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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Literature and Composition — Practice Exam 3: Answer Key, Explanations & Sample **Essays**

This file accompanies *Practice Exam 3*. Do not read it until you have finished both sections of the exam. It contains the Section I answer key, a full explanation of all 55 multiple-choice questions, and, for each of the three free-response questions, the 6-point rubric, scoring notes, three scored sample essays (6, 4, and 2 points) with commentary, and a guide to estimating your composite score.

Sources of the Passages

PASSAGE	QUESTIONS	TEXT	NOTES
P1	1–11	Andrew Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (published 1681), complete	Seventeenth-century metaphysical lyric; a three-part argument in couplets
P2	12–22	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> (1860–61), opening of Chapter 1, abridged	First-person retrospective narration; comic and frightening
P3	23–33	Robert Frost, “Mending Wall” (1914), complete	Blank-verse dramatic reflection
P4	34–44	William Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> (c. 1606), Act 1, Scene 7, abridged	Soliloquy followed by a confrontation
P5	45–55	Original passage written for this practice exam in the manner of a 1920s British modernist novel	Free indirect discourse at a party

PASSAGE	QUESTIONS	TEXT	NOTES
Section II Q1	—	Edna St. Vincent Millay, “What lips my lips have kissed” (collected 1923)	Italian-form sonnet
Section II Q2	—	Original passage written for this practice exam in the manner of an early twentieth-century American realist novel	Third-person, ironic narration

Era mix: three pre-1900 passages in Section I (P1, P2, P4) and two from 1900–1928 or modeled on that period (P3, P5); both Section II texts are early twentieth century or modeled on it.

Section I Answer Key

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL CODE	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
1	B	FIG 5.B	P1	E
2	C	NAR 4.C	P1	E
3	A	FIG 6.B	P1	M
4	C	FIG 6.D	P1	M
5	D	STR 3.C	P1	E
6	A	FIG 5.D	P1	M
7	D	NAR 4.C	P1	H
8	B	NAR 4.C	P1	E
9	A	STR 3.C	P1	E
10	C	FIG 6.B	P1	H
11	B	LAN 7.A	P1	M
12	D	NAR 4.B	P2	E
13	A	NAR 4.C	P2	M
14	C	CHR 1.A	P2	E
15	B	SET 2.B	P2	E
16	D	STR 3.C	P2	H
17	A	FIG 5.B	P2	M
18	C	CHR 1.A	P2	M
19	D	CHR 1.A	P2	M

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL CODE	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
20	B	STR 3.D	P2	M
21	A	NAR 4.C	P2	E
22	C	LAN 7.A	P2	H
23	B	NAR 4.A	P3	E
24	D	NAR 4.C	P3	M
25	A	STR 3.B	P3	M
26	C	FIG 5.B	P3	M
27	B	FIG 6.B	P3	M
28	A	CHR 1.C	P3	E
29	D	STR 3.C	P3	M
30	B	NAR 4.C	P3	H
31	C	LAN 7.A	P3	H
32	A	STR 3.C	P3	M
33	D	LAN 7.A	P3	H
34	C	CHR 1.A	P4	M
35	B	FIG 5.B	P4	M
36	D	CHR 1.E	P4	E
37	A	FIG 6.A	P4	H
38	C	FIG 6.B	P4	H
39	B	STR 3.C	P4	H
40	A	STR 3.B	P4	E
41	C	CHR 1.D	P4	M
42	D	CHR 1.E	P4	H
43	B	CHR 1.D	P4	M
44	A	LAN 7.A	P4	H
45	D	NAR 4.B	P5	E
46	C	FIG 6.A	P5	M
47	B	NAR 4.C	P5	H
48	A	FIG 6.A	P5	M

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL CODE	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
49	D	CHR 1.C	P5	M
50	C	STR 3.B	P5	M
51	B	NAR 4.C	P5	M
52	A	SET 2.B	P5	M
53	D	SET 2.C	P5	M
54	C	NAR 4.C	P5	H
55	D	LAN 7.A	P5	M

Answer-letter distribution: A = 14, B = 13, C = 14, D = 14 (longest run of the same letter: 1).

Difficulty distribution: Easy = 14, Medium = 27, Hard = 14.

Skill distribution (by big idea): NAR Narration/speaker = 13; CHR Character = 10; STR Structure = 10; FIG Figurative language/word choice = 13; SET Setting = 3; LAN Literary argumentation = 6.

Question formats: EXCEPT items: 7, 19, 54. Roman-numeral items: 4, 41. Student-claim (literary argumentation) items: 11, 22, 31, 33, 44, 55.

Section I Explanations

Each explanation names the skill from the AP Course and Exam Description framework, explains why the best answer is correct, and says why each of the other three choices is wrong. Line numbers refer to the numbered lines in the exam booklet.

Passage 1: Questions 1–11

1. *In context, the word “complain” (line 7) is best understood to mean* (FIG 5.B; difficulty easy)

Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 5.B – Word choice – explain the function of specific words and phrases.] The speaker is describing the leisurely courtship he would conduct if there were “world enough, and time.” While the lady searches for rubies beside the Ganges, he waits by the Humber and “complain[s],” which in seventeenth-century love poetry means to voice a lover’s lament. The word thus names a conventional, almost ceremonial activity of the pining suitor, in keeping with the mock-courtly hyperbole of the first stanza.

A. is wrong. The speaker explicitly says that the lady’s “coyness” would be “no crime” (line 2) under these conditions, so he is not faulting her; this choice reads “complain” in its modern sense. (C) is wrong. A “formal objection” is another modern sense of the word and does not fit the romantic scenario of a suitor separated from his beloved by an ocean of distance. (D) is wrong. This takes “complain” literally as reporting an ailment; nothing in the lines concerns sickness.

2. *The tone of the first twenty lines is best described as* (NAR 4.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: C. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator’s or speaker’s perspective.] The speaker pretends to offer the lady unlimited time, then inflates that time absurdly: he would love her “ten years before the Flood,” while she refuses “Till the conversion of the Jews” (lines 8–10); he would

spend “thirty thousand” years on her breasts “But ... to the rest” (lines 15-16). The comic exaggeration, mock-learned allusion, and courtly compliment together create a playful, extravagant tone.

A. is wrong. The hyperbole is too self-consciously witty to be sincere devotion; “reverent” mistakes the courtly flattery for genuine worship. (B) is wrong. The speaker says the lady deserves “this state” (line 19) and does not blame her; accusation emerges, if at all, only in the second stanza. (D) is wrong. The speaker is personally and amorously engaged, and his verse is lively rather than clinical, so “detached and analytical” fails on both counts.

3. The phrase “vegetable love” (line 11) most nearly suggests a love that would (FIG 6.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 6.B – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a metaphor.] The next line completes the thought: this love “should grow / Vaster than empires, and more slow.” The metaphor draws on the plant’s patient, unhurried, almost unstoppable growth, and it humorously stretches that growth to imperial scale.

B. is wrong. Nothing in the lines suggests fragility; the love is imagined as “vaster than empires.” (C) is wrong. The phrase suggests growth, not nourishment, and the lines say nothing of domestic comfort. (D) is wrong. This plays on the modern association of “vegetable” with dullness, but the speaker’s love is expansive and enormous, and the poem as a whole is about desire, not routine.

4. Which of the following purposes do the references to the Ganges, the Humber, the Flood, and the conversion of the Jews (lines 5-10) serve? (FIG 6.D; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 6.D – Comparison – identify and explain the function of an allusion.] Statement I is true: the Flood (the distant past) and the conversion of the Jews (expected only at the end of time) bracket an impossibly long courtship. Statement II is true: the lady wanders beside “the Indian Ganges” while the speaker waits beside the “Humber,” a river of the speaker’s own England. Statement III is false: the allusions are used for comic scale, not to express piety; the speaker is playfully borrowing the vocabulary of sacred history in order to flatter and persuade.

A. is wrong. This omits statement II, which is also supported by the geographic contrast in lines 5-7. (B) is wrong. Statement III is the one false statement; it cannot be the only true one. (D) is wrong. This pairs a true statement with the false statement III and omits statement I, which is the most obvious function of the allusions.

5. The shift that occurs in line 21 is best described as a shift from (STR 3.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] Stanza 1 is governed by “Had we but world enough, and time”; line 21 opens with “But,” and the speaker turns to what he actually hears “at my back”: “Time’s wingèd chariot.” The poem moves from imagined abundance to the pressure of death and the “Deserts of vast eternity.”

A. is wrong. The speaker never criticizes the lady’s character; he criticizes only her delay, and he does so by appealing to circumstance. (B) is wrong. The speaker does not become religiously doubtful; the turn is to mortality and the grave, expressed with wit. (C) is wrong. The distance discussed in stanza 1 is a hypothetical conceit, and the poem does not celebrate union until stanza 3.

6. The imagery in lines 21-24 primarily conveys the speaker’s sense that (FIG 5.D; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 5.D – Imagery – identify and explain the function of an image or imagery.] The “wingèd chariot hurrying near” is heard “at my back,” so time is imagined as a pursuer closing in; ahead lie “Deserts of vast eternity,” an image of barren, featureless space. Together the two images convey time’s pressure and the emptiness that awaits.

B. is wrong. The speaker expresses no guilt; he is arguing, not confessing. (C) is wrong. The chariot pursues both lovers (“before us”) and is not associated with the lady’s beauty in these lines. (D) is wrong. Death is presented as bleak, not as a “release”; the “Deserts” image is barren.

7. In lines 21-32, the speaker presents death as all of the following EXCEPT (NAR 4.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: D. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator’s or speaker’s perspective.] The stanza is relentlessly physical and earthly. D is not stated: the only “afterlife” imagery is “eternity” as a “Desert,” and the speaker’s wry final couplet says that “none, I think, do there embrace.” A is supported by “Thy beauty shall no more be found”; B by “Nor ... shall sound / My echoing song”; C by “worms shall try / That long-preserved virginity.”

A. is wrong. Line 25 states directly that her beauty “shall no more be found,” so this is something the stanza does assert. (B) is wrong. Lines 26-27 say that the lover’s “echoing song” will no longer sound in her “marble vault.” (C) is wrong. Lines 27-29 depict worms trying the lady’s “long-preserved virginity” and turning her “quaint honour” to dust.

8. The tone of lines 31-32 (“The grave’s a fine and private place, / But none, I think, do there embrace”) is best described as (NAR 4.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator’s or speaker’s perspective.] The speaker uses understatement: he calls the grave “fine and private,” as if recommending a hotel, then concedes that privacy is useless because the dead cannot “embrace.” The dry, deadpan understatement is wry, and it turns grim reflection into a seductive argument.

A. is wrong. An elegiac tone would mourn the dead sincerely; the couplet is too witty and too instrumental to the speaker’s argument for that. (C) is wrong. There is no reverence for death or the grave; the lines treat them with ironic detachment. (D) is wrong. The speaker is not angry at the lady or at death; he is making a joke in service of persuasion.

9. The repetition of “Now” in lines 33, 37, and 38 primarily serves to (STR 3.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] “Now therefore,” “Now let us sport us,” “And now, like amorous birds of prey” gives the final stanza the drive of a conclusion: the speaker has shown that the future is barren and therefore demands action in the present. The repeated adverb compresses time and pushes the lady toward a decision.

B. is wrong. The lines do mention youth (“the youthful hue”), but the repetition is a call to action, not a lament. (C) is wrong. “Now” points toward the present and immediate future; no past is recalled in stanza 3. (D) is wrong. The speaker is the one urging haste, and he shows no hesitation.

10. The image of “amorous birds of prey” (line 38) most directly functions to (FIG 6.B; difficulty hard)

Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 6.B – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a metaphor.] Stanza 2 pictured the lovers as passive victims of time and then of worms; in stanza 3 they become hunters: “Rather at once our time devour / Than languish in his slow-chapped power.” The predator image reverses the earlier relationship, so that the lovers turn time into prey.

A. is wrong. This describes stanza 2, but stanza 3 reverses it; the birds of prey are hunters, not victims. (B) is wrong. Birds of prey are aggressive and violent, and the stanza's next images ("tear our pleasures with rough strife") continue the violence. (D) is wrong. The image describes both lovers ("our time"), not the lady alone, and it contains no captured bird.

11. *A student is writing an essay arguing that the poem's three stanzas follow the structure of a logical argument. Which of the following sets of quotations best supports this claim?* (LAN 7.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] The choice that shows the logical connectives and sequence is B: a hypothetical premise ("Had we but ... time"), an adversative objection ("But at my back"), and a conclusion ("Now therefore"). These are the markers of an "if ... but ... therefore" argument, one in each stanza.

A. is wrong. These are images of space and travel, one from each stanza; they do not show logical progression. (C) is wrong. These are examples of wit and understatement, not of a stepwise argument. (D) is wrong. These are metaphors for love and desire; they do not mark the steps in a chain of reasoning.

Passage 2: Questions 12–22

12. *The point of view of the passage is best described as that of* (NAR 4.B; difficulty easy)

Answer: D. [Skill: NAR 4.B – Narration – identify and explain the function of point of view.] The first-person narrator is Pip, but the verbs and judgments belong to an adult looking back: "my first fancies ... were unreasonably derived from their tombstones" (lines 7–9), "I believe they were fat, though I was at that time undersized for my years" (lines 59–60). The retrospective distance permits comic commentary on the child's beliefs.

A. is wrong. A child narrating in the moment would not call his own thoughts "unreasonably derived" or refer to "that universal struggle" (line 16). (B) is wrong. The narrator never enters the convict's mind; everything is limited to what Pip saw and thought. (C) is wrong. The pronoun "I" shows that the narrator is Pip himself, not an outside observer.

13. *The narrator's description of his five brothers in lines 13–19 is best characterized as* (NAR 4.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective.] The narrator says the brothers "gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle" and imagines them "born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets." The comic euphemism and absurd image treat infant death lightly, but the existence of five small gravestones in a row keeps the undertone of loss.

B. is wrong. There is no complaint or accusation in the lines; the humor is gentle. (C) is wrong. The narrator's whimsy shows engagement with the children, not coldness, and the "five little stone lozenges" are carefully noticed. (D) is wrong. The tone is playful and ironic, so "unrestrained grief" misreads it.

14. *Lines 4–12 suggest that as a young child Pip* (CHR 1.A; difficulty easy)

Answer: C. [Skill: CHR 1.A – Character – identify and describe what textual details reveal about a character, perspective, and motives.] The narrator says he "never saw any likeness of either of them" and drew conclusions about his father ("a square, stout, dark man") from "the shape of the letters" and about his mother from the inscription. Having no other source, the orphaned child makes the tombstones into a portrait.

A. is wrong. Lines 5-6 state that he never saw his parents. (B) is wrong. No resentment is expressed; the child's guesses are innocent. (D) is wrong. His sister is mentioned only as authority for the family name, and no teaching of reverence is described.

15. The description of the setting in lines 20-32 primarily serves to (SET 2.B; difficulty easy)

Answer: B. [Skill: SET 2.B – Setting – explain the function of setting in a narrative.] The landscape is “bleak,” “overgrown with nettles,” a “dark flat wilderness,” a “low leaden line,” and a “distant savage lair.” The vast, cold, unwelcoming terrain surrounds the “small bundle of shivers” at the end of the sentence and makes the child seem exposed and alone.

A. is wrong. The adjectives are overwhelmingly negative, so the landscape is not idealized. (C) is wrong. The setting is a churchyard, far from Pip's village (lines 49-50), and its details suggest menace. (D) is wrong. The narrator's tone toward the landscape is not wistful; it is stark.

16. The long sentence in lines 23-32, built of clauses that begin “and that,” is structured so as to (STR 3.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] Each “and that” clause identifies a feature in order of widening distance: the churchyard, the graves, the marshes, the river, the sea. The final clause turns suddenly to the smallest object, “the small bundle of shivers ... was Pip.” The structure delays the identity of the frightened child and makes it a moment of both comedy and pathos.

A. is wrong. The clauses assert a growing certainty (“found out for certain”), not confusion. (B) is wrong. The sentence is elaborate and energetic and does not suggest boredom. (C) is wrong. The clauses name features of the place, not threats; the actual danger comes in the next paragraph.

17. The phrase “small bundle of shivers” (lines 31-32) primarily serves to (FIG 5.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 5.B – Word choice – explain the function of specific words and phrases.] Replacing “I” with a bundle of shivers makes Pip an object, a small collection of involuntary reactions. The oddity of the phrase is comic, and the helplessness it conveys is moving; both effects are typical of the adult narrator's affectionate distance.

B. is wrong. The shivers result from being “afraid of it all and beginning to cry,” not from cold alone. (C) is wrong. The narrator is amused but tender, not contemptuous. (D) is wrong. The next paragraph shows that the child's fear is entirely justified.

18. The series of participial phrases in lines 36-41 (“soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones ...”) chiefly emphasizes the man's (CHR 1.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: CHR 1.A – Character – identify and describe what textual details reveal about a character, perspective, and motives.] Every phrase is passive: the man has been “soaked,” “smothered,” “lamed,” “cut,” “stung,” and “torn” by the environment. He is frightening to Pip, but the accumulation shows him as hunted, injured, and suffering, so he is both a threat and an object of pity.

A. is wrong. The passives show things done to the man, not violence he commits, even though he is terrifying. (B) is wrong. Pip does not know him; the man is called a “fearful man” (line 36). (D) is wrong. The man wants silence and food, not understanding.

19. The man's speech in lines 33-58 is characterized by all of the following EXCEPT (CHR 1.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.A – Character – identify and describe what textual details reveal about a character, perspective, and motives.] The man threatens (“I’ll cut your throat!”), commands (“Tell us your name! ... Quick!”, “Give it mouth!”), and speaks in dialect (“Pint out the place,” “ha’ got”). Nothing in his speech is polite, so D is the exception.

A. is wrong. Lines 34–35 contain explicit threats. (B) is wrong. “Tell us your name,” “Give it mouth,” and “Show us” are imperatives. (C) is wrong. “Pint” for “point” and “ha’” for “have” (line 57) are examples of nonstandard speech.

20. *Compared with lines 1–32, lines 33–41 are marked by* (STR 3.D; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: STR 3.D – Structure – explain the function of contrasts within a text.] The opening is a discursive, whimsical meditation on names and tombstones; at line 33 a “terrible voice” interrupts with a short quoted threat, and the sentences become short and fragmentary (“A fearful man ... A man with no hat”). The tone moves from amusement to terror.

A. is wrong. The passage never moves toward the future. (C) is wrong. The later lines are more external and physical than the earlier ones. (D) is wrong. The narrator never addresses the reader directly.

21. *The narrator’s attitude toward his younger self is best described as* (NAR 4.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: A. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator’s or speaker’s perspective.] The narrator teases the child’s reasoning about tombstones and about his brothers’ pockets, but he also renders the child’s terror with tenderness (“small bundle of shivers,” “trembling” on the high tombstone, line 55). The mixture is amusement with sympathy.

B. is wrong. Nothing in the narration blames or scolds the child. (C) is wrong. The memories described are mostly cold and frightening, so the narrator is not longing for them. (D) is wrong. The vivid detail and the narrator’s playful commentary show close involvement.

22. *A student argues that the narrator uses the child’s distorted perspective to make a frightening moment partly comic. Which detail from the passage best supports this claim?* (LAN 7.A; difficulty hard)

Answer: C. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] When the convict turns Pip upside down, the narrator reports that the church “made ... go head over heels” and that “I saw the steeple under my feet.” The child perceives the church as an object that tumbles and then “came to itself,” a comic personification that records the terror from a child’s disoriented perspective.

A. is wrong. This is a threat and supports the menace, not the comedy. (B) is wrong. This is a command and supports the menace. (D) is wrong. This detail shows Pip’s poverty and the man’s hunger and is not comic in the way the claim describes.

Passage 3: Questions 23–33

23. *The speaker of the poem is best described as* (NAR 4.A; difficulty easy)

Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.A – Narration – identify and describe the narrator or speaker.] The speaker uses the first person (“I let my neighbor know,” line 12; “I tell him,” line 26), starts the annual repair, and does the work, yet he questions the need for a wall (“There where it is we do not need the wall,” line 23). He participates while doubting.

A. is wrong. He is not forced; he is the one who notifies his neighbor and sets the day (lines 12-13). (C) is wrong. He mentions hunters only to distinguish their damage from the gaps he is discussing (lines 5-8). (D) is wrong. He is a participant, not an observer, and there is no "dispute" in the sense of a quarrel.

24. *The phrase "Something there is" (line 1) most strongly suggests that the speaker regards the force that damages the wall as* (NAR 4.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective.] The speaker uses the indefinite "Something" and cannot name it. Later he rejects the offer of "Elves" ("it's not elves exactly," line 37). The indefinite phrasing and the unidentified cause suggest a natural but mysterious force.

A. is wrong. Lines 5-8 say that the hunters' work "is another thing." (B) is wrong. The speaker says it is "not elves exactly" and never addresses it. (C) is wrong. The gaps are made unseen ("No one has seen them made," line 10), so no human is blamed.

25. *Lines 5-11 serve primarily to* (STR 3.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.B – Structure – explain the function of a particular sequence of events.] The speaker first sets aside the hunters ("another thing") whose damage he has repaired, then focuses on "the gaps I mean," which "no one has seen ... made or heard ... made." The passage sharpens the central mystery: the gaps appear without any visible agent.

B. is wrong. The hunters are mentioned to set them apart, and no moral judgment on cruelty is made, though the dogs "yelp." (C) is wrong. "At spring mending-time" says when the gaps are found, not why mending must happen then. (D) is wrong. The neighbor appears in line 12, after this passage.

26. *The word "spell" (line 18) most clearly reveals the speaker's* (FIG 5.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 5.B – Word choice – explain the function of specific words and phrases.] The stones must be balanced with "a spell" and the speaker commands them in a mock-incantation: "Stay where you are until our backs are turned!" The speaker is half-seriously turning the labor into a game of magic, and the humor lightens the repetitive work.

A. is wrong. The tone is light and amused, not frightened. (B) is wrong. The speaker is joking and later rejects the idea of elves. (D) is wrong. The task is described with humor, not annoyance, even though the fingers are rough (line 20).

27. *By calling the mending "just another kind of out-door game" (line 21), the speaker suggests that the activity is* (FIG 6.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 6.B – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a metaphor.] The speaker immediately adds that "It comes to little more" and that "we do not need the wall." A game is something done for its own sake, so the metaphor presents the mending as a shared custom with little practical purpose.

A. is wrong. "One on a side" suggests teams, but the speaker presents the work as cooperative: "We keep the wall between us as we go." (C) is wrong. The only injury mentioned is rough fingers (line 20), and the tone is playful. (D) is wrong. The speaker's point is that the wall isn't needed, and the neighbor does not take part for relational reasons.

28. *The statement "He is all pine and I am apple orchard" (line 24) serves primarily to* (CHR 1.C; difficulty easy)

Answer: A. [Skill: CHR 1.C – Character – explain the function of contrasting characters.] The metaphor sets pines against apple trees, and the following lines pursue the logic: “My apple trees will never get across / And eat the cones under his pines.” Because the two kinds of land do not threaten one another, the speaker concludes that no wall is needed. The contrast may also hint at differing temperaments.

B. is wrong. There is no envy; the speaker is lighthearted and confident. (C) is wrong. No comparison of value is made. (D) is wrong. An orchard is productive, not barren.

29. The shift that occurs in line 28 (“Spring is the mischief in me”) is best described as a shift from (STR 3.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] Up to line 27 the speaker narrates the task and ends with the neighbor’s saying. Then he says “Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder / If I could put a notion in his head,” followed by his own questions about walls. He moves from reporting to wondering aloud.

A. is wrong. The speaker expresses no regret and does not move toward acceptance. (B) is wrong. Spring has been the season since line 11; there is no seasonal change. (C) is wrong. The speaker is amused, not angry, and has not agreed with the neighbor.

30. The speaker’s questions in lines 30–34 reveal that he (NAR 4.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator’s or speaker’s perspective.] “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know / What I was walling in or walling out, / And to whom I was like to give offense.” The speaker advocates reasoning about purpose and consequence rather than custom, but he does not say all walls should go.

A. is wrong. His complaint concerns unexamined walls, not walls in general; he mends this one. (C) is wrong. He is exploring a doubt (“I wonder if I could put a notion in his head”) and has no certainty. (D) is wrong. He cares enough to hope the neighbor will think for himself (lines 37–38).

31. A student argues that the poem presents the neighbor as bound to inherited tradition rather than reasoned belief. Which of the following details best supports this claim? (LAN 7.A; difficulty hard)

Answer: C. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] The simile links the neighbor to a primitive figure with a stone, and line 43 says that he “will not go behind his father’s saying”: he will not question the origin of the belief. Together they depict a man guided by an inherited rule rather than by his own reasoning.

A. is wrong. This describes the land of the neighbors and says nothing about tradition. (B) is wrong. This simply reports that the speaker contacts the neighbor. (D) is wrong. This describes the speaker, not the neighbor.

32. The poem’s final line repeats line 27 almost exactly. In context, the repetition primarily suggests that (STR 3.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] Between lines 27 and 45 the speaker has questioned the saying and imagined challenging it, but the neighbor repeats it unchanged and “likes having thought of it so well.” The repetition marks the absence of change and, after the speaker’s reflection, reveals the neighbor’s pride in an inherited phrase.

B. is wrong. The poem gives no sign that the speaker has changed his mind. (C) is wrong. The neighbor "likes having thought of it so well," so he is satisfied with it. (D) is wrong. The speaker's tone remains observant and wry; he is not angry.

33. *A student argues that the poem is ambivalent about walls rather than simply opposed to them. Which of the following pairs of quotations best supports this claim?* (LAN 7.A; difficulty hard)

Answer: D. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] The speaker is the one who calls the neighbor out to mend the wall (line 12), and yet he repeats his opening statement that something "doesn't love a wall" (line 35). He initiates the custom and also sympathizes with the force that destroys it, which is ambivalence.

A. is wrong. These lines describe only the force that undoes the wall, so they show one side of the speaker's feelings. (B) is wrong. These are the neighbor's words, not the speaker's. (C) is wrong. These lines argue against the need for a wall and show no ambivalence.

Passage 4: Questions 34–44

34. *In the opening sentence of the soliloquy (lines 1-7), Macbeth expresses a wish that the murder could* (CHR 1.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: CHR 1.A – Character – identify and describe what textual details reveal about a character, perspective, and motives.] He hopes that the murder "could trammel up the consequence," that "this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all here," with no result beyond the deed itself. He would then "jump" (risk) the life to come. The sentence is a hypothetical wish, and the lines that follow admit that this is not possible.

A. is wrong. "Done quickly" is part of his thought, but the sentence is about the absence of consequences, not about escaping detection. (B) is wrong. He says he would "jump the life to come," so he is willing to risk the afterlife; the problem is the consequences on earth. (D) is wrong. Nothing in the soliloquy suggests delegating the act; he thinks about "bear[ing] the knife myself" (line 16).

35. *In context, the phrase "this bank and shoal of time" (line 6) most nearly refers to* (FIG 5.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 5.B – Word choice – explain the function of specific words and phrases.] In the sentence, "here, upon this bank and shoal of time" contrasts with "the life to come" in line 7. Time is a sandbank or shallows in the sea of eternity, a small area of earthly existence, and Macbeth says that if the consequences ended there he would risk the afterlife.

A. is wrong. "Here" refers to this life, not to a specific room or castle. (C) is wrong. Macbeth discusses kingship later (lines 25-28), but "bank and shoal" is a metaphor for the time of life. (D) is wrong. The "judgment here" in line 8 is about earthly retribution, not public opinion; the phrase in line 6 names the setting of that judgment.

36. *In lines 12-16, Macbeth acknowledges that the murder of Duncan would* (CHR 1.E; difficulty easy)

Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.E – Character – explain how a character's choices, actions, and speech reveal complexities.] Macbeth lists his roles: "his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed; then, as his host, / Who should against his murderer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself." Each role gives him a duty to protect Duncan, which the murder would violate.

A. is wrong. The lines do not mention allies. (B) is wrong. Duration of rule is not discussed. (C) is wrong. Duncan has trusted Macbeth ("double trust") and has honored him (line 34); Duncan has not betrayed him.

37. *The simile in lines 21-25 ("pity, like a naked new-born babe") suggests that Duncan's death will* (FIG 6.A; difficulty hard)

Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 6.A – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a simile.] A newborn is helpless, yet in the image pity is "striding the blast" and mounted on the "couriers of the air," blowing the deed "in every eye" so that "tears shall drown the wind." The image combines vulnerability with irresistible force, predicting universal outrage and grief.

B. is wrong. The vivid image of pity as stormy power contradicts the idea that it is weak. (C) is wrong. The line says the deed will be blown "in every eye," so the reaction will be universal. (D) is wrong. Nothing in the image concerns preventability.

38. *The metaphor in lines 25-28 ("I have no spur ... Vaulting ambition") characterizes ambition as* (FIG 6.B; difficulty hard)

Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 6.B – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a metaphor.] Macbeth lacks a "spur" (a reason that urges the horse) and has "only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself / And falls." The equestrian image shows ambition as a rider who jumps too far and falls; it is his only motive and it is self-defeating.

A. is wrong. The image shows ambition as reckless and self-destructive, not noble. (B) is wrong. Lady Macbeth has not entered yet; the soliloquy is Macbeth's own reasoning. (D) is wrong. Macbeth says that ambition is the only thing he has; it is not absent.

39. *The soliloquy (lines 1-28) is organized as a movement from* (STR 3.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: B. [Skill: STR 3.C – Structure – explain the function of structure in a text.] Lines 1-12 concern "consequence" and "judgment here"; lines 12-20 shift to the moral claims of kinship, hospitality, and Duncan's virtues; lines 25-28 acknowledge that nothing but "Vaulting ambition" spurs him. Each section removes a reason for the act.

A. is wrong. The order is reversed; Macbeth begins with practical concerns. (C) is wrong. Macbeth does not express anger at Duncan, whose virtues he praises. (D) is wrong. He ends with the admission of weakness in his motive, not with confidence.

40. *Lady Macbeth's entrance at the end of line 28 primarily serves to* (STR 3.B; difficulty easy)

Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.B – Structure – explain the function of a particular sequence of events.] The dash at the end of "And falls on the other—" marks an interrupted sentence; Macbeth was about to confirm that ambition would "fall." Her entrance cuts off his internal argument, and her opening line ("He has almost supp'd") immediately challenges his absence from the banquet. The dramatic structure shifts from soliloquy to confrontation.

B. is wrong. The scene continues for many more lines. (C) is wrong. Macbeth says in line 33 that they "will proceed no further," which shows that he has decided against the act. (D) is wrong. The exchange is tense and serious, not comic.

41. *In lines 38-48, Lady Macbeth attempts to persuade Macbeth by* (CHR 1.D; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: CHR 1.D – Character – describe how textual details reveal nuances in characters' relationships.] Statement I is true: "Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dress'd yourself?" and "Such I account thy love" treat his earlier ambition as an illusion. Statement II is true: he would "live a coward in thine own esteem."

Statement III is false: Duncan is not mentioned in her speech and no revenge is threatened.

A. is wrong. Statement II also appears in the speech (lines 45-48). (B) is wrong. Statement III is the one false statement. (D) is wrong. This pairs II with the false statement III and omits I.

42. *Macbeth's reply in lines 49-51 ("I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none") indicates that he* (CHR 1.E; difficulty hard)

Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.E – Character – explain how a character's choices, actions, and speech reveal complexities.] "All that may become a man" limits legitimate action to what is fitting for a human being; "Who dares do more is none" says that anyone who goes beyond it forfeits his humanity. Macbeth answers her challenge to his manhood by redefining it in moral terms.

A. is wrong. He is not boasting; he is setting limits. (B) is wrong. He does not express regret. (C) is wrong. "Who dares do more is none" contradicts the idea that he will do anything.

43. *In lines 52-64, Lady Macbeth's argument depends on defining manhood as* (CHR 1.D; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: CHR 1.D – Character – describe how textual details reveal nuances in characters' relationships.] She says "When you durst do it, then you were a man," and that to be "more than what you were" he must be even more resolute. She treats manhood as follow-through on one's vow, and she supports it with her own claim that she would have destroyed her nursing child "had I so sworn as you / Have done to this."

A. is wrong. She wants him to pursue, not restrain, ambition. (C) is wrong. Obedience to Duncan is the opposite of what she demands. (D) is wrong. The nursing image is used to show her ruthlessness, not to praise tenderness; she says she would have destroyed the child.

44. *A student argues that Lady Macbeth consistently recasts Macbeth's moral hesitation as a failure of manhood. Which of the following pairs of quotations best supports this claim?* (LAN 7.A; difficulty hard)

Answer: A. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] In both quotations she ties the moral question to courage and manliness: fear of acting on his desire is cowardice ("afear'd"), and being a man is defined as having the courage to act ("durst"). These are the places where she most directly links his hesitation to a deficiency of manhood.

B. is wrong. These lines state the facts of the banquet and make no reference to manhood. (C) is wrong. These lines show her ruthlessness but do not link hesitation to manhood. (D) is wrong. These lines express confidence in the plan; they do not address Macbeth's hesitation as unmanliness.

Passage 5: Questions 45–55

45. *The narration of the passage is best described as* (NAR 4.B; difficulty easy)

Answer: D. [Skill: NAR 4.B – Narration – identify and explain the function of point of view.] The narrator uses "she" and "Mrs. Ashe," but the sentences pass into her thoughts without quotation marks: "Perfectly. It was a curious word. One said it of a hat." and "How absurd! How utterly she had meant it!" This blend of narration and consciousness is free indirect discourse.

A. is wrong. The pronoun is "she," not "I." (B) is wrong. Only Mrs. Ashe's thoughts are given; Lady Brandreth's are guessed at by Mrs. Ashe ("What did Lady Brandreth see?"). (C) is wrong. Interior thought is the main content of the passage.

46. The simile in lines 4-7 ("It reached her as the sea reaches a bedroom window at night") conveys that the noise of the party is (FIG 6.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 6.A – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a simile.] The comparison is developed with "an air of being occupied in some enormous business of its own and of taking no interest in her whatever." The sea is huge, continuous, and unconcerned with individuals, which makes the party a force she must enter but which does not notice her.

A. is wrong. Nothing in the elaboration suggests comfort. (B) is wrong. The sea has an air of "taking no interest in her whatever," which is indifference rather than hostility. (D) is wrong. The memory of Lyme comes later (line 20) and is not connected with the sea.

47. The sentences "Perfectly. It was a curious word. One said it of a hat." (lines 8-9) primarily reveal that Mrs. Ashe (NAR 4.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective.] She tries the word "perfectly" in her mind and finds it strange; by saying that "one said it of a hat," she links it to the language of fashion and social approval. The ironic deflation questions her claimed happiness.

A. is wrong. Her interest is in the word, not in vanity. (C) is wrong. The tone is skeptical rather than delighted. (D) is wrong. The word modifies "happy," not the party.

48. The simile in lines 14-16 ("the mouth, which went on without her like a servant who has been told that the family is out") suggests that Mrs. Ashe's social speech is (FIG 6.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 6.A – Comparison – identify and explain the function of a simile.] The mouth operates "without her" as a servant who continues doing the work while the family, the real self, is "out." Her polite sentences about lilies and the party are generated by habit while her attention is elsewhere.

B. is wrong. The speech is polite ("most charming party") rather than rude. (C) is wrong. The servant is a comparison and no actual servants are discussed. (D) is wrong. She is astonished but not ill; the detachment is habitual ("as she always was").

49. Lady Brandreth is characterized primarily as (CHR 1.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.C – Character – explain the function of contrasting characters.] Lady Brandreth has "large, kind, unobserving eyes" and greets Mrs. Ashe with warm exclamations. Mrs. Ashe wonders "What did Lady Brandreth see?" and answers: "A woman of forty in green silk. A hostess." The contrast between the greeting and Mrs. Ashe's inner life shows the older woman as pleasant but blind to her.

A. is wrong. "Unobserving" contradicts "perceptive." (B) is wrong. Her kindness appears genuine; it is the absence of insight that is stressed. (C) is wrong. There is nothing domineering about her greeting.

50. The third paragraph (lines 20-28) functions primarily to (STR 3.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: C. [Skill: STR 3.B – Structure – explain the function of a particular sequence of events.] The paragraph opens with "But she was not there" and moves to a remembered afternoon at Lyme when "the whole of the afternoon lay before her like an unbroken field." The sentence ends with "no one had required her to cross it in any particular direction," which is the opposite of her current situation, in which she must "put on" a face and be "agreeable."

A. is wrong. Gerald is a memory and plays no role in the party. (B) is wrong. No unhappiness in the marriage is identified; the final paragraph says "it was not unhappiness." (D) is wrong. No new guest appears in this

paragraph.

51. *The exclamations "How absurd! How utterly she had meant it!" (line 25) combine* (NAR 4.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective.] "How absurd!" laughs at the girl's indifference to the tide, and "How utterly she had meant it!" admires that indifference as genuine. The two exclamations are a pair that holds both feelings.

A. is wrong. There is no contempt and no relief; she regards the memory with some longing. (C) is wrong. She is not angry at Gerald, who is barely remembered. (D) is wrong. She "had not said the name aloud for fifteen years," so there is no suggestion of a meeting.

52. *The description of the clock in lines 29–31 primarily serves to* (SET 2.B; difficulty medium)

Answer: A. [Skill: SET 2.B – Setting – explain the function of setting in a narrative.] The clock "struck the half-hour with a small, apologetic stroke," and it "had always, in its small way, been right." Its authority is unobtrusive but undeniable; time and obligation will always be right and will take her back to the party.

B. is wrong. The clock was her mother's, but nothing is said about strictness. (C) is wrong. The half-hour is an ordinary detail, and the narrator is not mocking her tardiness. (D) is wrong. Nothing in the passage is foreshadowed by the clock.

53. *Mrs. Ashe's position at the turn of the staircase serves to* (SET 2.C; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: SET 2.C – Setting – describe the relationship between a character and a setting.] She pauses "where the staircase turned" with the party below, and she later takes steps down while still thinking ("descending a step, and then another"). The location is a threshold between the privacy of the landing and the noise of the drawing-room, like the passage from private thought to public performance.

A. is wrong. The staircase is not linked to the family's history. (B) is wrong. She does not look down on the guests; she fears being unseen by them. (C) is wrong. There is no fear of heights.

54. *The final paragraph (lines 40–48) suggests all of the following about Mrs. Ashe EXCEPT that* (NAR 4.C; difficulty hard)

Answer: C. [Skill: NAR 4.C – Narration – identify details, diction, or syntax that reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective.] She does not resolve anything; she continues to descend, and the paragraph ends with Hugh lifting his hand. A is stated: "it was not unhappiness." B is stated: she "found it larger than the furniture allowed." D is stated: "That was what nobody would believe."

A. is wrong. Line 40–41 says outright "it was not unhappiness." (B) is wrong. Lines 42–44 describe the insight in nearly these terms. (D) is wrong. Lines 41–42: "That was what nobody would believe, if she could have told them."

55. *Which of the following is the most defensible claim about the passage as a whole?* (LAN 7.A; difficulty medium)

Answer: D. [Skill: LAN 7.A – Literary argumentation – develop a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and the evidence itself.] The passage contrasts what Lady Brandreth sees ("A hostess") with what Mrs. Ashe feels and remembers, and it ends with her sense of a life larger than its "furniture," while Hugh looks up at her with an "entirely satisfied face." The evidence supports the claim about concealed inner depth.

A. is wrong. Hugh is “mild and handsome” and “entirely satisfied”; he is not described as neglectful. (B) is wrong. Gerald is a memory of freedom, but nothing suggests longing for a reunion. (C) is wrong. The party is described as noisy and indifferent, not hostile, and her feelings are mixed (“not unhappiness”).

Section II: Free-Response Scoring Guides and Sample Essays

All three essays are scored on the same 6-point analytic rubric: Row A (Thesis, 0–1), Row B (Evidence and Commentary, 0–4), and Row C (Sophistication, 0–1). The rubric language below is modeled on the published College Board scoring guidelines. Rows are scored independently, but they interact: a response with no defensible thesis can still earn Row B points, and a response cannot earn the sophistication point without a defensible interpretation to be sophisticated about.

How to use the scoring guides. Read each prompt and the “what strong responses might argue” list before you read the samples. Score your own essay row by row, being honest about what your commentary actually *explains* as opposed to what it merely *names*. Then read the three samples and their commentary, which show what the same rubric looks like at 6, 4, and 2 points. A teacher or peer reader is the best check on your own scoring; students almost always over-credit their own commentary.

Question 1: Poetry Analysis (Millay, “What lips my lips have kissed”)

RUBRIC

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt (“Millay uses literary elements to show the speaker’s complex understanding of her past loves”), only name devices (“Millay uses personification and a simile”), summarize the poem, or make a claim that the poem cannot support.
1	The response presents a defensible interpretation of the poem that responds to the prompt. The thesis may be one or several sentences, may appear anywhere in the essay, and need not preview the whole line of reasoning.

Decision rules: The thesis must make a claim about what the poem means or does, not only that devices exist. A thesis that says the speaker feels “sad” can earn the point if the poem plausibly supports it, even though it is simple. A thesis that merely repeats “complex” without saying what the complexity is does not earn the point. A thesis that is clearly contradicted by the poem (for example, that the speaker rejoices in having forgotten) does not earn the point.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis, repeats information in the prompt, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent, opinion without reference to the poem, or off-topic.
1	Evidence is general. Commentary summarizes the evidence but does not explain how it supports an argument.	Plot-style summary or paraphrase of the poem ("First the speaker says she forgot her lovers, then she talks about a tree"); lists devices with little or no explanation.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence and some explanation of how it relates to the argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	A mix of specific evidence and generalities; repetitive or simplistic explanations ("this shows she is sad"); one idea developed while others are only stated; claims whose connection to one another is unclear.
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how <i>some</i> of the evidence supports the line of reasoning. Explains how at least one literary element or technique contributes to the poem's meaning.	Evidence is specific and focused on words and details; multiple claims support the thesis; some evidence is not integrated, or some commentary remains general.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary <i>consistently</i> explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning. Explains how <i>multiple</i> literary elements or techniques contribute to meaning.	Everything in a 3, plus every claim is explained and the techniques are shown working together toward the interpretation.

Decision rules: Repeated instances of one technique (for example, three images) count as multiple elements only if each is shown to contribute differently; otherwise the response is capped at 3. A response need not use technical terms to earn 3 or 4 if it analyzes how specific language choices create meaning. Errors in grammar and mechanics that interfere with communication prevent the fourth point. A response without a thesis can still earn Row B points.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	Does not meet the criteria.

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument by <i>any one</i> of four pathways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poem; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader literary, cultural, or historical context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations of the poem; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

What does not earn the point: sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (“Throughout history, people have mourned lost love”); a single sophisticated sentence, such as the last line of a conclusion, that is not sustained in the essay; merely hinting at alternative readings; oversimplifying the poem’s tensions; ornate or inflated language that does not advance the argument. The quality must be part of the argument throughout, not tacked on.

PROMPT-SPECIFIC SCORING NOTES

The poem. Millay’s sonnet has an Italian octave (rhyme ABBAABBA: why, Iain, rain, sigh, reply, pain, again, cry) and a sestet with an unusual pattern (CDEDCE: tree, one, before, gone, me, more). The volta comes at line 9 (“Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree”). The speaker’s situation is paradoxical: she has “forgotten” her lovers, but the poem is occupied by the *feeling* of their absence.

A defensible thesis takes a position on what the speaker’s “complex understanding” is. Examples: (a) the speaker discovers that forgetting the particulars of love does not dissolve its emotional residue, so memory is feeling rather than fact; (b) the speaker mourns not her lovers but the loss of her own capacity for passion; (c) the poem’s restraint, with a strict form and quiet diction, shows grief held in check by an aging, self-possessed speaker. A thesis that only says “the speaker is sad but does not remember” is acceptable but thin, and usually leads to a 3 or lower in Row B.

What strong responses might argue (any well-supported interpretation is acceptable):

- The octave dramatizes forgetting through syntax: the opening sentence enumerates what she can no longer answer (“where, and why”) and settles on the blunt “I have forgotten,” before the sentence turns on “but.”
- The personification of the rain (“full of ghosts ... that tap and sigh / Upon the glass and listen for reply”) makes the lost lovers present as an insistent but unanswerable audience, and suggests the speaker is both haunted and unable to respond.
- “Unremembered lads” and “a quiet pain” create a paradoxical grief: pain for people she cannot recall, which suggests that what she mourns is the experience of being desired or of feeling, not the individuals.
- The volta at line 9 moves from interior and sound (rain, glass, sighs) to exterior and stillness (a winter tree), and the simile gives the speaker an image of knowing absence without cataloging what has gone (“Nor knows ... Yet knows”).
- The metaphor “summer sang in me / A little while, that in me sings no more” identifies the speaker with the tree and defines the loss as a loss of vitality; “cannot say” versus “only know” separates factual memory from emotional knowledge.
- Form and sound: the strict Italian octave and the sigh/reply/cry rhymes contain the emotion within order; the plain monosyllables of the final line produce a quiet finality.

- Alternative readings: the poem as a tough-minded refusal of nostalgia (she does not wish the lovers back) versus a lament for lost youth; the “ghosts” as the lovers, as the memories themselves, or as the rain’s own sounds projected by a lonely listener.

Common traps: summarizing the poem stanza by stanza; calling the speaker “sad” without distinguishing what she is sad about; moralizing about the speaker’s many lovers; treating the tree as a symbol of one particular lover; ignoring the volta; analyzing only imagery and overlooking syntax, rhyme, and structure; reading “forgotten” literally and missing that the poem is deeply preoccupied by memory.

SAMPLE ESSAY A (SCORE: 6/6)

Memory is usually imagined as a ledger of what happened; in Millay’s sonnet it is closer to a weather, a mood that persists after its causes have dissolved. The speaker claims to have forgotten the particulars of her love affairs, yet the poem is steeped in the ache of what she cannot retrieve. Through a personified rain, a pivotal turn to a natural simile, and a closing movement from not knowing to knowing, Millay suggests that the speaker’s real loss is not any particular lover but her own capacity for passion, and that this loss, unlike the lovers’ names, cannot be forgotten.

The octave presents forgetting as a studied absence. The first line piles up the questions a memory should answer, “and where, and why,” and the next dismisses them with a flat “I have forgotten.” The kisses and the “arms [that] have lain / Under my head till morning” are physical and specific in kind but anonymous in person: she recalls the category of her experience without the individuals in it. Yet the sentence turns on “but,” and what arrives is not calm: “the rain / Is full of ghosts tonight.” Millay’s personification does the work that explicit grief would do. The ghosts “tap and sigh / Upon the glass and listen for reply,” so the vanished lovers become suppliants outside a window the speaker does not open. That they “listen for reply” turns forgetting into something faintly guilty, for she cannot answer them when she cannot name them. Her “quiet pain / For unremembered lads” is therefore a strange, double grief: sorrow for men she cannot recall, and perhaps for the fact that she cannot. The diminutive “lads” and the adjective “unremembered” imply that these men mattered less as individuals than as occasions of feeling, yet she still imagines a “cry” at midnight, an image of passion that is both desire and distress.

The volta at line 9 moves this feeling from the bedroom to the landscape. “Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree” gives the speaker an emblem, and the simile does what her own memory cannot: it states the logic of her condition. The tree “[n]or knows what birds have vanished one by one, / Yet knows its boughs more silent than before.” The syntax mirrors the paradox, with a negative and a “yet” falling around the central fact that absence can be felt without being itemized. The tree cannot count the birds, but it can hear the silence. The shift in setting also changes the emotional climate, from the restless ghosts of the rain to the stillness of a bare winter exterior; the speaker’s feeling is no longer haunted but resigned. The image also quietly revises the lovers themselves. They are not betrayers or victims but birds, creatures whose coming and going was never the tree’s to control. That removes blame, which may be why the pain is “quiet.”

The final three lines draw the distinction outright. “I cannot say what loves have come and gone, / I only know that summer sang in me / A little while, that in me sings no more.” The phrases “cannot say” and “only know” separate knowledge of facts from knowledge of feeling, and the word “only” paradoxically elevates the second kind. “Summer sang in me” is a metaphor in which the speaker herself becomes the tree, a body briefly full of song, and the plain monosyllables of “sings no more,” following the brief “A little while,” give the close an unadorned finality that the ornate imagery of the ghosts has been preparing for. The line slows to a stop like the end of a season.

It would be easy to read the poem as regret that love is over, but the speaker never wishes her lovers back; she mourns what their presence made audible in her. The sonnet's formal control complicates any impression of confession or looseness: the Italian octave, rhyming ABBAABBA, holds her grief inside a strict container, and the unusual sestet rhymes (tree, one, before, gone, me, more) keep that order while letting the argument unravel into its quiet conclusion. Millay thus presents forgetting not as the cure for loss but as its deepest form: what is gone is not a person but a self that could be moved.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The first paragraph offers a defensible and specific thesis: the speaker's real loss is her own capacity for passion, a loss that, unlike the lovers' names, cannot be forgotten. It responds directly to the prompt's "complex understanding." **Row B: 4.** Evidence is specific and spread across the whole poem (lines 1–2, 3–7, 9–11, 12–14), and every claim is explained rather than just labeled. The writer explains how the syntax of the opening sentence enacts forgetting, how personification makes the ghosts into "suppliants" who "listen for reply," how diction ("lads," "unremembered," "only") qualifies the grief, how the simile and the volta relocate the feeling, how "cannot say" versus "only know" separates fact from feeling, and how the metaphor, the monosyllables of the final line, and the form shape the close. Several different techniques are shown working together toward one interpretation, and the prose is controlled. **Row C: 1.** The essay sustains a tension (a poem about forgetting that is saturated with remembered feeling), explicitly takes up and answers an alternative reading in the penultimate paragraph (regret for lost love versus mourning of a capacity), and writes in a consistently vivid, precise style. Any one of these pathways would be enough; the essay maintains all three. **Total: 6.**

SAMPLE ESSAY B (SCORE: 4/6)

In "What lips my lips have kissed," Edna St. Vincent Millay uses imagery, personification, and a simile to show that the speaker feels sadness about her past loves even though she cannot remember them. This shows that memory is complicated because a person can lose the details of the past but still feel the emotion.

In the first part of the poem, the speaker says she has forgotten the lips she kissed and the arms that held her. She says she has forgotten "what arms have lain / Under my head till morning." This shows that she has had many relationships but they have blurred together. However, the next part starts with "but," which shows a change. She says "the rain / Is full of ghosts tonight." The rain is personified because it has ghosts that "tap and sigh." This makes the poem sad and spooky and shows that the memories are coming back like ghosts even though she doesn't remember them. The word "ghosts" suggests the lovers are gone forever, which makes the speaker feel lonely. The words "tap and sigh" use sound to make the ghosts seem like they are really at the window, which helps the reader feel the loneliness of the room. The speaker also feels "a quiet pain," which shows she is sad.

In the second part, the speaker compares herself to a tree. "Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree, / Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one." The tree is a symbol of the speaker and the birds are the lovers. The tree is in winter, so it is cold and empty, which means the speaker feels empty too. The tree does not know which birds left but knows "its boughs more silent than before." This shows that even though the speaker can't remember all of the lovers, she can feel that they are gone. The simile helps the reader picture how she feels in a way that is easier to understand.

At the end of the poem the speaker says "I only know that summer sang in me / A little while, that in me sings no more." Summer is a metaphor for her youth and love. It sang in her, which means she was happy, but now it "sings no more," which means she isn't happy anymore. The poem ends on a sad note, which shows that she is

mourning the loss of her youth. Millay uses the rhyme scheme and the sonnet form to give the poem structure, which makes it feel serious. The last line is short and simple, so it feels like an ending.

In conclusion, Millay uses personification, imagery, and a simile to show that the speaker is sad about her lost loves even though she cannot remember them. The poem shows that memory and emotion are not always connected, which is a complex idea about love.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The first paragraph claims that the speaker feels sadness about past loves she cannot remember, and that memory and emotion can be separated. That is a defensible reading that responds to the prompt, although the thesis is more general than it could be. **Row B: 3.** Evidence is specific and used for every claim, and the essay follows a clear line of reasoning that tracks the poem. The writer explains the contribution of personification (the ghosts that “tap and sigh”), the simile of the tree (including the winter setting and the “silent” boughs), and the metaphor of “summer,” so the requirement for at least one technique is met. The essay does not reach 4 because the commentary is not consistently explanatory. It often falls back on “this shows she is sad” or “makes the poem sad and spooky,” asserts symbolism (the tree is the speaker, the birds the lovers) without explaining what the correspondence reveals, reduces “summer” to “her youth,” and mentions rhyme and sonnet form (“makes it feel serious”) without any analysis. The organization follows the poem rather than developing ideas about it, and the “volta” is not identified as a turn. **Row C: 0.** The last sentence calls the idea “complex” but does not develop any tension or consider an alternative reading. The writing is clear but not distinctive. **Total: 4.**

SAMPLE ESSAY C (SCORE: 2/6)

In the poem “What Lips My Lips Have Kissed” by Edna St. Vincent Millay, the speaker is very sad about her past loves. Millay uses imagery and figurative language to show this.

The speaker starts by saying that she forgot all of the people she has kissed and the arms that held her at night. She says it is raining and the rain is full of ghosts. This is imagery because it makes you picture the rain and the ghosts at the window. The ghosts are probably the people she loved before. The speaker feels a quiet pain in her heart for the boys who will not come back to her. This shows that she is lonely and misses them. The words “sigh,” “reply,” and “cry” all rhyme, which makes the poem sound sad like crying.

Then she talks about a lonely tree in the winter. The tree does not know what birds left but it knows that it is quieter. The speaker is like the tree because she is lonely and her loves have left her like the birds left the tree. This is a simile.

At the end she says that summer sang in her for a little while but it does not sing anymore. This means that she was happy before but now she is not happy. Millay also describes the tree as “lonely,” so the reader knows that the speaker is lonely too. The poem is a sonnet, which has fourteen lines and a rhyme scheme. The poem is sad because the speaker lost her loves and she is alone.

Millay uses many literary devices like imagery, simile, and personification to show that the speaker is sad. The poem is about how love can be lost and how sad it is to be alone. In conclusion, the speaker in the poem is very sad about her past loves and Millay uses imagery to show this.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The thesis (the speaker is very sad about her past loves, and Millay uses imagery and figurative language to show it) is a minimal but defensible claim, even though it ignores the forgetting that drives the poem. **Row B: 1.** The body paragraphs mostly paraphrase the poem in order. Devices are named (“This is imagery,” “This is a simile”) but their effects are barely explained: the definition “imagery because it makes you picture the rain” explains what imagery is, not what the image does in the poem. The

statements that the speaker “is lonely and misses them” are repeated rather than developed, and the single attempt to discuss sound (“makes the poem sound sad like crying”) is not tied to an argument. There is no line of reasoning that builds toward an interpretation. **Row C: 0.** There is no attempt at complexity beyond restating that the speaker is sad. **Total: 2.**

Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis (Julian and Lavinia Ordway)

RUBRIC

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt (“The writer uses literary elements to show the complex relationship between Julian and Lavinia”), only name devices, summarize the passage, or make a claim the passage cannot support.
1	The response presents a defensible interpretation of the passage that responds to the prompt. The thesis may be one or several sentences, may appear anywhere in the essay, and need not preview the whole line of reasoning.

Decision rules: The thesis must make a claim about meaning, not only assert that devices or events exist. A simple but defensible claim earns the point; a claim that merely repeats a word from the prompt (“complex”) without saying what the complexity is does not. A thesis that the text clearly contradicts does not earn the point.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis (if present), repeats information in the prompt, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent; opinion without reference to the text; off-topic.
1	Evidence is general. Commentary summarizes the evidence but does not explain how it supports an argument.	Summary or paraphrase of the passage; lists devices with little or no explanation.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence and some explanation of how it relates to the argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	A mix of specific evidence and generalities; repetitive or simplistic explanations (“this shows she is sad”); one idea developed while others are only stated.

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how <i>some</i> of the evidence supports the line of reasoning. Explains how at least one literary element or technique contributes to the passage's meaning.	Evidence is specific and focused on words and details; multiple claims support the thesis; some commentary remains general or some evidence is not integrated.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary <i>consistently</i> explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning. Explains how <i>multiple</i> literary elements or techniques contribute to meaning.	Everything in a 3, plus every claim is explained and the techniques are shown working together toward the interpretation.

Decision rules: Repeated instances of one technique (for example, three images) count as multiple elements only if each is shown to contribute differently; otherwise the response is capped at 3. A response need not use technical terms to earn 3 or 4 if it analyzes how specific language choices create meaning. Errors in grammar and mechanics that interfere with communication prevent the fourth point. A response without a thesis can still earn Row B points.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	Does not meet the criteria.
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument by <i>any one</i> of four pathways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the passage; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader literary, cultural, or historical context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

What does not earn the point: sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (“Throughout history, people have struggled between love and duty”); a single sophisticated sentence, such as the last line of a conclusion, that is not sustained through the essay; merely hinting at an alternative reading; oversimplifying the tensions of the text; ornate or inflated language that does not advance the argument. The quality must be part of the argument throughout.

PROMPT-SPECIFIC SCORING NOTES

The passage. The excerpt is a third-person, past-tense scene told in close, ironic narration that stays almost entirely within Julian's perceptions. Lavinia is therefore seen only through him, and the narrator's wry commentary (the barometer at a height “convenient to nobody,” the “unreasoning pang,” the coin that “rings false”) steadily undermines Julian's confidence in his “perfectly sensible errand.” The key tension is that every reasonable argument is on Julian's side and every emotional advantage is on Lavinia's.

A defensible thesis says what the complexity of the relationship is and how the text creates it. Examples: (a) the relationship is a silent negotiation of debt in which Lavinia's refusal to reproach him makes her the moral victor; (b) Julian's ideas of progress and freedom are exposed as self-justification, while Lavinia's devotion is revealed to be both sacrifice and power; (c) the house is the medium through which each sibling accuses and forgives the other. A thesis that says "they have a complicated relationship full of guilt" is acceptable if it is supported but is likely to lead to a 3 or lower in Row B.

What strong responses might argue:

- The house is personified as a judge ("waiting ... less in welcome than in judgment"), displacing the conflict onto an object and establishing the siblings' terms before they speak.
- The handshake and the narrator's phrase "who owed whom an apology" show a relationship conducted through ritual and formality; the sentence's balanced syntax enacts the stiffness.
- Domestic details (barometer, clock, mended stair-carpet, the kitchen) reveal twenty years of Lavinia's labor, and the narrator's irony toward Julian shows his discomfort as guilt, not simply nostalgia.
- Lavinia's speech is spare and dry; "without reproach, which was worse" shows the narrator conceding that her restraint accuses more than anger could. Her remark about the longer letters shows an intelligence that has anticipated him.
- The motif of "free" and the false-ringing coin undermines Julian's rationale; the plan that he believes will liberate her is perceived as a hollow word.
- The apples are "absurd," "a reproach," and "a gift," and the narrator's inability to settle on one word is the passage's central ambiguity: Lavinia's hospitality cannot be separated from her moral claim.
- Her closing concession ("he must do exactly as he thought best") hands him freedom as a burden; the narrative leaves unresolved whether she has surrendered or won.
- Narrative perspective as an argument: because the narration is limited to Julian, the reader must infer Lavinia's feelings from gestures, which is itself the story's point about the siblings' mutual opacity.

Common traps: treating Lavinia as only a martyr or only a manipulator; ignoring the narrator's irony toward Julian; summarizing the visit in order; assigning the apples a symbolic meaning (for example, original sin) that the passage does not support; discussing "the house" as a symbol without showing how particular details create the effect; neglecting syntax and point of view in favor of imagery.

SAMPLE ESSAY A (SCORE: 6/6)

The scene is built around an unspoken contest in which neither party raises her voice, and the writer's achievement is to make Julian and Lavinia's relationship legible entirely through objects, courtesies, and what goes unsaid. Filtered through Julian's uneasy perception, the narration presents Lavinia as both the sibling who has been wronged and the one who holds the moral advantage, and Julian as a man whose sensible errand collapses into shame. The result is a relationship in which obligation, guilt, and a grudging love cannot be separated from one another.

The writer first sets the emotional terms by letting the house itself judge. Julian expects it to look "smaller," the comfortable condescension of the successful, but it stands "white and exact," seeming to have waited "less in welcome than in judgment." The personification transfers moral authority from the sister to the building before she speaks; this is Lavinia's world, and it will try him. The greeting follows the same strategy. Lavinia extends "her hand, not her cheek," and the narrator's wry gloss, that a handshake suited an occasion on which "it was

not yet clear who owed whom an apology," reveals that the siblings are already in a negotiation about debt. The long, balanced syntax of that sentence imitates the formality of the greeting, so that decorum itself becomes a barrier between them.

Domestic details then measure the distance between Julian's life and Lavinia's. The kitchen he "had once liked too much" suggests a warmth in their childhood that has since been disallowed, and the simile of a man crossing "a field he has been warned is mined" shows that he fears the house more than any rational visitor should. The barometer "at a height convenient to nobody" and the clock that tells "an hour that he suspected to be wrong" are comic, but they show a house frozen in its father's habits and kept by Lavinia with an exactness that reads at once as devotion and as imprisonment. When Julian notices she has "mended the stair-carpet," the narrator adds that he observes it "with an unreasoning pang." The pang is unreasoning because the mending is trivial, and it is overwhelming because it is evidence of twenty years of labor performed in his absence.

Dialogue sharpens what the description implies. "There was no one else to keep it," Lavinia says, "without reproach, which was worse." The narrator's judgment inside the sentence admits that her calm accuses more effectively than anger could, and the phrase "twenty years" fixes the abstraction in a "steady hand" that sets the cup down "in precisely the same spot." Yet her dry remark that his "letters have got longer" reveals a second Lavinia, a quick wit who has understood his strategy for months. The smile that accompanies it is "their mother's smile," which "had always preceded some small act of fortitude," and here fortitude is both her weapon and her sacrifice. Lavinia is not simply a martyr; she is the stronger party, and the writer lets us see that she knows it.

The final paragraph complicates the contest by making her most pointed act ambiguous. The polished russet apples from the tree Julian climbed as a boy are "absurd," a "reproach," and yet "a gift." The narrator stalls among these words ("he could find no other word for it"), which suggests that Lavinia herself may not separate hospitality from accusation. Julian's shame arrives "without being sure of what," a phrase that confesses his confusion over whether he is guilty of leaving or only of wanting to sell. Lavinia's closing concession, that he must "do exactly as he thought best," is generous on its face and unanswerable in effect: she grants him the freedom he came to claim, and he finds it unbearable.

Read this way, the passage refuses to reduce the siblings to victim and villain. It shows a brother who is not wrong about the roof and the taxes and a sister who is not wrong about the cost of the years, and it lets the house, with its polished fruit and mended carpet, carry the claim that neither can voice.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The first paragraph states a specific, defensible thesis: the relationship is an unspoken contest in which Lavinia is both wronged and morally ahead, and Julian's sensible errand turns to shame, so that obligation, guilt, and love are inseparable. **Row B: 4.** Every body paragraph is built on short, exact quotations from different parts of the passage, and each is explained as a choice: personification of the house transfers authority to Lavinia; the balanced syntax of the greeting sentence enacts formality; the mine-field simile and the barometer detail expose Julian's fear and the house's frozen devotion; "without reproach, which was worse" is analyzed as the narrator's own admission; the wavering among "absurd," "reproach," and "gift" is read as the passage's central ambiguity. Multiple elements (personification, syntax, simile, detail, dialogue, narrative perspective) are shown working together. **Row C: 1.** The essay develops the passage's tensions throughout rather than adding them at the end (Lavinia as victim and victor; Julian as correct and ashamed), refuses the victim/villain reading in its conclusion, and is written in a consistently precise, persuasive style.

Total: 6.

SAMPLE ESSAY B (SCORE: 4/6)

In this passage the writer uses setting, dialogue, and tone to show that Julian and Lavinia have a tense relationship in which Lavinia makes Julian feel guilty about wanting to sell the house. Although they are polite to each other, there is a lot of unspoken conflict under the surface.

The writer begins with the description of the house. Julian had thought the house would “look smaller,” but it is “white and exact” and seems to be waiting “less in welcome than in judgment.” This personification makes the house seem like a judge, which shows that Julian already feels guilty before he even goes inside. The setting is important because the house stands for the family and the past that Julian left behind.

Next, the way Lavinia greets him shows the distance between them. She holds out “her hand, not her cheek,” which is formal and cold. The narrator says it was not clear “who owed whom an apology,” which shows that both of them feel there is something unresolved. Inside, the house has not changed. The barometer hangs where their father hung it and the clock is slow. These details show that Lavinia has kept everything the same for twenty years, which means she has devoted her life to the house. When Julian notices that she mended the stair-carpet, he feels “an unreasoning pang,” which shows that he feels sad and guilty about leaving her alone.

The narration stays close to Julian’s thoughts, so the reader only sees Lavinia through him. This makes her silences seem stronger, and the narrator’s mild humor, such as the barometer hanging at a height “convenient to nobody,” makes Julian’s nervousness seem a little ridiculous. The dialogue also shows their relationship. When Julian says “You have kept it very well,” Lavinia says “There was no one else to keep it.” The narrator says she said it “without reproach, which was worse.” This shows that Lavinia does not need to be angry because her calm words make Julian feel even worse. Lavinia also seems smart because she says his letters “have got longer,” which shows she knew he wanted to sell the house.

At the end, Lavinia has polished apples from the tree Julian climbed as a boy. Julian thinks it is “a reproach” but also “a gift.” This shows that the relationship is complicated because Lavinia is both blaming him and being kind. When Lavinia says he should do “exactly as he thought best,” Julian is ashamed, which shows that she has won the conflict without arguing.

In conclusion, the writer uses personification, details of setting, and dialogue to show that Julian and Lavinia have a complicated relationship full of guilt and unspoken feelings. Lavinia stays calm but still makes Julian feel bad.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The thesis says that the siblings’ relationship is tense and that Lavinia makes Julian feel guilty, and it adds the observation about unspoken conflict beneath politeness. It is defensible and responds to the prompt. **Row B: 3.** The evidence is specific and spans the passage, and the paragraphs form a reasonable sequence (house, greeting, dialogue, ending). The essay explains personification of the house, the point-of-view observation (we see Lavinia through Julian), and the effect of “without reproach, which was worse.” It falls short of 4 because the commentary is uneven: several sentences simply restate the quotation (“which shows that Julian feels sad and guilty”), the claim that the setting “stands for the family and the past” is asserted rather than demonstrated, the barometer and clock details are listed more than analyzed, and the apple paragraph concludes by naming the ambiguity (“both blaming him and being kind”) without exploring how the passage creates it. The conclusion mostly repeats the introduction. **Row C: 0.** The essay recognizes that the relationship is “complicated” but does not sustain or develop any tension, and it does not take up an alternative reading. **Total: 4.**

SAMPLE ESSAY C (SCORE: 2/6)

In this passage, Julian and Lavinia have a complex relationship. The writer uses literary elements and techniques to show this relationship, such as imagery, dialogue, and tone.

At the start Julian comes back to his old house after being away. He thought the house would look smaller but it did not. His sister Lavinia opens the door and holds out her hand. She says that he will want tea and that she kept the fire going in the front room. This shows that she is trying to be nice to him. The writer uses the word “judgment” to describe the house, which shows that Julian feels nervous about coming home.

Then they go into the house and Julian sees that everything is in its place. The barometer is where his father hung it and the clock is still there. He sees that she mended the stair-carpet. The writer uses imagery here to describe the house so the reader can picture it. Julian says she kept the house very well and she says there was no one else to keep it. This shows that Lavinia has been alone for a long time and Julian feels bad about it.

Julian came to talk to Lavinia about selling the house. A man from the mills wants to buy the land. Julian thinks she could live in Boston near him. But Lavinia knows what he is going to say, because she says that his letters have gotten longer. She smiles like her mother.

At the end there are apples on the sideboard from the tree that Julian climbed when he was a boy. Julian looks at the apples and feels ashamed. Lavinia tells him that the house is as much his as hers and that he should do what he thinks is best. This shows that their relationship is complicated because they love each other but they have a disagreement.

The writer uses imagery, dialogue, and tone to show the complicated relationship of Julian and Lavinia. In conclusion, they are family but they disagree about the house.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 0. The opening sentences restate the prompt (“Julian and Lavinia have a complex relationship”) and name devices (“imagery, dialogue, and tone”) without saying what the complexity is. The final paragraph offers only that the siblings “are family but they disagree about the house,” which does not make an interpretive claim. **Row B: 2.** The essay includes some specific details (the barometer, the stair-carpet, the apples, the line about the longer letters) and a few attempts at explanation: the word “judgment” shows Julian is nervous, and “there was no one else to keep it” shows Lavinia has been alone. However, most of the essay recounts the scene in order, the single technique named (“imagery”) is not tied to any meaning, and there is no line of reasoning. This is one point above the minimum because some evidence is relevant and some of it is explained. **Row C: 0.** There is no sophistication. **Total: 2.**

Question 3: Literary Argument (desire versus duty)**RUBRIC****Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)**

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt, only name a work and the concept, summarize the plot, or make a claim about the work that cannot be defended.

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
1	The response presents a defensible interpretation of a work of fiction that responds to the prompt. The thesis may be a claim about how the character's conflict operates in the work, or about how it contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Any reasonable reading of "desire" and "duty" is acceptable.

Decision rules: The thesis must make a claim about meaning, not only assert that devices or events exist. A simple but defensible claim earns the point; a claim that merely repeats a word from the prompt ("complex") without saying what the complexity is does not. A thesis that the text clearly contradicts does not earn the point. A response may choose any work of literary merit, on the list or not, but the work must plausibly contain the conflict the prompt names; a response about a work that does not (or that treats a different concept entirely) cannot earn Row A.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis (if present), repeats information in the prompt, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent; opinion without reference to the text; off-topic.
1	Evidence is general. Commentary summarizes the evidence or focuses on narrative developments rather than specific details; it does not explain how the evidence supports an argument.	Plot summary ("First Jane goes to Thornfield, then she leaves"); lists events with little or no explanation.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence and some explanation of how it relates to the argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	A mix of specific scenes and generalities; simplistic or repetitive explanations; claims whose relation to one another is unclear; drifts toward plot summary.
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how <i>some</i> of the evidence supports the line of reasoning. (<i>Unlike Questions 1 and 2, Row B for Question 3 does not require the explanation of literary elements or techniques.</i>)	Specific scenes, details, or quotations support each claim; some commentary remains general or some evidence is not fully integrated.

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary <i>consistently</i> explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning, and the essay addresses an interpretation of the work as a whole.	Everything in a 3, plus every claim is explained, the claims build on one another, and the essay shows what the conflict means for the whole work, not only for the scenes discussed.

Decision rules: A response that only recounts the plot is capped at 1 in this row. Evidence may be paraphrased from memory as long as it is specific (named scenes, characters, and details); direct quotation is not required. Errors in grammar and mechanics that interfere with communication prevent the fourth point. A response without a thesis can still earn Row B points.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	Does not meet the criteria.
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument by <i>any one</i> of four pathways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the work; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader literary, cultural, or historical context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

What does not earn the point: sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (“Throughout history, people have struggled between love and duty”); a single sophisticated sentence, such as the last line of a conclusion, that is not sustained through the essay; merely hinting at an alternative reading; oversimplifying the tensions of the text; ornate or inflated language that does not advance the argument. The quality must be part of the argument throughout.

PROMPT-SPECIFIC SCORING NOTES

The task. The prompt asks for a work of fiction in which a character is torn between personal desire and a sense of duty to family or community, and for an analysis of how this conflict contributes to an interpretation of the *whole* work. “Desire” and “duty” may be read broadly (ambition, love, freedom, selfhood versus family honor, filial obligation, communal survival, religion, or tradition). The conflict must be genuine: a character who simply obeys or simply rebels is not torn.

A defensible thesis takes a position on what the conflict means for the work. Examples: (a) the work shows duty to be an internalized form of desire, such as a need for approval, rather than an external constraint; (b) the work argues that a community or family that demands the sacrifice of individual desire loses the very people who sustain it; (c) the work proposes a resolution in which neither desire nor duty can be honored without the other, so the character must redefine both. A thesis that says “the character chooses duty over desire” with no further claim is thin and usually capped at a 2 or 3 in Row B.

What strong responses might argue (examples only; any work of literary merit is acceptable if the conflict is genuine):

- *Antigone*: Antigone's duty to her brother and the gods conflicts with her civic obligation to Creon's decree; the play tests whose "duty" has real authority and whether Creon's loyalty to the state is also a form of private pride.
- *Jane Eyre*: Jane's passion for Rochester conflicts with her duty to conscience; later St. John Rivers offers duty without love; Brontë reconciles the two only after Jane gains independence.
- *Things Fall Apart*: Okonkwo's private tenderness toward Ikemefuna conflicts with his fear of weakness, which he mistakes for clan duty; the clan is more flexible than he is, and the colonial intrusion exposes both.
- *A Doll's House*: Nora's duty as wife and mother conflicts with the duty to herself; Ibsen makes the choice to leave a critique of marriage as a social institution.
- *The Awakening*: Edna's desire for autonomy conflicts with the roles of wife and mother, and the novel asks whether the society leaves any form of fulfillment available.
- *Beloved*: Sethe's decision to protect her children becomes a violation of the very bond she means to protect; the community's duty to Sethe is in question as well.
- *Brooklyn*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Namesake*, or *Americanah*: obligation to family left behind and desire for a new life, with the work asking what an immigrant owes to home.
- *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Remains of the Day*, or *A Raisin in the Sun* are also good fits, with Stevens's repressed desire in *The Remains of the Day* a case where duty becomes self-erasure.

Common traps: retelling the plot in chronological order; choosing a work in which the character is never actually torn; forgetting the "work as a whole" requirement and writing only about one scene; shifting from "duty" to a different concept (for example, "fate" or "social pressure") in the middle of the essay; listing events without explaining what they show about the conflict; relying on half-remembered details that cannot support a claim.

SAMPLE ESSAY A (SCORE: 6/6) — THINGS FALL APART

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe stages the conflict between desire and duty not as a clean choice between self and community but as a collision between a man's private feelings and a public code that he has internalized so completely that he can no longer tell the two apart. Okonkwo's tragedy is that he treats duty to Umuofia as a duty to appear unfeeling, and when his real attachments conflict with that performance, he betrays them in the name of the clan. Achebe uses this conflict to suggest that the same values that give Igbo society its strength make it brittle when the world changes, so that Okonkwo's personal ruin becomes an image of the clan's own vulnerability.

The decisive episode is the killing of Ikemefuna. The boy, given to Umuofia by the neighboring village of Mbaino as compensation for the murder of an Umuofian woman, has lived in Okonkwo's household for three years, and Okonkwo has come to love him, though he shows this "affection" only through the severity he calls fatherhood. When the Oracle decrees that Ikemefuna must die, the elder Ezeudu warns Okonkwo, "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death." The clan's law requires the sacrifice, but the duty to obey the Oracle does not require Okonkwo to strike the blow. When Ikemefuna runs to him crying "My father, they have killed me!" Okonkwo "drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak." Achebe's phrasing locates the true motive: the decision is not made out of duty to the clan but out of fear of seeming like his father, Unoka, the lazy, indebted man whose memory Okonkwo despises. Okonkwo's desire to be unlike his father has hardened into a code that overrides the loyalty he feels, and he mistakes that code for the community's demand.

The consequences show that the community does not share his rigidity. Obierika, his closest friend, tells him that what he has done will not please the Earth, and that he himself would never have taken part in such a death; meanwhile Okonkwo, who has killed five men in battle, goes two days without food and cannot sleep. The clan's

own norms, Achebe suggests, allow a man to hold back his hand. The tension in Okonkwo is therefore not between a private wish and a collective rule but between two versions of duty: the clan's actual customs, which include mercy and restraint, and Okonkwo's narrower idea of what a strong man must do. His exile for seven years in Mbanta, his mother's homeland, after the accidental killing of Ezeudu's son, extends this contrast; in his mother's kin he finds the compassion and ritual flexibility that his own conception of manhood has denied.

The conflict returns at the end, transformed by colonial intrusion. Okonkwo comes back to a clan that has been divided by Christianity and a new government; his son Nwoye has left to join the church, an act that echoes his boyhood tenderness toward Ikemefuna and exposes how Okonkwo's suppression of feeling has driven his family away. At the meeting that the court messengers interrupt, Okonkwo kills one of them, expecting the people to rise with him. They do not: the crowd breaks into tumult instead of action and lets the other messengers escape, and Okonkwo, discerning fright in that tumult, knows that Umuofia will not go to war. Here duty, as Okonkwo understands it, demands collective violence, but the clan, no longer unified, cannot answer. Having once sacrificed his love to a perceived demand of the community, he now finds that the community will not honor his sacrifice. His suicide, an act forbidden by the same culture he tried to defend, is the final collapse of his private code against the real one.

It would be easy to read Okonkwo's story only as the failure of an individual who is too proud. But Achebe, writing in 1958 against accounts like the District Commissioner's planned book on the "Pacification of the Primitive Tribes," insists that the cause of the tragedy is both personal and historical. Okonkwo's inability to reconcile feeling with duty makes him the clan's most severe defender and its most revealing casualty. By setting a man who confuses fear with obligation against a community that is itself less rigid than he is and then undone by outside forces, the novel proposes that cultures, like individuals, can fail when they lose the capacity to bend.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The first paragraph presents a defensible, nuanced thesis: Okonkwo's conflict is not simply desire against duty but a private feeling against a public code that he has internalized, and Achebe uses the conflict to suggest that the strengths of Igbo society make it brittle. It responds to the prompt and to the work as a whole. **Row B: 4.** Evidence is specific and accurate (Ezeudu's warning, Ikemefuna's cry, the machete, the narrator's gloss "He was afraid of being thought weak," Obierika's reaction, the seven years in Mbanta, Nwoye's departure, the court messenger scene and the crowd's tumult, the suicide), and the commentary consistently explains how each piece supports the claim, including the insight that the clan's actual customs are more flexible than Okonkwo's version of duty. The final two paragraphs connect the conflict to the interpretation of the whole novel (the clan's fragility under colonial intrusion). **Row C: 1.** The essay sustains a complex argument, in which duty is revealed as misread fear, and situates the novel in its historical context (the colonial account represented by the District Commissioner) in a way that illuminates the reading rather than decorating it. **Total: 6.**

SAMPLE ESSAY B (SCORE: 4/6) — JANE EYRE

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jane is torn between her desire to be loved and her sense of duty, both to her own moral principles and to other people. This conflict contributes to the meaning of the novel as a whole by showing that Jane can only find happiness when she is able to balance her desires with her duties and not give up either one.

The first time this conflict appears is at Thornfield, where Jane falls in love with Mr. Rochester. Jane wants to marry him, and they are about to be married when it is revealed that he already has a wife, Bertha Mason, who is locked in the attic. Rochester begs Jane to stay with him as his mistress, and Jane very much wants to. However, she feels a duty to her own conscience and says she must "keep the law given by God." Brontë makes

the choice harder by showing Rochester as desperate and sorrowful, so the reader sees that leaving him is a real sacrifice. Jane leaves Thornfield in the middle of the night, even though it hurts her. This shows that Jane will not give up her morals even for love. It also shows that Brontë does not want the reader to think that real love means giving up your self-respect.

Next, Jane goes to Moor House, where she finds that St. John Rivers, Diana, and Mary are her cousins. St. John wants Jane to marry him and go with him to India as a missionary. This time the conflict is reversed because Jane is being asked to follow duty but not love. St. John tells her that it is her duty to God, and Jane almost agrees, but she realizes that she does not love him and that marrying him would be like a death. She says she would go as his helper but not as his wife. This shows that Jane believes duty without love is not enough, which is the opposite of what happened with Rochester. In both cases Jane refuses to let someone else decide who she is.

In the end Jane hears Rochester's voice calling her and she goes back to Thornfield, which has burned down. Rochester is blind and has lost a hand, and Jane marries him. She now has her own money from her uncle, so she is independent. Because of this, she is able to choose Rochester freely. The famous line "Reader, I married him" shows that she has found a balance.

In conclusion, the conflict between desire and duty in *Jane Eyre* shows that the best life is one where a person is both independent and loved. Brontë shows this through Jane's choices at Thornfield, at Moor House, and at Ferndean.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The thesis (Jane is torn between desire and duty, and happiness comes only from balancing them) is defensible and addresses the work as a whole. **Row B: 3.** The essay selects accurate scenes (the aborted wedding and flight from Thornfield, the proposal from St. John, the return to Ferndean) and uses the reversal between the Rochester and St. John episodes as a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of this evidence supports the claim (for example, that leaving Rochester shows she will not give up her self-respect, and that St. John's proposal reverses the conflict). It is not a 4 because much of the second half is plot summary with brief commentary, and the explanation is not consistent: the final paragraph's "she has found a balance" is asserted rather than shown, the role of Jane's inheritance is mentioned but not analyzed, and the essay treats "balance" as an answer without examining how the novel makes the balance possible or what remains unresolved (Rochester's maiming, the cost to Bertha). **Row C: 0.** The ending names the novel's message but does not develop complexity, context, or an alternative reading. **Total: 4.**

SAMPLE ESSAY C (SCORE: 2/6) — ROMEO AND JULIET

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo and Juliet have to choose between their love for each other and their duty to their families. This conflict contributes to the meaning of the play because it shows how the hatred between the two families destroys the young people.

At the beginning of the play, Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is a Capulet, and the two families are enemies. When Romeo goes to the Capulet party he meets Juliet and they fall in love. They find out that they are from enemy families but they still want to be together. Juliet says "What's in a name?" which shows that she does not care about the family names. They decide to get married secretly with the help of Friar Laurence.

After that, Romeo's friend Mercutio is killed by Tybalt, who is Juliet's cousin. Romeo has a duty to his friend and his family so he kills Tybalt. This shows how the feud forces Romeo to choose between his love for Juliet and his loyalty to the Montagues. The Prince banishes Romeo to Mantua, so he cannot be with Juliet. Juliet's father then

wants her to marry Paris. Juliet does not want to marry Paris because she loves Romeo, but she is supposed to obey her father. She goes to Friar Laurence and he gives her a potion to make her look dead.

The plan does not work because Romeo does not get the message. He thinks Juliet is really dead and buys poison and goes to her tomb. He drinks the poison and dies. Then Juliet wakes up and sees Romeo dead and stabs herself. At the end the families see what the feud has done and they make peace.

In conclusion, the conflict between desire and duty in *Romeo and Juliet* shows that the feud is destructive. Romeo and Juliet follow their desires for each other but their duty to their families is too strong. This is a tragedy about love and hate.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The thesis claims that the lovers must choose between love and duty to family and that the conflict shows the feud to be destructive. It is defensible, if simple. **Row B: 1.** The essay is a chronological retelling of the plot, with accurate details but almost no commentary on how those details support an argument. The few attempts at explanation ("This shows how the feud forces Romeo to choose," Juliet's "What's in a name?" "shows that she does not care about the family names") are general. The essay never examines how the characters experience the conflict as a conflict (for instance, Juliet's obligation to Capulet at the Paris episode is mentioned but not analyzed), and there is no line of reasoning. According to the rubric, a response that focuses on narrative developments rather than specific, explained details earns one point in this row. **Row C: 0.** There is no sophistication. **Total: 2.**

How to Score Yourself

Step 1: Score Section I

Compare your answers with the key and count the number you answered correctly. There is no penalty for wrong answers. Your **multiple-choice raw score** is the number correct, out of 55.

Skill diagnostic. To find your weak areas, record the questions you missed in each category. A category in which you missed more than a third of the questions is a target for review.

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS	NUMBER	MISSED
Narration and speaker (NAR)	2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 21, 23, 24, 30, 45, 47, 51, 54	13	
Character (CHR)	14, 18, 19, 28, 34, 36, 41, 42, 43, 49	10	
Structure (STR)	5, 9, 16, 20, 25, 29, 32, 39, 40, 50	10	
Word choice, imagery, and comparison (FIG)	1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 17, 26, 27, 35, 37, 38, 46, 48	13	
Setting (SET)	15, 52, 53	3	
Literary argumentation (LAN)	11, 22, 31, 33, 44, 55	6	

Also look at your misses by passage. Students who do well on prose but poorly on Passages 1 and 3 usually need practice with poetic syntax (inverted or very long sentences) and with the turn of a poem; students who miss many questions on Passage 4 should practice paraphrasing Shakespearean verse line by line before answering.

Step 2: Score Section II

Score each essay from 0 to 6 using the row-by-row rubric above: Row A (0–1), Row B (0–4), Row C (0–1). If you can, have a teacher or classmate score the essays independently and average the results. Row C is the hardest point to earn (nationally only a small fraction of essays receive it); if you are unsure, do not award yourself the point. Your **essay total** is the sum of the three essay scores, out of 18.

Step 3: Estimate your composite score

The College Board does not publish its conversion formula, and the cut points change slightly from year to year. The following is a standard approximation used by score calculators.

- **Multiple-choice composite** = MCQ raw score $\times$ 1.2273 (maximum about 67.5)
- **Free-response composite** = essay total $\times$ 4.583 (maximum about 82.5)
- **Total composite** = MCQ composite + free-response composite (maximum about 150)

APPROXIMATE COMPOSITE	APPROXIMATE AP SCORE
105 or above	5
87 to 104	4
65 to 86	3
45 to 64	2
Below 45	1

These bands are estimates only. They are intended to show the relative weight of the sections and to help you set goals, not to predict an official score.

Worked examples.

PROFILE	MCQ CORRECT	MCQ COMPOSITE	ESSAYS (Q1 / Q2 / Q3)	ESSAY TOTAL	FR COMPOSITE	TOTAL	ESTIMATED SCORE
Strong	42	51.5	5 / 4 / 5	14	64.2	115.7	5
Solid	36	44.2	4 / 3 / 4	11	50.4	94.6	4
Developing	29	35.6	3 / 3 / 3	9	41.2	76.8	3
Emerging	22	27.0	2 / 2 / 2	6	27.5	54.5	2

Step 4: Decide what to practice next

- **If your MCQ score is low but your essays are strong**, you probably read well but are not yet precise about what a question is asking. Practice paraphrasing the cited lines before reading the choices, and review the

explanations for the “wrong because” reasons, which show the standard traps (too broad, true but not asked, tone too extreme, device correct but function wrong).

- **If your essays are weaker than your multiple-choice score**, the most common cause is commentary that names rather than explains. After each quotation, force yourself to write a sentence that begins “The word ... suggests ...” or “By placing ... next to ..., the writer ...” and ends with a link to your thesis.
- **If your Row A scores are strong but Row B scores are 2 or lower**, you are probably organizing by device or by sequence instead of by idea. Rewrite one essay with topic sentences that make claims about meaning, and then check that each paragraph advances the one before it.
- **If you are earning 4s and 5s and want the sophistication point**, practice stating your thesis with a “although ... , ...” structure that names a real tension in the text, and then testing it against the lines that seem to contradict you.

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