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AP<sup>®</sup>



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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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#### **Free-Response Question 3**

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### Question 3: Literary Argument

6 points

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 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><b>Row A</b> <b>Thesis</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b></p> <p>For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1 point</b></p> <p>Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the selected work.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<p><b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>• Make a generalized comment about the selected work that doesn't respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Responses that earn this point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a defensible interpretation of a character's reinvention in the selected work.</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a claim about how a character's reinvention contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b></p> <p><b>Restate the prompt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Literary characters often choose to reinvent themselves for significant reasons. These reasons vary but may stem from a desire to separate from a previous identity, gain access to a different community, hide from hostile forces, or express a more authentic sense of self."</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment about the selected work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Great Expectations follows the story of a character who reinvents himself."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew has become an increasingly controversial play in modern times."</i></li> </ul>		<p><b>Examples that earn this point:</b></p> <p><b>Provides a defensible interpretation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Gatsby reinvents himself as a wealthy, high-class man in order to win back Daisy's love. This reinvention brings about the tragedy of the novel."</i></li> <li>• <i>"In The House Behind the Cedars, Rena, a biracial woman, chooses to represent herself as white when moving to a new city. The anxiety she feels due to this decision reflects the nation's identity crisis following the Civil War."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Through the character of Mia Warren, Celeste Ng illustrates in Little Fires Everywhere that while reinvention is possible, one can never expect to completely escape the actions of the past."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>• A thesis that offers a defensible claim about the character's reinvention in the selected work may earn the point; any reasonable student interpretation of a "character's reinvention" is acceptable.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

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

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row C</b> <b>Sophistication</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>	
	<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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>”).</li> <li>• 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>”).</li> <li>• Oversimplify complexities of the topic and/or the selected work.</li> <li>• Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument.</li> </ul>	<b>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the selected work.</li> <li>2. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context.</li> <li>3. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the text.</li> <li>4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

In William Golding's imaginative dystopia wherein a group of young boys are stranded and left to fend for themselves, many of said boys must undergo a transformation in order to preserve not only their lives, but also their learned morality and social behavior. Specifically, Jack Meridew intentionally adopts a new identity to prove himself and carry his weight on the island. Jack Meridew's desire to transform himself in *The Lord of the Flies* illustrates the destruction and downfall of mankind when left to their own devices (original sin), as well as the inherent evil that resides in man.

Jack's original reinvention into an avid hunter is solely to support the others and himself. He is courageous and wants to help out and "be good" by stepping up and taking a critical role in their island survival, but it is clear to the audience that these actions are not without their own ulterior motives. Jack's failure to kill a simple animal leaves him questioning his abilities (and masculinity), as well as resulting in group disappointment from wasted effort and resource, but he quickly undergoes a transformation to combat this. Jack's new identity kills first and questions later. He transforms from a young boy hesitant and unable to kill a small creature to a hunter with excessive and aggressive hunting procedures. His treatment of the mother pig shows his abandonment of learned social behavior to be well-mannered and "good", as he exhibits overkill with phallic interpretations toward a maternal figure. Instead of a timid and hesitant young boy, Jack has devolved into someone relying solely on primal instinct of man to hurt others for self gain.

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.

In the final act, with the boys at war and Jack leading the charge, he is ready to spear Ralph in order to gain full control of an island he has embraced as his new home. Ralph, being the personification and symbolism of democracy and learned good moral behavior within the group of boys, has no option left but to get chased and eventually maimed by Jack, whose new identity becomes the symbol of innate human evil. Golding contrasts between Jack's original character and Jack's new identity in the final hunt as an illustration of mankind's regression from learned good to innate evil. It is not until rescue men come to save the boys that Jack realizes the scope of his actions, which begs the question: Was Jack's new identity truly a new reinvention of his character or was it hiding underneath the surface of learned goodness?

Jack Meridew intentionally creates a new identity in *The Lord of the Flies* to free himself from cowardice and insecurity he feels, but Golding ultimately uses him as a vessel to demonstrate the regression of man from learned good to an innate evil.

In the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khalid Hausani, the main character Amir attempts to reinvent himself when he flees to America from his home in the Middle East. He attempts to leave his past trauma behind him. Amir carries guilt and shame of not helping his childhood best friend when he was assaulted. Shortly after this event Amir and his father leave during war torn times. He attempts to separate from his previous identity once leaving his home. His, at first, inability to do so contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole that guilt dictates self identification and his later development to reinvention conveys the theme that one can not separate from their past.

When Amir moves to America and tries to reinvent himself after the traumatic event he loses his innocence and curiosity. He completely shifts his personality and is more introverted. This is all due to the guilt he experiences and his inability to forgive himself. His new self deprecating attitude dictates his relationship with his father and his romantic relationships where he is riddled with insecurity and constantly seeking validation. His faulty relationships and self identity are all on the grounds of the guilt he feels for his prior inaction to help his friend. This creates a level of irony since all Amir wanted to do was separate himself from the person he was that made him feel so guilty but he never actually changed from that moment until the end of the book. His 'reinvention' of himself was unattainable since he did not act towards any personal change and stayed statically attached to the guilt he felt.

Another thematic topic his reinvention connects to is that of past. When Amir truly reinvents himself is when he confronts his past misdoings. At the beginning of the novel he had false hope that he could escape his past through reinvention where in reality he is able to reinvent himself by confronting his past. Amir returns back to his home country and continues down a path of redemption. His failures to move forward in America were due to his delusions of being able to disguise his past. When Amir saves his childhood best friend's son from the assaulter he finds clarity in rewriting his wrongs. This action on his past and movement in his character are the reason he is able to finally reinvent himself. This adds to themes that ignoring and separating from your past will stunt personal growth.

In *The Kite Runner* Amir attempts to run from his past and hide from his guilt as a way of self reinvention. Amir is caught between true reinvention and fickle disassociation. He only finds real change when he gains redemption through action. His false reinvention to authentic reinvention and his dynamic character add to the work as a whole and the novel's message, that guilt shackles one's ability to grow and past experiences should be used to guide reinvention not attempted to be forgotten.

In the novel "Beowulf" by Seamus Heaney, Heaney describes the path the Beowulf takes from being a man consumed by his own pride, to a noble leader. However, Heaney also describes how clutching onto pride despite being successful can hinder one from continuing on this path.

After a warrior by the name of Beowulf arrives at a town hall known as Heorot, he discovers the troubled townspeople following previous attacks from Grendel, a creature that has terrorized Heorot for years. Full of confidence, Beowulf agrees to defeat the creature and does so successfully. He is awarded with gifts which seem to only fuel his confidence. He is also able to successfully defeat the mother of this creature, which further develops his pride and almost persuades others into questioning his mortality. Although he defeated the creatures that had terrorized the townspeople and became the king of the Danes, he succumbs to a wound following his battle with a dragon at the end of the novel. What makes this event significant is that he chose to fight the dragon alone, despite the likelihood of not emerging victorious. Here, it becomes evident that Beowulf had successfully reinvented himself, but not completely.

Beowulf demonstrates that he is capable of being a great leader through his ability to protect, and although he had developed his abilities as the king of the Danes, he still holds onto his pride until the moment he dies. It is evident that his position as king had only made this outcome more likely, although it reveals that one's ignorance may hinder their success.

### 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:

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 to 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,

**Question 3 (continued)**

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.

**Sample: 3A—*Lord of the Flies*****Score: 1-4-1****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

This cogent essay responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the novel. The thesis, “Jack Meridew’s desire to transform himself in *The Lord of the Flies* illustrates the destruction and downfall of mankind when left to their own devices (original sin), as well as the inherent evil that resides in man,” appears as the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. It earned 1 point in Row A.

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

The response develops a clear line of reasoning that characterizes Jack’s new identity as a move “from learned good to an innate evil” (paragraph 4). Paragraph 2 of the essay focuses on the beginning of Jack’s transformation and argues that he began the process “solely to support the others and himself.” The essay argues that Jack’s reinvention began when his “failure to kill a simple animal leaves him questioning his abilities (and masculinity)” and he eventually “transforms from a young boy hesitant and unable to kill a small creature to a hunter with excessive and aggressive hunting procedures.” The additional piece of evidence presented in paragraph 2, (“his treatment of the mother pig”), is significant because it “shows his abandonment of learned social behavior to be well-mannered and ‘good.’” Paragraph 3 examines Jack’s physical transformation and points out that “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.” The accompanying commentary claims, “Body paint symbolizes their regression and embracing of their primitive thoughts and ideas that they become compelled to act on.” In paragraph 4, the essay considers Jack’s relationship with Ralph whom the essay describes as “the personification and symbolism of democracy and learned good moral behavior within the group of boys.” Jack, on the other hand, has become “the symbol of innate human evil” and the response characterizes the conflict between the two boys as “mankind’s regression from learned good to innate evil.” The response seamlessly blends apt and specific evidence with compelling commentary to support its claims. This essay earned 4 points in Row B.

**Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 1**

Sophistication is established by identifying and exploring the complexities and tensions within the text, most notably in reference to Jack’s change in identity, the conflict this progression creates within the group of boys, and its symbolism of Jack’s fall from good to evil. The response also employs a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive as seen in “In William Golding’s imaginative dystopia wherein a group of young boys are stranded and left to fend for themselves, many of said boys must undergo a transformation in order to preserve not only their lives, but also their learned morality and social behavior”(paragraph 1) and “It is not until rescue men come to save the boys that Jack realizes the scope of his actions, which begs the question: Was Jack’s new identity truly a new reinvention of his character or was it hiding underneath the surface of learned goodness?” (paragraph 4). This essay earned the point in Row C.

**Question 3 (continued)****Sample: 3B—*The Kite Runner*****Score: 1-3-0****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

This essay presents its thesis, “His [Amir’s], at first, inability to do so contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole that guilt dictates self identification and his later development to reinvention conveys the theme that one can not separate from their past,” in the introductory paragraph. Because the thesis presents a defensible interpretation of the novel, it earned 1 point in Row A.

**Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 3**

The response incorporates evidence and commentary to support its lines of reasoning that focus on the role of guilt as a motivator for reinvention of oneself and the need for redemption. The essay traces Amir’s journey of reinvention by examining the significance of his move to America where he “tries to reinvent himself after the traumatic event he loses his innocents and curiosity” (paragraph 2) and points out later in the same paragraph, “His faulty relationships and self identity are all on the grounds of the guilt he feels for his prior inaction to help his friend.” The second paragraph also considers “the guilt he experiences and his inability to forgive himself.” Paragraph 3 considers the connection between Amir’s transformation and his past and argues, “His failures to move forward in America were due to his delusions of being able to disguise his past.” The commentary then suggests that when Amir “saves his childhood best friend’s son from the assaulter he finds clarity in rewriting his wrongs.” The evidence and the commentary offered build a clear line of reasoning. The commentary, however, does not clearly integrate all evidence provided. For example, the last sentence of paragraph 2 states, “His ‘reinvention’ of himself was unattainable since he did not act towards any personal change and stayed statically attached to the guilt he felt,” yet the essay in the concluding paragraph describes Amir as a “dynamic character.” This response earned 3 points in Row B.

**Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

Because the essay oversimplifies complexities within the novel with assertions such as “guilt shackles one’s ability to grow” (paragraph 4), and the interpretation is not situated within a broader context, it did not earn the point in Row C.

**Sample: 3C—*Beowulf*****Score: 1-1-0****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

This essay earned 1 point in Row A because it provides a defensible thesis of a character’s reinvention. The thesis, “Heaney describes the path the Beowulf takes from being a man consumed by his own pride, to a noble leader. However, Heaney also describes how clutching onto pride despite being successful can hinder one from continuing on this path,” appears in the first paragraph.

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

The essay provides evidence that focuses largely on developments in the overarching narrative, including Beowulf’s arrival at Heorot, his success in battle with “the creatures that had terrorized the townspeople,” his becoming king, and his ultimate death. These details are not, however, accompanied

### Question 3 (continued)

by commentary that explains their significance or connection to the thesis. The essay offers a bit of commentary after describing Beowulf’s death: “What makes this event significant is that he chose to fight the dragon alone, despite the likelihood of not emerging victorious. Here, it becomes evident that Beowulf had successfully reinvented himself, but not completely.” The commentary, however, is general and does not connect the evidence to the thesis. The final sentence of the essay, “It is evident that his position as king had only made this outcome more likely, although it reveals that one’s ignorance may hinder their success” seems disjointed and disconnected from the thesis. No line of reasoning is established within the essay. It earned 1 point in Row B.

#### **Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

The response did not earn the sophistication point in Row C because it neither demonstrates sophistication of thought nor develops a complex literary argument.