

2023

AP[®]



AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

Inside:

Free-Response Question 3

- Scoring Guidelines**
- Student Samples**
- Scoring Commentary**

Question 3: Literary Argument

6 points

Many works of literature feature a rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in the text. They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance. The character’s motivation for this rebellious behavior is often complex.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response, you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row A Thesis (0–1 points)</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	<p>1 point</p> <p>Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the selected work.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the selected work that doesn't respond to the prompt. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the complex motivation of the rebel character. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a claim about how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole.
<p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Restate the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In many literary works, characters rebel against their families, societies, or governments, but their motivation for doing so is usually pretty complex.”</i> <p>Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment about the selected work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In <u>Fences</u>, Cory and Troy have a difficult relationship.”</i> <i>“Elizabeth Bennet lives in the 18th century, which was a time when women were expected to get married very young.”</i> <i>“In <u>The Coquette</u>, we get Eliza’s story in her own words by reading her letters.”</i> 		<p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Provides a defensible interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In <u>King Lear</u>, Cordelia’s quiet rebellion is grounded in her genuine love for her father and her suspicion of Regan and Goneril’s true intentions.”</i> <i>“In <u>One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest</u>, McMurphy actively resists Nurse Ratched’s rules because of his care for his fellow inmates.”</i> <i>“With her refusal to inhabit a subservient role, Sofia, Harpo’s assertive and defiant wife in <u>The Color Purple</u>, inspires the other female characters to rebel against their situations, but her experience also serves as a cautionary tale of what eventually happens to rebels.”</i>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. A thesis that offers a defensible claim about the complex motivation of the rebel character in the selected work may earn the point; any reasonable student interpretation of “rebellious behavior” is acceptable. For a thesis to be defensible, the selected work must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes					
Typical responses that earn 0 points:	Typical responses that earn 1 point:	Typical responses that earn 2 points:	Typical responses that earn 3 points:	Typical responses that earn 4 points:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. • May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a selected work rather than specific details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. • May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. • May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. • Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. • Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. • Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. • Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. 	
Additional Notes:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. • To earn the fourth point in this row, the response must address the interpretation of the selected work as a whole. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include ...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where ...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time ...</i>”). • Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see ...</i>” OR “<i>Though the text could be said to ...</i>”). • Oversimplify complexities of the topic and/or the selected work. • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument. 	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the selected work. 2. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. 3. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the text. 4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 		

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

→ The novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Neale Hurston follows Janie who is in pursuit of a fulfilling life which proves to be difficult as a black woman in her time. Society devalues her and her needs as a human being but Janie rebels in order to live a life on her own terms. In this novel Janie disrupts societal and familial affairs in her relationships with her husbands, Logan, Joe, and Tea Cake; she is motivated by love and freedom ~~and~~ and the rebellion contributes to the meaning of the work that promotes women being able to have both love and freedom.

Janie's first husband ^{Logan} ~~Logan~~ represents a life without both love and freedom. Janie feels no attraction towards him and only married him from the pressures of her grandmother Nanny. While Nanny was right in that Logan could support Janie with his ownership of property and the ~~protection~~ protection of marriage, this is not a fulfilling existence. Logan expects Janie to fulfill the role of home-maker and laborers farmwork that Janie wholeheartedly detests. All of these factors ~~are~~ inevitably contribute to Janie running away with Joe, a man she is attracted to and goes with in hopes to ~~escape~~ escape her current circumstances. This desertion of Logan is a rebellion against societal and familial affairs. At the time it was the expectation to marry and follow the will of their husbands. Society actively asked women to disregard their desires and dutifully fulfil their roles at home. Janie's rebellion against these ideals

Page 6

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Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



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disrupt the existing expectations placed upon women. Her motivation ~~also~~ lies in freedom of the restrictive marriage and the pursuit of a loving relationship she believes she could have with Joe.

Although her ~~early~~ life with initially seems successful because of his membership granting them power and luxury, Joe soon begins to constrict Janie's freedom. Throughout the story she is described as having beautiful long hair which many are attracted to. As her hair becomes a symbol of her sexuality, Joe becomes jealous and forces her to cover it. As well he make cruel comments calling her an old woman and humiliates her. For a period of time Janie lives with this torment, often being silenced for speaking her mind, but eventually she cracks. After a ~~while~~ Joe is cruel to her again she publicly humiliates him and exposes his hypocrisy. This is a rebellion against societal and familial standards because it directly attacks the archetype of quiet and subservient wife. Along with this, ~~she~~ once Joe dies, she is able to let down her hair. Since this is a symbol of her ~~in~~ sexuality this rebels against the way society ~~has~~ ~~and~~ ~~her~~ ~~sexuality~~ ~~is~~ specifically Joe, restrict women's sexuality and don't allow them to express it. Again she is motivated by the freedom to speak her mind and express herself and sexuality as she pleases. Once again the novel promotes these ideas of female independence and expression ~~and~~ and so Janie's retaliations against Joe accentuates a feminist interpretation

Page 7

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Question 1 Question 2 Question 3



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of the work.

In Janie's first relationship with Tea Cake she is able to have both love and freedom. Her neighbors ~~are~~ discourage this relationship believing he is only after her money but Janie ignores these judgements. She pursues it because of their mutual passion for each other and how he encourages her freedom. Their relationship defies society's condemnation and even limits on what ~~women~~ women should do. Janie goes out with Tea Cake often and he teaches her to fish and shoot. Both of these activities were deemed improper for a ~~lady~~ lady but Janie rebels against it. Eventually Janie and Tea Cake runaway together and get married but this does not restrict her freedom. In this relationship Janie finds love and can freely express it as well as not conforming to society's expectation of how a wife should be. This contributes to the work in that Janie is simultaneously free and in love; this is an experience that this book can be interpreted to promote.

Page 8

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Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a historical fiction novel about the ~~life~~ of adulterer Hester Prynne as she struggles to provide for her daughter while her lover, Reverend Dimmesdale, grows ill from his guilt. ~~Hester's daughter is a rebel against the setting's puritanical culture.~~ Hester Prynne disrupts the ~~society's~~ setting's ^{strict} society due to her desire to protect her daughter and lover and ultimately defines the novel's theme of redemption and societal change through kindness.

The protagonist, Hester Prynne, works hard as a spinster to provide for ~~her~~ her daughter and resists interrogation throughout the plot to protect her lover's reputation. These interests cause her to work hard and be kind to the ~~the~~ inhabitants of Boston to little welcome. There are points in the novel when the society threatens to take her daughter, but Prynne fights to keep her daughter. By the end of the plot, years have passed and Prynne's

Page 8

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Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

hard work ~~is~~ has not gone unnoticed with the townsfolk being kind to her and government allowing her to take of the red A on her clothes. This desire to protect her loved ones has led to Hester Pyrenne to work hard and unintentionally make society kinder.

By fighting for what she loves most, Hester Pyrenne is a true society who changes her society for the better, by being a good and better person. ~~is~~

Page 9

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Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Tita wasn't happy with her family traditions so she would rebel and break rules to go against the traditions. Tita was the last born daughter to mama Elena in the book "Like Water For Chocolate". Mama Elena had Tita follow the family tradition that the last born daughter in any family had to never marry and take care of their mother until she passed. Tita was madly in love with a boy named Pedro and they were each other's soul mates. She was forbidden to ever be alone with Pedro by her mother because she wasn't allowed to be in love because of the tradition. Mama Elena allows Tita's older sister, Gertrudis, to marry Pedro. Pedro proceeds to tell Tita that he will only marry Gertrudis in order to still see Tita and this motivates her to rebel.

Moments when Pedro was alone, Tita would be with him and spend moments together. At family events they'd only glance at each other with their fiery desire building up in them. There were moments in the story when

Page 6

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Question 1

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Tita would wish her mother would die so she could be with Pedro. Other moments, she would use her magic cooking powers to make people feel how she felt about everything.

Tita's desire to rebel against her family traditions show how impactful traditions can be. It can ruin the life of someone and help them change their values. Tita always did as she was told because she loved the idea of family but traditions made her hate what she desired. It wasn't fair that her older sister could be happy and she had to suffer with the inconvenience of being the youngest. She was expected to be like her older sister which made her rebel more. Family traditions ~~are not fair.~~ are not fair.

Page 7

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Question 3

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

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

Many works of literature feature a rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in the text. They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance. The character’s motivation for this rebellious behavior is often complex.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel 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 changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in a significant way;
- analyze the character’s disruption of the existing state and how the complex motivation of the rebel 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 significant rebel character, 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 official 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 rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. The prompt offered students suggestions on a variety of ways that characters can be disruptive—“They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance”—but it also invited students to define the concept in different or unique ways, depending on the text they chose. Second, students were asked to analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to the work as a whole. In doing so, students could 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 were

Question 3 (continued)

asked to articulate an overall thesis about how a rebel character changes or disrupts the existing state of affairs as well as how the character’s motivation contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. They also needed to develop the argument through evidence and commentary, ideally constructing a line of reasoning that shows the complexity of their understanding. Stronger responses use 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.

Sample: 3A—*Their Eyes Were Watching God***Score: 1-4-0****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

This essay responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that appears in the introductory paragraph: “In this novel Janie disrupts societal and familial affairs in her relationships with her husbands, Logan, Joe, and Tea Cake; she is motivated by love and freedom and the rebellion contributes to the meaning of the work that promotes women being able to have both love and freedom.” The response earned 1 point in Row A.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4

The essay provides appropriate and persuasive evidence in its development of the line of reasoning that focuses on Janie’s emerging desire for both love and freedom as her act of rebellion. The essay is organized around Janie’s three marriages and her relationship with each husband. In paragraph 2, the response examines Janie’s marriage to Logan who “expects Janie to fulfill the role of home-maker and laborous farm work that Janie wholeheartedly detests.” The commentary argues that Janie’s “desertion of Logan is a rebellion against societal and familial affairs” and that, in effect, her rebellion disrupts “the existing expectations placed upon women.” Janie’s relationship with Joe is the focus of paragraph 3, and the essay points out the symbolism of Janie’s “beautiful long hair” which is viewed as “a symbol of her sexuality.” Eventually, when Joe dies, “she is able to let down her hair.” The response also argues Janie’s rebellion against Joe “is a rebellion against societal and familial standards because it directly attacks the archetype of quiet and subservient wife” (paragraph 3). Janie’s “final relationship” with Tea Cake is examined in paragraph 4, and the essay makes the point that although her neighbors disapprove of the romance, “Janie ignores these judgements” because Tea Cake “encourages her freedom.” These details support the argument that “Their relationship defies society’s condemnation and even limits on what women should do” such as “fish and shoot.” The essay’s combination of specific evidence and insightful commentary support the argument that women should be able to have both love and freedom “as well as not conforming to society’s expectation of how a wife should be” (paragraph 4). The essay earned 4 points in Row B.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

While the response is consistent and thorough, it does not exhibit sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument. The essay makes an attempt to situate its interpretation within a broader context in paragraph 3 (“Janie’s retaliations against Joe accentuates a feminist interpretation of the work”), but the interpretation is not thoroughly developed. This essay did not earn the point in Row C.

Question 3 (continued)

Sample: 3B—*The Scarlet Letter*

Score: 1-2-0

Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1

The response presents its thesis in the opening paragraph: “Hester Pyrenne disrupts the setting’s strict society due to her desire to protect her daughter and lover and ultimately defines the novel’s theme of redemption and societal change through kindness.” Because the thesis presents a defensible interpretation of the novel, the essay earned 1 point in Row A.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 2

While the response presents some specific textual details, such as “Reverend Dimmesdale, grows ill from his guilt” (paragraph 1) and the “government allowing her to take of the red A on her clothes,” (paragraph 2), this evidence is not effectively used to develop a line of reasoning. Paragraph 2 makes broad generalities about Hester: “These interests cause her to work hard and be kind to the inhabitants of Boston to little welcome” and “Pyrenne fights to keep her daughter.” Additionally, the commentary provided in paragraph 2, “This desire to protect her loved ones has led to Hester Pyrenne to work hard and unintentionally make society kinder,” is an oversimplified explanation and does not advance the argument. The essay does not address how Hester rebels except to claim that she “changes her society for the better, by being a good and better person” in the concluding paragraph. This essay earned 2 points in Row B.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

This essay oversimplifies complexities within the novel, does not employ a style that is vivid or persuasive, does not situate the interpretation in a broader context, and it does not account for alternative interpretations. It did not earn the sophistication point in Row C.

Sample: 3C

Score: 1-1-0—*Like Water for Chocolate*

Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1

The essay earned 1 point in Row A because it presents a defensible interpretation of the work. The thesis, “Tita’s desire to rebel against her family traditions show how impactful traditions can be,” is located in the first sentence of the conclusion.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 1

This essay tends to focus on the overarching narrative developments of the novel and provides evidence that is largely general: “She [Tita] was forbidden to ever be alone with Pedro by her mother because she wasn’t allowed to be in love because of the tradition” (paragraph 1) and “Other moments, she would use her magic cooking powers to make people feel how she felt about everything” (paragraph 2). The evidence is presented without commentary, so no line of reasoning is developed. Paragraph 3 presents the point that “Tita always did as she was told because she loved the idea of family but traditions made her hate what she desired,” but this point is not developed. The final sentence of the essay, “Family traditions are not fair,” is a generalization and oversimplifies the complexity of the novel. This essay earned 1 point in Row B.

Question 3 (continued)

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

This essay does not develop a complex literary argument, nor does it demonstrate sophistication of thought; therefore, it did not earn the point for sophistication in Row C.