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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Literature and Composition — Practice Exam 5: Answer Key, Explanations, and Sample Essays

Contents: (1) Section I answer key; (2) explanations for all 55 multiple-choice questions; (3) scoring materials and sample essays for Free-Response Questions 1, 2, and 3; (4) how to score yourself.

Source and attribution notes. Passage 1 is William Blake, "London" (*Songs of Experience*, 1794). Passage 2 is from Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Chapter 5 (1818; text of the 1831 revised edition). Passage 3 is A. E. Housman, "To an Athlete Dying Young" (*A Shropshire Lad*, 1896). Passage 4 (the Calder scene), Passage 5 (the Hanover Row story), and the Question 2 passage (the Karin Sundahl homestead passage) were written for this practice exam in period styles and are not by the authors they resemble. Free-Response Question 1 is Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842).

Part 1: Section I Answer Key

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
1	B	NAR 4.A	1 Poem (Blake)	E
2	D	FIG 5.A	1	E
3	A	STR 3.C	1	M
4	C	FIG 5.B	1	M
5	C	FIG 5.D	1	E
6	B	FIG 5.C	1	M
7	A	FIG 6.B	1	H
8	D	STR 3.D	1	H
9	B	FIG 6.B	1	M

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
10	A	LAN 7.B	1	M
11	C	LAN 7.D	1	M
12	D	SET 2.B	2 Prose (Shelley)	E
13	A	CHR 1.A	2	M
14	B	NAR 4.C	2	M
15	C	STR 3.D	2	M
16	B	NAR 4.C	2	H
17	D	CHR 1.E	2	E
18	D	STR 3.E	2	M
19	A	NAR 4.D	2	H
20	C	FIG 6.D	2	M
21	C	CHR 1.A	2	M
22	B	LAN 7.D	2	M
23	A	NAR 4.B	3 Poem (Housman)	E
24	C	STR 3.D	3	M
25	B	FIG 5.A	3	E
26	D	NAR 4.C	3	H
27	A	FIG 6.B	3	M
28	C	STR 3.B	3	M
29	D	STR 3.C	3	M
30	B	NAR 4.C	3	H
31	A	FIG 5.D	3	M
32	B	FIG 5.C	3	H
33	C	LAN 7.D	3	M
34	C	SET 2.B	4 Drama (original)	E
35	D	CHR 1.A	4	E
36	B	NAR 4.C	4	M
37	A	CHR 1.D	4	M
38	D	CHR 1.D	4	H

Q	ANS	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFF
39	B	NAR 4.C	4	H
40	A	STR 3.E	4	M
41	C	STR 3.B	4	M
42	D	CHR 1.B	4	H
43	D	CHR 1.E	4	H
44	A	LAN 7.B	4	M
45	B	NAR 4.B	5 Prose (original)	E
46	C	SET 2.B	5	E
47	A	CHR 1.A	5	E
48	C	NAR 4.C	5	M
49	D	FIG 6.A	5	E
50	B	CHR 1.D	5	H
51	A	STR 3.D	5	H
52	C	NAR 4.C	5	H
53	B	FIG 6.C	5	H
54	D	STR 3.C	5	E
55	A	LAN 7.A	5	M

Tally by letter: A = 14, B = 14, C = 14, D = 13. **Skill tally:** NAR 12, CHR 10, STR 11, FIG 13, SET 3, LAN 6. **Format items:** EXCEPT = 4 (Questions 5, 18, 43, 51); Roman numeral = 3 (Questions 6, 21, 52). **Difficulty:** 14 easy, 27 medium, 14 hard.

Part 2: Explanations for Section I

Passage 1 — Blake, “London” (Questions 1–11)

1. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.A – identify and describe the speaker.] The speaker is a walker: “I wander thro’ each charter’d street,” he “mark[s]” faces, and he “hear[s]” cries and curses as he moves from the Thames to the midnight streets. He records and condemns but never acts. (A) is wrong because the speaker proposes no remedy of any kind. (C) is wrong because he indicts the very institutions (Church, Palace, charter) that a secure resident would trust. (D) is wrong because nothing in the poem suggests unfamiliarity; he says “each” street and “every” face, which implies long acquaintance.

2. Answer: D. [Skill: FIG 5.A – literal and figurative meaning.] A “charter” is a legal grant of rights and ownership, so streets and even a river that are “charter’d” are held, bounded, and owned under law. The repeated word sets up the poem’s theme of institutional control. (A) is the sound-alike trap, treating “charter” as a mapping term. (B) misreads the word as “chartered” a boat or bus for hire. (C) takes the pleasant connotation of privilege as a grant of honor, which ignores the oppressive context of the following lines.

3. Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.C – function of structure and repetition.] The anaphora of “In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant’s cry of fear, / In every voice” (lines 5–7), together with “Marks of weakness, marks of woe,” builds a sense of totality: there is no face, voice, or age exempt. (B) is wrong because the speaker joins the suffering by hearing it; he never claims superiority. (C) is wrong because the repetition describes what the speaker perceives, not the indifference of Londoners. (D) is wrong because the effect is cumulative and oppressive rather than soothing.

4. Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 5.B – function of specific words.] Related to “pall” (to make pale or shrouded), “appalls” means to horrify and shame. The sweeper’s cry reproaches a Church whose walls are “black’ning” in both a literal (soot) and a moral sense. (A) “amuses” reverses the tone. (B) “darkens” is attractive because of “black’ning” in the same line, but “appalls” does not mean to darken, and the verb “black’ning” already supplies that image. (D) “summons” is a literal-minded guess that ignores the context of reproach.

5. Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 5.D – imagery.] This is an EXCEPT item: three of the four kinds of imagery are present, and the key is the one that is absent. Visual: “every face,” “black’ning Church,” “blood.” Auditory: “cry,” “voice,” “sigh,” “curse.” Kinesthetic: “wander,” “Runs in blood down Palace walls.” No smell appears anywhere in the poem. So (C) olfactory is the key, and (A), (B), (D) are all present.

6. Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 5.C – symbols.] The Church and the Palace stand as symbols of religious and political power. Statement I is true: the Church is “black’ning” and the Palace is bloodied by suffering that the institutions have not relieved. Statement II is true: the sweeper’s cry “appalls” the Church and the soldier’s sigh “Runs in blood down Palace walls.” Statement III is false; the images are accusatory, not images of sympathetic response. Only (B), “I and II only,” matches.

7. Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 6.B – metaphor.] A sigh cannot literally run as blood. The metaphor turns the soldier’s private, unheard suffering into a public stain on the Palace, implying that the monarchy’s wars are paid for by men like him. (B) takes the figure literally as battle damage. (C) invents a punishment that the poem never mentions. (D) reverses the implication: the blood is an accusation, not an honor.

8. Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.D – function of contrasts and shifts.] Stanzas 1–3 move from the streets to the Church and Palace, the public institutions. “But most” begins a new emphasis at “midnight”: the Harlot’s curse, the infant’s tear, and the “Marriage hearse” bring suffering into sexuality, birth, and marriage, that is, into private and family life. (A) is wrong because hope never enters the poem. (B) is wrong because the poem contains no memory. (C) reverses the movement, since the last stanza is more intimate, not more official.

9. Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 6.B – figurative comparison.] A marriage carriage and a hearse are brought together in a single compressed phrase: the institution that should shelter new life is joined to death (“plagues”). That is an oxymoron-like paradox. (A) is wrong because the phrase intensifies rather than softens. (C) is wrong because no specific funeral is evoked. (D) is wrong because there is no “like” or “as” and nothing about a journey.

10. Answer: A. [Skill: LAN 7.B – defensible interpretation.] The claim has two parts, both supported: suffering is “in every” face and voice, and it is sustained by “charter’d” streets, the Church, the Palace, and the “mind-forg’d manacles.” (B) is wrong because charity is never mentioned. (C) is wrong because the poem pities rather than

blames the poor. (D) is wrong because no countryside appears.

11. Answer: C. [Skill: LAN 7.D – select evidence.] A claim that suffering is partly self-imposed needs evidence of internalized bondage, and “The mind-forg’d manacles I hear” says that the chains are made by the mind. (A) and (B) describe where and what the speaker sees but not who forged the bondage. (D) concerns the effect of the Harlot’s curse on an infant, which is not self-imposed.

Passage 2 — Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Questions 12–22)

12. Answer: D. [Skill: SET 2.B – function of setting.] The “dreary night of November,” the hour (“one in the morning”), the “dismal” rain, and the dying candle surround the “accomplishment” with gloom, so that the reader senses that the triumph will turn sour. (A) is wrong because the time is stated, not criticized. (B) is wrong because no storm later interrupts anything. (C) is wrong because the work is complete, not hindered.

13. Answer: A. [Skill: CHR 1.A – details reveal a character’s perspective.] “I had selected his features as beautiful” shows that Victor planned an ideal and expected to achieve it, which is why the actual result produces shock. (B) is wrong because he does not take pride at the moment; he is appalled. (C) is wrong because he assumes beauty matters, which is why he chose it. (D) has no support in the text.

14. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – details and syntax reveal perspective.] The exclamation, set after his claim that he chose beautiful features, is bitterly ironic: “Beautiful!” echoes his intention and then collapses into “Great God!” at the reality. (A) misreads irony as sincerity. (C) is wrong because no critic is imagined. (D) is wrong because the focus is the gap between plan and result, not fear of others.

15. Answer: C. [Skill: STR 3.D – function of contrasts.] The parts (“lustrous black” hair, “pearly whiteness” teeth) would be beautiful alone, but they “only formed a more horrid contrast” with the eyes, skin, and lips. The contrast between beautiful details and a horrifying whole is the point. (A) is wrong because no gentle manner is mentioned. (B) is wrong because lines 12–17 describe the creature, not the narrator’s moods. (D) introduces mental weakness, which the passage never discusses.

16. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – syntax and diction reveal perspective.] The aphoristic sentence universalizes: Victor’s sudden reversal is offered as an example of how changeable “the feelings of human nature” are. It also begins the paragraph that moves from description to his psychological reaction. (A) is close but overstates a shift of attention away from himself, since the next sentences return to “I.” (C) is wrong because the sentence is not an apology. (D) is wrong because the next sentences confirm, not contradict, that he worked hard.

17. Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.E – choices and actions reveal a character.] Victor “rushed out of the room” and paced his bedchamber, unable even to look at the being he had spent two years creating. He flees. (A) is wrong because he does not plan to warn anyone. (B) is wrong because he never decides to destroy it. (C) is wrong because he does not seek help.

18. Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.E – function of a significant event.] This is an EXCEPT item. The dream extends his horror into sleep (A), joins creation with death through the corpse and grave-worms (B), and turns the kiss for Elizabeth into the embrace of a corpse (C). Nothing in the dream shows the creature threatening Elizabeth; the creature appears only after Victor wakes, so (D) is the key.

19. Answer: A. [Skill: NAR 4.D – reliability.] Victor concedes “He might have spoken, but I did not hear” and that the hand was “seemingly to detain me.” The hedges show that he is interpreting an ambiguous gesture through terror; the creature may have wanted contact rather than harm. (B) states as fact what the narrator himself hedges. (C) is wrong because he vividly recalls the scene. (D) has no textual basis.

20. Answer: C. [Skill: FIG 6.D – allusion.] Dante's *Inferno* is a standard of imagined horror; saying the creature surpasses what "even Dante could not have conceived" claims that its hideousness exceeds the greatest literary visions of hell. (A) is wrong because the allusion concerns the creature, not Victor's education. (B) mistakes the reference for a comparison with a character. (D) borrows the idea of a journey from the *Divine Comedy*, which the passage does not use.

21. Answer: C. [Skill: CHR 1.A – details reveal a character's state.] Statement I is false: the paragraph describes "bitterness of disappointment," not relief. Statement II is true: dreams that were "pleasant rest" are "now become a hell." Statement III is true: his pulse, arteries, "languor and extreme weakness." So (C), "II and III only."

22. Answer: B. [Skill: LAN 7.D – select evidence.] The claim is that the horror comes from lost ideals rather than injury from the creature. "The beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" makes the loss of the dream the immediate cause. (A) is about weather. (C) and (D) show physical fear, which fits a different claim.

Passage 3 — Housman, "To an Athlete Dying Young" (Questions 23–33)

23. Answer: A. [Skill: NAR 4.B – point of view.] "We chaired you" and "we bring you home" show a speaker who belongs to the crowd that cheered and now carries the coffin. (B) and (C) assign roles the poem never mentions. (D) is wrong because the speaker joins in the carrying and the praise.

24. Answer: C. [Skill: STR 3.D – contrast.] Both stanzas feature "shoulder-high" and a procession to the athlete's home. In stanza 1 it is a triumph; in stanza 2 the same gesture carries a coffin to his "threshold." Only (C) captures the repetition with a reversed meaning. (A) is wrong because stanza 1 does not cause stanza 2. (B) and (D) do not describe two parallel scenes.

25. Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 5.A – literal versus figurative.] The "stiller town" follows "set you at your threshold down" and refers to the grave: the town of the dead, which is "stiller" than the market-place. (A) and (D) read the phrase literally. (C) refers to the speaker's own town, but the phrase names the town to which the athlete has gone.

26. Answer: D. [Skill: NAR 4.C – tone.] The phrase "Smart lad" approves of the athlete's timing while stating a bleak thought, that dying young is clever because it escapes the decline of fame. The paired answer is correct only if both words hold: "approving" (he is being praised) and "grimly ironic" (it is a grim thing to praise). (A) is wrong because there is no resentment. (B) fits the first stanza more than line 9. (C) is wrong because the address is personal, not clinical.

27. Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 6.B – metaphor.] The laurel (victory) grows "early" but "withers quicker than the rose" (a proverbial image of fragile beauty), so glory is faster to fade than even delicate things. (B) is wrong because love is not discussed. (C) reverses the comparison. (D) reads the tone of the town's cheering as insincere with no support.

28. Answer: C. [Skill: STR 3.B – function of a sequence of lines.] The speaker reasons that the dead cannot see "the record cut" or hear applause, so "silence sounds no worse than cheers / After earth has stopped the ears." This is an argument that the loss of acclaim means nothing to the dead. (A) is wrong because the lines are argumentative, not mournful. (B) accuses no one. (D) is wrong because the lines look forward, not back.

29. Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.C – structure.] Stanzas 1–2 contrast two processions; stanzas 3–5 offer the consoling argument that early death spares him the fate of faded athletes; stanzas 6–7 imagine him among the dead holding the cup. (A) is wrong because there is no anger. (B) is wrong because there is no hope for the

future. (C) is wrong because the town's values are not criticized.

30. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – speaker's perspective.] The "lads that wore their honours out" and the "Runners whom renown outran" are those who live past their fame ("the name died before the man"). The speaker sees this as a humiliation the athlete escapes. (A) is not a theme of the poem. (C) is absurd as advice. (D) is wrong because the speaker values the athlete's name.

31. Answer: A. [Skill: FIG 5.D – imagery.] The "sill of shade" and "low lintel" make the grave a house with a doorway, and the athlete is told to hold up the cup there. The image makes the grave a place where his victory is kept. (B) and (C) invert the consoling tone. (D) misreads "foot on the sill" as a failed race.

32. Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 5.C – symbol.] The laurel garland is the traditional symbol of victory. Though a garland is "briefer than a girl's," it is "unwithered," so early death has preserved his fame at its height. (A) assigns the symbol to the dead rather than the athlete. (C) and (D) introduce relationships that are not in the poem.

33. Answer: C. [Skill: LAN 7.D – select evidence.] "Strengthless dead" reminds the reader that the athlete's strength is gone, a note of loss under the consolation. (A) and (B) support the speaker's praise. (D) praises the preserved trophy.

Passage 4 — Original problem-play scene (Questions 34–44)

34. Answer: C. [Skill: SET 2.B – function of setting.] The wet November afternoon, the "low" fire, Isobel with her back turned, and the letter held "as one holds a thing not quite clean" create a gloomy, tense domestic stage on which a confrontation is waiting. (A) is wrong because the party is not yet visible. (B) is wrong because wealth is not emphasized. (D) is not signaled by the direction.

35. Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.A.] Placing the hat down "with great care" is an overcontrolled gesture that hides irritation, matching the formal politeness of his first speeches. (A) is contradicted by his questions. (B) and (C) have no basis in the lines.

36. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – tone through diction.] "So good as to share" is sarcasm: Calder claims that because Isobel shares his surname, a letter bearing it is his to open. (A) mistakes sarcasm for sincerity. (C) and (D) are contradicted by his continuing to justify himself.

37. Answer: A. [Skill: CHR 1.D – relationships.] Calder claimed that he noticed the address only after opening the letter; Isobel quietly points out that her name was plainly on the envelope. This exposes the weakness in his claim. (B) and (C) are wrong because she does not apologize or plead. (D) is wrong because she stays on the subject.

38. Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.D.] "You did not say that I might own nothing of my own, but you meant it" shows that she now reads "Everything here is yours" as a form of ownership, not a gift. (A) reverses her meaning. (B) introduces wealth, which is not her complaint. (C) is wrong because she is reflecting on the cost of the house.

39. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.C – speaker's perspective.] "You would have been just, and Dick would have been a case" implies that Calder would have applied impartial procedure ("written to a solicitor") and treated the boy as a matter to be handled rather than a person. (A) is contradicted by "just." (C) and (D) are unsupported.

40. Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.E – function of an event.] She burns the letter immediately after rejecting forgiveness: "I find I do not want to be forgiven." The burning removes the evidence from Calder's reach and refuses the role his offer would give her. (B) is wrong because the payments are not wrongdoing in her eyes. (C) has no basis. (D) contradicts her last speech.

41. Answer: C. [Skill: STR 3.B.] After the silence she asks “Is it the money that wounds you? Or that there is a household in Leeds that does not depend upon your good opinion?” The conversation turns from the payments to the marriage. (A) and (B) are not in the text. (D) is wrong because the argument intensifies.

42. Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.B – change.] He “looks at” his hat and “sets it down again”; he sits with “hands open on his knees.” The controlling man of the opening is subdued. (A) is wrong because the posture shows uncertainty, not relief. (B) and (C) describe active responses that he does not make.

43. Answer: D. [Skill: CHR 1.E.] This is an EXCEPT item. Calder expresses injury (“Stung”), implies a wife’s duty (“a poor wife who must be caught before she is candid”), and reduces the matter to sums (“Forty pounds, four times”). He never concedes that his own habits may have prompted her secrecy; even his final offer is generosity, not self-examination. So (D) is the key.

44. Answer: A. [Skill: LAN 7.B – thesis.] A strong thesis makes a defensible, specific claim about meaning and sets up a line of reasoning. (A) does so. (B) is a restatement of topic. (C) offers labels. (D) is a generality that could apply to any play.

Passage 5 — Original Irish realist story (Questions 45–55)

45. Answer: B. [Skill: NAR 4.B.] “A speech I still cannot remember without discomfort” and the final reflection show an adult looking back and judging the boy’s feelings. (A) ignores that retrospective stance. (C) is wrong because the narrator is a character with limited knowledge. (D) is wrong because he interprets freely.

46. Answer: C. [Skill: SET 2.B.] Boiled bacon, rising damp, and the aunt’s insistence on the kitchen show a house that is cramped and unpleasant. The narrator stands at the window looking out. (A) and (D) have no support. (B) is wrong because the mention of August belongs to a complaint about the other months, not a longing for summer.

47. Answer: A. [Skill: CHR 1.A / simile.] The simile compares the promise to a coin he could not bring himself to spend: he treasured it and feared spoiling it. (B) takes the coin literally. (C) is wrong because the narrator is hopeful. (D) is wrong because the simile does not concern giving.

48. Answer: C. [Skill: NAR 4.C.] He admits “her glance had passed through the glass” though “she could not have seen me in the unlit room,” and she answered his offer by turning her bracelet and saying only “it was kind.” His feeling is intense but built from small, ambiguous signs. (A) and (B) contradict the details. (D) is wrong because nothing in the girl’s words is encouragement.

49. Answer: D. [Skill: FIG 6.A.] The furniture simile shows that the uncle sees the boy as an object he is used to and does not think about until it is out of place. (A) mistakes the surprise for a spatial one. (B) and (C) are emotions the simile does not carry.

50. Answer: B. [Skill: CHR 1.D.] The uncle’s late return is the reason the boy is being kept from his pleasure, yet he speaks as though he were granting permission. The speech is unintentionally ironic. (A) is contradicted by his forgetting. (C) and (D) are not in the passage.

51. Answer: A. [Skill: STR 3.D.] This is an EXCEPT item. The stalls are shrouded and “being counted out,” so the vendors are already closing; the claim that they have not begun to close is false. (B), (C), and (D) each pair a correct expectation with an accurate finding, so (A) is the key.

52. Answer: C. [Skill: NAR 4.C.] Statement I is false: the vendors are “patient” and the young woman speaks “without malice.” Statement II is true: “tradesmen at the close of a long day.” Statement III is true: the ribbons are “cheap” and “none was the colour I had carried in my mind.” So (C).

53. Answer: B. [Skill: FIG 6.C – personification.] The sound that “went about the hall without finding anything to rest upon” is given an aimless search, which mirrors the boy’s lack of anything solid to hold after his hopes collapse. (A) is wrong because the size of the hall is not the concern. (C) wrongly makes the clock a witness. (D) is wrong because fear of the dark is not suggested.

54. Answer: D. [Skill: STR 3.C.] The passage moves from the long wait and the florin held warm in his hand to a hall of covered stalls and a final “mistake” he “could not yet name.” (A) is wrong because the feelings are not resolved. (B) is wrong because the uncle is not forgiven or criticized. (C) reverses the facts.

55. Answer: A. [Skill: LAN 7.A – claim and evidence.] The last sentence names the mistake as something “so carefully tended” that he never saw it: an illusion of his own making. (B) and (D) are plot details. (C) records the vendor’s words and supports a claim about the fair, not about his illusions.

Part 3: Free-Response Question 1 — Poetry Analysis (Browning, “My Last Duchess”)

Scoring Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point). *0 points:* There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt, simply describe the poem, state only a topic or a list of techniques, or make a claim that the poem cannot support. *1 point:* The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the poem.

Decision rules: The thesis may be one or more sentences, and it may appear anywhere in the response. It must make a claim about meaning, not just name devices. A thesis that merely restates the prompt (“the speaker has a complex attitude”) does not earn the point; one that says what the complexity is, does. The claim need not preview every body paragraph, and it need not be fully proven in the thesis itself.

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

POINTS	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent; opinion with no reference to the poem; irrelevant references.
1	Provides evidence that is mostly general. Commentary may be absent, or it merely summarizes the evidence.	Summary or description of the poem; names techniques with little or no explanation.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence. Commentary explains how some of the evidence 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; simplistic or repetitive explanations; one point developed while others are underdeveloped; unclear connections between claims.

POINTS	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and it explains how at least one literary element or technique contributes to the meaning of the poem.	Uniformly specific evidence; focus on particular words and details; multiple supporting claims; some evidence may be unintegrated or some commentary may remain general.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and it explains how multiple literary elements or techniques contribute to the meaning of the poem.	Everything in the 3-point response, plus every claim clearly explained, and several techniques shown working together toward the interpretation.

Decision rules: Writing that suffers from errors of grammar or mechanics that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point. Repeated instances of one technique (for example, several images) earn credit for multiple elements only if each is shown to add something different to the meaning; otherwise the response is capped at 3. A response may use no technical vocabulary and still earn 3 or 4 if it analyzes how specific language creates meaning. A response with no thesis can still earn Row B points. Plot summary or paraphrase alone is a 1.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point). *0 points:* The response does not meet the criteria. *1 point:* The response demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument in at least one of four ways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poem; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. **Decision rules:** The sophistication must be part of the argument throughout, not a single sentence. It is **not** earned by sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (for example, “Throughout history, humans have...”), by merely hinting at an alternative reading, by a single insightful sentence in the conclusion, by oversimplifying a complexity the poem contains, or by ornate language that does not advance the argument.

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

What a defensible thesis looks like. A thesis earns Row A if it says *what* the Duke’s attitude is and does not merely call it complex. Defensible claims include: (1) the Duke simultaneously admires the Duchess’s beauty and resents the generosity of her feeling, and can resolve that conflict only by turning her into a possession; (2) his pride in rank is the real object of his feeling, and the Duchess’s offense was that she did not value it; (3) his admiration is real but is admiration for the portrait, which, unlike the woman, stays where he puts it. Theses that only say “the Duke is controlling” are defensible but thin, since the prompt requires a complex attitude; theses that say “Browning uses imagery, diction, and tone to show the Duke’s complex attitude” restate the prompt and earn nothing.

What strong responses might argue (any of these, developed with specific language, can support a 5 or 6):

- The possessive diction of the opening ("my last Duchess," "that piece a wonder," "there she stands") shows that the Duke admires the portrait as an acquisition, and the repetition of "there she stands / As if alive" at the poem's close makes the opening admiration chilling.
- The curtain "I have drawn for you, but I" shows the Duke's control over who sees her, and thus over her expression, even now.
- The catalogue of things that pleased her (his "favour," the sunset, the cherries, the white mule) shows what offends him: she did not rank his gift above ordinary pleasures. The levelling syntax enacts the insult.
- The thrice-repeated "stoop" reveals that his pride in his "nine-hundred-years-old name" prevented him from speaking to her as an equal, and thus created the silence that ended in "commands."
- The understatement of "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together" conveys violence by its absence; the enjambment lets the line break fall where the life stops.
- The Duke's self-presentation as inarticulate ("which I have not") is contradicted by the fluency of the couplets: the form, with its conversational enjambment, is itself the mask. The reader sees a mind that cannot hide what it takes pride in.
- The shift at "I repeat, / The Count your master's..." and the closing allusion to Neptune "taming a sea-horse" connect the first marriage and the next: the Duchess was, and the new bride will be, something to subdue and display.
- The dramatic situation (an audience of one, an envoy) complicates the Duke's attitude: part of what he performs is calculated, so the reader must separate his feelings from his rhetoric.

Common traps. (1) Summary: retelling that the Duke killed or ordered the death of his wife, with no analysis of how Browning's language makes the reader sense it. (2) Device lists: "Browning uses enjambment, alliteration, and imagery," without saying what any of them does. (3) Treating the Duke as the poet: attributing the Duke's views to Browning, or missing the irony between what the Duke intends to convey and what he reveals. (4) Ignoring the word *complex*: describing only contempt or only admiration. (5) Missing the ending: leaving out the turn to the dowry and the sculpture, which reframes the whole monologue. (6) Over-reading biography: citing Browning's life or the historical Duke of Ferrara in place of the text.

Sample Essay A — 6/6 (Row A 1, Row B 4, Row C 1)

Browning's Duke wants his visitor to believe that he is a connoisseur, a man of taste gently remembering a lost wife. The poem lets his own language prove otherwise. Through possessive diction, a repeated emphasis on "stoop," and a conversational verse form that hides control beneath ease, Browning portrays an attitude that is neither simple admiration nor simple contempt but a jealous need to own the Duchess, one the Duke can satisfy only by turning a living woman into a painting that he alone may unveil.

The poem's first line already reveals this attitude. "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall" places the wife behind a possessive pronoun and a wall, and the Duke's praise, "I call / That piece a wonder," admires the portrait rather than the woman; "piece" reduces her to an item in a collection. His claim that she looks "as if she were alive" is a compliment to the painter's skill, and it carries an irony that surfaces at the end, when he repeats, "There she stands / As if alive." The first time the phrase sounds like admiration. The second time, after the Duke has explained what he did to make her stand there, it is chilling. The repetition frames the whole monologue and shows that what he values in her is her stillness. His control of the portrait extends to the curtain that "none puts by... but I," and the parenthetical aside shows his pride in being the only one who decides who may look at her "depth and passion." He can admire the passion in the portrait precisely because it is safe behind a curtain.

When the Duke turns to the living Duchess, his admiration curdles into resentment, and Browning shows this through a list. “My favour at her breast, / The dropping of the daylight in the West, / The bough of cherries some officious fool / Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule” all draw the same “approving speech” from her. The syntax lumps together the Duke’s gift, a sunset, a servant’s cherries, and an animal, and the Duke’s grievance is exactly this levelling. That she gave the same warmth to his jewel and to a mule is, for him, an insult. He calls her “too soon made glad, / Too easily impressed,” but his own complaint shows that the quality he condemns is generosity. The pause in “how shall I say?” pretends that he is hunting for a delicate word, but it is rehearsed; it lets him present contempt as tolerant reluctance.

The most revealing word is “stoop.” The Duke says that no one would “stoop to blame / This sort of trifling,” and later that to correct her would be “some stooping; and I choose / Never to stoop.” The repetition shows that pride in his “nine-hundred-years-old name” forbade him to speak to her as an equal. Rather than telling her what disgusts him, he let resentment harden until, in a line of chilling economy, “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” The enjambment lets the line break fall at the moment of silence, and the semicolon leaves the violence unspoken. The understatement is the poem’s most devastating technique, because the Duke assumes that his listener will find his logic reasonable.

Yet the poem complicates any reading of the Duke as merely cold. His disavowal of eloquence, “Even had you skill / In speech (which I have not),” is a lie, since the entire poem is a performance of fluent, persuasive speech in couplets so unobtrusive that they sound like talk. This form is itself characterization: iambic pentameter that runs on across its line ends makes menace sound civilized. The final turn from the portrait to the dowry and the bronze “Neptune, / Taming a sea-horse” confirms the continuity. For the Duke, a wife, a statue, and a painting are possessions, and the new marriage will be another acquisition. The last words, “cast in bronze for me,” echo the first “my.”

The Duke’s attitude toward his late wife is therefore a contradiction he cannot see: he admires her beauty only now that she can smile at no one but him, and he resents her warmth even as he keeps its image on his wall.

Scoring commentary. *Row A:* 1. The opening paragraph makes a defensible claim that defines the complexity (admiration and contempt resolved into possession). *Row B:* 4. Evidence is specific and drawn from the whole poem (opening, curtain, list, “stoop,” “commands,” Neptune), and commentary explains how each choice produces meaning. Multiple techniques (possessive diction, repetition, syntax of the list, enjambment and understatement, verse form) are shown to contribute distinct effects to a single line of reasoning. *Row C:* 1. The essay sustains a tension throughout (the Duke performs fluency while denying it; the same phrase “as if alive” means two things at the beginning and the end) and accounts for how the Duke’s self-presentation differs from what he reveals. It is part of the argument, not a closing flourish.

Sample Essay B — 4/6 (Row A 1, Row B 3, Row C 0)

In “My Last Duchess,” Robert Browning uses diction, imagery, and structure to show that the Duke is proud, controlling, and jealous of his late wife. Although the Duke seems to admire her, his true feelings are anger and a need to control her.

At the start of the poem the Duke shows the envoy a portrait of the Duchess. He says “That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall” and calls it “a wonder.” The word “my” shows that the Duke thinks of the Duchess as his property, and the word “last” suggests that there will be others. He also says that he drew the curtain over the portrait himself, which shows that he likes to be in control of who sees her. This tells the reader that the Duke is a controlling man.

The Duke then explains what he disliked about his wife. He says that she had “a heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad.” The dash makes it seem like he is thinking of the right words, but he really is criticizing her. He lists the things that made her happy, such as his “favour at her breast,” the sunset, a bough of cherries, and her white mule. By putting these together, the Duke shows that he is angry because she liked everything the same, even though he gave her his name. The “nine-hundred-years-old name” shows that he is very proud of his family. He says that he would never “stoop” to tell her what he disliked, which shows his pride again. Because he would not talk to her, her smiling went on until “I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” This implies that he had her killed.

The Duke’s tone also changes as he talks. At first he sounds proud and polite, saying “Will’t please you sit and look at her?” as if he were only a good host, but by the middle he is bitter and defensive. He says “Sir, ’twas all one!” which sounds angry, and he asks “Who’d stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?” as though no one could disagree with him. The change in tone shows that the Duke is not as calm as he wants to appear and that the Duchess’s behavior bothered him much more than he admits. This makes the reader see him as someone who hides his feelings behind good manners.

The structure of the poem also helps show the Duke’s character. The poem is written in couplets, and the lines run over into the next lines, so that the Duke sounds like he is just talking. This shows that he is calm even when he talks about something terrible. At the end, the Duke turns to talking about the dowry for the Count’s daughter and shows the envoy a statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse. This is important because it shows that he wants to control his next wife the same way that he controlled the Duchess. Neptune taming the sea-horse is a metaphor for the Duke taming his wife.

In conclusion, Browning uses diction, structure, and imagery to show the Duke’s complex attitude toward the Duchess. He is proud and jealous and wants to control her, even after her death. This shows that the Duke is a dangerous man.

Scoring commentary. *Row A: 1.* “The Duke is proud, controlling, and jealous... Although he seems to admire her, his true feelings are anger and a need to control her” is a defensible claim that goes beyond restating the prompt. *Row B: 3.* The evidence is specific (“my,” the curtain, the list, “stoop,” “commands,” Neptune), and the commentary explains how the diction and the verse form contribute to the Duke’s characterization (the possessive “my”; couplets and enjambment that sound conversational). However, much of the commentary stays general (“this shows that the Duke is controlling” appears several times), the paragraph about the list asserts rather than demonstrates why the combination matters, and the final comparison to Neptune is stated without close attention to the language. The line of reasoning is present but plain, so the response does not earn the fourth point. *Row C: 0.* The essay mostly treats the Duke as one-dimensionally controlling; it does not examine the tension between his admiration and his resentment, the gap between his performance and his revelation, or any alternative reading. The conclusion repeats the thesis.

Sample Essay C — 2/6 (Row A 1, Row B 1, Row C 0)

In the poem “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning the speaker is a duke who loved his wife’s portrait but hated that she was friendly to everyone. This is why he decided to kill her.

The poem starts with the Duke showing a painting of his wife to a man who is visiting. He says that it is a wonder and that the painter worked on it for a day. The Duke says that the Duchess had a spot of joy on her cheek and that she was too easily made happy. She liked a lot of things, such as the sunset and the cherries and her white

mule. The Duke did not like that she smiled at everyone the same way. He says that he did not want to stoop to tell her what was wrong. Then he gave commands and her smiles stopped.

Browning uses imagery like the sunset and the cherries to show what she liked. There is also a metaphor when the Duke says that she had a “spot of joy.” Browning also uses repetition when he says “there she stands” two times. The poem also has rhyme, which is couplets. The Duke uses a lot of dialogue and talks in a polite way even though he is a murderer.

At the end of the poem the Duke tells the man to come downstairs and meet the company. He also talks about the Count’s daughter and the dowry and says to look at the statue of Neptune. This shows that the Duke is going to marry again. The Duke is a bad husband and he does not treat women well.

In conclusion, Browning uses many literary devices to show the Duke’s feelings about his wife. The poem is a good example of a dramatic monologue and it shows a man who is jealous and proud.

Scoring commentary. *Row A: 1.* The first paragraph makes a claim about the Duke’s attitude (he loved the portrait but resented her friendliness, and so had her killed) that the poem supports. It is simple, but it is a defensible interpretation and not a restatement. *Row B: 1.* The body is nearly all summary. Evidence is mostly general paraphrase (“she liked a lot of things”). Devices are named (imagery, “metaphor,” repetition, rhyme) with little or no explanation of their effect, and “spot of joy” is mislabeled as a metaphor without discussion. The comment that the Duke is “polite even though he is a murderer” gestures at the gap between manner and conduct, but it is not developed. *Row C: 0.* There is no attention to tension, context, or alternative readings, and the conclusion repeats the thesis in generalities.

Part 4: Free-Response Question 2 — Prose Fiction Analysis (Karin Sundahl on the homestead)

Scoring Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point). *0 points:* There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt, simply describe the passage, state only a topic or a list of techniques, or make a claim that the passage cannot support. *1 point:* The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the passage. *Decision rules:* The thesis may be one or more sentences, and it may appear anywhere in the response. It must make a claim about meaning, not just name devices. A thesis that merely restates the prompt (“the speaker has a complex attitude”) does not earn the point; one that says what the complexity is, does. The claim need not preview every body paragraph, and it need not be fully proven in the thesis itself.

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

POINTS	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent; opinion with no reference to the passage; irrelevant references.
1	Provides evidence that is mostly general. Commentary may be absent, or it merely summarizes the evidence.	Summary or description of the passage; names techniques with little or no explanation.

POINTS	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence. Commentary explains how some of the evidence 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; simplistic or repetitive explanations; one point developed while others are underdeveloped; unclear connections between claims.
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and it explains how at least one literary element or technique contributes to the meaning of the passage.	Uniformly specific evidence; focus on particular words and details; multiple supporting claims; some evidence may be unintegrated or some commentary may remain general.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and it explains how multiple literary elements or techniques contribute to the meaning of the passage.	Everything in the 3-point response, plus every claim clearly explained, and several techniques shown working together toward the interpretation.

Decision rules: Writing that suffers from errors of grammar or mechanics that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point. Repeated instances of one technique (for example, several images) earn credit for multiple elements only if each is shown to add something different to the meaning; otherwise the response is capped at 3. A response may use no technical vocabulary and still earn 3 or 4 if it analyzes how specific language creates meaning. A response with no thesis can still earn Row B points. Plot summary or paraphrase alone is a 1.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point). *0 points:* The response does not meet the criteria. *1 point:* The response demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument in at least one of four ways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the passage; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. *Decision rules:* The sophistication must be part of the argument throughout, not a single sentence. It is **not** earned by sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (for example, “Throughout history, humans have...”), by merely hinting at an alternative reading, by a single insightful sentence in the conclusion, by oversimplifying a complexity the passage contains, or by ornate language that does not advance the argument.

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

What a defensible thesis looks like. A thesis earns Row A if it says what is complex about Karin’s relationship to the land. Defensible claims include: (1) Karin sees the land as indifferent to her family’s suffering, yet she finds that she is bound to it through her body and her inheritance; (2) the land is both her father’s destroyer and the

only thing that gives his life meaning, so her grief and her acceptance cannot be separated; (3) she begins by expecting the land to answer her loss and ends by taking up responsibility for it without expecting an answer. "Karin has mixed feelings about the land" restates the prompt and does not earn the point.

What strong responses might argue:

- The flat, still opening ("as still as a plate") and "Nothing had been changed by the burying" show that Karin expected the land to respond to death "as a blow alters a face"; the land's silence is what she must absorb.
- Polysyndeton and long additive sentences ("beyond the creek rose the divide, and beyond the divide there was nothing at all") enact the horizon's emptiness and make the human structures (the windmill, the sod house) look small; the windmill "waiting to be asked a question" projects her own unanswered grief onto the landscape.
- The metaphor of a man loving "a woman who has never said yes" casts the father's devotion as unrequited and shows that Karin sees the land as taking without giving back; "strength... teeth... lungs" lists the bodily cost.
- The father's furtive hurry ("as if he had been caught in some indecency") shows how the land demanded constant labor; Karin's own unhurried walk marks a different way of living with it.
- The sensory turn at the plowed ground (cold earth, the smell of iron "and of something older") shifts the passage from observation to touch. The earth smells like a cellar and a grave, yet "she found that she did not hate it now," and the plain, understated syntax presents acceptance as a discovery rather than a decision.
- The image of her hands as "her father's hands," with soil "no lye would ever take out," shows the land marking her permanently and makes inheritance literal.
- The meadowlark's song, "careless as coins," briefly frees her from roles ("neither a daughter nor a mourner nor the eldest of four"), contrasting with the burdens named elsewhere; the release is temporary.
- The final image of her mother's chimney smoke as "a thin gray line that held up the whole sky" reverses the earlier image of the sky "pressing down" on the earth: human routine now holds up the weight, which suggests quiet endurance as the relationship she will have to the land.
- The third-person limited narration with free indirect discourse allows the narrator to move between Karin's resentments and a larger, impersonal view of the land, so that both her perspective and the land's indifference are visible.

Common traps. (1) Summarizing Karin's walk. (2) Reading the passage as simply about a daughter's grief and ignoring the land. (3) Reading the land as only hostile (ignoring "she did not hate it now") or only comforting (ignoring "cool indifference"). (4) Treating the father as the subject instead of Karin: the prompt asks about *her* relationship. (5) Listing "imagery, simile, and personification" without explaining effect. (6) Missing the structure: the shift at "Karin stopped at the edge of the plowed ground." (7) Quoting long stretches without commentary.

Sample Essay A — 6/6 (Row A 1, Row B 4, Row C 1)

On the morning after her father's burial, Karin Sundahl looks out over the land that killed him and finds, to her own surprise, that she cannot disown it. The author portrays a relationship that is not affection but inheritance: the land is indifferent, it has taken a life without acknowledgment, and yet it has already entered Karin's body. Through a flat, additive description of the landscape, a metaphor of unreturned love, and an ending that reverses her sense of the land's weight, the passage shows grief and acceptance becoming inseparable.

The landscape in the opening is described as a place that refuses to respond. The country lies “as still as a plate,” and “Nothing had been changed by the burying.” The sentence that follows, “That was what she could not at first take in,” is free indirect discourse, and it shows that Karin had expected the land to register her father’s death “as a blow alters a face.” The expectation is itself revealing: she has been taught to treat the land as a participant in the family’s life. The prose then enacts the land’s refusal with long additive sentences: “beyond the creek rose the divide, and beyond the divide there was nothing at all but the pale color of the sky pressing down upon the pale color of the earth.” The repeated “and beyond” produces a horizon that never offers anything to rest on, while the sky “pressing down” gives the emptiness a weight. Against it the windmill looks “less like a machine than like a man waiting to be asked a question.” The personification belongs to Karin, who is the one waiting for an answer, and the land provides none.

Her father’s relationship to the land, as Karin sees it, supplies the passage’s central metaphor. He “loved it... as a man loves a woman who has never said yes.” The comparison casts the land as a beloved who accepts devotion without giving anything back, and the list that follows, “his strength and his teeth and at last his lungs,” makes the cost bodily and cumulative, ending with the land taking them “with the same cool indifference with which it took the rain.” The detail that he would bend to the handles “as if he had been caught in some indecency” shows that even his hope was furtive. From these details Karin has built a wary view of the land: it rewards love with consumption. Her own unhurried walk, in contrast to his habit of hurrying, shows that she means to approach it differently.

The pivot comes when she “stopped at the edge of the plowed ground,” and the passage shifts from looking to touching. The earth is “cold,” and it “smelled of iron and of something older, like the inside of a cellar.” The simile calls up a buried, closed space, and “something older” suggests the grave in the north quarter as well as the soil’s long history. The sentences that follow are plain and sparing: “She had hated that smell all through the first winter... She found that she did not hate it now.” The abrupt, unadorned syntax presents acceptance as something Karin finds out rather than chooses, and the plainness keeps the moment from sentimentality. When she rubs the soil away and looks at “her father’s hands,” with “the black rimmed under the nails that no lye would ever take out,” inheritance becomes literal: the land has marked her as it marked him, permanently.

The meadowlark adds a final complication. Its song falls “in bright pieces, careless as coins,” and for its length she is “neither a daughter nor a mourner nor the eldest of four, but only a body standing in a great light.” The relief is real, but it lasts only “for the length of it.” The land can free her briefly only by making her forget the roles it has also imposed. Then the quiet “closed over the place where it had been,” and she returns to the house, where her mother’s smoke rises as “a thin gray line that held up the whole sky.” That image reverses the earlier sky “pressing down”: now it is a domestic thread, not the earth, that bears the weight. Karin’s relationship to the land is thus neither love nor hatred, but the recognition that the labor of living on it is what holds the world up.

Scoring commentary. *Row A:* 1. The thesis states what is complex (indifferent land, yet inherited and inescapable; grief and acceptance inseparable). *Row B:* 4. Evidence comes from the entire passage and is specific; each paragraph explains how particular language works (free indirect discourse, additive syntax, personification of the windmill, the unrequited-love metaphor, simile of the cellar, plain syntax at the turn, the image of the hands, the reversal of the sky image). Multiple techniques are linked to the claim, and the commentary consistently explains the connections. *Row C:* 1. The response sustains attention to a tension (the land is both consuming and constitutive of Karin’s identity) and accounts for the temporary release of the meadowlark as a complication, not an escape; the closing image is read as a reversal that complicates the opening, not a decorative flourish.

Sample Essay B — 4/6 (Row A 1, Row B 3, Row C 0)

In this passage the author uses imagery, personification, and symbolism to show that Karin has a complicated relationship with the land. At first the land seems cold and uncaring toward her family, but by the end Karin begins to accept it as part of her life.

The passage begins with Karin going outside the morning after her father's funeral. The land is "as still as a plate," and "Nothing had been changed by the burying." This shows that the land does not care that her father has died. The author describes the red grass, the creek, and the divide, and says that the sky is "pressing down" on the earth. The word "pressing" makes the sky feel heavy, which matches Karin's grief. The windmill is described as "a man waiting to be asked a question." This personification makes the windmill seem like it is waiting for something, as Karin is.

Next, Karin thinks about her father. She remembers that he always hurried in the field and that he said it was "a good country." The author uses a simile to say he loved the land "as a man loves a woman who has never said yes." This shows that the land did not love him back, even though he gave it his "strength and his teeth and at last his lungs." The land took everything from him with "cool indifference." The description of the land as indifferent shows that Karin may feel angry about it.

The author also shows how hard her father worked. He would "stop in the furrow, pushing back his cap" and then "bend again to the handles" as if he were afraid to be idle, which makes the land seem like a master that never lets him rest. Karin's walk is described as slow ("she did not hurry"), which is different from her father and shows that she may not want to live the same way he did.

Then Karin picks up some dirt and smells it. The dirt smells "of iron and of something older." She hated the smell during the first winter but now "she did not hate it now." This is the turning point because she starts to accept the land. The image of her hands being "her father's hands" with dirt under the nails shows that she is becoming like her father and that she will be tied to the land too.

At the end, a meadowlark sings and Karin feels free for a moment, and then she walks back to the house, where smoke is rising from the chimney. The "thin gray line" that "held up the whole sky" is a symbol of her mother and family, who keep going even after the loss. This shows that Karin will stay with her family and continue to live on the land.

In conclusion, the author uses many literary techniques to show Karin's complex relationship with the land. She goes from seeing it as cold and uncaring to accepting that it is part of who she is.

Scoring commentary. *Row A: 1.* The thesis (cold and uncaring at first, accepted as part of her life by the end) is defensible and goes beyond restating the prompt. *Row B: 3.* The essay follows the passage in order but supports each claim with specific evidence, and several comments explain a technique (the weight of "pressing," the personification of the windmill, the unrequited-love simile, the hands). The line of reasoning (rejection to acceptance) is clear. The commentary, however, often stops at "this shows" and states a conclusion rather than explaining how the language produces it (for example, why "cool indifference" implies Karin's anger, or how the "thin gray line" can be a symbol of the family). The meadowlark is summarized rather than analyzed. These weaknesses keep the response from the fourth point. *Row C: 0.* The essay treats Karin's change as a simple move from one attitude to another and does not explore tension, context, or alternatives; the conclusion repeats the thesis.

Sample Essay C — 2/6 (Row A 0, Row B 2, Row C 0)

Karin has a complex relationship with the land in this passage. The author uses figurative language, imagery, and other literary elements to show it.

In the first paragraph, Karin comes out of the house in the morning and everything is quiet. The author says the land is “as still as a plate.” This uses a simile, and it shows that it is very quiet and calm. Her father was buried the day before, and she thinks that the land should look different, but it is “just as it had been.” This shows that the land does not care about her father or about her family. The windmill is also described like a man waiting for a question, which is personification.

In the next part, Karin remembers her father in the field. He was always in a hurry and he said it was a good country. The author says he loved the land “as a man loves a woman who has never said yes.” This shows that he loved the land a lot but the land did not love him. He worked until he lost his teeth and his lungs. The land took everything from him.

Then Karin goes to the plowed ground and picks up some dirt. She used to hate the smell but she doesn’t hate it now. The dirt is on her hands like her father’s hands. This shows that she is like her father.

Finally, a meadowlark sings and Karin feels free for a little while. Then she goes back to the house. The author uses a lot of imagery in this passage such as the red grass, the creek, the bird, and the smoke. The imagery helps the reader see the setting.

The author shows that Karin has a complex relationship with the land by using literary techniques. The land is both good and bad for her and her family.

Scoring commentary. *Row A: 0.* The first sentences restate the prompt (“a complex relationship with the land”) and name techniques without saying what the relationship is. The last sentence (“both good and bad”) is too general to count as an interpretation of this passage. *Row B: 2.* There is some specific, relevant evidence (the plate simile, the unrequited-love simile, the hands) and some explanation of how it relates to the claim (“the land does not care”; “she is like her father”). But the evidence is a mix of specifics and plot retelling, the explanations are simple and repetitive (“this shows”), the imagery paragraph at the end is generic, and no line of reasoning is established. The evidence and commentary together reach 2 points but not 3, because no line of reasoning is established and the explanations do not engage a technique in any depth. *Row C: 0.* No complexity, context, or alternative is explored.

Part 5: Free-Response Question 3 — Literary Argument (Setting as Character)

Scoring Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point). *0 points:* There is no defensible thesis. Typical responses restate the prompt, summarize the plot, or name a work and a setting without making a claim. *1 point:* The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation. *Decision rules:* The thesis may address the setting’s role in the work, how the setting shapes a character, or how the setting contributes to the work as a whole. Any reasonable interpretation of “functions almost as a character” is acceptable (a setting that acts, pressures, shelters, confines, or judges). The chosen work must be a work of fiction with enough literary merit to support the argument.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points). *Note: for Question 3, Row B does not require the explanation of a literary technique. The fourth point instead requires that the response address the work as a whole.*

POINTS	DESCRIPTOR	TYPICAL RESPONSES
0	Simply restates the thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	Incoherent; opinion with no reference to a work; irrelevant references.
1	Provides evidence that is mostly general. Commentary may be absent, or it merely summarizes the evidence.	Focuses on narrative developments rather than specific details; plot summary.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence. Commentary explains how some of the evidence relates to the argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	A mix of specific details and generalities; simplistic or repetitive explanations; the setting is described but its effect on a character is asserted rather than shown.
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	Specific scenes, images, or details support each claim; some commentary explains how the setting shapes the character; some evidence may be unintegrated.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning, and the response addresses the interpretation of the work as a whole.	Every claim is explained; the argument returns again and again to what the setting reveals about the work's larger meaning.

Decision rules: Errors of grammar or mechanics that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point. Evidence may be paraphrase or quotation; precise detail matters more than exact quotation. Evidence must come from the work chosen, and obvious misreadings of the work weaken the claim they are meant to support.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point). *0 points:* The response does not meet the criteria. *1 point:* The response demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument in at least one of four ways: (1) identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the work; (2) illuminating the interpretation by situating it within a broader context; (3) accounting for alternative interpretations; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. **Decision rules:** The sophistication must be part of the argument throughout, not a single sentence. It is **not** earned by sweeping generalizations offered as “context” (for example, “Throughout history, humans have...”), by merely hinting at an alternative reading, by a single insightful sentence in the conclusion, by oversimplifying a complexity the work contains, or by ornate language that does not advance the argument.

Prompt-Specific Scoring Notes

What a defensible thesis looks like. The prompt has three jobs: pick a setting that functions almost as a character, show how it shapes a character, and say what it contributes to the work as a whole. A thesis earns Row A if it makes a claim about any of these that the chosen work can support, for example: “In *Rebecca*, Manderley is less a house than a rival consciousness whose memory of its first mistress shapes the narrator’s timidity, so that the novel becomes a study of how inherited places can colonize identity.” A thesis such as “Setting is important in *Jane Eyre*” or “Thornfield is a setting that functions like a character” does not make a claim about meaning.

What strong responses might argue (any of these, developed with specific scenes and details, can support a 5 or 6):

- *Wuthering Heights*: the Heights and the Grange are opposed climates of being that divide Catherine against herself; the moor outlasts both.
- *Jane Eyre*: the sequence of houses (Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House, Ferndean) maps stages of Jane’s independence; Thornfield’s third story is a literal enclosure of what the house’s respectability suppresses.
- *Rebecca*: Manderley preserves the first Mrs. de Winter’s will and imprisons the narrator in comparison; its burning ends the hold.
- *The Great Gatsby*: the valley of ashes and the billboard eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg turn a space into a moral judgment and shape George Wilson’s despair and his reading of events.
- *Beloved*: 124 Bluestone Road is a haunted house that holds Sethe’s past; the exorcism by the community changes the house and thus her relationship to memory.
- *The House of Mirth*: the social world’s interiors (Bellomont, the Trenors’ houses, the boardinghouse) make Lily a decorative object and then expel her.
- *Pedro Páramo*: Comala is a town of voices and the dead; the setting is the structure of the book and shapes Juan Preciado’s quest.
- *Things Fall Apart*: Umuofia’s customs and landscape shape Okonkwo, and the arrival of the church and the courthouse changes the setting that sustained his identity.
- *A House for Mr. Biswas*: the search for a house is the character’s search for dignity; the final house is the achievement and the cost.

Common traps. (1) Plot summary organized as a tour of places. (2) Treating setting as backdrop (weather, scenery) and not as an agent that acts on a character. (3) Not specifying a character: the prompt requires that the setting *shape a character*. (4) Failing to connect to the work as a whole: ending in a paragraph that repeats that “the setting is important.” (5) Choosing a work the writer remembers only vaguely, leading to misreadings or generic evidence. (6) Losing the key term: drifting from setting-as-character into theme in general. (7) Using a film adaptation as evidence.

Sample Essay A — 6/6 (Row A 1, Row B 4, Row C 1) — *Wuthering Heights*

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë makes houses into climates of being. Wuthering Heights, exposed to the “atmospheric tumult” of the moors, and Thrushcross Grange, sheltered in its park, are not simply locations for a love story; they are opposing conditions of life that act on Catherine Earnshaw until she is divided against

herself. By showing how the Grange reshapes Catherine and how the moor outlasts both houses, Brontë suggests that the novel's passion is real precisely because it belongs to a landscape rather than a society, and that the attempt to live in a house that excludes that landscape is fatal.

Lockwood's first description establishes the Heights as a place that acts on whoever comes to it. He explains that "wuthering" is "a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather," and he notes the "stunted firs" and the "gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun." The wind has bent every living thing into a permanent posture of need, and Brontë invites the reader to see the inhabitants the same way. Heathcliff and Catherine, raised on the moors, run wild there, and their identification with the place is nearly total.

The Grange acts on Catherine in the opposite way. When the Lintons' bulldog bites her and she is kept at the Grange for five weeks, she comes back transformed into a lady in "a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands." The costume belongs to the house: it restricts movement, it demands management, and it replaces the freedom of the moor with correct behavior. What the setting changes is not only her dress but her sense of what has value. She laughs at Heathcliff's dirty, unkempt appearance, and she later chooses Edgar Linton, explaining to Nelly that she has "no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven." The place has given her a second self that she cannot reconcile with the first.

Brontë dramatizes the division in Catherine's account of her dream, which makes setting the language of the soul. She says that heaven "did not seem to be my home," that "I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth," and that the angels "flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights, where I woke sobbing for joy." Heaven in her dream is a version of the Grange, a place of comfort that she experiences as exile, while the heath is home. When she contrasts her love for Edgar, which is "like the foliage in the woods" that time will change, with her love for Heathcliff, which "resembles the eternal rocks beneath," she measures her feelings in landscape. Setting has become the way she thinks, and the two houses are the poles between which her thinking is torn. Having married into the Grange, she dies within it.

The novel's last movement widens the claim to the work as a whole. Heathcliff takes possession of the Heights and then the Grange, and gathers every inhabitant under his control, yet he cannot take the moor, where he longs to join Catherine. He dies with the casement open and the lattice flapping in the weather, as though the moor had come in for him. Lockwood, who has watched the households' violence from a safe distance, visits the three graves and "watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth." The peaceful ending appears to settle the matter, but Brontë complicates it: the vision is filtered through Lockwood, whose judgments have been unreliable, and the country people swear that the dead walk. The landscape is large enough to hold both peace and haunting.

The setting is therefore not a backdrop but the standard by which the characters are judged. The Grange's order cannot sustain Catherine's wild self; the Heights' violence cannot sustain a household; only the moor, indifferent to both, gives the passion its final place. Brontë suggests that human desire seeks a home as large as itself, and that such a home exists only outside the houses people build.

Scoring commentary. Row A: 1. The thesis defines the setting (houses as climates of being), names the character it shapes (Catherine), and states the meaning for the work as a whole. Row B: 4. Evidence is specific and accurate (Lockwood's description of "wuthering," the cloth habit, Catherine's dream and her "foliage / eternal rocks" speech, Heathcliff's death, the graves) and each piece is explained in terms of the claim. The final paragraphs consistently address the work as a whole. Row C: 1. The response sustains a complexity (the Grange

and the Heights both fail; the moor is neither peaceful nor haunted alone) and accounts for Lockwood's unreliability as an alternative to the apparently peaceful ending. The sophistication is built into the argument, not added at the end.

Sample Essay B — 4/6 (Row A 1, Row B 3, Row C 0) — *Jane Eyre*

In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, the houses where Jane lives function almost as characters because each one shapes who she becomes. By moving Jane from place to place, Brontë shows that a person's identity depends on finding a home that allows her both love and independence.

The first house is Gateshead, where Jane is an unwanted orphan living with her aunt, Mrs. Reed. The most important setting is the red-room, where Jane is locked as punishment after she fights with her cousin John. The red-room is where her uncle died, and Jane is terrified that his ghost will appear. The room's red color and cold atmosphere make Jane feel trapped and powerless. This experience shapes her because it makes her determined to resist injustice, and she tells Mrs. Reed she will never visit her again. Gateshead acts like a character who tries to crush Jane's spirit.

Next, Jane goes to Lowood School, which is cold and strict. The girls are hungry because of the burnt porridge, and Mr. Brocklehurst makes them suffer to teach them humility. Jane's friend Helen Burns dies of consumption there, and when typhus spreads, the school is investigated. Lowood teaches Jane to be patient and to work hard, and it gives her an education, but it also shows her that people in power can be hypocritical. Lowood is like a character who tests Jane.

Thornfield Hall is the most important house because it is where Jane falls in love with Mr. Rochester. Thornfield seems like a happy place at first, but it hides a secret: Rochester's wife, Bertha, is locked in the attic. The strange laughter and the fire in Rochester's room are signs that the house is hiding something. The fire in Rochester's bed and the torn wedding veil show that the house is dangerous, and the discovery that the house has a secret changes Jane's view of Rochester. Thornfield also has a third story with small windows and dark rooms, which contrasts with the warm drawing rooms downstairs. Because of Thornfield, Jane learns that love needs honesty, and when she finds out about Bertha she leaves the house in the middle of the night. The house is like a character because it hides the truth and then forces Jane to choose between love and her principles.

Finally, Jane finds Moor House and later Ferndean, where she and Rochester are reunited. Ferndean is a plain house in the woods, which suggests that Jane and Rochester can only be happy in a simple place away from the society that hurt them.

Overall, the settings in *Jane Eyre* are almost like characters, and they shape Jane by teaching her what she needs. Brontë uses the different houses to show Jane's journey from a powerless child to an independent woman who finds love on her own terms.

Scoring commentary. *Row A:* 1. The thesis makes a defensible claim (each house shapes Jane; identity depends on finding a home that allows love and independence). *Row B:* 3. The evidence is specific and accurate (the red-room, the burnt porridge, Helen Burns, Bertha in the attic, Ferndean) and supports each claim in a clear line of reasoning organized by house. The commentary explains how some of the settings shape Jane (the red-room fosters resistance; Thornfield forces a choice). However, the essay is organized chronologically, so it leans toward summary, and the commentary on Lowood and Ferndean is asserted rather than explained. The statement that each house is "like a character" is repeated without being explored. The connection to the whole

work is made only in the last paragraph, so the essay does not earn the fourth point. *Row C: 0.* No complexity is developed; for example, *Thornfield* is a place of both love and imprisonment, and *Ferndean's* seclusion might be read as retreat as well as fulfillment, but the essay does not take up those tensions.

Sample Essay C — 2/6 (Row A 1, Row B 1, Row C 0) — *The Great Gatsby*

In *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the setting of the valley of ashes acts like a character because it affects the people who live there. The valley of ashes shows that the American Dream is broken.

The valley of ashes is a gray place between West Egg and New York City. Nick Narrator describes it as a "desolate area of land" where ashes grow like wheat. The people who live there are poor and they are covered with dust. George Wilson owns a garage there, and his wife Myrtle is having an affair with Tom Buchanan. Tom takes her to an apartment in New York. In the valley of ashes there is also a billboard with the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. The eyes are big and yellow and look out over the valley.

The valley of ashes affects George Wilson because he is poor and he cannot leave. When Myrtle is hit by a car, George thinks that the car was driven by her lover, and he looks at the billboard and says that God sees everything. His friend Michaelis tells him that it is just an advertisement. Then George goes to find the driver and he shoots Gatsby in his pool and then he kills himself.

The setting is almost like a character because it is gloomy and sad and it changes how people act. The valley of ashes is the opposite of East Egg and West Egg, where the rich people live and have big parties. This shows that there is a difference between the rich and the poor in the novel.

In conclusion, the valley of ashes is important in *The Great Gatsby* because it is like a character. It shows how the poor are hurt by the rich and it shows that the American Dream is broken.

Scoring commentary. *Row A: 1.* The claim that the valley of ashes shows the American Dream is broken is a defensible, if broad, interpretation; the prompt's "functions almost as a character" is only restated, but the thesis does make a claim about meaning. *Row B: 1.* The evidence is mostly plot and description (the garage, Myrtle's affair, Wilson's actions) with little explanation of how the setting shapes a character. The key detail, the billboard, is mentioned twice but never analyzed; there is no discussion of why Wilson takes the eyes for God's, or what that reveals. The commentary ("it is gloomy and sad and it changes how people act") is general. There is also an error in the plot summary (the narrator is called "Nick Narrator," and Nick's phrase is misquoted). *Row C: 0.* There is no complexity, context, or alternative reading, and the conclusion repeats the thesis.

Part 6: How to Score Yourself

Step 1: Section I raw score. Count your correct answers from the key (55 maximum). There is no penalty for wrong answers.

Step 2: Section II raw scores. Score each of your three essays from 0 to 6 using the rubrics above (Row A 0–1, Row B 0–4, Row C 0–1). Compare your essay with the 6-, 4-, and 2-point samples. Be honest about Row B: a response that names techniques but does not explain them is a 1 or a 2, not a 3 or a 4. Row C is rare (fewer than 1 in 10 essays earns it), so do not count on it. If possible, ask a teacher or a peer to score one essay blind and compare.

Step 3: Composite estimate (approximate). The College Board does not publish the exact formula, and the weights shift slightly every year. A reasonable estimate is:

- Multiple-choice contribution = (number correct) $\times$ 1.23, for a maximum of about 67.5
- Free-response contribution = (sum of your three essay scores, 0–18) $\times$ 4.58, for a maximum of about 82.5
- Composite = MC contribution + FRQ contribution, out of about 150

COMPOSITE (APPROXIMATE)	ESTIMATED AP SCORE
about 105 or higher	5
about 87 to 104	4
about 65 to 86	3
about 45 to 64	2
below about 45	1

These bands are approximations compiled from public score calculators. They are not official, and the real cutoffs vary from year to year.

Worked example. A student who answers 38 of 55 correctly earns about 46.7 composite points from Section I. If the same student scores essays of 4, 3, and 4 (total 11), the free-response contribution is about 50.4, for a composite of about 97, which falls in the “4” range.

Step 4: Diagnose. Use the skill codes in the key table to find patterns: if you missed several NAR items, practice tracking the speaker’s perspective and tone; if you missed LAN items, practice choosing the evidence that supports a claim exactly rather than loosely. For the essays, ask: Did my thesis say what is *complex*? Did I explain what each piece of evidence *does* rather than that it *shows*? Did I return to the work as a whole? Then revise one essay for 20 minutes, aiming specifically at the Row B commentary.

End of Practice Exam 5 materials.

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