

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 1

(Sir Philip Sidney's "Thou Blind Man's Mark")

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a persuasive analysis of Sidney's use of poetic devices to convey the speaker's complex attitude toward desire. The essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide convincing readings of both the complex attitude and Sidney's use of poetic devices. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a score of 9, especially persuasive.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of Sidney's use of poetic devices to convey the speaker's complex attitude toward desire. The essays are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the attitude toward desire and of Sidney's use of poetic devices, and their analysis of the relationship between the two is less thorough or convincing. These essays demonstrate the student's ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9–8 responses. Essays scored a 7 present better developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a 6.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of Sidney's use of poetic devices to convey the speaker's attitude toward desire but tend to be superficial in their analysis of the attitude and of the devices. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the speaker's attitude or of Sidney's use of devices may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These essays demonstrate some control of language, but the writing may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 essays.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or it may ignore the complexity of the speaker's attitude toward desire or Sidney's use of devices. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the student's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poem.
- 0** These essays are completely off topic or inadequate; there may be some mark, or a drawing, or a brief reference to the task.
- These essays are entirely blank.

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

In his poem entitled "Thou Blind Man's mark" Sir Philip Sidney characterizes desire as a force able to take control of a man's mind. Consequently, this man strives for shallow, material satisfaction as opposed to true self-fulfillment. The speaker's contempt for desire is clearly portrayed in his harsh description of it and the effect it has had on him, as well as his declaration that he will no longer yield to its power.

The poem begins with a series of accusatory phrases, each of which frame a negative aspect of desire, as viewed by the speaker. He calls desire a "blind man's mark," implying that no man ~~is~~ able to see desire for what it really is. He would willingly be attracted to it. When he says "blind," the speaker does not literally mean a person whose eyes are damaged or defective; in context, a "blind man" is one who lacks a sense of direction or of vision for the future, thus making him susceptible to the manipulating forces of desire. Desire preys upon the "blind" and lures in the "fools" because they are easily beguiled into thinking that lusting after one's desires is all there is to life. The speaker claims desire can reduce men to just "dregs of scattered thought," which illuminates the speaker's perception of desire as a sort of monster, capable of



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ripping a man's mind to shreds, destroying his natural sense of intuition and reason, and replacing it with incohesive, ~~raggedly~~ raggedly desires. Man's ability to form his own thoughts has been replaced by his obsession with his desires, a crime for which the speaker considers desire to be the "bard of all evils." This is quite a hefty condemnation, and it reflects the feelings of the speaker; he uses ~~seven~~ seven phrases, in the first four lines alone, to declare his passionate feelings towards desire. This extensive list of insults, coupled with the fact that the speaker personifies desire and endows it with malevolent monster-like qualities, ~~also~~ demonstrates that the speaker genuinely does feel that desire is a combination of all evils known to man. He says ~~"I have too~~ "I have too dearly bought, with price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware," revealing that his attitude stems from his personal experience with the power of desire to ruin a man's mind. The speaker especially laments that his mind was wasted on desire when it should have been preparing to "higher things" of more substance and value.

However, the speaker also offers a glimmer of hope and severs his mind's ties to desire. After describing the force of desire as an evil one, he proclaims he will no longer be victim to it: "But yet in vain



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thou hadst my ruin sought; [...] In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire." The speaker makes three consecutive claims that desire has attempted "in vain" to lead him down the wrong path; this repetition emphasizes the speaker's liberation at having cast off the shackles of desire. He has regained the power of his own mind, and in doing so, has regained a powerful sense of self. No longer controlled by his desires or even distracted by the spark or smoke desire may create to try to lure him back, he professes a new goal: "within myself to seek my only hire, desiring naught but to kill desire." The conclusion of the poem provides a significant resolution; the speaker has learned to look inward and not outward to find true fulfillment, and the only desire he will follow is the desire to fight manipulating forces which attempt to rob him of his autonomy.

The speaker's portrayal of desire as a powerful enemy to the freedom of his own mind highlights the difficulty of maintaining control over one's own mind when faced with adversaries that are alluring or manipulative. Through his struggle ~~with~~ with and subsequent defeat of the force of desire, the speaker inspires us to do the same with similar forces in our lives.

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How can one escape the clutches of desire? In the poem "Thou Blind Man's Mark," Sir Phillip Sidney discusses his hatred of desire and outlines his struggle to free himself from the temptations of desire. He fights against the alluring nature of desire, claiming finally that his purpose ~~is to~~ is to kill desire in himself.

Sidney personifies Desire and addresses his problems to Desire himself. Through this apostrophe, he places ~~an actual~~ the actual blame on Desire, removing the blame of himself being tempted by Desire. He gives himself a concrete enemy whom he can defeat, and ultimately, kill. He ~~refers to~~ Desire calls to Desire, "Thou web of wills, whose end is never wrought," ~~he seeming to create~~ feeling that Desire has formulated a complex plan ~~to trap~~ in which to trap him. By ~~creating~~ ~~giving~~ ~~to~~ assigning to Desire human thoughts and actions, Sidney creates a rival not just in himself. He takes his own ease of temptation out of himself and ~~to~~ focuses all of his energy on this monstrous Desire.

To build his enemy and truly personify him, Sidney employs metaphors and imagery describing Desire. He describes Desire as a snake that entangles the foolish and the weak. He says Desire is "dregs of scattered thoughts," ~~what is left~~ bringing to mind the ends of



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useful thoughts, what was left behind as waste. He describes how in the past he has been tempted and succumbed to buying Desire's "worthless ware." However, now Sidney says that he is not ~~af~~ effected by Desire's "smoky fire," ~~a fire~~ not even a true fire that could represent passion or power. The "smoky fire" of Desire is shadows and false promises. The images and metaphors Sidney ~~describ~~ uses ~~describe~~ ~~Desire~~ characterize Desire as false and worthless.

As his metaphors depict Desire, the structure of the ~~poem~~ English sonnet describes Sidney's battle against Desire and his final ~~mission~~ personal mission. In the first stanza he describes the general evils of Desire, giving the audience an initial impression of <sup>his</sup> disgust ~~to his~~ of whomever he is addressing. In the second stanza, he announces his subject, "Desire, desire!" He calls out to desire, angry and a little sad that he had fallen for its guise. He says he has been tempted by it in the past, but in the third stanza, he promises no more. ~~He says~~ Using anaphora for emphasis of the uselessness of Desire's efforts, he says "In vain" has desire tried to tempt him. He says he has learned an important lesson of virtue, which he explains in his heroic couplet. ~~He says~~ He ~~states~~ states that now he will seek in himself and only desires the death of Desire. He closes the poem and resolves his problem with ~~the~~ this

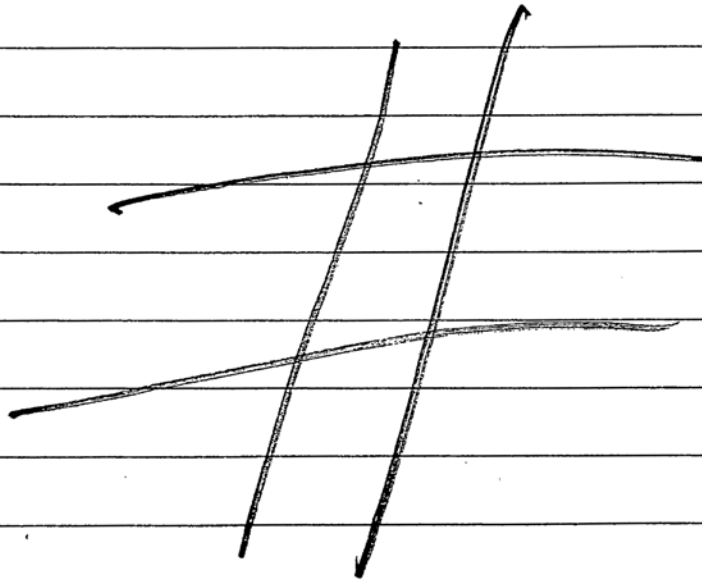


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final closing purpose. Throughout the poem he builds up his hate and ~~he wonders at~~ desires to defeat Desire somehow. With the heroic couplet he hits home his purpose and in a way seems to have already defeated his own desire.

Sidney employs apostrophe, imagery, and the structure of the English ~~son~~ sonnet to describe his feelings toward desire and to state his purpose pertaining to desire. He creates his enemy as a thoroughly personified adversary, and he vows to use his own <sup>virtues</sup> strengths to defeat its alluring vices.



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The speaker of "Thou Blind Man's Mark" uses myriad poetic devices such as diction, repetition, and periodic structure to express their complex attitude ~~toward~~ toward desire. The speaker has an attitude of hatred and scorn toward desire. Their word choice shows the attitude throughout the poem. The last line of the poem, "Desiring naught but how to kill desire," shows this hatred. The only reward the speaker is looking for is to kill desire. The speaker utilizes many short simple words throughout the entire poem. Words such as "vain, scum, snare, causeless, and mangled," embody the speaker's discontent with desire. One tends to use short small words or phrases when they are unhappy or discontent. The speaker uses periodic structure. There are short phrases such as "Band of all evils," "Fond fancy's ~~scum~~ scum," and "Thou web of will" from the beginning of the poem to the end. This fourteen line poem, making it a sonnet, gives strong emotion. The periodic structure can help one relate to the poem. The short sentences and phrases enable the reader to read it more fluently without misunderstanding anything.

~~Repetition~~ <sup>Repetition</sup> within the poem absolutely helps the speaker to express his attitude toward desire. The repetition of the word "vain" is a huge aid to the speaker. It is repeated four times within three lines. ~~The~~ The speaker cannot stress enough how vain desire must be.



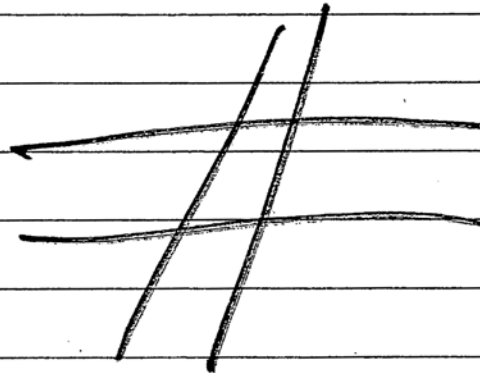


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The repetition of the word "vain" gives the sonnet an ominous feeling. It starts to make the reader really think about their own feelings about desire.

Desire is a want that everyone has experienced. The speaker personifies desire in the poem. The speaker calls desire "~~the~~" "Thou blind man's mark," and "thy smoky fire." Not only is desire personified, but the speaker compares it to ~~the~~ reality by calling desire "cradle of causeless care" and ~~the~~ "web of will." Everyone can relate to the speaker in a way. Having a desire for something might not ~~at~~ always have a positive outcome. Desire can be the hubris of someone. It can be seen as evil. Desire can consume the mind and lead one to do many actions they <sup>usually</sup> wouldn't do just for that desire. The discontent of the speaker with desire is reasonable and they portray it throughout the poem in an excellent use of poetic devices.



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## 2012 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 1

#### Overview

This question asked students to read carefully the poem “Thou Blind Man’s Mark,” by 16th-century poet Sir Philip Sidney, and to write a well-developed essay analyzing how poetic devices help to convey the speaker’s complex attitude toward desire.

With its emphasis on the “complex attitude toward desire,” the question was designed to lead students to consider the speaker’s complicated understanding of his past engagement with the “worthless ware” he desired and his current hope to have mastered the lesson taught by “virtue”: to seek only inner resources and treasures, while extinguishing the desire for the external things that “snare” the unwary. The prompt asked students to consider how the poet creates multiple dimensions of meaning through the use of poetic devices and to develop an interpretation of the poem through analysis of the connection between technique and meaning.

#### Sample: 1A

##### Score: 9

This persuasive essay begins confidently by characterizing desire as “a force” that hinders “true self-fulfillment.” Early on, highly rhetorical analysis embraces the complexity of the poem as the essay convincingly explores the purpose and effects of the speaker’s “harsh description” and “accusatory phrases.” Responding to the sonnet’s dramatic language, the second paragraph attentively moves the reader past the literal language of blindness and develops a sophisticated reading of how “the speaker personifies desire and endows it with malevolent monster-like qualities.” Although this essay does not employ the poetic vocabulary specific to sonnets, it shows how the speaker’s attitude transitions in the sestet from accusation and lament to assertion, as “he proclaims he will no longer be victim to it.” Frequent, apt references to the text in the third paragraph cement our understanding of this “significant resolution.” Sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure throughout this focused essay support perceptive readings, resulting in an elegant, insightful essay that earned a score of 9.

#### Sample: 1B

##### Score: 7

This essay, notable for its clarity and organization, presents a reasonable interpretation of Sidney’s sonnet. It begins with a short paragraph that previews the argument as a “struggle to free himself from the temptations of desire.” Next, the essay focuses on personification and apostrophe as the techniques through which Sidney conjures up “a concrete enemy” or “a rival.” The point is well taken, but the language of the psychological analysis could be more precise (“He takes his own ease of temptation out of himself”). With continuing frequent references to the text, the essay introduces a number of other poetic devices (metaphor, imagery, anaphora), reflecting familiarity with the language of literary analysis. Although its observations about Sidney’s use of poetic devices are fundamentally sound and in some cases perceptive (for example, the discussion of “Desire’s ‘smoky fire’” in the third paragraph), the analysis generally lacks the thoroughness and precision characteristic of essays at the very top of the scoring range. The last point about Sidney’s “final closing purpose” lapses into paraphrase. Greater development is possible, yet the essay is largely successful in integrating assertion, evidence, and analysis and thus earned a score of 7.

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**Question 1 (continued)**

**Sample: 1C**

**Score: 4**

A combination of analytical impulses and unfulfilled promises, this essay ultimately does not offer an adequate exploration of Sidney's sonnet. On the positive side, in the fourth sentence the student already is synthesizing, relating the poem's last line to the "attitude of hatred and scorn." Similarly, the second paragraph makes a case for the importance of the repetition of the word "vain" — another worthwhile point but one that is not adequately developed. In the third paragraph, desire and hubris are linked, and if this idea were developed, greater clarity would result. Despite the identification of potentially illuminating features of the poem, a number of weaknesses hamper the essay's effectiveness. A sense of oversimplification pervades the essay, as empty assertions take the place of analysis ("repetition of the word 'vain' is a huge aid to the speaker"). As the essay concludes, it does so in terms that miss the poem's complexity ("It can be seen as evil"; "excellent use of poetic devices"). These drawbacks, as well as a lack of sophistication in vocabulary and sentence structure (see the choppy last paragraph), earned this essay a score of 4.