

2023

AP[®]



AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Question 1: Poetry Analysis

6 points

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 your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use 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	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <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. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the poem.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the poem that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the poem or features of the poem rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 		Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the speaker's complex response to the changing season.
Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Cary uses various literary elements to convey the speaker's response to the onset of autumn."</i> Do not relate to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Fall is a time when leaves change and decay is all around us."</i> Describe the poem or features of the poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"In the poem 'Autumn,' the speaker describes how flowers, birds, and even temperatures react to the changing of summer into fall. They lose their colors, migrate, and turn colder."</i> 		Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"While autumn makes the speaker's surroundings less hospitable, the speaker takes comfort in the memories of summer and the promise of spring's future arrival."</i> <i>"The personification of nature reveals the speaker's sense of loss at summer's ending and of dread at autumn's arrival."</i> <i>"Cary uses a predictable rhyme scheme and four-line stanzas to highlight how the predictable seasonal cycle eases the speaker's otherwise melancholy reaction to autumn's arrival."</i>
Additional Notes: <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. For a thesis to be defensible, the poem 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				
<p>Row B</p> <p>Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.</p>	<p>1 point</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>3 points</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the poem contributes to its meaning.</p>	<p>4 points</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the poem contribute to its meaning.</p>
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	<p>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</p> <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. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to focus on summary or description of a poem rather than specific details or techniques. • Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</p> <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. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem 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. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem 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. • Explain how the writer’s use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student’s interpretation of the poem.
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <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 may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the poem. 					

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 poem could be said to ...</i>”). • Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the poem comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. • Oversimplify complexities in the poem. • 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 poem. 2. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. 3. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the poem. 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. 		

Romantic and hyperbolic imagery is used to illustrate the speaker's unenthusiastic opinion of the coming of autumn, which conveys Cary's idea that change is difficult to accept but necessary for growth.

Romantic imagery is utilized to demonstrate the speaker's warm regard for the season of summer and emphasize her regretfulness for autumn's coming, conveying the uncomfortable change away from idyllic familiarity. Summer, is portrayed in the image of a woman who "from her golden collar slips/and strays through stubble fields/and moans aloud". Associated with sensuality and wealth, the speaker implies the interconnection between a season and bounty, comfort, and pleasure. Yet, this romantic view is dismantled by autumn, causing Summer to "slip" and "stray through stubble fields". Thus, the coming of real change dethrones a constructed, romantic personification of summer, conveying the speaker's reluctance for her ideal season to be dethroned by something much less decorated and adored. Summer, "she lies on pillows of the yellow leaves,/ And tries the old tunes for over an hour", is contrasted with bright imagery of fallen leaves. The juxtaposition between Summer's character and the setting provides insight to the positivity of change--the yellow leaves--by its contrast with the failures of attempting to sustain old habits or practices,"old tunes". "She lies on pillows" creates a sympathetic, passive image of summer in reaction to the coming of Autumn, contrasting her failures to sustain "old tunes" According to this, it is understood that the speaker recognizes the foolishness of attempting to prevent what is to come, but her wishfulness to counter the natural progression of time.

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, dramaticizing 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. She says "the proud meadow-pink hangs down her head/Against the earth's chilly bosom, witched with frost". Implying pride and defeat, and the word "witched", the speaker brings a sense of conflict, morality, and even good versus evil into the transition between seasons. Rather than a smooth, welcome change, the speaker is practically against the coming of fall. The hyperbole present in the poem serves to illustrate the Speaker's perspective and ideas on the coming of fall, which are characterized by reluctance and hostility to change from comfort.

The topic of this poem, Fall--a season characterized by change and the deconstruction of the spring and summer landscape--is juxtaposed with the final line which evokes the season of Spring. From this, it is clear that the speaker appreciates beautiful and blossoming change, but resents that which destroys familiar paradigms and norms. Fall, seen as the death of summer, is characterized as a regression, though the turning of seasons is a product of the literal passage of time. Utilizing romantic imagery and hyperbole to shape the Speaker's perspective, Cary emphasizes the need to embrace change though it is difficult, because growth is not possible without hardship or discomfort.

In Alice Cary's poem "Autumn," Cary uses precise diction to create contrasting imagery and the shift of the poem to show her simultaneous dislike and appreciation of Winter, and her appreciation of the warmer seasons.

Throughout the poem, word choice creates the difference between the seasons. In stanza one, "twilight," "sunset," and "golden" depict the visuals of summer; this is continued in stanza two with words like "warmer." The transition from Summer to Fall comes in one phrase: "yellow leaves" (line seven) which depicts imagery of leaves changing color as they do in Fall, but the switch is foreshadowed in the phrase "warmer air deceives". The words used to describe Summer and Fall all have a positive connotation: "Golden" suggests a regal nature to Summer, "sunset" is often associated with beauty, and "yellow" is a warm color, and is often associated with joy or kindness.

After the shift of the poem in stanza four, the imagery made by word choice changes to something of dislike toward Winter. Words with negative connotations like "red," "lost," and "frost" coupled with the contrast within line fifteen between "proud" and "hangs down her head" creates a tonal contrast with earlier depiction of Summer and Fall with Winter being more negative. Lines eighteen through twenty depict the loss of the robin's song, which is described as "golden" (positive connotation), to the "brown cricket;" in contrast with gold, brown is associated with dirt and uncleanliness which suggests that Cary isn't happy that the robin's song was lost because of winter.

In the final stanza of the poem, Cary implies that even though Winter creates a "withered world," she still appreciates it because it precedes Spring, hence the final line of the poem. Ultimately, Cary's diction and the contrast it creates between the seasons illustrates her complex attitude toward the warm and cold times of a year.

In "Autumn," Cary employs repetition and imagery in order to convey the speaker's complex response to the changing seasons, ultimately demonstrating the distinct details that make each season their own.

Many sentences of this poem begin with the word "And." "And Summer from her golden collar slips....," "And, stealing hopeful to some sheltered bower..." The repetition of the word "And" is used to describe each season. Since each season consists of something different, repetition as well as imagery are incorporated to describe the difference between them. "The rose has taken off her tire of red- The mullein-stalk it's yellow stars have lost..." This quote utilizes imagery in order to demonstrate a season change from spring to winter. You are able to grasp this season change from the imagery of the roses dying and the stars gone. Since winter takes flowers away and creates a dim sky, the new season change would be winter.

In closing, all of the seasons have their differences and the complexity of seasons changing is well demonstrated throughout this poem through repetition and imagery.

Question 1

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

Overview

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 season. 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

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grammatically correct writing, and it should be noted that students are not expected in a timed writing scenario to write a polished, revised essay.

Sample: 1A**Score: 1-4-1****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The essay responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis located in the introductory paragraph: “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.” The essay earned 1 point in Row A.

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

The response presents specific evidence from the poem and couples it with perceptive commentary to build a line of reasoning that focuses on the speaker’s unhappiness about the arrival of fall. In paragraph 2, the essay analyzes the speaker’s use of romantic imagery and presents lines from the poem that portray summer as a woman who “from her golden collar slips/and strays through stubble fields/and moans aloud.” The commentary that follows argues astutely that through personification, “the speaker implies the interconnection between a season and bounty, comfort, and pleasure.” Later in the same paragraph, the essay argues that the image of summer as she “lies on pillows of the yellow leaves,/ And tries the old tunes for over an hour” creates “a sympathetic, passive image of summer in reaction to the coming of Autumn.” Paragraph 3 considers the speaker’s use of hyperbolic imagery which “displays the discrepancies between unrealistic, exaggerated perceptions of change and the reality of progress.” The response presents the line “the proud meadow-pink hangs down her head/Against the earth’s chilly bosom, witched with frost” and follows with the commentary that carefully considers the speaker’s use of the “the word ‘witched.’” The essay argues that it “brings a sense of conflict, morality, and even good versus evil into the transition between seasons.” The response provides aptly chosen evidence and commentary that consistently supports the line of reasoning throughout the essay. In addition to its in-depth analysis of the imagery of the poem, the essay considers Cary’s use of juxtaposition in paragraph 2: “The juxtaposition between Summer’s character and the setting provides insight to the positivity of change—the yellow leaves—by its contrast with the failures of attempting to sustain old habits or practices, ‘old tunes’.” Additionally, an example of enjambment is discussed in the essay’s observation that “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.” The literary device is not named, nor is it necessary to do so. The essay organizes and supports its argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each one supported consistently with evidence that is clearly explained. This response earned 4 points in Row B.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 1

The essay develops a complex literary argument by identifying and exploring the poem’s tensions and contrasts (described as juxtapositions) in each block of evidence and commentary and through its in-depth analysis of the imagery used throughout the poem. Furthermore, the response employs a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive, such as this sentence at the beginning of paragraph 2: “Romantic imagery is utilized to demonstrate the speaker’s warm regard for the season of summer and emphasize her regretfulness for autumn’s coming, conveying the uncomfortable change away from

Question 1 (continued)

idyllic familiarity.” Another example occurs at the end of the third paragraph: “The hyperbole present in the poem serves to illustrate the Speaker’s perspective and ideas on the coming of fall, which are characterized by reluctance and hostility to change from comfort.” The essay earned 1 point in Row C.

Sample: 1B**Score: 1-3-0****Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The essay presents a defensible interpretation of the poem through its thesis, “In Alice Cary’s poem ‘Autumn,’ Cary uses precise diction to create contrasting imagery and the shift of the poem to show her simultaneous dislike and appreciation of Winter, and her appreciation of the warmer seasons,” that appears in the introductory paragraph. The response earned 1 point in Row A.

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

The essay blends evidence and commentary to support a line of reasoning that characterizes summer as positive and winter as negative. The response directs attention to specific words and their effect. For example, in paragraph 2, the essay considers the significance of the words “twilight,” “sunset,” and “golden” and argues that “Golden” suggests a regal nature to Summer, ‘sunset’ is often associated with beauty, and ‘yellow’ is a warm color, and is often associated with joy or kindness.” Paragraph 3 turns its attention to the “imagery made by word choice changes to something of dislike toward Winter.” This analysis focuses on words “with negative connotations like ‘red,’ ‘lost,’ and ‘frost’” found in the poem. The essay also points out the image of the “brown cricket” and asserts “brown is associated with dirt and uncleanness which suggests that Cary isn’t happy that the robin’s song was lost because of winter.” While the essay has built a clear line of reasoning, the response does not consistently explain how all the evidence supports the line of reasoning. For example, in the third paragraph of the response, the observation is made that some specific evidence “creates a tonal contrast with earlier depiction of Summer and Fall with Winter being more negative.” The idea of “tonal contrast” is not developed adequately. This response earned 3 points in Row B.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

The essay does not demonstrate sophistication of thought nor develop a complex literary argument. It did not, therefore, earn the sophistication point in Row C.

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

This essay earned 1 point in Row A for its defensible thesis presented in the first paragraph of the response: “In ‘Autumn,’ Cary employs repetition and imagery in order to convey the speaker’s complex response to the changing seasons, ultimately demonstrating the distinct details that make each season their own.”

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

The response provides evidence that is largely general. For example, it points out the repetition of the word “and” by quoting two lines that begin with the word. The commentary, “The repetition of the word ‘And’ is used to describe each season,” does not explain how the repetition adds meaning to the

Question 1 (continued)

interpretation of the poem. The essay provides two examples of imagery (“The rose has taken off her tire of red- The mullein-stalk it’s yellow stars have lost ...”), but the commentary provided (“You are able to grasp this season change from the imagery of the roses dying and the stars gone”) does not explain how the imagery supports the thesis. Although several literary devices are mentioned, a minimal amount of explanation of their significance is offered. No line of reasoning is established within the essay. It earned 1 point in Row B.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 1

The thesis oversimplifies the speaker’s response to the changing seasons (“all of the seasons have their differences”) instead of exploring the complexity of the speaker’s response. The style of the essay is not vivid or persuasive. Thus, the response did not earn the point in Row C.