world go on believing the false picture.” (A) is the literal sleep sense. (C) and (D) both use the aspirational sense, which is wrong because the “world” is the deceived party, not the speakers.

31. Answer: C. [Skill 4.C – tone.] The speakers are wary (“shades our eyes”), refuse to be counted, and want the world to keep its illusions; “guarded and defiant” captures both. (A) is the opposite. (B) misses the intensity of the refusal. (D) is wrong because there is no affection for the world.

32. Answer: A. [Skill 3.D – contrast.] The poem sets the outward actions of smiling and singing against the inner “cries” and “tortured souls.” (B) is the opposite: the singing does not ease the pain. (C) misreads the joy as sincere. (D) is wrong because the prayer to Christ is sincere.

33. Answer: B. [Skill 7.A – defensible claim.] The mask is a “debt” imposed on them (protection from the world’s scrutiny) yet is accompanied by “torn and bleeding hearts” (torment). (A) is wrong because the reason given is the world’s guile, not shame. (C) is unsupported: the speakers want the world to “dream otherwise.” (D) is contradicted by the closing “We wear the mask!”

Passage 4 — Original 1880s regionalist story (Questions 34–44)

34. Answer: B. [Skill 4.B – point of view.] The narrator reports the widow's thoughts ("she let herself think the thought") but keeps back some of what she feels, such as the thought itself, which is described as a "stone" without being named. (A) is wrong because there is no "I." (C) is wrong because only one mind is entered. (D) is wrong because her thoughts are reported.

35. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C.] The neighbors' kindness covers a prediction that she will fail and sell. (A) misses the doubt. (B) overstates by calling it an insult. (C) is wrong because there is nothing religious in the remark.

36. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C – function of repetition.] The opening and closing phrases ("gone in to see about the hens") frame the passage with the same ordinary task, suggesting that her decisions live inside continuous work rather than apart from it. (A) is a tempting but unsupported charge: the widow makes a firm decision, not an escape. (C) is wrong because nothing suggests fondness. (D) is wrong because the first instance is six years earlier.

37. Answer: A. [Skill 2.C – character and setting.] Her husband "would ask nothing of it that it could not give," while she "asked the hill for everything." (B) is wrong because she works harder. (C) is the opposite of the contrast ("She had not inherited the agreement"). (D) is wrong because nothing she says blames him.

38. Answer: C. [Skill 6.B.] Comparing her face to the "color and set of the fence posts" suggests she has become weathered, fixed, and part of the farm. (A) overreaches. (B) is wrong because the next line says "She did not mind." (D) is wrong because the comparison is about appearance, not labor.

39. Answer: D. [Skill 5.A – meaning in context.] "Wanted paint" means lacked paint, an old sense of the word. (A), (B), and (C) are the common modern senses and make no sense of a house that "wanted paint."

40. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C.] The list begins with "a house in the village," proceeds to a seat in church, and ends with "the right to be tired," moving from material to emotional goods. (B) imposes an order of cost that the text does not state. (C) is wrong because the passage shows the village's appeal. (D) is wrong because she is not indifferent to what the money would buy.

41. Answer: C. [Skill 6.A – simile.] The knowledge is a stone carried "so long she had forgotten its weight": settled and almost unnoticed. (A) is wrong because she does not long to set it down. (B) is wrong because it is old, not recent. (D) is a false link between two unrelated stones.

42. Answer: C. [Skill 1.E.] "Leaving would be a thing done to her, and staying was a thing she did." (A) and (B) are explicitly denied ("She did not stay for her husband's sake . . . for the land's sake either"). (D) is wrong because the mowing "would come up thinner next."

43. Answer: A. [Skill 7.D – selecting evidence; EXCEPT.] Speaking aloud suggests her isolation, not specifically her self-reliance. (B), (C), and (D) each show her acting on her own will and judgment.

44. Answer: D. [Skill 1.B – character change.] She had always "disliked the wavering place," but now she touches it and understands that her husband "made the going-around as straight as the ledge allowed." This is a new acceptance of what cannot be moved, and a new respect for her husband's method. (A) is wrong because no rebuilding is mentioned. (B) contradicts the tenderness of the scene. (C) contradicts the final sentence.

Passage 5 — Original early-twentieth-century colonial narrative (Questions 45–55)

45. Answer: B. [Skill 2.A – setting.] A forest that has “been waiting” is patient, watchful, and almost alive. (A) is the opposite. (C) is contradicted by the later image of the cabbages. (D) is wrong because the forest does not promise profit.

46. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C.] The narrator generalizes (“as men picture what they have not seen, in the image of what they know”) and then contrasts the imagined station with the “clearing the size of a ship’s deck.” (A) is wrong because no one is blamed. (B) is wrong because the narrator’s expertise is not at issue. (C) describes the content of the “told” picture, not the real station.

47. Answer: A. [Skill 1.A.] A suit like paper and a ledger he never sets down suggest a man who has become a kind of document himself. (B) and (C) misread the details as signs of wealth or poverty. (D) is not supported.

48. Answer: A. [Skill 1.A.] The agent has “the only thing he spoke of with any warmth, and it was a warmth of resentment” and feels “managed by a quantity of moving water.” (B) is wrong because he is evasive about the rubber. (C) goes beyond the text. (D) is wrong because his warmth is resentful.

49. Answer: B. [Skill 4.B.] The sentence turns the manager into the one managed, an ironic reversal. (A) is wrong because the narrator is wry, not sympathetic. (C) is wrong because the river is the agent’s grievance. (D) is wrong because the narrator is still speaking: “One felt.”

50. Answer: D. [Skill 3.C – repetition.] The agent’s phrase is evasive; when it returns attached to the men’s “backs,” the phrase exposes what it was hiding. (A) is the opposite. (B) is wrong because the narrator is not uncertain; the agent is evasive. (C) mistakes a rhetorical echo for a time marker.

51. Answer: A. [Skill 4.C.] The narrator observes their stillness and says “I understood, without being told,” but does not name the exploitation outright. (B) is wrong because judgments are present (“made use of”). (C) overstates; there is no denunciation. (D) is wrong because the passage avoids appeals for pity.

52. Answer: B. [Skill 1.E.] I is supported by “he had long since ceased to see anything that did not appear in the ledger.” II is supported by the last entry being weeks old and the agent turning past the blank pages quickly. III is unsupported: the passage never says he is deceiving the company. So I and II only.

53. Answer: C. [Skill 2.B.] The garden is a small ordered patch that the forest “did not seem to have noticed,” a symbol of futile ordering. (A) is wrong because the vegetables are “small and bitter-looking.” (B) misreads a display of pride as hospitality. (D) is wrong because the garden parallels, rather than contrasts with, the ledger: both are attempts at order.

54. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C.] “I do not know that I pitied him” avoids pity; “that is more than most men manage” grants respect; the final clause judges the omission. (A) ignores the respect. (B) contradicts “I do not know that I pitied him.” (C) is wrong because there is no affection.

55. Answer: C. [Skill 3.D – contrast; EXCEPT.] The flagstaff shows the station’s emptiness, not the contrast between measurement and the unmeasurable. (A), (B), and (D) all concern counting, aligning, or adding.

Part 3: Section II Scoring Materials

The Rubric Used for Questions 1 and 2 (Poetry and Prose Analysis)

ROW	POINTS	CRITERIA
A: Thesis	0–1	0: There is no defensible thesis. The response restates the prompt, summarizes the text, names devices without a claim, or does not respond to the prompt. 1: The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the text.
B: Evidence & Commentary	0–4	0: Restates the thesis or the prompt, repeats provided information, or is irrelevant. 1: Evidence is general; commentary summarizes the evidence but does not explain how it supports the argument. Typical: plot or poem summary, device-naming with little explanation. 2: Some specific, relevant evidence and some explanation of how it relates to the argument, but no line of reasoning (or a faulty one). Typical: a mix of specific evidence and generalities; repetitive or simplistic explanation; one point developed while others are stubs. 3: Specific evidence supports all claims in a line of reasoning; commentary explains how <i>some</i> of the evidence supports the line of reasoning and explains how <i>at least one</i> literary element or technique contributes to meaning. 4: Specific evidence supports all claims; commentary <i>consistently</i> explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning and how <i>multiple</i> literary elements or techniques contribute to meaning. Writing errors that interfere with communication prevent the fourth point.

ROW	POINTS	CRITERIA
C: Sophistication	0–1	0: Does not meet the criteria. 1: Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument by (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions in the text, (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader context, (3) accounting for alternative interpretations, or (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. Does NOT earn the point: sweeping generalizations passing as context; merely hinting at alternative readings; a single sophisticated sentence not sustained; oversimplifying complexities; ornate language that does not advance the argument.

Decision rules. (1) A thesis can appear anywhere; it must make a claim about the text’s meaning, not just name devices or restate the prompt. (2) Repeating one technique (for example, three images) counts as one technique unless each is shown to do something different. (3) A response with no thesis can still earn Row B points. (4) Row C requires sustained sophistication; it is not a bonus for a good last line.

The Rubric Used for Question 3 (Literary Argument)

Rows A and C are as above, with these differences: **Row A** may be earned by a claim about the concept in the chosen work *or* about how the concept contributes to interpretation of the work as a whole; any reasonable reading of the key term (“home”) is accepted. **Row B** at 3 requires specific evidence and commentary that explains how some evidence supports the line of reasoning, with **no requirement to name literary techniques**; at 4 the commentary must *consistently* explain how the evidence supports the line of reasoning and the response must address the interpretation of the work as a whole. Row B at 1 typically “focuses on narrative developments rather than specific details” (plot summary).

Question 1: Poetry Analysis — Hopkins, “Spring and Fall”

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

What the prompt asks. Analyze how Hopkins uses literary elements and techniques to convey the speaker’s *complex understanding of the child’s grief*. The word “complex” signals that the speaker’s understanding is not a single attitude. Strong responses identify at least two pulls: gentle condescension toward a child who weeps over leaves, and recognition that the child’s tears are the first form of an adult’s grief for mortality, including her own.

A defensible thesis makes a claim about *what the speaker understands* and gestures at how the poem builds it. Examples that earn Row A: - Although the speaker first treats Margaret's tears as the sentimental reaction of a child who has not yet learned that adults grow "colder," the poem's last two lines reveal that her grief is already the deepest kind: grief for her own mortality. - Hopkins presents grief as an inherited knowledge that children feel before they can say it ("Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed"), and the speaker's own tenderness is shaped by the fact that he shares it. - The poem moves from a rhetorical question that mildly rebukes the child to a declaration that makes her grief universal, so the speaker's wisdom consists in recognizing that her feeling is more accurate than his own detachment.

Theses that do NOT earn Row A: "Hopkins uses imagery, diction, and rhyme to show the speaker's complex understanding of grief" (device list and prompt restated); "The poem is about a girl who is sad that autumn is coming" (summary); "Grief is part of life" (a topic, not a defensible interpretation tied to this poem).

What strong responses might argue (at least six lines of analysis): 1. *The opening question* ("Márgaré, áre you gríeving / Over Goldengrove unleaving?") addresses the child by name and uses an invented, gentle word, "unleaving," that makes the falling of leaves an ongoing action; the tone is tender, almost teasing, not scolding. 2. *The comparison* "Leáves, like the things of man" and the question "can you?" separate the child's fresh thoughts from the adult's knowledge and suggest that she cannot yet care about "the things of man," while the poem later shows she already does. 3. *The prediction* in lines 5–8 ("as the heart grows older / It will come to such sights colder") reveals the speaker's own experience: he knows what aging does to sorrow, and the lines carry a note of regret at that coldness, which makes the speaker's wisdom bittersweet. 4. *The turn* at "And yet you will weep and know why" (line 9) and the dismissal "Now no matter, child, the name" (line 10) change the poem from commentary on her age to a claim that grief's causes are one cause: "Sorrow's springs are the same." 5. *The metaphor* of "springs" (sources of water, and the season) and the title's "Spring and Fall" suggest a cycle in which youth and decline, and the biblical Fall, are joined; "blight" calls up both plant disease and the consequence of original sin. 6. *Sound and syntax*: short, rhymed couplets and heavy stresses (marked by the accents) slow the poem and make the final couplet land with the force of a verdict; the compressed, coined phrases "wanwood leafmeal" turn dead leaves into a texture of pale, ground-down wood. 7. *The final couplet's reversal*: the child is "grieving" for leaves, but the speaker says she is "mourn[ing] for" herself, which reframes the opening question and completes the poem's structure. Strong responses note that "It is Margaret you mourn for" can be read as both the poem's most compassionate and its bleakest line. 8. *Syntactic hesitation*: the broken syntax of lines 12–13 ("Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed / What heart heard of, ghost guessed") enacts how this knowledge is felt before it is thought.

Common traps. (a) Reading the speaker as simply harsh or simply comforting; (b) listing devices (alliteration, enjambment, rhyme) without function; (c) paraphrasing each couplet in order; (d) ignoring the title; (e) treating "Goldengrove" as a literal place only; (f) stating "the poem is about death" without showing how the speaker's understanding changes; (g) making claims about Hopkins's biography or religious views as the only evidence.

Sample Response: 6 Points

Hopkins's speaker begins by addressing Margaret's tears over falling leaves with what sounds like gentle condescension, then closes by claiming that her grief is the most serious kind. The poem's understanding of that grief is complex because the speaker does not simply console a child, nor lecture her; he recognizes that she already feels what adults learn to ignore, and in doing so he exposes his own distance from that feeling as a loss.

The opening question establishes the gentle, slightly superior stance. “Márgarét, áre you gríeving / Over Goldengrove unleaving?” is tender: the child is called by name, and the coined word “unleaving” turns the falling of leaves into something happening gradually before her eyes. But the following question, “Leáves, like the things of man, you / With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?” presumes the answer is no. The pairing of “fresh thoughts” with “the things of man” casts her as too new to understand why anyone would mourn a falling leaf. The enjambment of “you” across the line break even mimics the speaker leaning toward the child, saying “you” twice, treating her sorrow as a small matter that his tone barely takes seriously.

The poem then turns toward the speaker’s own experience. “Ah! ás the heart grows older / It will come to such sights colder” is a prediction, but the sigh in “Ah!” suggests regret rather than superiority. He knows the future in which Margaret will not “spare a sigh / Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie.” The coined compound “wanwood leafmeal” makes the scene vivid and sorrowful: the leaves are pale (“wan”), reduced to something like meal, ground fine by time. Because the speaker supplies such rich language for what the “colder” heart will ignore, the reader senses that he has not entirely become colder himself. His wisdom has come at the price of the very response he is describing.

The turn arrives with “And yet you will weep and know why” (line 9), a line that quietly corrects the first half. Where the speaker previously doubted whether the child could care, he now says that she will weep, and that she will know the reason. The rhymed couplet “Now no matter, child, the name: / Sórrów’s spríngs áre the same” abandons the dismissive distinction between her grief and an adult’s. The word “springs” holds two senses, sources of water and the season, and links the child’s tears to the title’s “Spring and Fall.” What sounded like a rebuke becomes a statement of kinship: the sources of sorrow do not change with age, even if the names we give them do.

The last four lines make this explicit and complicate it further. “Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed / What heart heard of, ghost guessed” describes a knowledge that comes before language and thought: the heart “heard,” and the “ghost,” the spirit, guessed. The syntax stumbles through negatives and the compressed past participles, so that the sentence enacts the way this knowledge is felt before it can be spoken. Then the couplet delivers its verdict: “It is the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for.” “Blight” suggests the sickness of plants and the theological Fall named in the title, so the falling leaves are one image for a human condition that begins at birth. The final line reverses the opening: Margaret had been “grieving / Over Goldengrove,” but she mourns, in truth, herself.

This reversal is why the poem resists a simple reading as either consolation or warning. It is cruel to tell a child that her tears are for her own death, yet it is also the poem’s deepest respect for her, because it treats her grief as accurate. The speaker’s understanding therefore includes an admission: the “colder” adult heart is less true than the child’s. Hopkins compresses this idea in fifteen short lines, and the rhymed couplets make each judgment feel final, as if the poem were closing a door. Margaret’s grief, in the end, is the poem’s wisdom, and the speaker, who began by explaining it away, finishes by learning it from her.

Scoring commentary (6/6). *Row A: 1.* The opening sentences present a defensible thesis about the speaker’s complex understanding, a movement from condescension to recognition with a self-implicating twist. *Row B: 4.* Every claim has specific evidence (“unleaving,” “fresh thoughts care for, can you?,” “Ah!,” “wanwood leafmeal,” “springs,” the stumbling syntax of lines 12–13, “blight,” and the reversal of the final line). The commentary consistently explains how language creates meaning, and it covers multiple techniques (coined diction, question and enjambment, double meaning of “springs,” syntax, allusion to the Fall, and couplet structure) in service of one line of reasoning organized by ideas, not by devices. *Row C: 1.* Sophistication is sustained: the essay

explores the tension between the speaker's superiority and his regret, treats the last line as simultaneously compassionate and bleak, and argues that the adult's coldness is a loss. This is a complexity pathway, not a decorative closing sentence.

Sample Response: 4 Points

In "Spring and Fall," Hopkins uses diction, imagery, and structure to show the speaker's complex understanding of a young girl's grief. The speaker sees that her sadness over autumn leaves is really sadness about death, but he also treats her gently because she is a child.

The poem begins with a question: "Márgarét, áre you grieving / Over Goldengrove unleaving?" The speaker uses the girl's name, which makes the poem feel personal and caring. "Goldengrove" is an image of a golden forest in autumn, and "unleaving" is a word Hopkins made up to show the leaves coming off the trees. The speaker then asks whether she can really care for leaves, "like the things of man," when she has "fresh thoughts." This shows he thinks she is too young to understand sadness, so he is a bit condescending.

Next, the speaker says that when she grows older her heart will become "colder" and she will not "spare a sigh" when she sees "worlds of wanwood leafmeal." The image of dead, crumbling leaves shows how much time and age change people. The word "colder" has a negative connotation and implies that growing up means losing feeling. This shows the speaker's complex attitude because he is warning her about growing up but he also seems to be sad about it.

The poem changes at "And yet you will weep and know why." After this line the speaker says that "Sorrow's springs are the same." This means that all sadness comes from the same place, whether it is for leaves or for something bigger. The word "springs" might also refer to the season and ties back to the title, "Spring and Fall." The poem also uses rhyme in couplets, like "name" and "same," which makes the ideas feel certain, as if the speaker knows the truth. The sentence "Now no matter, child, the name" is also important because it brushes aside the difference between her sorrow and an adult's, and the short, firm line makes the speaker sound like someone who has thought about this for a long time and wants to say it plainly.

The ending says "It is the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for." Here the speaker reveals that the girl is really mourning for herself and for the fact that everyone dies. The shift from "Margaret" being the one who grieves to Margaret being the thing mourned is surprising, and it makes the reader go back to the first question and read it differently. "Blight" is a word used for plants that die, so it connects to the leaves, and it could also mean that people are born with sin. The speaker's understanding is complex because he sees that the girl's grief is both about small things and about huge things at once.

In conclusion, Hopkins shows through diction, imagery, and rhyme that the speaker understands the child's grief on several levels. He moves from thinking she is too young to understand to realizing that her sadness is about death, which is what everyone feels.

Scoring commentary (4/6). *Row A:* 1. The opening paragraph makes a defensible claim: her sadness is really about death, and the speaker is both gentle and condescending. It is more general than the 6-point thesis but still goes beyond restating the prompt. *Row B:* 3. Evidence is specific and spread across the poem ("unleaving," "colder," "wanwood leafmeal," "springs," "blight"), and commentary explains how at least one technique contributes to meaning (the connotation of "colder," the double meaning of "springs," couplet rhyme as certainty). It does not reach 4 because several explanations are partial or generic ("makes the poem feel personal," "shows how much time and age change people"), and the essay sometimes relies on the stock phrase

"this shows" without saying how the form (the stumbling syntax, the enjambment) creates the effect. The essay also organizes loosely by moments in the poem, with some summary. *Row C: 0.* The essay notes that the grief is "both small and huge," but this complexity is stated rather than explored; the conclusion restates the thesis and generalizes ("which is what everyone feels").

Sample Response: 2 Points

In the poem "Spring and Fall" by Gerard Manley Hopkins, the speaker talks to a young girl named Margaret who is sad about the leaves falling. The poet uses figurative language and imagery to show the speaker's understanding of the child's grief.

In the first lines, the speaker asks Margaret if she is grieving over the leaves. The leaves are a metaphor for death. This shows that the speaker feels bad for her. He says that "as the heart grows older" she will not care about the leaves anymore. This is a good example of imagery because it makes the reader picture a person growing up and being less sensitive. The word "colder" also shows a change from warm to cold, which is about feelings. The speaker is also using a question at the start, which is a technique that makes the reader think about the topic.

Then the poet uses rhyme in the poem. The poem has a lot of rhyme like "name" and "same" and "for" and "for." The rhyme makes the poem sound like a song or a lullaby, which shows that the speaker is comforting the child. The poem is also short, which shows that the speaker does not want to say too much to the child.

At the end the poet says "It is the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for." This means that Margaret is crying because she knows she will die one day. This shows that the speaker understands that she is sad. Another thing the poet does is use the title, "Spring and Fall," which shows that the poem is about seasons changing and about people changing too. The speaker seems to be older and wiser than the child, and he talks to her like a parent would. The poem is about how sadness is a part of life, and everyone feels it eventually.

In conclusion, Hopkins uses figurative language, imagery, and rhyme to show the speaker's understanding of grief. The speaker knows that Margaret is sad and he wants to comfort her.

Scoring commentary (2/6). *Row A: 0.* The first paragraph restates the prompt ("uses figurative language and imagery to show the speaker's understanding of the child's grief") and summarizes the situation. The later claim that "the speaker wants to comfort her" is not a thesis; it appears only in the conclusion and is not developed, and it misses the poem's complexity. *Row B: 2.* There is some relevant evidence (the "as the heart grows older" lines, the rhyme, and the final couplet) and some attempt at explanation, so the essay moves beyond a 1. But the commentary is simplistic, repetitive, and in places inaccurate or unsupported: the leaves are labeled a "metaphor for death" without showing how, "imagery" is named for a statement that is not imagery, the poem's rhyme is described as lullaby-like without evidence, and the brevity of the poem is read as the speaker's reluctance to speak. The essay does not build a line of reasoning, and the claim that the speaker "wants to comfort her" overlooks the poem's turn. *Row C: 0.* No complexity or sophistication is sustained.

Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis — Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Chapter 2)

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

What the prompt asks. Analyze how Hawthorne uses literary elements and techniques to convey the *narrator's complex attitude toward the Puritan women gathered at the prison door*. "Complex" means the narrator's attitude is not simply contempt: it combines amusement, criticism, a kind of backhanded admiration, and, through the crowd's own words, a measure of moral reproach.

A defensible thesis states what the narrator's attitude is *and* identifies its internal tension. Examples that earn Row A: - Hawthorne's narrator treats the Puritan women with ironic condescension, mocking their coarseness and self-righteousness, while the same long historical perspective that diminishes them also credits them with a vitality that "their fair descendants" lack. - By framing the women's cruelty as a product of diet and breeding and then letting their own words convict them, the narrator suggests that Puritan severity is both comic and frightening. - The narrator's attitude shifts from detached anthropological amusement to something sharper once the women speak, and the chapter's variety of voices (the young wife, the man in the crowd) prevents the community from being a single target.

Theses that do NOT earn Row A: "Hawthorne uses diction, syntax, and dialogue to show the narrator's attitude toward the women" (device list); "The narrator thinks the women are mean" (single note, no complexity); "The passage is about the punishment of Hester Prynne" (topic).

What strong responses might argue (at least six lines of analysis): 1. *Scholarly, mock-historical register.* The narrator's opening ("It was a circumstance to be noted") and the account of "six or seven generations" speak like an amateur historian explaining a specimen; the measured tone makes the women's physicality (a "coarser fibre") both comic and clinical. 2. *Physical diction.* "Broad shoulders and well-developed busts," "round and ruddy cheeks," "the beef and ale of their native land" reduce the women to body and appetite, while "moral diet not a whit more refined" extends the joke to their ethics. 3. *The backhanded compliment of decline.* The claim that each mother has passed on "a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty" casts the present as weaker, so the narrator's contempt for the women's coarseness is tangled with regret about modern fragility, an irony directed at the narrator's own age. 4. *Irony in the women's self-presentation.* A "hard-featured dame" in "mature age and church-members in good repute" proposes that women should handle "such malefactresses"; the narrator's phrase "self-constituted judges" and the claim that the ugliest woman is "the most pitiless" ties moral harshness to physical ugliness. 5. *Archaic dialogue.* "Marry, I trow not!" and "naughty baggage" are comic archaisms that mark the speakers as quaint, but the content (a "hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead," "ought to die") shows the cruelty beneath the comedy. 6. *The women's argument turns on itself.* They think the magistrates "merciful overmuch," yet the final speaker argues that the magistrates have "made [the law] of no effect"; the women demand more severity than the male authorities, complicating the assumption that the community is unified. 7. *Contrasting voices.* The young wife's softer remark ("the pang of it will be always in her heart") and the man's rebuke ("is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows?") show dissent and compassion inside the crowd; the man's rhetorical question stands as the passage's moral center, and the narrator allows it the last word before Hester appears. 8. *Narrator's position within the story.* "Our story" and "us at the present day" place the narrator in the nineteenth century, looking back; the distance allows ironic judgment and also an uneasy kinship.

Common traps. (a) Treating the passage as a straightforward condemnation of the Puritans; (b) summarizing what each woman says; (c) ignoring the long first paragraph (the narrator's voice) and writing only about dialogue; (d) ignoring the young wife and the man; (e) naming "irony" without saying what is ironic; (f) writing about Hester, who has not yet appeared.

Sample Response: 6 Points

The narrator of this passage takes up the stance of a genial historian, and under that geniality hides a complicated judgment. Hawthorne's narrator mocks the Puritan women at the prison door as coarse, appetitive, and self-righteous, but the same backward glance across "six or seven generations" that diminishes them also credits them with a vigor that the narrator's own age has lost, and the women's words, once spoken, reveal a cruelty that the narrator's humor cannot absorb.

The first paragraph is a performance of scholarly detachment. The narrator announces "a circumstance to be noted," as if setting down a field observation, and then explains the women's behavior as a matter of ancestry and diet: they were "of old English birth and breeding," raised on "the beef and ale of their native land, with a moral diet not a whit more refined." The joke lies in the parallel between what they eat and how they behave; their ethical life is treated as one more thing they consume. The catalog of physical features, "broad shoulders and well-developed busts," "round and ruddy cheeks," continues the effect by reducing the women to bodies. The long, balanced sentences, loaded with qualifications ("if not a character of less force and solidity"), make the narrator sound careful and impartial even as he is dismissive.

Yet the comedy has an edge that points at the narrator's own time. When he says that each successive mother "has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty," the language of decline suggests that the "fair descendants" are weaker than their coarse ancestors. The word "fair" is half a compliment and half a diagnosis. The narrator is amused by the Puritan women's boldness, yet he concedes that it is bolder than anything his contemporaries can match. This ambivalence matters because it blocks the reader from feeling superior: the passage makes fun of the past while implying that the present has lost something.

When the women begin to speak, the register shifts from amusement to unease. The "hard-featured dame of fifty" opens with "I'll tell ye a piece of my mind" and the archaic oaths, "Marry, I trow not!", read as quaint, but her proposal that women "church-members in good repute" should handle "such malefactresses" turns the quaintness toward menace. The next speaker's wish for "the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead" and the last woman's insistence that Hester "ought to die" make the comedy of the first paragraph look different in retrospect. The narrator's earlier claim that these were women of "a boldness and rotundity of speech" now seems less like a mild joke than a warning. By describing the last speaker as "the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges," Hawthorne links moral and physical harshness and makes the phrase "self-constituted" carry the narrator's final, sharp judgment: these women have appointed themselves judges, and no one else has.

The women also contradict themselves. They call the magistrates "God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch," and they want a harsher sentence than the one given, though they are themselves, by their own description, the community's moral guardians. The crowd is not a chorus. A "young wife, holding a child by the hand" speaks "more softly" and sees that Hester's shame will remain "always in her heart," and a man interrupts with the passage's moral center: "is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the

gallows?" The question allows virtue to be an inner quality and not a product of terror. It also reproaches the women in terms the narrator has been implying all along, and Hawthorne gives him the last word before Hester appears.

In sum, the narrator's attitude is a layered irony: amused by the women's coarseness, wistful about the vigor it implies, and alarmed by the zeal it produces. The passage prevents the reader from settling on either contempt or admiration. That complexity prepares for the novel's larger question, which is not only whether Hester is guilty, but what kind of community takes pleasure in deciding.

Scoring commentary (6/6). *Row A:* 1. The opening paragraph gives a defensible thesis that names the narrator's stance (genial, ironic historian) and its complications (credit for vigor, exposure of cruelty). *Row B:* 4. Evidence is specific throughout ("beef and ale," "moral diet," "fainter bloom," "self-constituted judges," "merciful overmuch," the young wife and the man's rhetorical question). Commentary explains how multiple techniques work together: register and sentence structure of the narrator's opening, diction (physical catalog), irony and backhanded compliment ("fair descendants"), archaic dialogue as comic then menacing, shifts in voice (young wife, the man), and the placement of the man's question before Hester's entrance. Every paragraph advances the line of reasoning from amusement to unease to moral reproach. *Row C:* 1. The essay consistently explores tensions (affection and critique, past and present, comedy and menace), argues that the narrator's irony turns back on his own age, and ends by situating the passage within the novel's larger question without sweeping generalization.

Sample Response: 4 Points

In this passage from *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne uses irony, diction, and dialogue to show that the narrator feels both amused and critical toward the Puritan women. The narrator makes fun of them for being coarse and judgmental, but he also shows that they have a kind of strength.

At the beginning, the narrator describes the women in a way that is humorous. He says that they were "of old English birth and breeding" and that they had a "coarser fibre" than their descendants. He explains this by saying they ate "beef and ale," so their "moral diet" was not refined either. This is ironic because he is saying that what a person eats decides how moral they are. The details about their "broad shoulders" and "ruddy cheeks" show that he thinks of them as physical and strong instead of delicate. The narrator's tone is formal and educated, like a historian, which makes the humor stronger because he sounds serious while he is being funny.

The narrator also says that their descendants have "a fainter bloom." This could mean the modern women are weaker, so he sees some good in the Puritans. The word "fainter" suggests something fading, like a color, so the narrator may be a little sad that the old strength is going away. This shows that his attitude is complex, because he criticizes them but also admires their strength.

Next, the women talk about Hester. The first woman says the magistrates should have given Hester a harsher punishment and that she "would not come off with such a sentence" if women were the judges. The archaic words "Marry, I trow not!" make the speech sound old-fashioned and a little silly, but what she says is cruel. Another woman says they should have put a "hot iron" on her forehead. The narrator calls the last woman "the ugliest as well as the most pitiless" of the "self-constituted judges." This shows that the narrator thinks they are judging themselves too highly. The dialogue shows that the women are harsh and have no mercy. The narrator also uses the word "pitiless," which has a very negative connotation and tells the reader what to think about the last woman. Hawthorne also uses short exclamations like "Marry, I trow not!" so the women sound like real people talking in a crowd.

However, the passage also has some kinder voices. The young wife says that the “pang” of the letter will be in Hester’s heart, and a man in the crowd says “is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows?” These show that not everyone is cruel, and the narrator lets them speak to balance the others.

Overall, Hawthorne uses irony, diction, and dialogue to show the narrator’s complex attitude toward the women. They are humorous and strong, but also harsh. This prepares the reader for Hester’s entrance and for the rest of the book, in which the Puritans judge her.

Scoring commentary (4/6). *Row A: 1.* The thesis (“amused and critical... but he also shows that they have a kind of strength”) is defensible and engages the prompt’s “complex” attitude, though it is general. *Row B: 3.* The essay supplies specific evidence across the passage and explains how at least one technique contributes to meaning (the historian’s formal tone combined with humorous content; “self-constituted judges”; the contrast between archaic speech and cruel content). It does not earn the fourth point because some commentary is generic (“this shows that the women are harsh”; “the narrator lets them speak to balance the others”), the fifth paragraph treats the young wife and the man as simple balance without analyzing their function, and the line of reasoning is more a sequence of observations than a developing argument. *Row C: 0.* Complexity is named (humor and criticism) but not explored or sustained; the final paragraph restates the thesis and gestures to the novel without developing the connection.

Sample Response: 2 Points

In this passage Hawthorne shows that the narrator thinks the Puritan women are mean. He uses a lot of description and dialogue to do this.

The narrator describes the women as having “broad shoulders” and “ruddy cheeks.” This is imagery that shows what they look like. He says they ate “beef and ale” which is something they ate. The narrator describes them in a way that shows they are not very nice or delicate. They are also loud because he says they have “a boldness and rotundity of speech.” This makes the reader think they are loud and rude.

When the women talk they say bad things about Hester. One woman says that Hester should have a “hot iron” on her forehead. Another woman says “this woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die.” This shows that the women are very harsh and do not forgive. They think that Hester is a bad person who did something wrong. The women are in a group, so they all agree with each other, which shows that the crowd has power over Hester. This makes the reader nervous about what will happen to her. The dialogue is important because it shows the women’s feelings. The women also use old words like “goodwife” and “gossips,” which shows that the story happens a long time ago.

The passage also has a man who says “is there no virtue in woman.” This shows he does not agree with the women, but he does not say very much. At the end, the door of the prison is opening and Hester is coming out. This makes the reader want to keep reading because they want to see what will happen to Hester.

In conclusion, Hawthorne uses imagery and dialogue to show that the narrator thinks the women are mean. The women are cruel to Hester and the narrator does not like them. Hawthorne wants the reader to feel sorry for Hester and think the women are bad.

Scoring commentary (2/6). *Row A: 1.* The first sentence makes a claim, “the narrator thinks the Puritan women are mean,” which is a (simple) interpretation of the narrator’s attitude, so the thesis point is earned; it does not engage the prompt’s “complex” attitude, but a defensible claim is all Row A requires. *Row B: 1.* The evidence is accurate but general, and the commentary mostly paraphrases or describes (“This is imagery that shows what they look like”; “which is something they ate”). Technique names (imagery, dialogue) are attached with little or no explanation of how they create meaning, and the final paragraph includes a general claim about the reader’s feelings that is not tied to language. A single mention of the man’s dissent is not analyzed. There is no line of reasoning. *Row C: 0.* The essay oversimplifies the narrator’s attitude and offers no complexity or context.

Question 3: Literary Argument — A Character’s Relationship to Home

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

Rubric note. Question 3 uses the same Row A (0–1), Row B (0–4), and Row C (0–1) structure with these differences. Row A may be earned by a claim about the character’s relationship to home or by a claim about how that relationship contributes to the interpretation of the work as a whole. Row B at 3 and 4 does **not** require naming literary techniques; it requires specific evidence (scenes, details, actions, lines) and commentary that explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning. For the fourth point, the commentary must be consistent and must address the interpretation of the work as a whole. Plot summary caps Row B at 1. Row C follows the same four pathways; for Question 3, situating the work in its historical or cultural context is a common route.

The key term. “Home or homeland that is lost, left, or returned to.” Responses must focus on a character’s *relationship* to home (belonging, longing, estrangement, idealization, disillusionment), not simply on a journey or a setting. Any reasonable reading of “home” is accepted: a country, a house, a family, a community, a language. Responses that treat home as a physical place only, and that never explain what the character’s relationship means for the work, stay in Row B 1–2. Responses that drift away from “home” toward general themes (identity, loss) lose focus.

A defensible thesis claims something about *what the relationship to home reveals or does in the work*.

Examples: - In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo’s exile shows that home is a web of custom and kinship and not a place he can possess, and his return to a transformed Umuofia makes the novel’s tragedy not the loss of land but the loss of the meaning that held it together. - In *Beloved*, 124 Bluestone Road is a home haunted by the past that Sethe has left but cannot escape, and the house’s transformation by the community at the end suggests that a home becomes livable only when memory is shared. - In *The Namesake*, Gogol’s rejection of, and eventual return to, his family’s Bengali home reveals that inheritance is not chosen or discarded but gradually claimed.

Theses that do NOT earn Row A: “Home is important to the character in this novel” (restates the prompt); “The character leaves home and returns, which shows the theme of home” (summary); “Home is where the heart is” (cliche, no claim about the work).

What strong responses might argue (varies by work). 1. *Home as relationship rather than place:* what the character believes home gives them (status, safety, identity), and how the work shows that belief to be incomplete. 2. *Idealization versus return:* the character’s memory of home differs from the home they find; the gap becomes the work’s subject. 3. *Home lost to external force:* colonization, war, slavery, or economic

displacement, and how the character's response to the loss shapes the work's moral argument. 4. *Home left by choice*: ambition or shame motivates departure, but the character's identity remains tied to what was left. 5. *The community's relationship to home as a foil*: a second character (a friend, a sibling, an elder) who adapts to loss, throwing the protagonist's rigidity or grief into relief. 6. *Language, naming, food, or ritual* as portable home, and the question of what can and cannot be carried. 7. *Form and ending*: how the final scene or image (a return, a burial, a reunion, a burning) closes or leaves open the character's relationship to home and reframes the whole work. 8. *Historical context*: how the work's moment (colonial Nigeria, post-Civil War America, postwar Britain, the Partition, the Great Depression) shapes what "home" can mean.

Common traps. (a) Retelling the plot in order; (b) choosing a work that is only half-remembered and relying on vague references; (c) forgetting the "work as a whole" part and ending with a statement about the character alone; (d) treating "home" as a synonym for "setting"; (e) losing the key term halfway through the essay; (f) misattributing scenes or quotations.

Sample Response: 6 Points (*Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe)

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo believes that home is something a man earns and then holds: a compound, titles, a place in the clan's order. Achebe uses Okonkwo's exile and return to show that home is instead a web of custom and kinship that exists only as long as people continue to enact it, and that the tragedy of the novel is not that Okonkwo loses a place, but that he returns to find that the meanings that made the place a home have been taken from it. Okonkwo's relationship to home is therefore the novel's measure of colonial violence, which destroys what he thought was permanent, and of his own rigidity, which makes him unable to live in what remains.

Okonkwo's first loss of home is a lesson he fails to learn. After his gun explodes at Ezeudu's funeral and kills Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son, the clan decrees that he must flee to his mother's village, Mbanta, for seven years, and the clansmen burn his compound and kill his animals to cleanse the land of an offense against the earth goddess. Achebe makes this punishment impersonal: it is not an act of hatred but a ritual, and the clan's grief at the destruction is real. Okonkwo, however, experiences exile as a theft of his plans. He had meant to take the highest titles, and he regards the seven years as time wasted. When his uncle Uchendu explains that a child is called "Nneka," "Mother is Supreme," because a man belongs to his fatherland when things are good, but when there is sorrow he finds refuge in his motherland, Okonkwo has no answer. Uchendu is describing home as something with a feminine, consoling side that Okonkwo has spent his life despising. The scene shows that the exile was never merely a punishment; it was an invitation to understand home as something other than status, and Okonkwo refuses it by counting the days.

His relationship to the idea of home also shapes the novel's earlier tragedies. Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, the boy who has lived in his household and called him father, because he is afraid of seeming weak, and the killing costs him his son Nwoye. Nwoye's quiet departure from his father's house to join the church at Mbanta shows how Okonkwo's definition of home as masculine strength has already emptied his own compound. When Obierika later visits to report that missionaries have come to Umuofia and that the village of Abame has been destroyed, it becomes clear that the clan is under a new kind of pressure, and that the home Okonkwo expects to return to is already changing.

The return confirms this. Okonkwo comes back to Umuofia planning a triumphant restoration: a larger compound, wives for his daughters, the titles he missed. Instead, the clan receives him politely and then moves on, because the people of Umuofia have been divided by a church, a court, and a new government. Obierika's

later remark that the white man “has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” explains the novel’s title and Okonkwo’s failure: the home he returned to is intact as a place and destroyed as a community. When Okonkwo kills the court messenger at the meeting and the clan lets the other messengers escape, he understands that Umuofia will not act as one, and he takes his own life. Achebe places that suicide at the center of the final chapter, where Obierika tells the District Commissioner that Okonkwo “was one of the greatest men in Umuofia” and was driven to his death. The Commissioner, meanwhile, decides that the story deserves “a reasonable paragraph” in his book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

That last irony is the novel’s final account of home. For Okonkwo, home was both the center of his identity and a place he never learned to hold flexibly; for the Commissioner, it is an item of a colonial survey. Achebe gives readers the first by demonstrating how much the second leaves out. Okonkwo’s rigidity is real, and the novel never excuses it, but his death is not only his own failure. It exposes how thoroughly colonialism treats a community’s home as a matter of land and administration, ignoring the customs, relationships, and meanings that Okonkwo, for all his flaws, had spent his life trying to protect. The novel asks its readers to mourn what was lost with complete knowledge that it was not perfect, and that is why its portrait of home is tragic rather than nostalgic.

Scoring commentary (6/6). Row A: 1. The opening paragraph gives a defensible thesis about what Okonkwo’s relationship to home reveals and how it shapes the work as a whole (colonial violence plus Okonkwo’s rigidity). Row B: 4. Evidence is specific and accurate to the novel: the accidental killing at Ezeudu’s funeral, the seven-year exile to Mbanta and the burning of the compound, Uchendu’s “Mother is Supreme,” Ikemefuna and Nwoye, Obierika’s report on Abame and his “knife” remark, the return and the clan’s divided response, Okonkwo’s killing of the messenger and suicide, Obierika’s words to the Commissioner, and the planned “reasonable paragraph.” Commentary consistently explains how each piece of evidence supports the line of reasoning (home as ritual and kinship; Okonkwo’s refusal to accept its feminine side; his emptied compound; the changed Umuofia; the Commissioner’s reduction) and connects them to the work as a whole. No technique labeling is required at Question 3, though the essay notes irony and structure. Row C: 1. The essay sustains complexity: it holds Okonkwo responsible for his rigidity while indicting colonialism, and it situates the novel’s portrayal of home in the context of colonial administration through the Commissioner’s book, so the broader context illuminates the argument rather than decorating it.

Sample Response: 4 Points (*Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe)

In Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, the main character Okonkwo has a strong relationship to his home, Umuofia. When he is forced to leave and then comes back, he finds that things have changed, and this shows that home can be lost even when a person returns. The novel uses Okonkwo’s relationship to home to show the damage caused by colonialism.

At the start of the novel, Okonkwo is one of the most respected men in Umuofia. He has become wealthy through hard work, he has taken titles, and he is known as a great wrestler. He believes that he belongs in Umuofia because he has earned it, and he is afraid of being like his father, Unoka, who was lazy and in debt. This shows that his relationship to home is based on status and strength. He wants to be a leader in the clan, and he wants to keep the clan’s traditions.

When Okonkwo accidentally kills a boy at a funeral, he is forced to leave Umuofia for seven years. He goes to his mother’s village, Mbanta. His compound is burned. Okonkwo is very upset by the exile because he had plans to rise to the top of the clan. His uncle Uchendu tries to comfort him and tells him about the importance of the

motherland, but Okonkwo does not really listen. This shows that he does not understand that home is more than just where he has power, and that he cannot accept being separated from it.

While Okonkwo is in exile, missionaries come to Umuofia and Mbanta, and his son Nwoye joins the church. This hurts Okonkwo, and it shows that the world he knows is changing. When Okonkwo returns, he finds that the clan is different. There are Christians, a church, and a government court. Okonkwo wants to fight against the white men, but the other people in the village do not want to fight. This makes him feel that his home no longer exists. Okonkwo is a very proud man, so it is hard for him to accept this, and he decides he would rather die than live in a changed Umuofia.

At the end, Okonkwo kills a messenger from the court, and when the clan does not stop the other messengers from leaving, he hangs himself. Obierika is angry at the Commissioner because Okonkwo was a great man. The novel ends with the Commissioner thinking about writing a book about the tribes, and this shows that the colonists do not understand the people they are controlling.

In conclusion, Okonkwo's relationship to his home shows how colonialism can destroy a community. Okonkwo loses his home when he is exiled, and then loses it again when he returns. The novel shows readers that when a way of life is lost, it cannot be recovered, and this is a tragedy.

Scoring commentary (4/6). Row A: 1. The thesis (Okonkwo's return shows that home can be lost even when a person returns, and this exposes colonial damage) is defensible and responsive to the prompt. Row B: 3. The evidence is specific and accurate (Unoka, the funeral killing, the burned compound, Mbanta, Uchendu, Nwoye and the church, the court messenger, Obierika, the Commissioner's book), and much of the commentary explains how the evidence supports the claim that Okonkwo's idea of home is status and that returning does not restore it. It stops at 3 because the middle of the essay is largely chronological retelling; some explanations are generic ("This hurts Okonkwo, and it shows that the world he knows is changing"), the significance of Uchendu's lesson is asserted rather than explained, and the connection to the work as a whole is limited to the closing lines. Row C: 0. The essay does not explore Okonkwo's own role in the loss of his home, the ironies of the Commissioner's book, or the colonial context in a sustained way; the final paragraph generalizes ("when a way of life is lost, it cannot be recovered").

Sample Response: 2 Points (*Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe)

In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Okonkwo is a man who lives in Umuofia, a village in Africa. Home is very important to him and the story is about how he loses his home. This is shown through his exile and when he comes back.

Okonkwo is a strong man who is a great wrestler. He works hard and has a lot of yams and wives. He is afraid of being weak like his father. He kills Ikemefuna even though Ikemefuna called him father, because he does not want to look weak. Later Okonkwo accidentally shoots a boy at a funeral and has to leave the village for seven years. He goes to his mother's village, and he is sad because he wants to go back to his home. His house is burned down. His uncle there is kind to him, but Okonkwo still does not like living there. The years go by slowly for him and he thinks about what he is missing in Umuofia.

After seven years Okonkwo goes back to his village. When he gets there, the village has changed because white men came and built a church. Many people joined the church, including his son Nwoye. The white men also have a court and put the leaders in jail. The leaders are treated badly in the jail and have to pay money to get out,

which makes the people of the village very angry. Okonkwo is angry about this and he wants to fight them. He kills a messenger from the court with his machete and the village does not support him. Then Okonkwo hangs himself, which is a sin in his culture.

The title of the book is *Things Fall Apart*, which shows that things fall apart for Okonkwo because he loses his home. Okonkwo's relationship to home is very important in the novel because it shows how people feel when they lose their home. In the end the white men take over and Okonkwo is dead.

Scoring commentary (2/6). *Row A: 0.* The first paragraph restates the prompt ("Home is very important to him and the story is about how he loses his home") and offers no interpretation of what Okonkwo's relationship to home reveals about the work. The closing assertion that the book "shows how people feel when they lose their home" is a general statement, not a defensible claim tied to the work. *Row B: 2.* The essay uses mostly accurate plot detail (Ikemefuna, the funeral accident, seven years' exile, the church, Nwoye, the court, the suicide), which is more specific than a Row B 1 response. But it is narrative summary: it does not explain how any detail supports a line of reasoning, and the two attempts at commentary ("he is sad because he wants to go back"; "the title shows that things fall apart for Okonkwo") are simplistic. The mention that suicide is a "sin" in Okonkwo's culture is accurate but is never linked to the prompt or to what the ending says about home. *Row C: 0.* No complexity or context.

Part 4: How to Score Yourself

Step 1: Section I (multiple choice)

Count your correct answers out of 55 (there is no penalty for wrong answers). Multiply by **1.23** to estimate your weighted score out of about **67.5**.

Step 2: Section II (free response)

Score each essay with the rubric above (Row A 0–1, Row B 0–4, Row C 0–1, for a maximum of 6 per essay). Add the three essay scores for a total out of 18. Multiply by **4.58** to estimate your weighted score out of about **82.5**. If possible, ask a teacher or classmate to score your essays blind; students usually score themselves about half a point to a point too high on Rows B and C. Compare each essay with the samples above, and be especially strict about Row C.

Step 3: Composite and estimated AP score

Add the weighted Section I and Section II scores for a composite out of about 150. **These bands are approximate. The College Board does not publish its conversion, and cut scores change from year to year.**

COMPOSITE (APPROX.)	ESTIMATED AP SCORE
105 or higher	5
87 – 104	4
65 – 86	3
45 – 64	2

COMPOSITE (APPROX.)	ESTIMATED AP SCORE
Below 45	1

Worked example. 38 correct in Section I ($38 \times 1.23 = 46.7$) and essay scores of 4, 4, and 4 ($12 \times 4.58 = 55.0$) give a composite of about 101.7, which is in the 4 band. 45 correct (55.4) with essay scores of 5, 5, and 4 ($14 \times 4.58 = 64.1$) give 119.5, in the 5 band.

Step 4: Diagnose

- **Section I by skill.** Tally your misses by the skill codes in Part 1. If most of your misses are NAR (narrator and speaker, tone words, irony) or FIG (meaning in context, imagery), return to those skills and practice paraphrasing the cited lines before reading the choices. If you miss LAN items, practice judging a student's claim against the text: the best evidence fits the claim itself, not just the topic.
- **Section I by passage.** Compare your performance on the two poems (Passages 1 and 3) and the three prose passages (2, 4, 5). If poetry is weaker, practice locating the shift before answering any other question.
- **Question 1 and 2.** If you lost Row A, your thesis restated the prompt or listed devices; revise it so it says what the speaker or narrator understands, feels, or contrasts, using "although," "yet," or "but." If you lost Row B, check whether each body paragraph explains *how* a word, image, or structure creates meaning instead of renaming it. If you lost Row C, ask whether you explored a tension that runs through the whole essay.
- **Question 3.** If you lost points, check whether you kept returning to "home" and the work as a whole instead of retelling the plot, and whether you can cite specific scenes or details from memory. Prepare three works in advance with key scenes, motifs, and one interpretive claim each.

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