



2000 Advanced Placement Program® Free-Response Questions

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2000 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

In the following passage from her autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty recalls early experiences of reading and books that had later impact on her craft as a writer of fiction. In a well-organized essay, analyze how Welty's language conveys the intensity and value of these experiences.

Line I never knew anyone who'd grown up in Jackson
without being afraid of Mrs. Calloway, our librarian.
5 She ran the Library absolutely by herself, from the
desk where she sat with her back to the books and
facing the stairs, her dragon eye on the front door,
10 where who knew what kind of person might come in
from the public? SILENCE in big black letters was
on signs tacked up everywhere. She herself spoke in
her normally commanding voice; every word could
be heard all over the Library above a steady seething
15 sound coming from her electric fan; it was the only
fan in the Library and stood on her desk, turned
directly onto her streaming face.

As you came in from the bright outside, if you
15 were a girl, she sent her strong eyes down the stair-
way to test you; if she could see through your skirt
she sent you straight back home: you could just put
on another petticoat if you wanted a book that badly
from the public library. I was willing; I would do
20 anything to read.

My mother was not afraid of Mrs. Calloway. She
wished me to have my own library card to check out
books for myself. She took me in to introduce me and
I saw I had met a witch. "Eudora is nine years old and
25 has my permission to read any book she wants from
the shelves, children or adult," Mother said. "With
the exception of *Elsie Dinsmore*,"* she added. Later
she explained to me that she'd made this rule because
Elsie the heroine, being made by her father to practice
30 too long and hard at the piano, fainted and fell off the
piano stool. "You're too impressionable, dear," she
told me. "You'd read that and the very first thing
you'd do, you'd fall off the piano stool." "Impres-
sionable" was a new word. I never hear it yet without
35 the image that comes with it of falling straight off the
piano stool.

Mrs. Calloway made her own rules about books.
You could not take back a book to the Library on the
40 same day you'd taken it out; it made no difference
to her that you'd read every word in it and needed
another to start. You could take out two books at a
time and two only; this applied as long as you were
a child and also for the rest of your life, to my mother
45 as severely as to me. So two by two, I read library
books as fast as I could go, rushing them home in
the basket of my bicycle. From the minute I reached
our house, I started to read. Every book I seized on,
from *Bunny Brown and His Sister Sue at Camp Rest-
a-While* to *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*,
50 stood for the devouring wish to read being instantly
granted. I knew this was bliss, knew it at the time.
Taste isn't nearly so important; it comes in its own
time. I wanted to read *immediately*. The only fear was
that of books coming to an end.

55 My mother was very sharing of this feeling of
insatiability. Now, I think of her as reading so much
of the time while doing something else. In my mind's
eye *The Origin of Species* is lying on the shelf in the
pantry under a light dusting of flour—my mother was
60 a bread maker; she'd pick it up, sit by the kitchen
window and find her place, with one eye on the oven.
I remember her picking up *The Man in Lower Ten*
while my hair got dry enough to unroll from a load
of kid curlers trying to make me like my idol, Mary
65 Pickford. A generation later, when my brother Walter
was away in the Navy and his two little girls often
spent the day in our house, I remember Mother read-
ing the new issue of *Time* magazine while taking
the part of the Wolf in a game of "Little Red Riding
70 Hood" with the children. She'd just look up at the
right time, long enough to answer—in character—
"The better to eat you with, my dear," and go back to
her place in the war news.

(1983)

*Elsie Dinsmore was the long-suffering young heroine in a popular series of children's books written by Martha Finley and first published in 1868.

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Question 2

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

In the following passage, George Orwell uses the example of Gandhi to make an argument for choosing human imperfection over “sainthood.” As you read Orwell’s remarks, note his choice of details and his tone. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Orwell criticizes Gandhi’s position and assess how effectively Orwell develops his own position.

Close friendships, Gandhi¹ says, are dangerous, because “friends react on one another” and through loyalty to a friend one can be led into wrong-doing. This is unquestionably true. Moreover, if one is to love God, or to love humanity as a whole, one cannot give one’s preference to any individual person. This again is true, and it marks the point at which the humanistic and the religious attitude cease to be reconcilable. To an ordinary human being, love means nothing if it does not mean loving some people more than others. The autobiography² leaves it uncertain whether Gandhi behaved in an inconsiderate way to his wife and children, but at any rate it makes clear that on three occasions he was willing to let his wife or a child die rather than administer the animal food prescribed by the doctor. It is true that the threatened death never actually occurred, and also that Gandhi— with, one gathers, a good deal of moral pressure in the opposite direction—always gave the patient the choice of staying alive at the price of committing

a sin: still, if the decision had been solely his own, he would have forbidden the animal food, whatever the risks might be. There must, he says, be some limit to what we will do in order to remain alive, and the limit is well on this side of chicken broth. This attitude is perhaps a noble one, but, in the sense which—I think—most people would give to the word, it is inhuman. The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one *is* sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one’s love upon other human individuals. No doubt alcohol, tobacco, and so forth, are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is also a thing that human beings must avoid.

(1949)

¹ Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948). Political and spiritual leader in India

² Gandhi’s autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

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Question 3

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

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*

The lines above are from a speech by King Lear. Write a carefully reasoned essay in which you briefly paraphrase Lear's statement and then defend, challenge, or qualify his view of the relationship between wealth and justice. Support your argument with specific references to your reading, observation, or experience.

END OF EXAMINATION