



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2023 AP[®] English Literature and Composition Set 1
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	274,836		
• Number of Readers	1,566		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	53,092	14.91
	4	98,970	27.80
	3	122,774	34.48
	2	51,129	14.36
	1	30,078	8.45
• Global Mean	3.26		

The following comments on the 2023 free-response questions for AP[®] English Literature and Composition were written by the Chief Reader, Steve Price, Mississippi College, assisted by Exam Leaders Christine De Vinne and Kathy Keyes and Question Leaders Jason Coats, Syble Davis, and Rudy dela Rosa. These comments give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question 1

Task: Poetry Analysis

Topic: Alice Cary, “Autumn”

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.48

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 1, the poetry analysis question, students were asked to read Alice Cary’s poem “Autumn” and respond to the following prompt:

In Alice Cary’s poem “Autumn,” published in 1874, the speaker contemplates the onset of autumn. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Cary uses literary elements and techniques to convey the speaker’s complex response to the changing seasons.

In a timed writing situation and with an unfamiliar text, students were expected to complete three tasks successfully. They were expected to:

- read the poem carefully;
- analyze the speaker’s complex response to the changing seasons; and,
- write a well-written response based on that analysis.

Reading the poem involves more than simply understanding individual words and describing what happens. Students were expected to view the text specifically as a poem, recognizing literary elements and techniques in the context of poetry, and then analyze how those techniques are used to shape the poem and its meaning. For example, in “Autumn,” students might identify and explore a variety of devices that impact meaning, including personification (“the sunset gates they crowd,” “strays through stubble-fields, and moans aloud,” and “the warmer air deceives”) and imagery (“pillows of the yellow leaves,” “Sits rustling in the faded boughs to-day,” and “the sun had kissed the topmost bough”), which are frequently linked; how the poem uses parallel construction (“The wind,” “The rose,” “The robin,” “The very cock [that] crows”) that nonetheless varies subtly in content; the presence of gendered natural elements (“She lies,” “her tire of red,” “his cold and unsuccessful love”); and the shift that occurs in the final stanza, signaled by an imperative statement (“Shut up the door”) and conjunction (“but”).

Analyzing the poem means taking the relevant elements that students identified in their reading and exploring how the parts function collectively to create the meaning of the work as a whole. In “Autumn,” students needed to consider how the parts convey the speaker’s complex response to the changing seasons. The word “complex” is central to the prompt, reminding students to look for and explore the shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical aspects of the poem. For instance, students might analyze the tension in how the speaker endures the “the withered world” and still finds pleasure in “the poetry of Spring,” or they might explore the complexity of the cyclical nature of the seasons, examining the relationships among the various elements the speaker identifies.

Writing a well-written response means demonstrating a variety of skills. Students were asked to establish a thesis that shows understanding of the speaker’s complex response to the changing seasons. They were asked to build this defensible interpretation with specific, relevant evidence from the poem and through their own commentary that explains the connection between their argument and the evidence. The more successful responses build a line of reasoning that connects ideas and shows the relationships between them. A well-written response is more than grammatically correct writing, and it should be noted that students are not expected in a timed writing scenario to write a polished, revised essay.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Overall, responses were solid. Students performed well on the specified tasks, demonstrating their grasp of foundational skills in reading, writing, and analysis. “Autumn” was an accessible poem, both in language and theme (attention to the changing seasons). Students generally understood the poem and what it was literally describing, and they were aided by useful footnotes that offered additional, accessible context. Most responses were full, complete essays. In particular:

- Most students were able to read and understand the narrative of the poem and how it was literally describing the speaker’s observations of the different seasons.
- Most students were able to identify at least one literary element in the poem, with personification and imagery the most frequently discussed.
- Many students were able to analyze the function of at least one literary device and make a defensible claim about the speaker’s response to the changing seasons.
- Most students identified that there was a speaker who offers their own perspective on the changing seasons. Some students discerned the speaker’s tone and assertiveness at the end of the poem, how the speaker creates criteria for a worldview that one “who loves me” must follow.
- Some students explored the complexities of the poem, for instance identifying unusual or unexpected descriptions, like how “the warmer air deceives” or how the “cock crows lonesomely at morn,” and then using analysis to arrive at more nuanced understanding of the speaker’s response to the changing seasons.
- The most successful students constructed sophisticated responses by developing extended discussions of the tensions of the poem or by placing the speaker’s experience in a broader context (equating it, for instance, with climate change).

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students identify literary devices but miss opportunities to analyze them and explore their richer meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Hyperbolic imagery displays the discrepancies between unrealistic, exaggerated perceptions of change and the reality of progress, continuing the perpetuation of Cary’s idea that change must be embraced rather than rejected. ‘Shorter and shorter now the twilight clips/The days, as though the sunset gates they crowd’, syntax and diction are used to literally separate different aspects of the progression of time. In an ironic parallel to the literal language, the action of twilight’s ‘clip’ and the subject, ‘the days’, are cut off from each-other into two different lines, emphasizing a sense of jarring and discomfort. Sunset, and Twilight are named, made into distinct entities from the day, dramatizing the shortening of night-time into fall. The dramatic, sudden implications of the change bring to mind the switch between summer and winter, rather than a transitional season like fall—emphasizing the Speaker’s perspective rather than a factual narration of the experience.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have a thesis, but it is a general, vague one that does not capture the nuances nor complexity of the speaker’s response to the changing seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Romantic and hyperbolic imagery is used to illustrate the speaker’s unenthusiastic opinion of the of the coming of autumn, which conveys Cary’s idea that change is difficult to accept but necessary for growth.” “Cary used techniques such as personification, contrast, and word choice in order to show that the change from summer to winter is unfortunate and destructive but inevitable.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Embrace What We Don’t Know.** After first reading a poem, ask students to highlight spots they find confusing or where they have questions. Ask students to put a big question mark in the margin and encourage them not to be shy with their uncertainty. In “Autumn,” students are likely to highlight things like “warmer air deceives” or the wind’s “cold and unsuccessful love.” Students can then pair up and discuss each other’s challenging parts of the text. The class can also discuss the confusing passages, with the goal of collaboratively gaining understanding. The activity helps students to

embrace what they don't initially know—to be more comfortable with uncertainty—and to build their confidence to explore these often rich elements of a text.

2. **Exit Ticket: Complex Thesis Draft.** To help students to grapple with complexities of a text, at the end of each class, ask them to draft a complex thesis. During class discussion, have students identify shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical aspects of the poem. Then, to help them grapple with these complexities, ask them to draft a thesis that combines shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical elements by using terms like “but,” “and,” “not,” and “or.” Students can explore the idea briefly (just a couple of minutes), sketching out particular evidence and their own initial analysis/commentary that tries to explain their complex idea. Let students know that these are initial ideas and that they'll be incomplete or even confusing to start. They're taking risks as thinkers, though, and sometimes these risks work out. At the beginning of the next class, let students reread their draft ideas and add to them.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of poetry analysis skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their reading, analysis, and writing skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 2, 5, and 8** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.
- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 2, 5, and 8** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' poetry analysis instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - These videos also examine how to analyze individual literary elements and explore their richer meaning, a skill highlighted in the “Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps” column of the table above.
 - The **Faculty Lecture for Unit 2 (“What’s a Metaphor for Anyway?”)**, for example, explains how a metaphor functions within a poem to convey additional meaning. After watching this video, students can extrapolate how they might analyze other literary devices in a text and explore their richer meaning.
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers can simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Poetry and/or for particular skills they'd like to have their students practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can help teachers explain the difference between thesis statements that are general and vague and thesis statements that capture nuances or complexity within the text, an important distinction highlighted in the “Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps” column in the table above.

Question 2

Task: Prose Fiction Analysis

Topic: Nisi Shawl, *Everfair*

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.40

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 2, the prose fiction analysis question, students were asked to read an excerpt from Nisi Shawl’s novel *Everfair* and respond to the following prompt:

The following excerpt is from Nisi Shawl’s novel *Everfair*, published in 2016. In this passage, the narrator describes the experience of a young woman, Lisette, as she rides her bicycle through the French countryside in July 1889. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Shawl uses literary elements and techniques to portray Lisette’s complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle.

In a timed writing situation and with an unfamiliar text, students were expected to complete three tasks. They were expected to:

- read the excerpt carefully;
- analyze Lisette’s complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle; and,
- write a well-written response based on that analysis.

Reading the prose passage means reading closely for both literary techniques and meaning, which can be an additional challenge for some students given the relative length of the prose passage. Students were expected to view the text specifically as a prose passage, recognizing conventions particular to the genre, and then analyze how those techniques are used to shape the passage and its meaning. For example, in *Everfair*, students might identify and explore a variety of devices and techniques that impact meaning, including sensory details (“insects buzzed,” “the scent—intoxicating!”) and imagery (“The crest came in sight, the washed-out summer sky showing itself through the beech trees’ old silver trunks” and “the valley, the blurred rows of cultivation curving away smaller and smaller in the bluing distance”). Students might also note the descriptions of Lisette (“She was a wild thing, laughing, jouncing over dry watercourses, hanging on for dear, dear life”) and how the excerpt is structured into thirds, with Lisette presented differently in each (first learning about the bike and becoming one with it; then back in public, along the river, where she recognizes her awkwardness; and then personifying the bike, talking to it as a friend).

Analyzing the prose passage means taking the relevant parts that students identified in their reading and thinking about how the parts function collectively to create the meaning of the prose passage as a whole. In *Everfair* students needed to consider how the parts convey Lisette’s complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle. The word “complex” is again central to the prompt, reminding students to look for and explore the shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical aspects of the prose passage. For instance, students might analyze and explore *how* Lisette learns to ride “her new mechanical friend” in the first part of the passage—how the riding goes from “at first, work” and “wobbling” to “going faster, faster! Flying! Freedom!” They could delve into what “Freedom!” means to Lisette at this moment in time. They might consider why it’s important that Lisette bonds (literally, in the final scene) with a “machine.” In order to account for the entire passage, students should also have taken into account the middle section of the excerpt, when she is “suddenly conscious of the curious stares of those around her” and considered how this experience adds to/detracts from the earlier “Freedom!”

Writing a well-written response to a prose passage means that students demonstrate the ability to establish an overall thesis and build an argument through evidence and commentary, ideally constructing a line of reasoning that shows the complexity of their understanding. A challenge of any prose passage lies in the amount of evidence that students must account for and analyze. The more successful responses cover passages more fully, with the exploration illuminating the complexity of the passage with its differences, contrasts, and contradictions. It should again be noted that students are not expected in timed writing to write a polished, fully revised essay but rather to be engaged in a process of thinking as they explore the passage and draft their response.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Overall, students performed well on the specified tasks. Students seemed to find the passage from *Everfair* accessible and again wrote full, complete essays in response to the prompt. In particular:

- Most students were able to read and understand the overall narrative arc of the passage. Some students noted how the narrative is divided into thirds. Some students found the middle section (when Lisette is back in public, along the river, and she recognizes her awkwardness) challenging to integrate into the characterization of Lisette.
- Most students identified multiple particular details from the passage, which was rich and offered students a wide range of descriptions. Details describing Lisette as “free” and “powerful” were the most commonly used. Many students saw similarities between Lisette and the bicycle. Some students noted how Lisette becomes so powerful that even the environment seems to bow to her (“The road laid itself down before her”).
- Many students identified a range of literary devices, including details and imagery. Some students explored the importance of the supportive third-person narrator, who seems to celebrate Lisette.
- Many students took risks and offered interpretations of newly coined, figurative terms like “greenbrowngreengrey” and “coolwarmcoolwarm.”
- Many students made an overall claim about Lisette that noted her “[f]reedom” or momentary power on her bike. Some students explored more of the complexities about Lisette, for instance what “freedom” or being a “wild thing” means to her in particular (for instance, how she negotiates her “freedom” in public).
- Some students developed a line of reasoning based on the progression of the excerpt. Lisette goes from a novice on her bike (her “new mechanical friend”) to skilled and confident (a “wild thing” with “Freedom!”) to facing public pushback (she “blushed” at the “curious stares”) to being reminded of her power and the influence of her bicycle (“Dear one,” she refers to the bike). Students connected these ideas and showed how each discreet moment still forms a unified Lisette.
- Some students explored the full text, including the tensions, like how Lisette could be both “a wild thing” and “[f]lustered” or how she could have “[f]reedom!” and also face restraints.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students provided a thesis but it was generic or based on a statement from the passage (for instance, that Lisette gains power from riding her bicycle). Students missed opportunities to analyze the details and arrive at more nuanced, complex arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In Nisi Shawl's <i>Everfair</i>, Lisette’s enjoyment of the freedom and speed of her bike is shown to be liberating, but also undermined by her self-consciousness of how society views her love for it; this is portrayed through dynamic syntax and a shift in the mood of the poem.” “In Nisi Shawl's novel <i>Everfair</i>, the author shifts the tone between Lisette feeling free with just her bike and then having to act normal when she is not alone along with the difference in the environment when she is on her own in order to show the reader how differently she feels when in town versus out in nature.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students described the many engaging details from the passage but missed opportunities to connect them to Lisette (they failed to show what the details tell about Lisette’s complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Through the quick-paced and frantic structure of sentences in the descriptions of her riding her bike, it is evident that Lisette is positively overjoyed by the rush she gets when riding. She passes nearby trees, homes, and roads in a flurry of ‘greenbrowngreengrey’ and flickers through patches of sunlight and shade, switching between ‘coolwarmcoolwarm’. Shawl mashes together these words to depict the speedy velocity at which Lisette is whipping by the world around her. The world seems to contort to a blur, just as multiple words are contorted into one. This portrays the vivacious sensory experience Lisette has as she is riding her bike and recreates the sense of freedom one gets when moving very fast. When riding her bike, Lisette feels free of the confines of her daily life and can simply enjoy what she is experiencing in the moment. Additionally, Shawl’s frequent use of commas and long sentences symbolize the long distance Lisette travels on her bike and the multitude of things she feels at once. Gusts of wind ‘rushed into her face, whistled in her ears, filled her nose, tore her hair loose’. The wind adds to Lisette’s sensation that she is traveling very fast and

increases her happiness all the more. The wind is often shown to be force untethered by any restrictions, and its control over Lisette can symbolize her feelings of no boundaries or limits to what she can feel. Lisette’s loose hair can also imply that she is able to lose herself while riding the bike and give into her own joy.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

1. **Notice–Focus–Interpret** can be a helpful model to show a *process* for identifying and analyzing, offering students concrete steps, regardless of their skill level. A quick overview: **Notice:** With or without a prompt in mind, what do students see in a text? Don’t judge, just list aspects of the text that seem important. **Focus:** We want to do something with everything we’ve noticed, so we dial in on a question or controlling element. For the AP English Literature and Composition exam, the focus could be the main idea of the prompt—in the case of Question 2, if I’m thinking about “Lisette’s complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle” then what’s most relevant in my list? **Interpret:** Using that focus and those relevant items, what is the evidence telling you? Remind students that analysis is always circular and ongoing—they can go back to more Noticing, for instance, any time.

Notice–Focus–Interpret can provide students with a framework for how to approach analysis of a prose excerpt. As we saw with some students in the *Everfair* passage, sometimes students can struggle to see how textual details “add up” and contribute toward an overall argument. The Notice part of N–F–I can help students identify related details and how they work together to create meaning. As a class, brainstorm important aspects of rich texts, writing everything on the board—the more information the better. Offer small groups a guiding question (a Focus) and ask them to select relevant evidence from the board *and* to draft commentary that explains the relationship of the evidence to the question. (For instance, for *Everfair*, you might ask students to focus on a question like “What does ‘Freedom!’ mean for Lisette in this passage?” Students can then practice both filtering/narrowing evidence that’s most relevant to the question and constructing commentary.)

2. **Gallery Walks.** Generally, a gallery walk is a series of posters/stations arranged around the classroom. Students travel from station to station, individually or in groups, responding or contributing in some way, based on the assigned task. Information is progressively collected, which can be analyzed/discussed by groups or the entire class. Gallery walks are flexible and adaptive.

For the prose passage, to help students develop commentary and to connect evidence to a broader argument, the teacher could select a range of individual passages from a novel being studied, similar in length to a typical AP English Literature and Composition prose excerpt. (Students could select passages, too.) Hang the passages on the classroom wall, against a larger sheet of poster paper. Students are given a guiding question (for instance, “What does ‘Freedom!’ mean for Lisette in this *Everfair* passage?) and asked to walk from poster to poster, reading and circling/annotating words and phrases they find important and relevant. They add their own commentary, too. As students move to other posters, they add both annotations and commentary and can agree/disagree with existing comments. At the end, each group has a multivoiced, layered text with a range of interpretations they can consider and report back on. The activity can also be set up electronically, using a platform like Google Docs.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of prose fiction analysis skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their reading, analysis, and writing skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.
- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' prose fiction analysis instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - To support students in the practice of close reading of prose fiction and identifying engaging details that they may connect to a claim as supporting evidence (a common area of struggle as noted in the table above) teachers may want to have students watch the **Faculty Lecture for Unit 1, "The Self in 'The Tell-Tale Heart.'"**
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers can simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Prose and/or for particular skills they'd like to have their students practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Prose Analysis Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can provide teachers with examples of thesis statements that have varying levels of specificity, nuance, and complexity, a common area of struggle as noted in the "Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps" column in the table above.

Question 3

Task: Literary Argument

Topic: Reinvented Character

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.26

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 3, the literary argument question, students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

In many works of literature, characters choose to reinvent themselves for significant reasons. They may wish to separate from a previous identity, gain access to a different community, disguise themselves from hostile forces, or express a more authentic sense of self.

Either from your own reading or from the following list, choose a work of fiction in which a character intentionally creates a new identity. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the character's reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In a timed writing situation and without access to the text, students were expected to complete three tasks. They were expected to:

- select a work of fiction in which a character intentionally creates a new identity;
- analyze how the character's reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole; and,
- write a well-written response based on that analysis.

Selecting a work of fiction that addresses the focus of the prompt, in this case a text with a character who intentionally creates a new identity, is the first essential step for students. Students benefit from more complex texts, ones that contain multiple viewpoints, a variety of characters or narrative arcs, and language that lends itself to interpretation. Texts with less complexity make analysis more difficult. It should be noted that there is no formal list of acceptable texts; rather, students demonstrate the appropriateness of the text through their analysis and writing. The list of texts offered with the prompt is meant to offer suggestions, representing diverse options.

Analyzing the work of fiction here required two steps. First, students were asked to identify a character who intentionally creates a new identity. The prompt offered students suggestions on a variety of motivations a character may have for creating a new identity—"They may wish to separate from a previous identity, gain access to a different community, disguise themselves from hostile forces, or express a more authentic sense of self"—but it also invited students to define the concept in different or unique ways, depending on the text they chose. Second, students analyze how the character's reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. In doing so, students demonstrate both close reading and their ability to negotiate longer texts. Students were cautioned not to summarize the text, a reminder that the evidence they draw from the text should be used in service of analysis.

Writing a well-written literary argument requires students to negotiate a range of information, including the focus of the prompt and evidence from a substantial text. In this instance, they needed to articulate an overall thesis about how a character's reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. They must also develop the argument through evidence and commentary, ideally constructing a line of

reasoning that shows the complexity of their understanding. Stronger responses use more specific, precise evidence, though students are not expected to use direct quotations in their response. Stronger responses use evidence as support for defensible claims rather than merely as plot summary.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Generally, students of all levels found the prompt accessible and used a variety of texts to explore a character who intentionally creates a new identity. Students again tended to write complete essay responses. In particular:

- Most students were able to identify a character who intentionally creates a new identity and describe the reinvention. Many students selected less obvious characters and showed how they intentionally created a new identity.
- Most students were able to create a defensible thesis about their chosen character and how they intentionally create a new identity.
- Many students knew the general plot of their selected text and could describe key moments in addition to offering details about the character’s reinvention.
- Some students only summarized the text or described the character who intentionally creates a new identity.
- Some students connected the reinvention of the character to the larger meaning of the work as a whole.
- Some students developed a line of reasoning, showing relationships between ideas as they analyzed the character who intentionally creates a new identity.
- Some students used a broader context (such as a social context like race or gender) as a pathway to the Sophistication point in Row C.
- Some students wrote in a casual way without a clear plan—more like a stream-of-consciousness response. These responses often contained a thesis that emerged later in the essay (delayed thesis) along with interesting single points, but they often were not developed, linked to the thesis, nor connected to other ideas.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students sometimes relied on plot summary rather than analyzing the character’s reinvention with specific details from the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Balram’s journey begins in Laxmanghar, where as a child he is wary of breaking the social status of his culture—and as a result, is repeatedly shown that it is his fate to submit to others due to the power dynamics. This can be seen perhaps most immediately with his mother's death: as Balram watches the funeral pyre, he sees his mother’s foot stretching towards the sky, almost as if in rebellion; however, it is quickly consumed by flames, and upon seeing this, Balram faints for the first time in his life. In this moment of significance for Balram, he is first shown that any resistance, no matter how small, is quickly crushed by forces beyond his control. This motif is continued by Balram’s observations of the Ganges river, in particular on its mud. Balram sees the river as a source of impurity despite its sacredness—and we see through his introspection that despite the value placed on cultural symbols such as these, they are what is keeping those in the ‘darkness’ from ever escaping the lower class. Even when realizing this, Balram is still hesitant to take the power to change what he sees happening around him: we see this implicitly through his irrational fear of lizards, and his refusal to kill one despite his father’s insistence. And more prominently, when Balram is first given the title of White Tiger by an inspector who comes to his school, but must eventually leave the school to work and help provide for his family, Balram does not fight very hard to find a solution that allows him to continue his education (and is consequently reduced from White Tiger to ‘human spider’). In other words, Balram originally has little motivation to go against the social norms he has been exposed to his entire life, and despite knowing his fate and wanting, to some extent, to escape it, is unable to as long as he plays by the rules.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students sometimes struggled to show how the character’s reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Not only does Jack transform, but he becomes the leader of a new regime. His tribe rebels against the original attempt at civilization, in which Jack and his hunters provide food, but rather Jack distinguishes himself separately from Piggy, Ralph, and Simon. As a physical indicator of a transformation, the hunters start wearing tribal ‘makeup’ on their skin; not to protect from harsh light and other jungle conditions, but rather to declare a new identity. Jack and the hunters care less for practicality and civility, and more for danger, cruelty, and their primitive nature. Body paint symbolizes their regression and embracing of their primitive thoughts and ideas that they become compelled to act on. Jack and hunters kill Simon without much of a second thought and little to remorse in the aftermath because they have fully embraced their regression into the ‘evil’ side that man is born with.”
---	--

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

1. Encourage students to **Start with a Thesis**. Students sometimes use a delayed thesis, one that they work their way into as their response develops. (Again, in a timed writing situation, students are engaged in a process of thinking as they explore the passage and draft their response.) While the delayed thesis earns the student the thesis point, it poses challenges for selecting evidence and articulating commentary and for developing a line of reasoning. If students are encouraged to identify their argument first, they can use it to shape their essay, including linking ideas to the thesis and showing relationships between the ideas and the thesis (which creates the line of reasoning).
2. **Guided Review**. Peer review and even working with one’s own draft can be an intimidating, stressful activity. To facilitate the process for students, ask them to read for discrete, limited information. For instance, for Question 3, teachers might guide students to read for thesis, evidence, and commentary. (For practice, you might start with a posted sample from a previous year, for which you also have access to the commentary that will guide your attention toward the sample’s thesis, evidence, and commentary.) Initially, you can guide students through the activity in class, asking them to work intentionally and methodically—first, look for the thesis, highlighting it with a certain color and maybe making a quick comment in the margin; then, highlight any evidence in another color, noting in the margin if it’s especially specific or vague; finally, highlight the commentary/analysis in a final color, noting in the margin other ideas that might also be considered. Have students pay close attention to spots where evidence and commentary are not linked—these spots may be plot summary. Teachers can help students see how summary can be turned into evidence, sometimes as easily as adding a “For instance.” Teachers can also help students see opportunities to make general evidence more specific. Eventually students will use this intentional, focused reading of drafts on their own and even make it part of their composing process.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Literary Argument Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of literary argument skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their literary argumentation skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 3, 6, and 9** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.
- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 3, 6, and 9** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' literary argumentation instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - To address the common misconceptions and knowledge gaps noted in the table above, teachers may wish to assign the following AP Daily videos to supplement or reinforce their instruction.
 - **Unit 9: Skill 7.B Daily Video 1**
 - **Unit 9: Skill 7.D Daily Video 1**
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Literary Argument Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers can simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Prose and/or for particular skills they'd like to have their students practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Literary Argument Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can help teachers explain the difference between plot summary and analysis, as well as how to connect an idea, such as a character's reinvention, to a broader interpretation of the work, both common areas of struggle as noted in the table above.