



## 2000 Advanced Placement Program® Free-Response Questions

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# ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

### Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The story of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens and their enchanting but deadly song appears in Greek epic poetry in Homer's *Odyssey*. An English translation of the episode is reprinted in the left column below. Margaret Atwood's poem in the right column is a modern commentary on the classical story. Read both texts carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare the portrayals of the Sirens. Your analysis should include discussion of tone, point of view, and whatever poetic devices (diction, imagery, etc.) seem most important.

... our trim ship was speeding toward  
the Sirens' island, driven by the brisk wind.

...

Line Now with a sharp sword I sliced an ample wheel of beeswax  
5 and the wax soon grew soft, worked by my strength  
and Helios' burning rays, the sun at high noon,  
and I stopped the ears of my comrades one by one.  
They bound me hand and foot in the tight ship—  
erect at the mast-block, lashed by ropes to the mast—  
10 and rowed and churned the whitecaps stroke on stroke.  
We were just offshore as far as a man's shout can carry,  
scudding close, when the Sirens sensed at once a ship  
was racing past and burst into their high, thrilling song:  
'Come closer, famous Odysseus—Achaëa's pride and glory—  
15 moor your ship on our coast so you can hear our song!  
Never has any sailor passed our shores in his black craft  
until he has heard the honeyed voices pouring from our lips,  
and once he hears to his heart's content sails on, a wiser man.'

...

20 So they sent their ravishing voices out across the air  
and the heart inside me throbbed to listen longer.  
I signaled the crew with frowns to set me free—  
they flung themselves at the oars and rowed on harder,  
Perimedes and Eurylochus springing up at once  
to bind me faster with rope on chafing rope.  
25 But once we'd left the Sirens fading in our wake,  
once we could hear their song no more, their urgent call—  
my steadfast crew was quick to remove the wax I'd used  
to seal their ears and loosed the bonds that lashed me.

### SIREN SONG

This is the one song everyone  
would like to learn: the song  
that is irresistible:

Line the song that forces men  
5 to leap overboard in squadrons  
even though they see the beached skull  
the song nobody knows  
because anyone who has heard it  
is dead, and the others can't remember  
10 Shall I tell you the secret  
and if I do, will you get me  
out of this bird suit?\*

I don't enjoy it here  
squatting on this island  
15 looking picturesque and mythical  
with these two feathery maniacs  
I don't enjoy singing  
this trio, fatal and valuable.  
I will tell the secret to you,  
20 to you, only to you.  
Come closer. This song  
is a cry for help: Help me!  
Only you, only you can,  
you are unique  
25 at last. Alas  
it is a boring song  
but it works every time.

"Siren Song" from *You Are Happy*, SELECTED POEMS 1965-1975. Copyright © 1976 by Margaret Atwood. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co. ([www.hmco.com](http://www.hmco.com)). All rights reserved. Also from the Canadian collection SELECTED POEMS 1966-1984 © 1974, 1990 Margaret Atwood, published by Oxford University Press. First appeared in *POETRY*, February 1974.

\*In Greek mythology, Sirens are often represented as birds with the heads of women.

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following passage from *The Spectator* (March 4, 1712), the English satirist Joseph Addison creates a character who keeps a diary. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the language of the passage characterizes the diarist and his society and how the characterization serves Addison's satiric purpose. You may wish to consider such elements as selection of detail, repetition, and tone.

MONDAY, *eight o'clock*.—I put on my clothes and walked into the parlour.  
Line *Nine o'clock, ditto*—Tied my knee-strings and washed my hands.  
5 *Hours ten, eleven, and twelve*.—Smoked three pipes of Virginia. Read the *Supplement* and *Daily Courant*. Things go ill in the North. Mr. Nisby's opinion thereupon.  
10 *One o'clock in the afternoon*.—Chid Ralph for mislaying my tobacco-box.  
*Two o'clock*.—Sat down to dinner. *Mem.*: Too many plums and no suet.  
*From three to four*.—Took my afternoon's nap.  
15 *From four to six*.—Walked into the fields. Wind S.S.E.  
*From six to ten*.—At the club. Mr. Nisby's opinion about the peace.  
*Ten o'clock*.—Went to bed, slept sound.  
20 TUESDAY (*being holiday*), *eight o'clock*.—Rose as usual.  
*Nine o'clock*.—Washed hands and face, shaved, put on my double-soled shoes.  
*Ten, eleven, twelve*.—Took a walk to Islington.  
*One*.—Took a pot of Mother Cob's mild.  
25 *Between two and three*.—Returned; dined on a knuckle of veal and bacon. *Mem.*: Sprouts wanting.  
*Three*.—Nap as usual.  
*From four to six*.—Coffee-house. Read the news. A dish of twist.<sup>1</sup> Grand Vizier<sup>2</sup> strangled.  
30 *From six to ten*.—At the club. Mr. Nisby's account of the great Turk.  
*Ten*.—Dream of the Grand Vizier. Broken sleep.  
WEDNESDAY, *eight o'clock*.—Tongue of my shoe-buckle broke. Hands, but not face.  
35 *Nine*.—Paid off the butcher's bill. *Mem.*: To be allowed for the last leg of mutton.  
*Ten, eleven*.—At the Coffee-house. More work in the North. Stranger in a black wig asked me how stocks went.  
40 *From twelve to one*.—Walked in the fields. Wind to the south.  
*From one to two*.—Smoked a pipe and a half.  
*Two*.—Dined as usual. Stomach good.  
*Three*.—Nap broke by the falling of a pewter dish.  
45 *Mem.*: Cookmaid in love, and grown careless.  
*From four to six*.—At the coffee-house. Advice from Smyrna, that the Grand Vizier was first of all strangled and afterwards beheaded.  
*Six o'clock in the evening*.—Was half-an-hour in the club before anybody else came. Mr. Nisby of opinion, that the Grand Vizier was not strangled the sixth instant.  
50 *Ten at night*.—Went to bed. Slept without waking till nine next morning.  
55 THURSDAY, *nine o'clock*.—Stayed within till two o'clock for Sir Timothy; who did not bring me my annuity according to his promise.  
*Two in the afternoon*.—Sat down to dinner. Loss of appetite. Small-beer sour. Beef overcorned.  
60 *Three*.—Could not take my nap.  
*Four and five*.—Gave Ralph a box on the ear. Turned off my cookmaid. Sent a message to Sir Timothy. *Mem.*: did not go to the club to-night. Went to bed at nine o'clock.  
65 FRIDAY.—Passed the morning in meditation upon Sir Timothy, who was with me a quarter before twelve.  
*Twelve o'clock*.—Bought a new head to my cane and tongue to my buckle. Drank a glass of purl<sup>3</sup> to recover appetite.  
70 *Two and three*.—Dined and slept well.  
*From four to six*.—Went to the coffee-house. Met Mr. Nisby there. Smoked several pipes. Mr. Nisby of opinion that laced coffee<sup>4</sup> is bad for the head.  
75 *Six o'clock*.—At the club as steward. Sat late.  
*Twelve o'clock*.—Went to bed, dreamt that I drank small-beer with the Grand Vizier.  
SATURDAY.—Waked at eleven; walked in the fields; wind N.E.  
80 *Twelve*.—Caught in a shower.  
*One in the afternoon*.—Returned home, and dried myself.  
*Two*.—Mr. Nisby dined with me. First course marrow-bones, second ox-cheek, with a bottle of Brooke's and Hellier.  
85 *Three o'clock*.—Overslept myself.  
*Six*.—Went to the club. Like to have fallen into a gutter. Grand Vizier certainly dead, &c.

<sup>1</sup> A beverage

<sup>2</sup> Chief administrative officer of the Ottoman Empire

<sup>3</sup> A liquor

<sup>4</sup> Coffee containing spirits

**2000 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION  
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

**Question 3**

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of similar quality.

*Absalom, Absalom*  
*Agnes of God*  
*Alias Grace*  
*All the King's Men*  
*Bleak House*  
*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*  
*Crime and Punishment*  
*Equus*  
*Fifth Business*  
*Frankenstein*  
*A Gathering of Old Men*  
*Ghosts*  
*Great Expectations*  
*The Good Soldier*  
*The Great Gatsby*  
*Hamlet*  
*Heart of Darkness*

*Hedda Gabler*  
*In the Lake of the Woods*  
*Jane Eyre*  
*Joe Turner's Come and Gone*  
*Lord Jim*  
*The Mayor of Casterbridge*  
*Monkey Bridge*  
*Oedipus Rex*  
*The Remains of the Day*  
*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*  
*Snow Falling on Cedars*  
*Song of Solomon*  
*Tom Jones*  
*The Trial*  
*Trifles*  
*The Turn of the Screw*  
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

**END OF EXAMINATION**