

2018 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

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

The following interchange, excerpted from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, occurs when two characters who have been living on the Blithedale farm—a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living—are about to part ways. Read the passage carefully. In a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques.

Her manner bewildered me. Literally, moreover, I was dazzled by the brilliancy of the room. A chandelier hung down in the centre, glowing with I know not how many lights; there were separate lamps, also, on two or three tables, and on marble brackets, adding their white radiance to that of the chandelier. The furniture was exceedingly rich. Fresh from our old farm-house, with its homely board and benches in the dining-room, and a few wicker chairs in the best parlor, it struck me that here was the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination, revelling in various methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease. Pictures, marbles, vases; in brief, more shapes of luxury than there could be any object in enumerating, except for an auctioneer’s advertisement—and the whole repeated and doubled by the reflection of a great mirror, which showed me Zenobia’s proud figure, likewise, and my own. It cost me, I acknowledge, a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned against her, in my secret mind, and strove so to keep my footing. In the gorgeousness with which she had surrounded herself—in the redundance of personal ornament, which the largeness of her physical nature and the rich type of her beauty caused to seem so suitable—I malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste.

But, the next instant, she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles. I saw how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased, and should do a thousand things that would have been ridiculous in the poor, thin, weakly characters of other women. To this day, however, I hardly know whether I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale. In both, there was something like the illusion which a great actress flings around her.

“Have you given up Blithedale forever?” I inquired.

“Why should you think so?” asked she.

“I cannot tell,” answered I; “except that it appears all like a dream that we were ever there together.”

“It is not so to me,” said Zenobia. “I should think it

a poor and meagre nature, that is capable of but one set of forms, and must convert all the past into a dream, merely because the present happens to be unlike it. Why should we be content with our homely life of a few months past, to the exclusion of all other modes? It was good; but there are other lives as good or better. Not, you will understand, that I condemn those who give themselves up to it more entirely than I, for myself, should deem it wise to do.”

It irritated me, this self-complacent, condescending, qualified approval and criticism of a system to which many individuals—perhaps as highly endowed as our gorgeous Zenobia—had contributed their all of earthly endeavor, and their loftiest aspirations. I determined to make proof if there were any spell that would exorcise her out of the part which she seemed to be acting. She should be compelled to give me a glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real.

“Your allusion to that class of circumscribed characters, who can live in only one mode of life,” remarked I, coolly, “reminds me of our poor friend Hollingsworth.* Possibly, he was in your thoughts, when you spoke thus. Poor fellow! It is a pity that, by the fault of a narrow education, he should have so completely immolated himself to that one idea of his; especially as the slightest modicum of common-sense would teach him its utter impracticability. Now that I have returned into the world, and can look at his project from a distance, it requires quite all my real regard for this respectable and well-intentioned man to prevent me laughing at him—as, I find, society at large does!”

Zenobia’s eyes darted lightning; her cheeks flushed; the vividness of her expression was like the effect of a powerful light, flaming up suddenly within her. My experiment had fully succeeded. She had shown me the true flesh and blood of her heart, by thus involuntarily resenting my slight, pitying, half-kind, half-scornful mention of the man who was all in all with her. She herself, probably, felt this; for it was hardly a moment before she tranquillized her uneven breath, and seemed as proud and self-possessed as ever.

* a charismatic member of the Blithedale community who assumes a leadership position

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample E

[1] How do you reconcile your former understanding of someone with the new person the appears to be? In the given passage, Nathaniel Hawthorne's narrator struggles to accept the seemingly new version of Zenobia, and frustrated with the superficiality she employs, attempts to break her façade and to gage a more honest understanding of who she has become. Through the use of strongly unfavorable diction to underscore Zenobia's unpleasant and false disposition and repeated insistances on her actions as performance, Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia as one of contempt and disapproval.

[2] The passage opens with the narrator observing, in awe, the luxuries of Zenobia's home. It is beautiful, "the fulfillment of every fantasy of the imagination," but although the narrator is "dazzled," he is uneasy and feels a "bitter sense of shame." Hawthorne magnifies this feeling of shame through terms such as "costly self-indulgence" and "redundance of personal ornament," the narrator expresses his disapproval of Zenobia's overly-indulgent lifestyle, which is fundamenty different from the values of his own community. He further st__ his dislike of Zenobia when he says he "malevolently [beholds] her true character," implying Zenobia has been hiding her true personality. By claiming she is a "passionate, luxurious" woman "lucking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste," the narrator harshly criticizes her debauchery and makes evident his disapproval.

[3] Throughout the passage, the narrator's contempt for Zenobia is also st-[ILLEGIBLE] by his criticism of her superficiality. He discribes her as an "illusion," "a great action," underscoring her habit of hiding her true self and authentic emotions. The narrator repeatedly states that Zenobia "[seems] to be acting" and wonders when, or if ever, he has "beheld [her] in her truest attitude." Evidently, this defining falseness causes the narrator to both distrust and detest Zenobia. He longs to witness and genuine reaction from her, whether good or bad, simply to learn is she is capable and willing of any form of emotional vulnerability. This thirst for "a glimpse of something true" reveals his struggle to accept this new version of the woman he once knew, who has now become "self-complacent, condescending," and inauthentic.

[4] Throughout the passage, the narrator's criticism of Zenobia and her extravagant lifestyle revel his attitude towards her to be one of extreme disapproval and contempt. It is clear that he is deeply frustrated at her false exterior and long for her to abandon such toxic superficiality and unabashedly expose her true character. Although the narrator momentarily succeeds in getting Zenobia to "show [him] the true flesh and blood of her heart," however, she quickly returns to her "proud" and "self-processed" act and shows that she desires to continue her life of pretense.

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample I

[1] There is often a great divide in society between the selfish and the selfless. It takes a noble courage and sometimes self sacrifice to be selfless, especially because it can be deliciously easy to give in to selfishness. Hawthorne, in these two characters, has created an analysis of both sides options and revealed how one looks to the other.

[2] The narrator, a selfless character living in equality on the Blithedale farm, appears at first lost in the opulence and decadence of Zenobia's house. She struggles at first to "bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on [her]". Though disgusted by the excess of luxury, the narrator cares briefly to the conflicting sides with herself, and momentarily accepts the belief that Zenobia has every right to "make herself as gorgeous as she pleased," and indulge herself however she wishes. Though the narrator begins confused by the "illusion" and act that Zenobia puts on, she is able to resolve her internal conflict.

[3] The shift and internal resolution that the narrator experiences create a resolution in her attitude towards Zenobia. Where at first she was complacent in her acceptance of Zenobia's opulent lifestyle, she turns scornful and resentful as she regains control over Zenobia's proud aura and farad. She even calls to exorcise her of the connotated demonic clutches of this selfishness that she has given into. Though disdainful of Zenobia's luxurious life, the narrator believes that deep down she is ashamed of this selfishness, and endeavors to catch a "glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real". And thus with the execution of this endeavor, the narrator's ultimate view of Zenobia is reached. The metaphor of lightening and flame used to describe Zenobia's actions reveal not only the power of her true emotions, but also the sense of victory the narrator feels in her selfrighteousness.

[4] The narrator, though portrayed as selfless, is not perfect in her opinions, and Zenobia's selfishness is not wholly consuming either. The shifts of the narrators attitudes towards Zenobia, first submissive and accepting, then irritated, and lastly righteous and sure, help create the realization that labels, such as selfish or selfless, are not perfect, and people cannot be defined by just one word.

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample F

[1] As a species, humans are proud. They are often selfish, narrow minded, and, despite strong efforts to prove otherwise, morally unsound. This is not to say that mankind is evil, or bad, but simply human: a species that is characterized by these and many more truths. This excerpt from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1852 novel creates a compelling display on mankind's view of human nature. The narrator's attitude towards their companion, Zenobia, is characterized by their view of her as lofty and exuberant. The narrator is disgusted by the mask she wears to hide her true nature. Hawthorne employs disapproving diction and a scornful tone to convey the narrator's cold, distasteful attitude towards Zenobia in this excerpt.

[2] The narrator describes their _____ on Zenobia's current situation as being "self-indulgent," "brilliant", & "costly." The diction used creates a sense that the narrator is in awe of what Zenobia has surrounded herself with. However, they also see these furnishings as a reflection on Zenobia being "proud," "imposing" and "incapable of pure and perfect taste." Through the diction used to describe Zenobia's ornate ornamentations, it is clear that the narrator sees them as too beautiful and impressive. They stated that the narrator saw through the "gorgeousness with which she [Zenobia] had surrounded herself" to her true nature, of which she was using the beauty as a mask to hide.

[3] The tone with which the narrator addresses Zenobia is scornful, showing their disapproval of the beautiful mask & mantle she has adorned and hidden herself with. They speak to her with an "inert" tone, and coolly scorns her so that she reveals her true nature is an unbecoming, passionate moment. The narrator characterizes Zenobia as being "proud", "self-possessed", "lacking simplicity" and "condescending" Through their tone & disapproving diction it is clear that the narrator is dissatisfied and disgusted by Zenobia's true nature.

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample A

[1] In the given by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the two contrasting characters of the narrator and Zenobia undoubtedly have a complex and deeply developed relationship. These complexities stem mainly from the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia and their corresponding actions, most clearly expressed through Hawthorne's use of parallel contrasts and character monologue. It is through these techniques that it is revealed that although the narrator is fond of Zenobia, they are also criticizing of the choices she has made.

[2] The beauty of the room in which the characters are found in is the main focus of the first paragraph. It is described as "gorgeous" and as having many "shapes of luxury", most notably expensive vases and chandeliers. In the same paragraph, the farm house which the pair come from is described as "homely", containing only a "few wicker chairs in the best parlor," providing a stark contrast to the marble and riches of the new house. This description is paralleled with the similar contrast of Zenobia constantly being described as "gorgeous" in following paragraphs and the assumed plainness of the narrator having from the farmhouse. This description of Zenobia unveils the narrator's fondness for her (or at least her appearance) However his disdain for the house as expressed through the narrator preferring to stay at the farm and suggesting Zenobia do the same, reflects his disdain for her actions. In this case, the farm is representative of the narrator and the lavish house of Zenobia, so therefore, the narrator's critique of Zenobia's excessive wants.

[3] In paragraphs 7 and 8 after a brief conversation between characters, the narrator is not afraid to voice his criticism. Hawthorne has him do so in a brief monologue directed at Zenobia. It is within this monologue that his true feelings come out, and have a strong affect on Zenobia's state, causing her to become flustered. By having the narrator express his criticism in the form of a monologue, a stronger effect is delivered on the audience, and, in this case, Zenobia. This reflects the narrator's strong attitude towards Zenobia.

[4] Ultimately, the narrator does not approve of Zenobia's delusion of leaving the farm to live a luxurious life, and he does not allow his high opinion of her and her beauty prevent him from speaking his true feelings on the subject in a way that reflects how he truly feels about the situation.

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample D

[1] In the following interchange, excerpted from Nathaniel Hawthorne novel portrays the narrator's love and obsession for Zenobia. Throughout the section, the author uses a lot of diction and imagery to signify the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia.

[2] The first sentence of the interchange caught the narrator's eye for Zenobia. "Her manner bewildered me" and being "dazzled by the brilliancy of the room" already shows the reader that Zenobia stands out with her well-being and wealth. The diction used is positive towards Zenobia. She has a "proud figure", "passionate", "luxurious", "lack of simplicity". Everything about Zenobia that the narrator thinks is perfect. The narrators attitude towards her is compelling since "she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles". Zenobia didn't think too much of others since she already had everything. However, her god-like figure made the narrator curious about her true well-being. If all of this is fake and if she has another side. He wanted to know if "she seemed to be acting". Soon enough with the diction, it soon broke her.

[3] The imagery in this interchange is full with rich details. The description throughout this section shows how powerful Zenobia seems and how wealth controls one-self. Although the narrator doesn't say much about wealth, the first paragraph of the interchange says it all. Zenobia wasn't introduced yet but the detail of the Blithedale farm already hinted out how hi attitude was going to be towards her. It starts with the chandelier that glowed with so many lights. The furniture was "exceedingly rich". It was fresh and it chocked the narrator that "the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination", something everybody dreams of. The pictures, marbles, vases etc were everything that's luxurious. It revelled the "methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease". The imagery of the form shows the wealth and power Zenobia has.

[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. Two big devices were diction and imagery with the help of the narrators thoughts and emotions towards Zenobia.

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample B

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne shows the way the narrator feels about Zenobia in the se few paragraphs. The narrator feels as though Zenobia may not be entirely authentic. He feels spite towards her and her new life after Blithedale. Hawthorne is able to portray these feelings through the use of first person point of view and sophisticated diction. These literary techniques establish the tense tone of the excerpt.

[2] The first person point of view gives the reader insight on how they narrator is feeling. The reader is able to see the betrayal and disgust the narrator begins to feel for Zenobia and the façade she is attempting to create. He does not know the tree Zenobia and even states, "To this day, however, I hardly know whether I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale." The narrator is unaware of what Zenobia is truly like. The narrator is openly discussing his feelings towards Zenobia. He seems to believe that she is fake.

Sample C

[1] In the excerpt of the novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hawthorne portrayed the narrator's attitude twords Zenobia as a liar or as an dishonest person through the use of the literary techniques such as imagery and violent diction.

[2] Hawthorne's use of imagery is vital twords his attitude. For example in the last paragraph when he gives the reader a clear image of how Zenobia looks when he discovers the truth about her.

Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis

6 points

The excerpt found on the [AP English Literature and Composition 2018 Exam \(Question 2\)](#) is from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne. In this passage, two characters who have been living on the Blithedale farm—a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living—are about to part ways. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne uses literary elements and techniques to portray the narrator's complex attitude toward Zenobia.

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	
<p>Row A</p> <p>Thesis (0-1 points)</p> <p>7.B</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 passage.</p>
<p>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</p>		
<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 passage that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the passage or features of the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. <p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Restate the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude toward Zenobia through a variety of literary techniques." <p>Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Hawthorne illustrates the importance of wealth and beauty." <p>Describe the passage or features of the passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The passage makes skilled use of diction, imagery, and details." 	<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of Hawthorne's portrayal of the narrator's attitude toward Zenobia. <p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Provide a defensible interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Through the use of strongly unfavorable diction to underscore Zenobia's unpleasant and false disposition and repeated instances on her actions as performance, Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia as one of contempt and disapproval." [Sample E] "The narrator feels as though Zenobia may not be entirely authentic." [Sample B] [Minimally acceptable thesis] 	
<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. For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that could be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis may 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. 		

Scoring Criteria					
Reporting Category Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points) 7.A 7.C 7.D 7.E	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 student's 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. AND Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the passage contributes to its meaning.	
	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. AND Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the passage contribute to its meaning.				
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references that are irrelevant. 	1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques. Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. <i>[Sample B]</i> 	2 points: <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. 	3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage 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. 	4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage 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 passage.
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 may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the passage. 					

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.
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> 7.C 7.D 7.E </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Decision Rules and Scoring Notes </div> </div> <p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <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 passage could be said to...</i>”). Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the passage comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. Oversimplify complexities in the passage. <i>[Sample I]</i> Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument. <p>Additional Notes:</p> <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. 	<p>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the passage. <i>[Sample E]</i> Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the passage. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. <i>[Sample E]</i>