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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Literature and Composition — Practice Exam 4: Answer Key, Explanations & Sample Essays

This file accompanies *Practice Exam 4*. It contains the answer key, a complete explanation for every multiple-choice question, the scoring rubrics for the three free-response questions, prompt-specific scoring notes, scored sample essays at three performance levels for each question, and a guide to estimating your composite score.

Skill codes follow the AP English Literature framework. CHR = Character (1.A–1.E); SET = Setting (2.A–2.C); STR = Structure (3.A–3.F); NAR = Narration (4.A–4.D); FIG = Figurative language and word choice (5.A–5.D, 6.A–6.D); LAN = Literary argumentation (7.A–7.E). Difficulty: E = easy, M = medium, H = hard.

About the texts. Passage 1 (John Donne, Holy Sonnet 10, published 1633) and Passage 3 (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses,” 1842) are public-domain poems. Passages 2, 4, and 5 were written for this practice exam: Passage 2 in the manner of an eighteenth-century epistolary novel, Passage 4 in the manner of a 1920s American realist one-act play, and Passage 5 in the manner of Harlem Renaissance fiction. Free-Response Question 1 uses Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach” (1867), and Question 2 uses the opening of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Part 1: Section I Answer Key

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
1	B	NAR 4.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	E
2	D	NAR 4.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	E
3	A	STR 3.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
4	C	FIG 5.A	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
5	D	FIG 6.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
6	B	NAR 4.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	E

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
7	C	STR 3.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	H
8	A	STR 3.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
9	C	LAN 7.A	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
10	C	NAR 4.C	P1 (poem, Donne)	H
11	A	LAN 7.B	P1 (poem, Donne)	M
12	B	NAR 4.A	P2 (letter)	E
13	D	FIG 6.C	P2 (letter)	E
14	B	CHR 1.D	P2 (letter)	M
15	A	CHR 1.E	P2 (letter)	M
16	C	FIG 6.B	P2 (letter)	M
17	D	NAR 4.C	P2 (letter)	M
18	D	CHR 1.A	P2 (letter)	E
19	A	FIG 6.B	P2 (letter)	M
20	B	FIG 6.B	P2 (letter)	H
21	C	LAN 7.A	P2 (letter)	H
22	D	NAR 4.C	P2 (letter)	M
23	B	SET 2.C	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	E
24	C	FIG 5.A	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	E
25	A	NAR 4.C	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	M
26	D	FIG 6.B	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	H
27	B	FIG 6.A	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	M
28	C	CHR 1.C	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	M
29	A	NAR 4.D	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	H
30	B	STR 3.C	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	M
31	D	FIG 5.D	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	M
32	A	CHR 1.A	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	H
33	C	LAN 7.B	P3 (poem, Tennyson)	H
34	D	SET 2.B	P4 (drama)	E
35	A	FIG 5.C	P4 (drama)	E

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
36	B	CHR 1.E	P4 (drama)	H
37	C	STR 3.B	P4 (drama)	M
38	D	NAR 4.C	P4 (drama)	M
39	A	CHR 1.D	P4 (drama)	M
40	B	STR 3.C	P4 (drama)	H
41	C	CHR 1.D	P4 (drama)	M
42	A	CHR 1.E	P4 (drama)	M
43	D	STR 3.E	P4 (drama)	M
44	B	LAN 7.A	P4 (drama)	H
45	C	NAR 4.B	P5 (prose)	E
46	A	SET 2.B	P5 (prose)	E
47	D	FIG 6.A	P5 (prose)	E
48	B	STR 3.D	P5 (prose)	E
49	C	FIG 6.B	P5 (prose)	M
50	A	CHR 1.B	P5 (prose)	M
51	D	CHR 1.B	P5 (prose)	H
52	B	FIG 6.B	P5 (prose)	M
53	C	NAR 4.C	P5 (prose)	H
54	D	LAN 7.A	P5 (prose)	M
55	A	STR 3.C	P5 (prose)	H

Answer distribution: A = 14, B = 13, C = 14, D = 14. No answer letter repeats more than twice in a row.

Format items: EXCEPT items: Q5, Q18, Q31, Q34. Roman-numeral items: Q10, Q32, Q36. Student-claim and thesis items (LAN): Q9, Q11, Q21, Q33, Q44, Q54.

Part 2: Section I Explanations

Passage 1: Donne, Holy Sonnet 10 (Questions 1–11)

1. Answer: B. [Skill 4.C – details and diction that reveal a speaker’s perspective.] The opening command-like address (“be not proud”) and the flat contradiction “thou art not so” (line 2) show a speaker who speaks to Death as to an inferior, without fear. “Defiant and assured” captures both the challenge and the confidence. (A)

is the opposite of the speaker's stance; a reverent speaker would not tell Death not to be proud. (C) misreads the energy of the lines; nothing in them is tired or resigned. (D) is wrong because there is no consoling purpose or tenderness in the address; the speaker is arguing, not comforting.

2. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C.] "Poor Death" (line 4) pairs a term of pity with an object that has just been told it cannot kill anyone; the pity is mock pity, the way one might address a braggart whose boasts have collapsed. That is condescension. (A) takes "poor" at face value and ignores the surrounding insistence that Death has no power. (B) confuses the speaker's attitude with Death's; the speaker is not humble. (C) reverses the power relationship: the speaker is the one who says "nor yet canst thou kill me."

3. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C – function of structure.] Line 5 calls rest and sleep "thy pictures," that is, images or imitations of Death. Lines 5–6 then reason that if the copy gives "much pleasure," the original must give "much more." Lines 7–8 add that the best people go with Death soonest, for rest and release. (B) is wrong; the speaker never discusses his own sufferings. (C) misattributes a body-versus-soul contrast to these lines; line 8 mentions bones and soul but the passage's logic is the sleep analogy. (D) has no basis in the text; rest is treated as pleasant, not as a danger.

4. Answer: C. [Skill 5.A – meaning of a phrase in context.] "Rest of their bones" is repose for the body ("rest" as ease, not "remainder"), and "soul's delivery" is the soul's release. (A) is the trap built on the other sense of "rest" (what remains), and also adds "judgment," which the poem never mentions. (B) is wrong because burial and punishment are not suggested; the context is pleasure and release. (D) makes "delivery" an ending, but the couplet makes clear that the soul wakes eternally.

5. Answer: D. [Skill 6.C – personification of Death; EXCEPT item.] Line 9 says Death is "slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men," and line 10 says Death "dwell[s]" with "poison, war, and sickness." That covers (A) chance, (B) war, and (C) poison. Divine judgment is never mentioned in lines 9–12, so (D) is the exception.

6. Answer: B. [Skill 4.C – tone.] "Why swell'st thou then?" is not a request for information. "Swell" suggests puffing up with pride, so the question implies that Death's pride has no grounds after the preceding argument. (A) takes the question literally; the speaker has just explained everything. (C) is wrong because the line does not introduce a new argument; the soul is not mentioned until the couplet. (D) is a misreading; the speaker never admits a weakness.

7. Answer: C. [Skill 3.C.] Lines 1–12 attack Death's present claims to power. The couplet moves forward in time: "One short sleep past, we wake eternally / And death shall be no more." (A) is wrong because Death remains the one addressed ("Death, thou shalt die"). (B) misreads the tone; the couplet is more confident than anything before it. (D) is wrong because the couplet fulfills rather than reverses the speaker's position.

8. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C – function of the closing line.] The line is a paradox: Death, the thing that ends all life, is itself said to end. It completes the logic of "death shall be no more." (B) is unsupported; the speaker never admits fear. (C) is wrong because the line stays in the figurative mode (apostrophe and personification) that has run throughout. (D) is wrong because the line echoes the opening address rather than contradicting it.

9. Answer: C. [Skill 7.A – selecting evidence to support a claim.] Only line 13 describes death as a "short sleep" followed by waking, which is a temporary state. (A) denies Death's might but does not describe death as temporary. (B) subordinates Death to other forces, which supports a different claim. (D) mocks Death's pride but says nothing about duration.

10. Answer: C. [Skill 4.C.] Statement I is supported by line 9 (Death is “slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men”). Statement II is supported by lines 5–6 and 11–12 (sleep and “poppy or charms” give pleasure as well as, or better than, Death’s “stroke”). Statement III is false; no scripture is quoted or cited. Only I and II are supported, so (C) is correct.

11. Answer: A. [Skill 7.B – thesis.] A defensible thesis makes a claim about meaning and rests on the poem’s evidence. (A) names how the poem proceeds (Death is addressed as an inferior and then given an end) and what that accomplishes (fear becomes a defeated opponent). (B) names techniques without any claim about meaning. (C) is a claim, but the poem gives no support for secret fear; the speaker’s confidence is stated outright. (D) has no basis in the poem, which mentions no personal loss.

Passage 2: Letter from Harriet (Questions 12–22)

12. Answer: B. [Skill 4.A – narrator and situation.] The first paragraph says she must “set down what has passed,” and the letter then narrates the scene and tries to interpret it (“I have turned this over as I would turn a hem”). (A) is contradicted by “Do not, I beg you, write to Mrs. Jervis, nor to my lady, nor do anything at all.” (C) is wrong because she lists her wages and bed as reasons she is not unhappy. (D) is unsupported; she promises to write again Sunday.

13. Answer: D. [Skill 6.C – personification.] The clock “strikes as if it had a grievance against the quiet” gives it a sullen temper, which makes the silence of the house feel heavy and Harriet’s sleeplessness part of that mood. (A) invents a reference to Harriet; the clock’s “grievance” is against quiet, not against her. (B) is wrong because the tone is uneasy rather than mocking. (C) is not suggested; the clock strikes.

14. Answer: B. [Skill 1.D – relationships.] The compliment leads straight into advice: handsomeness is “a thing a girl in my station had better keep folded up like her Sunday gown.” The praise carries a warning. (A) ignores the warning. (C) is too strong; the mistress does not accuse Harriet of anything. (D) is wrong because the ribbon comes afterward and Harriet only suspects its purpose.

15. Answer: A. [Skill 1.E – a character’s speech.] The narration says Harriet “had not meant to be witty,” so her words were earnest and she did not see the double meaning. (B) is directly contradicted by that statement. (C) misreads a plain answer as defiance. (D) is also contradicted; she does not intend to flatter.

16. Answer: C. [Skill 6.B – metaphor.] A “wage” is payment for service. Harriet suspects the gift is meant to pay for her cooperation in the matter of the young master. (A) misreads “wage” as a complaint about pay. (B) is wrong because she is uncomfortable, not grateful. (D) is wrong because the sentence is about the ribbon, not workload.

17. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C.] “Louder than staring” is a paradox: silence or avoidance speaks more loudly than looking. It shows that Harriet reads meaning in the young master’s behavior. (A) treats the phrase as literal. (B) is wrong because Harriet is not trying to entertain her mother here. (C) is wrong because the sentence concerns the young master, not the mistress.

18. Answer: D. [Skill 1.A; EXCEPT item.] Lines 30–32 give her wages, her own bed, and leave to read in the evenings. Mrs. Jervis appears only as someone who “means kindly but tells everything twice”; no friendship is cited. (A), (B), and (C) are all stated.

19. Answer: A. [Skill 6.B.] Furniture “is not spoken to and need not answer,” and Harriet says she “was glad of it.” Being furniture meant being unnoticed, which she saw as a kind of safety. (B) is wrong because Harriet says she was glad of the thought, not that she saw it as cruel. (C) overstates; she does not express resentment. (D) misreads the metaphor as a joke about her employers’ belongings.

20. Answer: B. [Skill 6.B – extended metaphor.] The sentence turns on whether her house is “as low as I supposed” or “a tall house with a great many stairs, and I upon the wrong one, and no one to tell me which way is up.” The image expresses her uncertainty about where she stands in a social order. (A) takes the house literally. (C) is wrong because she does not express ambition. (D) is a plausible distractor because the sentence follows a discussion of sermons, but the stairs are about social position (“which way is up”), not about heaven.

21. Answer: C. [Skill 7.A – evidence for a claim.] Lines 25–27 show Harriet noticing a subtle social signal and reading its cause (“or been taught it”). (A) shows an anxious detail but no insight. (B) is a comparison of wages and shows no special perception. (D) shows shrewdness about a trade, but not the perception about people that the claim concerns.

22. Answer: D. [Skill 4.C – tone.] The shift from the delicate subject of the ribbon to blots, candles, hens, and a promise to write Sunday brings in everyday concerns; the closing sentence “less to feel” admits that the ordinary matters are also a way to settle her feelings. (A) overstates; the paragraph is lighter than the rest. (B) is wrong because Harriet is deferential to her mother throughout. (C) is wrong because no new complaint is introduced.

Passage 3: Tennyson, “Ulysses” (Questions 23–33)

23. Answer: B. [Skill 2.C – relationship between a character and a setting.] Ulysses calls his home a “still hearth” among “barren crags,” with an “aged wife” and a “savage race / That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.” The place confines him and the people do not know him. (A) contradicts “idle king” and “barren.” (C) is not mentioned. (D) is wrong because he calls the land barren and its people savage, not prosperous.

24. Answer: C. [Skill 5.A – literal versus figurative meaning.] To drink to the lees is to drink to the last dregs, and “Life” is the drink. The next lines (7–9) list the range of experience he has had. (A) takes “drink” too literally and tends toward feasting. (B) turns an image of fullness into escapism. (D) has no basis in the text.

25. Answer: A. [Skill 4.C.] “A name / For always roaming” says that what he is known as is the roaming itself. (B) borrows “a name” as reputation but the passage says nothing about fading. (C) is wrong; he is dismissive of his subjects. (D) is unsupported; he recounts successes and hardships, not failures.

26. Answer: D. [Skill 6.B.] Through the arch “gleams that untravell’d world whose margin fades / For ever and for ever when I move.” Experience opens onto a larger world whose edge retreats as he advances. (A) and (B) give the arch its ordinary architectural functions. (C) reverses the image; the arch opens a view rather than closing it.

27. Answer: B. [Skill 6.A – simile.] A star that sinks is chased toward the horizon; knowledge is similarly pursued “Beyond the utmost bound of human thought” (line 32). The simile conveys a goal that draws him past limits. (A) overreads; the speaker is not predicting failure. (C) misapplies the image; the star is knowledge, not his powers. (D) names a surface feature but ignores function.

28. Answer: C. [Skill 1.C – contrasting characters.] Telemachus is “centred in the sphere / Of common duties,” pays “adoration to my household gods,” and “works his work, I mine.” These traits contrast with Ulysses’s restlessness and make it easier for Ulysses to leave. (A) contradicts the praise (“Most blameless”). (B) is not

supported; Ulysses expresses no regret. (D) is wrong because the passage is addressed to no one yet; the mariners are first addressed at line 45.

29. Answer: A. [Skill 4.D – reliability.] He dismisses his subjects as hoarding, sleeping, feeding, and then praises Telemachus in terms that sound dutiful but small (“decent,” “useful”). The pattern suggests he lowers the value of home life to justify leaving it. (B) is contradicted by the loaded language. (C) ignores the explicit praise. (D) has no evidence in the passage.

30. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C – shift.] Lines 1–43 are reflection and self-justification in the speaker’s own mind. At line 44 the scene shifts to the harbor and the speaker begins to address his “mariners” and to urge action. (A) misreads the mood; he is not regretful. (C) is wrong because he does not condemn home at line 44. (D) misstates the emotion; the lines are resolute.

31. Answer: D. [Skill 5.D – imagery; EXCEPT item.] “Lights begin to twinkle” and “the long day wanes” are visual; “the deep / Moans round with many voices” is auditory; “the slow moon climbs” is a movement in the heavens. No smell or scent of the shore is evoked.

32. Answer: A. [Skill 1.A.] Lines 46–48 describe mariners who have “toil’d, and wrought, and thought” with him and who took “the thunder and the sunshine” (I). Line 49 says “you and I are old” (II). Nothing suggests reluctance; they are “free hearts, free foreheads” (III is false).

33. Answer: C. [Skill 7.B.] The poem treats the quest as heroic (“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield”) and shows its costs: the dismissal of home and the acknowledgment “Death closes all” and “we are not now that strength.” (A) is contradicted by line 1. (B) overstates; Telemachus is praised. (D) is wrong because the poem ends in resolve, not defeat.

Passage 4: One-act play excerpt (Questions 34–44)

34. Answer: D. [Skill 2.B; EXCEPT item.] The direction describes a parlor “kept for company” (A), a mantel clock “stopped at twenty minutes past four” (B), and a box half filled with newspaper-wrapped objects (C). Nothing suggests a recent celebration.

35. Answer: A. [Skill 5.C – symbol.] The clock has stopped, Walter tries to wind it, and it “does not start.” The play ends with Clara putting things back in the drawer, which also resists moving on. The clock stands for the household’s paralysis after the mother’s death. (B) is too small; the clock is not a sign of neglect only. (C) ties the clock to Clara’s departure, but the clock stands for the present. (D) is not suggested; the furniture is “good.”

36. Answer: B. [Skill 1.E.] Statement I is supported: Walter will not look at the drawer and says “There’s nothing in it I want.” Statement II is supported: his generosity (“Keep what you like”) deflects Clara’s attempts to share memories. Statement III is contradicted; he says “There’s no one here to say otherwise,” and ends by offering her a room. So I and II only.

37. Answer: C. [Skill 3.B – function of a sequence.] Walter says nobody is here to object; Clara answers “There’s you.” The conversation turns from deciding what to keep to the unsaid tension between them. (A) and (B) describe other shifts the text does not make. (D) is too strong; accusations come later and in muted form.

38. Answer: D. [Skill 1.A.] A man who “has already had this conversation with himself” has settled it privately, hence “patience.” (A) is contradicted by “not angry.” (B) overlooks the care in the stage direction. (C) is unsupported; he never apologizes.

39. Answer: A. [Skill 1.D.] After the doctor reports that the mother asked for Clara, Walter's "Three years is a long while to be asked for" is a quiet rebuke. (B) and (C) misattribute the emotional direction. (D) is wrong because Walter does not dispute the doctor.

40. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C.] Clara reads the order of names as a verdict ("I am the one who left"), and Walter replies "I put it the way she would have said it." The mother's judgment persists, and Walter defers to it. (A) and (D) are unsupported. (C) reverses the emphasis; Clara resents the wording rather than taking pride.

41. Answer: C. [Skill 1.D.] The mother said Clara had "no more business in the city than this dog had," in the tone of someone saying "the stove was hot." The bluntness and the way Clara still remembers it show a lasting wound. (A) and (D) ignore the context. (B) is too narrow; the remark is about Clara's place, not about fear.

42. Answer: A. [Skill 1.E.] The mother's response to Clara's departure was a remark about the hired man's dinner, a retreat into routine. Walter's own way of handling grief resembles that. (B) is too extreme. (C) misreads Clara's laugh, which "stops, as though the room had rebuked her." (D) is wrong because the mother is not shown as angry with the hired man.

43. Answer: D. [Skill 3.E.] "I don't know yet. For the dog, maybe." is hesitant and half-formed. Clara acknowledges hurt without being able to name it. (A) and (B) are contradicted by her softness. (C) overstates; she does not confess a specific fault.

44. Answer: B. [Skill 7.A.] The stage direction about the clock, which Walter sets down "as one sets down something that might still wake," shows grief expressed through a gesture with an object. (A) is a memory. (C) is a plot detail, not an expression of feeling. (D) is Walter's excuse for not writing and speaks more to avoidance than to indirect expression through objects.

Passage 5: Short story excerpt, a musician in the city (Questions 45–55)

45. Answer: C. [Skill 4.B – point of view.] The narrator uses "he" and reports what Lonnie "understood," "expected," and "felt," but never leaves his consciousness. (A) is wrong because the narration uses "he," not "I." (B) is wrong because no other character's thoughts are entered (we only see the man's smile from outside). (D) is wrong because interior states are reported throughout.

46. Answer: A. [Skill 2.B.] The city "never got quiet, only that the noise changed shifts." The sounds at three in the morning are different but continuous. (B) and (C) are not what the paragraph says. (D) contradicts paragraph two, which sets "back home" against "here."

47. Answer: D. [Skill 6.A – simile.] A man sleeping "with one hand on a dog" seeks reassurance from a loyal presence. Lonnie keeps his foot on the horn case the same way. (A) is wrong because the image is comforting, not burdensome. (B) ignores the emotional tone. (C) is a plausible reading but the simile concerns security in the present, not memory of home.

48. Answer: B. [Skill 3.D – contrast.] "A thing you could put your arms around" contrasts with "it had edges." One night is enveloping, the other is hard and unyielding. (A) is partly true of the passage but it is not the contrast drawn in these lines. (C) overstates; no danger is named. (D) concerns tempo, which these lines do not address.

49. Answer: C. [Skill 6.B – metaphor.] Lonnie has realized that being good is common in the city; the "crowd" of other good players is "already full." (A) takes "band" and "wall" literally. (B) is too strong; he does get work at Pell's. (D) takes "crowd" literally.

50. Answer: A. [Skill 1.B – change.] Lonnie played “with his eyes shut and the sound going up.” Deke says “This ain’t church. They can’t dance to the ceiling.” The playing aimed upward when the audience was in the room. (B) is contradicted by the sound “going up.” (C) is wrong because Deke criticizes the direction, not the skill. (D) misreads “church” as an insult to religion.

51. Answer: D. [Skill 1.B.] “That was a thing to know about yourself, and he was not yet sure whether he was glad to know it.” He learns he can adapt, and he is unsure of the cost. (A) is wrong because of “not yet sure.” (B) overreads; Deke’s tone is “not unkindly.” (C) is contradicted by the concern in the sentence.

52. Answer: B. [Skill 6.B.] A “second heart” suggests vitality and importance, and “did not yet know what rhythm to keep” suggests that Lonnie does not yet know how to take the opportunity. (A) is unsupported. (C) is contradicted by “did not yet know.” (D) is not suggested at this point.

53. Answer: C. [Skill 4.C.] The smile “as if Georgia were a joke they both knew” suggests that the man views Lonnie’s origins with a knowing amusement. The “as if” leaves open whether Lonnie shares the joke. (A) is not supported. (B) is too harsh; the man gives him a card. (D) is contradicted by the card.

54. Answer: D. [Skill 7.A.] The milk wagon is “a country sound that had wandered into the wrong place and did not know it.” The image of a sound out of place applies to Lonnie himself. (A), (B), and (C) all show opportunity or adaptation, which supports the other half of the student’s claim.

55. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C.] The last image joins the card (“Tuesday, 2 o’clock”) with the rhythm image used just before it. “Count” can mean marking beats and marking days. (B) is unsupported. (C) is contradicted by the hopeful, careful tone. (D) is the most tempting distractor, but it ignores the way the previous sentences tie counting to the card and to rhythm.

Part 3: How to Score Yourself

Step 1. Multiple choice. Count the number of questions you answered correctly (maximum 55). There is no guessing penalty. Multiply by 1.23 to get your approximate multiple-choice composite (maximum about 67.5).

Step 2. Free response. Score each essay from 0 to 6 using the rubrics below, or ask a teacher to score them. Add the three scores (maximum 18). Multiply by 4.58 to get your approximate free-response composite (maximum about 82.5).

Step 3. Composite. Add the two numbers (maximum about 150).

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

These cutoffs are approximate. The College Board does not publish its composite formula or cutoffs, and they vary from year to year.

Example. A student who answers 38 multiple-choice questions correctly ($38 \times 1.23 = 46.7$) and earns essay scores of 4, 3, and 4 ($11 \times 4.58 = 50.4$) has a composite of about 97, in the range of a 4.

Interpreting your results. Use the skill codes in the key to find patterns. If you missed most of the NAR items, practice identifying how a speaker's diction and syntax reveal attitude. If you missed STR items, practice marking shifts and explaining what each section does. If you missed LAN items, practice choosing evidence that supports a stated claim rather than evidence that is merely related to it.

Part 4: Section II Scoring Guidelines

All three essays are scored on a 6-point analytic rubric.

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
0	Does not respond to the prompt with a defensible interpretation. Typical responses restate the prompt, state a fact or a topic rather than a claim, summarize the text, or name literary devices without making a claim about meaning.
1	Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation. The thesis may be one or more sentences and may appear anywhere in the essay.

Decision rules. A thesis must make a claim that someone could argue with and that the text can reasonably support. A thesis that merely repeats the language of the prompt ("The speaker has a complex understanding of the world") does not earn the point. A thesis that names techniques but makes no claim ("Arnold uses imagery and tone") does not earn the point. The thesis does not have to preview the entire line of reasoning.

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

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Does not meet the criteria for 1 point.	Restate the thesis or the prompt, give irrelevant information, or are incoherent.
1	Provides evidence that is general; commentary summarizes the evidence but does not explain how it supports the argument.	Mostly plot summary or paraphrase; mention techniques without explanation.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence and consistently links it to a claim, but the commentary does not develop a line of reasoning, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	Mix of specific and general evidence; commentary that repeats "this shows"; one point developed while others are only stated; unclear connections among claims.

SCORE	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning and explains how at least some of that evidence supports the line of reasoning. For Questions 1 and 2, the commentary explains how at least one literary element or technique contributes to meaning.	Evidence is specific throughout; some commentary explains how the evidence works; some evidence may be left unexplained.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning and consistently explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning. For Questions 1 and 2, the commentary explains how multiple literary elements or techniques contribute to meaning.	Evidence is specific and well chosen; every claim is developed; the essay shows several techniques working together; the writing communicates clearly.

Decision rules. Writing with errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point. A response that repeats one technique (several images, for example) may earn the fourth point only if each use is shown to add something different to meaning. A response without a thesis can still earn Row B points. Summary or paraphrase alone earns 1 point at most.

Question 3 note. Row B for Question 3 does not require commentary on literary elements or techniques at the 3-point level. At the 3-point level the response needs specific evidence for all claims and some explanation of how the evidence supports the line of reasoning. At the 4-point level, the commentary must consistently explain how the evidence supports the line of reasoning and must connect the argument to an interpretation of the work as a whole.

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.

A response earns this point by doing at least one of the following, and sustaining it:

1. **Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions** within the text (for example, treating a poem's consolation as undercut by its own imagery).
2. **Illuminating the interpretation by situating it in a broader context** (historical, cultural, literary, or philosophical) in a way that sharpens the reading.
3. **Accounting for alternative interpretations**, that is, taking seriously a competing reading and explaining why the response's reading holds or how it must be qualified.

4. **Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive**, with precise diction and control of syntax that make the argument itself compelling.

What does NOT earn the point. Sweeping generalizations ("Throughout history, humans have always...") offered as context; merely mentioning another possible reading without engaging it; a single sophisticated sentence that is not sustained; oversimplifying the text's complexities; elaborate vocabulary that does not advance the argument.

Part 5: Question 1 (Poetry Analysis, Arnold, "Dover Beach")

Prompt-specific scoring notes

What a defensible thesis looks like. A thesis must make a claim about the speaker's *understanding of the world*, not just about the poem's topic. Defensible theses might argue that the speaker moves from sensory calm to historical despair and then to a fragile personal commitment; that his consolation is undercut by his own list of what the world lacks; that the sea stands for both the loss of faith and the persistence of human suffering; or that the poem's structure enacts the argument it makes about the world. Theses that only say the poem is "sad" or "about loss of faith" do not yet present a complex interpretation, although they may earn Row A if they make a claim the poem supports.

What strong responses might argue.

- The opening stanza's visual calm ("The sea is calm to-night," "tranquil bay") is a setup for the turn at "Only," where sound ("the grating roar / Of pebbles") introduces "the eternal note of sadness." The speaker's knowledge is auditory and cumulative, not visual.
- The allusion to Sophocles places the speaker's modern despair inside a long tradition of human misery. Through "we / Find also in the sound a thought," the poem makes this a shared inheritance rather than a private mood.
- The "Sea of Faith" is an extended metaphor that is introduced in the past tense, once "at the full," and then "withdrawing." The shift in tense and the sound of "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" turn a decline of religious certainty into an experience the reader can hear.
- The sea's meanings shift across stanzas: from physical scene, to a source of sadness, to a figure for faith, to the "naked shingles of the world," which suggests exposure and a bare, hostile landscape.
- The final stanza's apostrophe ("Ah, love, let us be true") is both a plea and an admission. The speaker's "true" loyalty is offered because nothing else in the world is certain.
- The catalog of negatives ("neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain") includes love, which complicates the plea: the speaker asks for fidelity in a world he says lacks love.
- The simile of "a land of dreams" and the metaphor of the "darkling plain" with its "ignorant armies" shift from beauty that is only apparent to violence without understanding.
- Form follows meaning: the irregular line lengths and rhymes imitate the ebb and flow of the sea, so that the poem's shape enacts what it describes.

Common traps. Naming devices without function ("The poem uses imagery, simile, and allusion"); treating the poem as a poem about the sea only; missing the turn at "Only" in line 7 and the turn to the present at line 24; summarizing each stanza; ignoring the final stanza's negations; treating the ending as simple hope.

6-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 4, Row C: 1)

In "Dover Beach," Arnold's speaker begins as an observer of a calm sea and ends as a man pleading for shelter, and the distance between those positions is the poem's argument about the world. The speaker understands the modern world as one from which faith has withdrawn and left only suffering and confusion. Yet he does not leave himself a clean consolation: the love he offers as refuge is listed among the things the world lacks, so the poem's closing plea is both a defense against despair and a confession of how little defense is available.

The first stanza stages a deceptive calm. The sea is "calm," the tide "full," the moon lies "fair," and the cliffs are "Glimmering and vast" in a "tranquil bay." The soothing sibilance and the stacked adjectives invite the listener to accept the night as beautiful, and the speaker's cheerful invitation, "Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!", sounds like a man showing off a view. But the word "Only" (line 7) turns the stanza from sight to sound. What the listener "hear[s]" is "the grating roar / Of pebbles," and the harsh consonants and the drawn-out repetition of "Begin, and cease, and then again begin" make the waves a mechanical, endless process. When the stanza ends with "The eternal note of sadness in," the word "eternal" makes the sadness belong not to this night but to the sea itself. The shift from a visual scene to an auditory one suggests that appearances are not trustworthy: the world looks serene and sounds sorrowful.

The second and third stanzas move the sound from the beach into history and belief. By placing Sophocles on the Aegean, hearing "the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery," the speaker joins his modern sadness to an ancient one, and the shift to "we" in "we / Find also in the sound a thought" draws the listener into a shared inheritance. The speaker then develops the metaphor that gives the poem its fullest meaning, the "Sea of Faith." The verbs matter: faith "Was once, too, at the full," and "Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd," an image of comfort and enclosure. In the present tense, the speaker "only" hears its "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar." The slow line, with three adjectives and the long vowels of "long, withdrawing roar," makes the departure audible and also long, as though loss is still going on. The result is "the vast edges drear / And naked shingles of the world." "Naked" says that nothing is left to cover the world, and "drear" and "vast" make the bareness impersonal. Where the earlier sea comforted, the later one exposes.

The last stanza turns from the world to the listener, and here Arnold's most complex move appears. "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" is an apostrophe that asks the nearest person to be a refuge. The speaker's reason is that "the world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new, / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light." The simile of "a land of dreams" repeats the first stanza's lesson about appearances, and the string of "nor" clauses removes each possible comfort in turn. What is striking is that "love" is on the list. If the world has "neither joy, nor love," then what the speaker proposes to one another is not discovered in the world but made against it, and the plea becomes a kind of defiance rather than a hope. A reader might argue that the poem ends in resignation because the final image, "ignorant armies clash by night," offers no rescue. But the very fact that the speaker addresses another person, in the intimacy of "the window" where the poem began, suggests that his understanding of the world is not purely despairing. He knows that the world offers no certitude, and so he places his trust in the only thing that does not require the world to be trustworthy: a promise between two people.

In the end, Arnold's speaker understands the world as a place whose beauty is only apparent and whose truth is heard, not seen. The poem's movement from calm to roar, from past comfort to present exposure, and from public history to private plea shows a mind that will not lie about its loss, but that will not stop reaching for something, even when it cannot say what the world can promise.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1):* The introduction offers a defensible claim that goes beyond the prompt: the speaker understands the world as one from which faith has withdrawn, and his love-plea is both defense and confession. *Row B (4):* Evidence is specific and spans the whole poem (the opening adjectives, "Only," the roar of the pebbles, the Sophocles allusion, the "Sea of Faith" metaphor, "naked shingles," the apostrophe, the "land of dreams" simile, the "nor" catalog). The commentary explains function rather than only naming devices: the move from sight to sound, the effect of the long line and past-to-present tense in the faith stanza, and the way the catalog of negatives undermines the plea. Multiple techniques (imagery, allusion, extended metaphor, tense, apostrophe, simile, syntax) are shown to contribute different things to the argument. *Row C (1):* The response sustains a tension (love is on the list of what the world lacks) and entertains and weighs an alternative reading (that the ending is resignation) before qualifying it. Both are part of the argument, not a final flourish. Total: 6.

4-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 3, Row C: 0)

In "Dover Beach," Matthew Arnold uses imagery, metaphor, and tone to show that the speaker sees the world as sad and without faith but thinks that love is the only way to deal with it.

In the first stanza the speaker describes the sea in a peaceful way. He says the sea is "calm," the tide is "full," and the moon "lies fair." These images of calm make the reader think that the night is beautiful. But then he says to listen and describes "the grating roar / Of pebbles." The word "grating" has a harsh sound, and it is a different feeling than the peaceful images before it. This shows that the speaker sees sadness underneath the beauty of the night. The line "The eternal note of sadness in" tells us that this sadness is always there, like the waves.

In the second stanza, Arnold uses an allusion to Sophocles. Sophocles was a Greek writer who heard the same sound on the Aegean sea and thought about human misery. This shows that people have always felt sad about life, and the speaker feels the same thing now. It makes the poem feel more universal because it connects the speaker to history.

The next stanza uses a metaphor of the "Sea of Faith." The speaker says that the Sea of Faith was once full and was like a "bright girdle." This means that in the past people had faith and it surrounded them. Now he only hears its "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar." The word "withdrawing" shows that faith is leaving. This shows the speaker feels the world has lost its faith and feels alone. The "naked shingles of the world" is an image that shows how empty the world is now.

In the last stanza, the speaker turns to love. He says "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" This shows that he thinks the only thing left is the love between two people. He says that the world seems like a "land of dreams" but "hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light." The images of "ignorant armies" clashing "by night" show that the world is a place of confusion and conflict. So the speaker wants to be true to the person he is with because there is nothing else to count on. The exclamation "Ah" and the direct address to "love" make the last stanza feel urgent, as if the speaker is afraid of what he has just realized about the world.

In conclusion, Arnold uses imagery, allusion, and metaphor to show the speaker's complex understanding of the world. He sees that the world is sad, that faith is gone, and that love is the only answer. The poem moves from calm to sadness, and this shows how the speaker's feelings change.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1):* The thesis makes a claim (the world is sad and without faith, and love is the only way to deal with it), which the poem supports. It is general and mostly restates the obvious, but it is defensible. *Row B (3):* Evidence is specific in every paragraph and is drawn from the whole poem. The commentary sometimes explains how a technique works: the contrast between calm images and "grating," the effect of "withdrawing," and the allusion that makes the sadness universal. This earns the third point. It does not

earn the fourth because much of the commentary stops at “this shows” and restates the content (“This means that in the past people had faith”), the paragraphs proceed stanza by stanza instead of building a line of reasoning, and the conclusion repeats the thesis. The response does not notice that “love” appears in the list of what the world lacks, so the final stanza is read too simply. *Row C (0)*: The essay never develops a complexity or tension; the claim that love is “the only answer” oversimplifies the ending. Total: 4.

2-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 1, Row C: 0)

In the poem *Dover Beach* Matthew Arnold uses imagery and figurative language to show that the speaker feels sad about the world and thinks that people should love each other.

The poem starts out describing the sea at night. The speaker says the sea is calm and the moon is fair and that the cliffs of England are glimmering. He asks the person he is with to come to the window because the night air is sweet. Then he tells them to listen to the sound of the waves on the pebbles. He says the sound brings the eternal note of sadness. This shows that the speaker is feeling sad.

Then the speaker talks about Sophocles who heard the same sound a long time ago. He thought about human misery. Then the speaker says that the Sea of Faith was once full but now it is going out. The speaker uses a metaphor to compare faith to the sea. This shows that the speaker thinks that people do not have faith anymore. He hears a melancholy roar and the shingles of the world are naked.

In the last stanza the speaker tells his love to be true to him. He says the world seems beautiful but really has no joy or love or light. He says we are on a darkling plain where armies clash by night. This is a simile that shows the world is a scary place. The speaker wants to be true to his love because the world is scary.

Arnold uses a lot of imagery and figurative language in this poem to show how the speaker feels. The imagery of the sea and the night show the speaker’s feelings. The poem is about faith and love. In conclusion the speaker feels sad and wants love.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1)*: The first sentence claims that the speaker feels sad about the world and thinks people should love each other. It is vague, but it is a claim about meaning that the poem supports; the point is awarded narrowly. *Row B (1)*: The body paragraphs retell the poem stanza by stanza. Evidence is mostly paraphrase (“He says the sea is calm”), and commentary consists of repeated “this shows” sentences with no explanation of how any word or technique creates meaning. Devices are named (metaphor, simile, imagery) with little or no analysis of how they work. Because the response summarizes without developing a line of reasoning, Row B is 1. *Row C (0)*: No complexity, context, alternative reading, or consistently persuasive style. Total: 2.

Part 6: Question 2 (Prose Fiction Analysis, Brontë, *Jane Eyre*)

Prompt-specific scoring notes

What a defensible thesis looks like. The prompt asks about Jane’s *complex experience of exclusion*. A thesis should say what that exclusion is like, not only that Jane is excluded. Defensible theses might argue that exclusion is both a wound and a refuge; that Jane turns exile into imaginative freedom but at a cost; that the passage shows the adult narrator’s retrospective sympathy for her younger self; or that the contrast between Jane’s solitude and the family circle reveals Mrs. Reed’s cruelty while also showing the origins of Jane’s independence.

What strong responses might argue.

- The opening paragraph, with its weather and its parenthetical about Mrs. Reed's dinner hour, establishes a household governed by habits and routines that include and exclude. The "leafless shrubbery," "sombre" clouds, and "penetrating" rain make the outside as unwelcoming as the inside.
- Jane's gladness that the walk is cancelled shows that her exclusion from the family is matched by dread of being outdoors with them; she is "humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority" to the Reed children, which shows how the family's treatment has shaped her sense of self.
- The scene in the drawing-room contrasts Mrs. Reed on the sofa, "with her darlings about her," with Jane, whom she "dispensed from joining the group." The parenthetical "(for the time neither quarrelling nor crying)" undercuts the picture of the contented family.
- Mrs. Reed's reported speech ("She regretted to be under the necessity...") is formal and hypocritical; its language of regret and "privileges" disguises an exclusion Jane's question exposes. The reply, "Jane, I don't like cavillers or questioners," shows that Jane is punished for asking for reasons.
- Jane's retreat into the window-seat is described with a series of religious and Eastern images: "like a Turk," "shrined in double retirement." These images suggest both sanctuary and confinement, and they show a child who can make a refuge out of a rejected position.
- The window separates and protects: the curtain on one side, the glass on the other, "protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day." Jane is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside, which mirrors her place in the family.
- Bewick's book supplies a landscape of "solitary rocks," "death-white realms," and a "wreck just sinking." Jane's attraction to these places of solitude suggests that she finds in them an image of her own condition, and her ability to form "an idea of my own" shows imaginative independence.
- The final lines ("happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption") qualify the happiness with fear and foreshadow the intrusion. The retrospective narrator tells the story with sympathy and irony.

Common traps. Summarizing the scene; treating Jane as simply a victim and ignoring the pleasure she takes in the window-seat and in the book; ignoring the retrospective voice (the adult narrator who sees her younger self); listing devices without function; ignoring Mrs. Reed's speech; treating Bewick's passages as irrelevant description.

6-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 4, Row C: 1)

Brontë's opening chapter presents exclusion not as a simple condition but as an experience that wounds Jane and shapes her at once. Jane is shut out of the family circle, and the passage records the hurt of that exclusion in the voices of the people who impose it. But Brontë also shows a child who builds a refuge from her exile, and the passage's final sentence, which calls the refuge happiness "in my way" and then warns of interruption, reveals how fragile that refuge is. Through contrast, reported speech, and a series of images of enclosure and desolation, Brontë makes Jane's exclusion both an injury and the beginning of her independence.

The first and most direct evidence of exclusion is the contrast between the family circle and the child outside it. The Reed children are "clustered round their mama" while Jane is "dispensed" from the group. Brontë's parenthetical comment that the children are "for the time neither quarrelling nor crying" is a small irony: the picture of the "perfectly happy" family is a temporary peace, and the narrator does not hide that she doubts it. Mrs. Reed's own speech is reported in indirect discourse, with its ceremonious "She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance." The courtesy of "regretted" and "necessity" disguises a decision to

punish, and the phrase “contented, happy, little children” defines the children who are allowed into the room against the child who is not. When Jane asks for reasons (“What does Bessie say I have done?”), she is rebuked as a “caviller,” and the exchange shows that the exclusion cannot be questioned. The formality of the language and the speed of the rebuke show Jane’s exclusion as a matter of power as well as of feeling.

The adult narrator’s retrospective voice matters here, because it lets Brontë show that Jane’s earlier exclusion has already damaged her sense of herself. Jane is “glad” the walk is canceled because the walk meant “the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie,” and “humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority” to the Reed children. The list of physical discomforts leads into the emotional ones, and the abstract phrase “consciousness of my physical inferiority” shows a child who has absorbed her cousins’ view of her. Exclusion, then, is not only something done to Jane but something she has learned to expect.

Having shown the injury, Brontë shows the refuge. The window-seat is described as a kind of shrine, “shrined in double retirement,” with Jane sitting “cross-legged, like a Turk,” behind a curtain of “scarlet drapery.” The religious word “shrined” and the exotic comparison make the corner a place of special value and make Jane herself its inhabitant, someone who has taken a rejected position and made it her own. Yet the setting also expresses the limits of the refuge. The curtain shuts the room out on one side, and on the other, the glass is “protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day.” The phrase “not separating” is important, because it tells us Jane is never fully inside or outside, just as she is not fully a member of the family. The “wet lawn and storm-beat shrub” and “ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly” give the weather the same turbulence the child cannot show, so the storm becomes a way of expressing her feeling.

The book Jane chooses, Bewick’s *History of British Birds*, deepens the portrait. Jane is not interested in the “letterpress” but in the “solitary rocks and promontories,” the “death-white realms,” and the “wreck just sinking.” These are places of isolation and desolation, and her choice shows that she looks for images that match her condition. But Brontë complicates this: Jane does not only identify with the desolation, she shapes it. “Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own,” she says, and the phrase “of my own” shows a mind that is at work even when it has been shut out. The child who has been told to be “more sociable and childlike” is, in her refuge, more imaginatively active than anyone in the drawing-room.

This is why the closing lines carry their ambivalence. “I was then happy: happy at least in my way” is qualified twice, by “then” and by “at least in my way,” and “I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon” admits that the happiness depends on being left alone. Brontë’s experience of exclusion is therefore not tragic isolation or comfortable solitude but something between them, a state in which a child discovers her inner strength under conditions that make her vulnerable.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1):* The thesis claims that exclusion is both an injury and the start of independence, and it previews a line of reasoning that goes beyond the prompt’s wording. *Row B (4):* Evidence is specific and drawn from across the passage (the family circle and the parenthetical, Mrs. Reed’s reported speech, Jane’s list of discomforts, the window-seat imagery, the Bewick passages, the last sentence). The commentary explains how techniques create meaning: contrast, indirect discourse, retrospective narration, imagery of enclosure and weather, allusion to the book’s landscapes, and qualification in the final sentence. Each paragraph advances the claim of the thesis. *Row C (1):* The response sustains a tension throughout (exclusion as wound and refuge) and attends to the adult narrator’s perspective. Total: 6.

4-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 3, Row C: 0)

In this passage from *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë uses setting, contrast, and imagery to show that Jane feels excluded from her family but finds comfort in being alone.

The passage begins with a description of the weather. It is cold and rainy, so the children cannot go for a walk. Jane says she is glad because she does not like going out in the cold and the damp. She also says that she feels “humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority” to her cousins. This shows that Jane already feels that she is not as good as the other children, and it is a sign that she feels excluded.

Brontë then contrasts Jane with the rest of the family. The Reed children are with their mother in the drawing-room, and she is “perfectly happy.” But Jane is not allowed to join them. Mrs. Reed says that she wants Jane to have “a more sociable and childlike disposition” before she can be with them. This is a cruel thing to say, and it shows that Mrs. Reed does not care about Jane’s feelings. When Jane asks what she did, Mrs. Reed says she does not like “cavillers or questioners.” The contrast between the happy family and Jane shows how excluded she is. Mrs. Reed’s long, formal sentence about “privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children” also sounds cold, and it suggests that Jane is treated as a problem to be managed rather than a child to be loved.

Jane goes to the breakfast-room and sits in the window-seat with a book. Brontë uses imagery to describe the window-seat: Jane is “shrined in double retirement” behind a red curtain. The word “shrined” suggests that the window-seat is a special place. On one side the curtain closes her in and on the other there is the glass window that shows the “drear November day.” The weather outside is stormy and wet, which matches Jane’s sad feelings. The window seat is a place where Jane can be alone and safe. At the same time, the curtain and the glass show that she is shut in, so the place is a refuge and a kind of confinement.

Jane reads Bewick’s book about birds. She is interested in the pictures of lonely places like rocks in the sea and cold places in the north. These images of loneliness fit with how she feels. Jane says that she “formed an idea of my own” about the “death-white realms,” which shows that she has a good imagination. Reading the book makes her happy.

In conclusion, Brontë uses contrast, imagery, and setting to show that Jane is excluded but that she is also able to find happiness alone. At the end Jane says she is “happy at least in my way,” which shows she has a complicated experience of being left out.

Scoring commentary. Row A (1): The thesis makes a claim about the meaning of the passage (exclusion together with comfort in solitude) that the text supports, and it responds to the prompt’s idea of complexity. Row B (3): The response uses specific evidence from throughout the passage and explains how at least one technique contributes to meaning (the contrast between the family and Jane; the imagery of the window-seat; the weather that matches Jane’s feelings). It does not earn the fourth point because commentary is frequently asserted rather than explained (“This is a cruel thing to say,” “These images of loneliness fit with how she feels”), the techniques are treated one at a time, and the reading of Mrs. Reed’s language, the retrospective narrator, and the final sentence is not developed. Row C (0): The response states that Jane’s experience is “complicated” but does not explore the tension. Total: 4.

2-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 1, Row C: 0)

In this passage Charlotte Bronte uses literary elements and techniques to show Jane’s complex experience of exclusion. Jane is left out by her family and she is sad about it.

At the beginning of the passage Jane says there is no possibility of taking a walk that day. She says she was glad because she did not like long walks in the cold. She did not like going home in the twilight with cold fingers and toes. She also did not like being scolded by Bessie. She feels that she is not as good as Eliza, John, and Georgiana.

Then Jane describes Mrs. Reed on the sofa with her children. Mrs. Reed will not let Jane join them because she is not sociable or childlike enough. Jane asks what she did and Mrs. Reed says she does not like questioners. This shows that Mrs. Reed is mean to Jane. Jane then goes to the breakfast room and finds a book with pictures. She sits in the window seat and shuts the curtain. She looks out at the rain and the storm.

Jane reads a book about birds. It has pictures of rocks and the sea and the cold north. Jane is interested in them and makes up an idea about them. She likes the pictures. The author uses imagery here to show that Jane likes to read.

At the end Jane says she was happy in her way. She was afraid of interruption, which came too soon. This shows that Jane is happy when she is alone and that she does not like to be interrupted.

In conclusion, Charlotte Bronte uses imagery and characterization to show Jane's experience of exclusion. Jane is excluded by her family but she finds happiness in her book.

Scoring commentary. Row A (1): The response claims that Jane is excluded and finds happiness in her book, which is a (very thin) claim about meaning that the passage supports. The first sentence alone restates the prompt, and the point is awarded for the last line of the conclusion and the second sentence combined, narrowly. Row B (1): The body retells the passage in order. Evidence is general, commentary is limited to statements such as "This shows that Mrs. Reed is mean," and the only device named (imagery) is not analyzed. Row C (0): No sophistication. Total: 2.

Part 7: Question 3 (Literary Argument: A Minor Character Who Illuminates a Central Character or Theme)

Prompt-specific scoring notes

Rubric difference. Row B for Question 3 does not require explanation of literary elements or techniques at the 3-point level. Row B is about specific evidence, commentary that explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and, at the 4-point level, a consistent focus on the *work as a whole*. Plot summary alone earns at most 1 point in Row B.

What a defensible thesis looks like. The thesis must (a) identify a minor character in a work of fiction and (b) make a claim about how that character illuminates a central character or theme *and* contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. A claim such as "Owl Eyes is a minor character in *The Great Gatsby*" is not a thesis. A claim such as "Owl Eyes, the drunken observer in *Gatsby*'s library, shows that *Gatsby*'s illusion is both artificial and sincere, and in doing so reveals the novel's central tension between performance and reality" is defensible.

Choosing a minor character. A minor character may be present for a scene or two, or may be a significant secondary figure who does not drive the plot. Readers accept characters such as Helen Burns or Bertha Mason (*Jane Eyre*), Justine Moritz or the De Lacey family (*Frankenstein*), Horatio, Fortinbras, or Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (*Hamlet*), Owl Eyes, Klipspringer, or Mr. Gatz (*The Great Gatsby*), Eva Peace (*Sula*), Septimus Smith

(*Mrs. Dalloway*), Obierika or Ezeudu (*Things Fall Apart*), and Hortense (*Bleak House*), among many others. A response is not penalized for a character that some readers consider major if the response argues the character's role is limited and illuminating. A response that chooses a protagonist's closest companion (such as Nick) and treats him as a "minor" character without argument is likely to be weak.

What strong responses might argue. (*Examples across the list.*)

- A minor character serves as a **foil** whose differences clarify the protagonist's choices (Horatio's steadiness against Hamlet's turmoil; Helen Burns's forbearance against Jane's anger).
- A minor character serves as a **witness** whose perception reveals what the protagonist cannot see (Owl Eyes in the library).
- A minor character **embodies the theme** in a small compass (Justine as innocence condemned; Septimus as the cost of the war and of a society's incapacity to hear suffering).
- A minor character's **death or departure** marks a turning point in the central character's development.
- A minor character provides **social or historical context** that places the protagonist's problem inside a larger system.
- A minor character is **the one who tells the truth**, thereby exposing the protagonist's self-deception.
- A minor character **appears only briefly or is absent** yet shapes how the protagonist is judged (Myrtle Wilson's husband, who appears rarely but whose grief drives the novel's catastrophe).

Common traps. Summarizing the plot of the novel; choosing a character and describing him or her without connecting the description to a theme; writing about the protagonist for most of the essay; forgetting to say how the character contributes to the whole; vague evidence from a half-remembered book.

6-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 4, Row C: 1), *The Great Gatsby*, Owl Eyes

F. Scott Fitzgerald gives Owl Eyes only two short scenes in *The Great Gatsby*, but they bracket the novel's central question: whether the world Gatsby builds is a fraud or a work of faith. Owl Eyes, the drunken, bespectacled guest who marvels at Gatsby's books, sees that the library is theatrical and yet genuine, and the same double vision explains why Gatsby is both a con man and a dreamer. At the funeral, when almost no one else comes, Owl Eyes becomes the single witness who recognizes that the cost of Gatsby's illusion was real. Through him, Fitzgerald asks readers to interpret the novel not as the exposure of a fake but as a tragedy about the sincerity of a performance.

In Chapter 3, Nick finds Owl Eyes in the library, drunk, "staring with unsteady concentration" at the shelves. He announces, with astonishment, that the books are real: "absolutely real," with pages and everything. He had expected cardboard. This is a joke at the guests' expense, because it reveals what everyone at Gatsby's parties assumes: that nothing in Gatsby's world could be authentic. But it is also a small revelation about Gatsby. The books, like the house and the cars, are the properties of a man who wants to be seen as someone he is not, and yet the books are real. Owl Eyes then calls Gatsby "a regular Belasco," comparing him to the Broadway producer famous for realistic stage sets, and praises his "thoroughness" and "realism." The comparison is double-edged. A Belasco builds a world that is false but convincing, and the owl-eyed observer admires the effort even as he names the illusion. His admiration that Gatsby "didn't cut the pages," that he "knew when to stop," shows that Owl Eyes reads the library as deliberate design, and the fact that he cares at all suggests he sees what Nick will eventually see: that Gatsby's performance is not mere vanity but an act of commitment. Gatsby builds real things to serve an imagined self.

This scene illuminates the novel's central theme of the relationship between illusion and reality because it shows that in *Gatsby's* case the two are not opposites. Nick's final verdict on Gatsby is that he is "worth the whole damn bunch put together," and the reason is that Gatsby's dream, though based on a fantasy of Daisy and a past that cannot be repeated, is carried out with a "romantic readiness" that no other character shows. Owl Eyes anticipates that judgment. He is the first guest to look at the machinery of Gatsby's world and to see that it works. The scene also sets up the novel's treatment of the other guests, who consume Gatsby's hospitality but never inquire into the host. Owl Eyes, drunk and out of place, is the only one who looks closely, so the book's most perceptive early reading of Gatsby comes from the margin of the party.

Owl Eyes returns in Chapter 9, and the return shows the cost of the illusion. After Gatsby's death the crowds who attended his parties do not come to the funeral; Wolfsheim stays away, Klipspringer calls only to ask for his shoes, and the house is nearly empty. Owl Eyes arrives at the grave in the rain, wipes his glasses "outside and in," and says of Gatsby, "The poor son-of-a-bitch." The line is blunt and without ceremony, but it is the only tribute Gatsby receives from a guest. It echoes the earlier library scene, since the man who first saw that the books were real now sees that the grief is real. His sentence also lets the reader hear what Nick cannot say, that Gatsby was both pitiable and admirable. A cynic could read the funeral as proof that Gatsby's world was empty, since no one but Owl Eyes cared. But Owl Eyes, who knew Gatsby's world as spectacle, is the one who mourns, and that suggests that Gatsby's spectacle held a sincerity that deserves mourning.

By pairing the library scene with the funeral, Fitzgerald uses a minor character to frame a major interpretive question. The novel could be read as a satire of the Jazz Age in which fraud and carelessness destroy a man. Owl Eyes refuses that simplicity. In his two scenes we see that the fake and the real can be the same object, and that the people who see this are rare. This is why Nick, the narrator, can claim to disapprove of Gatsby "from beginning to end" and still say that Gatsby was better than the rest. Owl Eyes gives Nick a precedent. His brief appearances confirm that Gatsby's greatness is not in the truth of his dream but in the faith with which he built its stage.

Scoring commentary. Row A (1): The thesis names a minor character and makes a claim about how he illuminates Gatsby and the novel's theme of illusion and reality, and it states a payoff for the interpretation of the whole. Row B (4): Evidence is specific and drawn from both of Owl Eyes's scenes and from related moments (Klipspringer, Wolfsheim, Nick's judgment of Gatsby). The commentary explains how the details support the claims: the discovery that the books are real, the Belasco comparison, the contrast with the other guests, and the funeral line. Every paragraph returns to the interpretation of the work as a whole. The essay does not summarize the plot. Row C (1): The response entertains an alternative reading (the funeral as proof of emptiness) and answers it; it also places the Belasco comparison in context and sustains the tension between the fake and the real. Total: 6.

4-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 3, Row C: 0), *The Great Gatsby*, Owl Eyes

In *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the minor character Owl Eyes helps show that Gatsby's world is fake in some ways but real in others, and this helps the reader understand the theme of illusion and reality in the book as a whole.

Owl Eyes first appears in Chapter 3 at one of Gatsby's parties. Nick finds him in the library, drunk, with large glasses. He is amazed that the books in Gatsby's library are real. He says he thought they would be cardboard, but they are "absolutely real." This shows that most people think Gatsby's world is fake. Owl Eyes also compares

Gatsby to Belasco, a person who creates realistic sets for plays. This shows that Gatsby is putting on a show and creating an image, just like a theater producer. But the books are real, so there is something true underneath the show. This helps us see that Gatsby is more complicated than the other guests think.

Owl Eyes is important because he is different from the other guests. They come to the parties to drink and have fun and they do not think about who Gatsby is. They spread rumors about him, like that he killed a man. But Owl Eyes pays attention to the books and sees them for what they are. He is the only one who really looks at Gatsby's things. This makes the reader understand that Gatsby is a mystery and that most people only see the surface. Fitzgerald puts Owl Eyes in the library, away from the music and dancing, which also separates him from the crowd and shows that he is thinking while everyone else is drinking.

Owl Eyes appears again in Chapter 9 at Gatsby's funeral. Almost no one comes to the funeral, even though hundreds of people came to his parties. Owl Eyes comes and says "The poor son-of-a-bitch." This shows that he was the only person who cared about Gatsby. It also shows the theme of the book, that the people in the Jazz Age are shallow and do not care about each other. The people who went to the parties used Gatsby, and when he died they did not come. Owl Eyes is the exception. His short line is also very plain, and that plainness makes it feel more honest than the long, loud parties.

In conclusion, Owl Eyes is a minor character who helps to show the theme of illusion and reality in *The Great Gatsby*. He sees that Gatsby's world is both a show and real, and he is the only one who comes to the funeral. This helps the reader see that Gatsby's dream was real even though it was an illusion, and that the other people were not.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1):* The thesis identifies a minor character and makes a claim about how he contributes to the theme of illusion and reality in the whole work. *Row B (3):* The response gives specific, accurate evidence from two scenes (the library, the funeral) and explains how some of it supports the claim: the real books under the false show, Belasco as a producer of realistic sets, and the funeral as a contrast to the parties. It earns the third point. It does not earn the fourth because commentary is repetitive ("This shows that...", "This helps us see...") and explains less than it states, the third paragraph (about the other guests) drifts toward general statements about the Jazz Age, and the final claim about the "theme of the book" is asserted rather than argued. *Row C (0):* No sustained complexity or context. Total: 4.

2-point sample (Row A: 1, Row B: 1, Row C: 0), *The Great Gatsby*, Owl Eyes

In *The Great Gatsby* there are many characters, but the minor character Owl Eyes is important because he helps us understand Gatsby and the theme of the book.

The book is about a man named Jay Gatsby who is rich and throws parties because he wants to get Daisy back. Daisy is married to Tom Buchanan and lives across the bay in East Egg. Nick Carraway is the narrator and lives next door to Gatsby. Gatsby throws big parties every weekend and many people come. One night Nick goes to a party and meets a man who is called Owl Eyes because he wears big glasses. He is in the library and is drunk. He says the books are real.

Later in the story Gatsby is killed by Mr. Wilson, who thinks that Gatsby killed his wife Myrtle. Myrtle was actually killed by Daisy who was driving Gatsby's car. After Gatsby dies there is a funeral, and not many people come. Owl Eyes comes to the funeral and says something about Gatsby. This shows that Owl Eyes cared about Gatsby.

Owl Eyes is important because he shows that Gatsby is not as fake as people think. His books are real. He also shows that people did not care about Gatsby. Owl Eyes helps the reader understand that Gatsby was a good person who was treated badly. I think this is what the author wants us to remember about him when we finish

reading. Gatsby wanted to be loved and wanted to win Daisy, but in the end he was alone. The funeral shows how lonely he was even though he was always surrounded by people at his parties. In conclusion, Owl Eyes is a minor character who helps us understand Gatsby and the book's theme.

Scoring commentary. *Row A (1):* The first sentence claims that Owl Eyes helps us understand Gatsby and the theme. This is too general to be a strong thesis, but the later claim that Owl Eyes “shows that Gatsby is not as fake as people think” is a claim about meaning the text supports; the point is awarded narrowly. *Row B (1):* The second and third paragraphs are plot summary that does not concern Owl Eyes (Daisy, Tom, Myrtle, Wilson). Evidence about the library and funeral is general and unquoted (“says something about Gatsby”), and commentary stops at “This shows that Owl Eyes cared.” The essay never explains how Owl Eyes illuminates a theme or contributes to the whole. *Row C (0):* None. Total: 2.

End of Answer Key.

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