

2019

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AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Free-Response Questions

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2019 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

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.)

Carefully read P. K. Page’s 1943 poem “The Landlady.” Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the speaker’s complex portrayal of the landlady. You may wish to consider such elements as imagery, selection of detail, and tone.

The Landlady

Through sepia air the boarders* come and go,
impersonal as trains. Pass silently
the craving silence swallowing her speech;
click doors like shutters on her camera eye.

Line

5 Because of her their lives become exact:
their entrances and exits are designed;
phone calls are cryptic. Oh, her ticklish ears
advance and fall back stunned.

10 Nothing is unprepared. They hold the walls
about them as they weep or laugh. Each face
is dialled to zero publicly. She peers
stippled with curious flesh;

15 pads on the patient landing like a pulse,
unlocks their keyholes with the wire of sight,
searches their rooms for clues when they are out,
pricks when they come home late.

20 Wonders when they are quiet, jumps when they move,
dreams that they dope or drink, trembles to know
the traffic of their brains, jaywalks their street
in clumsy shoes.

Yet knows them better than their closest friends:
their cupboards and the secrets of their drawers,
their books, their private mail, their photographs
are theirs and hers.

25 Knows when they wash, how frequently their clothes
go to the cleaners, what they like to eat,
their curvature of health, but even so
is not content.

30 And like a lover must know all, all, all.
Prays she may catch them unprepared at last
and palm the dreadful riddle of their skulls—
hoping the worst.

*boarders: people who rent rooms in a private home

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Question 2

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

Carefully read the following excerpt from William Dean Howells' novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). Then, in a well-constructed essay, analyze how the author portrays the complex experience of two sisters, Penelope and Irene, within their family and society. You may wish to consider such literary elements as style, tone, and selection of detail.

Line They were not girls who embroidered or
abandoned themselves to needle-work. Irene spent her
abundant leisure in shopping for herself and her
mother, of whom both daughters made a kind of idol,
5 buying her caps and laces out of their pin-money,¹
and getting her dresses far beyond her capacity to
wear. Irene dressed herself very stylishly, and spent
hours on her toilet² every day. Her sister had a
simpler taste, and, if she had done altogether as she
10 liked, might even have slighted dress. They all three
took long naps every day, and sat hours together
minutely discussing what they saw out of the window.
In her self-guided search for self-improvement, the
elder sister went to many church lectures on a vast
15 variety of secular subjects, and usually came home
with a comic account of them, and that made more
matter of talk for the whole family. She could make
fun of nearly everything; Irene complained that she
scared away the young men whom they got
20 acquainted with at the dancing-school sociables.
They were, perhaps, not the wisest young men.

The girls had learned to dance at Papanti's;³ but
they had not belonged to the private classes. They did
not even know of them, and a great gulf divided them
25 from those who did. Their father did not like
company, except such as came informally in their
way; and their mother had remained too rustic to
know how to attract it in the sophisticated city
fashion. None of them had grasped the idea of
30 European travel; but they had gone about to mountain
and sea-side resorts, the mother and the two girls,
where they witnessed the spectacle which such resorts
present throughout New England, of multitudes of
girls, lovely, accomplished, exquisitely dressed,
35 humbly glad of the presence of any sort of young
man; but the Laphams had no skill or courage to make
themselves noticed, far less courted by the solitary
invalid, or clergyman, or artist. They lurked helplessly

about in the hotel parlors, looking on and not knowing
40 how to put themselves forward. Perhaps they did not
care a great deal to do so. They had not a conceit of
themselves, but a sort of content in their own ways
that one may notice in certain families. The very
strength of their mutual affection was a barrier to
45 worldly knowledge; they dressed for one another;
they equipped their house for their own satisfaction;
they lived richly to themselves, not because they were
selfish, but because they did not know how to do
otherwise. The elder daughter did not care for society,
50 apparently. The younger, who was but three years
younger, was not yet quite old enough to be ambitious
of it. With all her wonderful beauty, she had an
innocence almost vegetable. When her beauty, which
in its immaturity was crude and harsh, suddenly
55 ripened, she bloomed and glowed with the
unconsciousness of a flower; she not merely did
not feel herself admired, but hardly knew herself
discovered. If she dressed well, perhaps too well, it
was because she had the instinct of dress; but till
60 she met this young man who was so nice to her at
Baie St. Joan,⁴ she had scarcely lived a detached,
individual life, so wholly had she depended on her
mother and her sister for her opinions, almost her
sensations. She took account of everything he did and
65 said, pondering it, and trying to make out exactly
what he meant, to the inflection of a syllable, the
slightest movement or gesture. In this way she began
for the first time to form ideas which she had not
derived from her family, and they were none the
70 less her own because they were often mistaken.

¹ pin-money: money used for small expenses and incidentals

² toilet: dressing and grooming

³ Papanti's: a fashionable social dance school in nineteenth-century Boston

⁴ Baie St. Joan: a Canadian resort

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Question 3

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

In his 2004 novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul writes: “It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That’s where the mischief starts. That’s where everything starts unravelling.”

Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which a character holds an “ideal view of the world.” Then write an essay in which you analyze the character’s idealism and its positive or negative consequences. Explain how the author’s portrayal of this idealism illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The Alchemist

Antigone

The Awakening

The Bluest Eye

Brave New World

Brideshead Revisited

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Candide

The Catcher in the Rye

Death of a Salesman

Don Quixote

A Gesture Life

Great Expectations

The Great Gatsby

The Handmaid’s Tale

The House of Mirth

The Importance of Being Earnest

Invisible Man

King Lear

Lolita

The Mill on the Floss

My Ántonia

Native Son

Odyssey

The Portrait of a Lady

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

The Sound and the Fury

The Sun Also Rises

The Tempest

To Kill a Mockingbird

When the Emperor Was Divine

STOP

END OF EXAM