



AP[®] English Language 2001 Sample Student Responses

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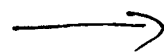
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The only thing that all writers have in common is that they write. Writers come from different backgrounds, different time periods, and different locations, and all bring varied experiences in to the act of setting pen to paper. Writing is tough - both physically draining and mentally frustrating - and, without some sort of support group - a network of acquaintances who share the same struggles - it is difficult to endure the agony of what some have called "mental constipation." Writing to Mrs. Lewes, Mrs. Peirce reached out for support, and her plea to Lewes was so "touching and tender" that it elicited a response. In her response, Lewes consoles Peirce by explaining her views on the development of a writer; using metaphor and personal experience she succeeds in her quest to offer advice to the burgeoning Peirce.

In the relatively short opening paragraph of her letter, Lewes first complements ~~her~~ Peirce: by ~~writing~~ ~~or~~ crafting a letter so poignant and well-written as to elicit a response from a busy author, she has passed the first test of a writer. The following paragraph completely redefines ~~the~~ the two women's relationship. Rather than accept ~~Peirce's~~ ^{Peirce's} view that she is innately superior to Lewes, Lewes humbles herself and raises Peirce, noting that the first step in becoming a writer is simply to have a



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dream - a dream of "exultation." Following this observation, Lewes likens all writers to pregnant women: as "offspring develop inside them," such writers feel that they are only "hushes" or "vehicles." Third, Lewes again sympathizes with ~~her~~ Peirce as she ~~explains~~ ^{delineates} the writer's paradox - that the more writers write, the more frustrated they become with the inadequacy of their own creation. Already, in the first twenty lines, ~~Peirce~~ ^{Lewes} has used a metaphor, a paradox, and an appeal to the reader - and the letter is only half done.

Shifting gears slightly, Lewes moves on to assuage Peirce's fears that she is past her prime. Likening a writer's inner gifts and experiences to fruit, ~~she~~ she puts a quite different spin on Peirce's worries and complements her on not exhausting herself, ~~em~~ stressing that she too has gone through the same struggles that Peirce has, Lewes begins to tell her story - and at the same time continue to explain her perspective on the development of a writer. All writers, she claims, are at first both proud and ambitious, and are unwilling to pen anything that they do not consider a masterpiece. Once they find a particular niche that they feel confident in, such writers begin to climb the ladder towards greatness. At this point an interesting transformation



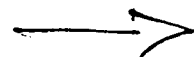
occurs. The farther up the writers climb, the more humble they become, and when (or perhaps if) these writers achieve critical acclaim, they are slightly embarrassed. Thus, Lewes' position on the development of a writer is that it is a gradual, slow process - and that, paradoxically, in order to become a great writer one must ~~grow~~ be weaned away from the hope of becoming a great writer. In explaining this process to Peirce, Lewes narrows the chasm between aspiring writers and great ones: underneath, she says, we ~~are~~ all come from the same roots.

Lewes' closing lines assure Peirce that the life of a married female writer is a happy one - using an allusion to ~~an~~ a character in one of her works. The entire letter operates on metaphor and paradox made interesting and relevant by Lewes' personal experience. Because of her experience, she speaks with authority; at the same time, however, she ~~too~~ points out the underlying similarities between her plight and Peirce's - offering exactly what Peirce needed, a dose of inspiration - something all writers could use.

Lewes' Words ~~of Persuasion~~

Personal letters are one of the most intimate forms of communication, and the best for persuasion. In this letter to Medina Peirce, Marian Evans Lewes conveys her beliefs on writing and on becoming an author. Through a personal narration of her life, a relaxed personal attitude, and ~~the~~ allusions to everyday life, Lewes is able to convey her idea that literary maturity, like physical and mental maturity, must be reached before any viable "offspring" may be produced.

Lewes' response to Peirce's "words of tenderness" (ln 4) ~~she~~ explains that it is necessary for a woman to reach a literary maturity before she will produce any worthwhile works of literature. To emphasize this point, Lewes compares the works of a young writer to "trashy, unripe fruit" (ln 27). She goes on to explain that it is useless to "exhaust" oneself, before ~~that~~ ^{one} is able to convey their ideas clearly and ^{both} concisely. In order to show ^{both} empathy and sympathy towards her adviser, Lewes then gives a narrative of her own life, showing the stages she went through before reaching literary maturity. Due to the already intimate nature of the letter, this narration and empathy help to draw the bond between these two women closer. This in turn makes Lewes' advice and argument even stronger. By writing on a

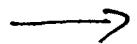


personal level, a comforting tone develops, in which Lewes comforts Peirce, commenting that age and health should not be a detriment to creativity. All throughout this letter, Lewes is encouraging Peirce to continue her pursuit of writing. By relating Peirce's ~~her~~ life to her own, Lewes is able to show that they have gone through a similar life, and that the end result may be the same. This, obviously, would be encouraging to an admirer.

Another way that Lewes is able to bring her message to a personal level is to use allusions to everyday life. For example, she ~~compares~~ compares the creation of a literary work to the birth of a child:

*What comes after, is rather the sense that the work has been produced within one, like offspring, developing and growing by some force of which one's own life has only served as a vehicle (ln 9-12).

Directed towards a thirty year old woman, this allusion was most likely a powerful method of persuasion. Furthermore, through this comparison Lewes once again emphasizes her point. Just as child birth cannot occur until a physical maturity is reached, a literary work requires a different type of 'coming of age'.



This very personal ~~the~~ letter from one woman to another was intended to be a method of encouragement. Peirce was worried that she could not become a writer, due to age, etc. However, through Lewis addresses these fears in several ways. By using a personal narrative, and comparisons, she comforts Peirce through her views on literary maturity. Furthermore, through her personal attitude and colloquial allusions to life, she makes this response letter into a work of encouragement, and a plea for the continuation of creativity.

~~Mar~~ Marian Evans Lewes' letter to Merusina Peirce is one of a somehow detached ~~intimacy~~ intimacy. She uses intelligent yet simple diction and syntax, a didactic style and personal confessions to create a long-lasting ~~lesson~~ lesson ~~on~~ on the development of a writer.

Lewes' diction and syntax, while at all times possessing an aura of intellect and formality, manages to remain relatively simple and entirely unaffected. There is no trace of the pomposity that often laces the writing style of a popular author. She is giving Peirce a life lesson, yet never stoops to be condescending or arrogant. Her diction displays an obviously firm grasp of the language, but nothing excessive or unnecessary, and her syntax is alternately long and short, punctuated frequently but not ~~heavily~~ heavily. ~~This~~ This makes her letter easily read and understood, but not oversimplified.

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for the "populace".

Lewes' didactic style is that of a sage and experienced woman, one who has made her mistakes and had her successes, respectively suffered and rejoiced, and come out the better with a greater understanding of what it's all about. She shifts her focus from herself, to Peirce, and back to herself, so that Peirce is not only getting advice, but concrete evidence from Lewes' life to back up this advice. Lewes' advises, "I want you ~~not~~ not to fancy yourself old because you are thirty, or to regret that you have not yet written anything... There is nothing more dreary than the life of a writer who has early exhausted himself." She also addresses Peirce's conflict between writing and domestic duties, and then says "Something of all that I have gone through myself, I have never known perfect health... [I have felt] the wants of others as my own."

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These types of personal confessions greatly enhance the effectiveness of this letter. She is opening herself and her past, showing Peirce that she too has struggled with these obstacles and overcome them. This personalization of the ~~lesson~~ ^{lesson} creates a feeling of intimacy and true life learning. She confesses, "I did not believe that I could do anything fine ... [I began with] a sort of writing which had no great glory belonging to it." She also confesses that, even now, the satisfaction in her own work is lacking, saying, "When we are young we say, 'I should be proud if I could do that.' Having done it, [however] one finds oneself the reverse of proud." All these confessions are meant for Peirce to feed off of and gather her own conclusions from. This is the most important and effective kind of teaching - the offering of one's own life and allowing the pupil to draw his ~~own~~ individual conclusions and

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lessons from experiences other than
his ~~own~~ own.

Lewes' letter proves to be a most effectively didactic work. It teaches but doesn't insist that its teaching is absolute truth; it suggests by personal experience but doesn't turn it into fact.

Peirce couldn't have had ~~as~~ better guidance in the development of a writer than in her correspondence with Marian Lewes.