

2020

AP[®]

 CollegeBoard

AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Sample Student Responses - Packet 3

Prose Fiction Analysis Question - Porter

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample A

[1] In the passage, Miranda observes her grandmothers and realizes that the world of adults is just as messy and complicated as her own child version. Great- Aunt-Eliza and Grandmother bicker and have terrible habits just like children, and in a single afternoon they ruin the blind faith that Miranda previously held in their ability to always know what was right. What Miranda observes conflicts with how she has been taught to view adults, Miranda holds her grandmothers to her own set of standards and finds them wanting.

[2] The passage opens with Great- Aunt-Eliza and Grandmother bickering as Grandmother believes Great- Aunt-Eliza is much too old to be standing up on a ladder. The author uses the repetition of a phrase by Grandmother, “at your time of life” to characterize her and her argument. Grandmother is trying to use Great- Aunt- Eliza’s age as a factor for why she shouldn’t be doing any type of risky behavior, and her tone is quite patronizing as she won’t outright tell her sister to get down. However, Great- Aunt-Eliza responds with a snappy retort that exposes Grandmother’s hypocrisy, “So long as you can go bouncing off on that horse of yours...I’m three years younger than you, and at *your time of life* that makes all the difference!”. Not only does this statement show that Grandmother was trying to push her authority onto her little sister, it demonstrates that Grandmother isn’t willing to listen to her own advice. Notably, the use of italics by the author makes Great- Aunt-Eliza’s use of Grandmother’s phrase much more noticeable.

[3] It’s important that Great- Aunt-Eliza’s response proved Grandmother’s advice cannot be followed by even herself, as the author uses the next paragraph to explain how this bickering affects Miranda. Miranda was listening to the argument between the two old ladies the entire time, she heard both Grandmother scolding and Great- Aunt-Eliza’s response. The author utilizes Miranda’s inner thoughts to reveal her view on the situation, “[she] saw two old women... who spoke to children as if they always knew everything, and children knew nothing... and they were always right and children never were...”. Miranda’s impression of her grandmothers was just challenged by their behavior. This juxtaposition casts the infallibility of her grandmothers’ intelligence and advice into great doubt. Miranda’s internal monologue continues, with her making the comparison between their behavior and how she and her sister fight, “...here they were bickering like two little girls at school, or even the way that Miranda and her sister Maria bickered... ”. Not only does this comparison help readers understand that Miranda is using her limited life experience to help her understand why this situation perturbs her so, but it also brings down her grandmothers from their lofty matronly pedestal and onto the same level of immaturity as Miranda herself.

[4] While so far the author has used dialogue or descriptions of actions to portray mood, they state directly in this case, “Miranda felt sad and strange and a little frightened.”. This makes it explicit how she feels, and the line that soon follows adds to this, “her heart sinking”. Miranda is

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

quite disheartened to learn that adults can behave just like children do. Where before she was able to innocently assume that adults always know and do better than children, for the simple reason that they're older than her, now Miranda has learned that that's simply not true at all. Her worldview has shifted, and it's only exacerbated by the last scene in the passage.

[5] Once the trio goes inside, Miranda judges her Great- Aunt-Eliza for partaking in snuff and this further cements the idea that her grandmothers as just as human and capable of making mistakes as she is. Even her description of Great- Aunt-Eliza has shifted from a basic, "Great- Aunt-Eliza was not pretty now and never had been" to "her steel-rimmed spectacles over her snuff-colored eyes, and snuff- colored woolen skirts billowing around her, and her smell of snuff". With this great emphasis on "snuff", it's obvious that the author wants the audience to pay attention to the fact that Great- Aunt-Eliza does snuff. Why they chose to emphasize this is made clear in the parlor scene, where Great- Aunt-Eliza takes a hit of snuff and Miranda judges her for it. "Miranda had heard of this shameful habit in women of the lower classes, but no lady had ever been known to 'dip snuff', and surely not in the family. Yet here was Great- Aunt-Eliza, a lady if not a very pretty one, dipping snuff.", while it's implied that Miranda learned that snuff is low-class from someone older and not herself, as she's never even seen it until now, Miranda is using what she previously knows to create standards of behavior. She has been taught what is proper for ladies to do, this idea of propriety was brought up by Grandmother in the beginning against Great- Aunt-Eliza for being on the ladder. Instead of blindly believing that Great- Aunt-Eliza is allowed to do snuff because she is an adult, Miranda holds Great- Aunt-Eliza to the standard that she has made for ladylike behavior and finds Great- Aunt-Eliza wanting. This is a shift, as before Miranda has just been taking in information by observing impartially, now she is observing and judging by adapting the information.

[6] Lastly, the author closes off the passage with a symbol of Miranda's lost innocence. Great- Aunt-Eliza offers Miranda a gumdrop from her pocket if she'll leave her alone and stop staring, "[She] took out a roundish, rather crushed- looking pink gumdrop with the sugar coating badly crackled.", this gumdrop is a symbol of Miranda's new viewpoint. Where before the sugar coating was whole and her faith in adults was too, now that faith has been squished and cracked just like the gumdrop. The act of bribing Miranda with a gumdrop is also patronizing her, Great- Aunt-Eliza is assuming that Miranda is just a simple child who wants candy and who will go away once she gets it. Great- Aunt-Eliza isn't even capable of seeing how Miranda's reaction has changed her.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample B

[1] As we grow up, the truth becomes evident that our parents and guardians are not without flaw. In this passage, Miranda has a realization that her Grandmother and Great - Aunt are not as mature and knowledgeable as she had prior thought. Through the use of dialogue, which develops Grandmother and Great - Aunt's character, and juxtaposition, Miranda's attitude towards the adults in her life shifts from respect and admiration to disappointment and surprise. This change in perspective suggests the theme that everyone is flawed.

[2] The passage begins with Miranda observing an encounter between Grandmother and Great - Aunt Eliza. Although they refer to each other as Sophia and Eliza, Miranda refers to them as Grandmother and Great - Aunt Eliza, highlighting her respect for them. As their bickering continues, Eliza's childish behavior is exhibited when she says, "I'm three years younger than you." This display of Miranda's great - aunt taunting her grandmother shows their lack of maturity that Miranda thought they had. Her disapproval of them is further expressed when the phrase "and at your time of life that makes all the difference." The bolded statement reveals the irony that they are arguing over who is more athletic at their stage of life, but their argument highlights their childish nature.

[3] Throughout the passage, Miranda continues to observe the unsophisticated actions of the women. She recalls how they "spoke ... as if they knew best about everything and children knew nothing." However, Miranda realizes that their bickering contradicts their own teachings. Miranda's preconceived notion of Grandmother and Great - Aunt Eliza further diminishes when she compares them to "two little girls at school." This realization hangs heavy over Miranda as her image of two trusted guardians in her life were shattered. This evoked sadness and fear in Miranda and the last nerve is struck when Great - Aunt Eliza is seen dipping snuff. This "shameful habit of women in lower classes" even surprised Grandmother and further highlighted how far they strayed from perfection.

[4] Throughout the passage, Miranda's faith in her guardians is repeatedly torn down. At first, Miranda has a high level of respect for not only her Grandmother and Great - Aunt but also their teachings and actions. However, upon analyzing a confrontation between the two women, Miranda quickly realizes that they are no more mature than she is.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample C

[1] As a child, one views the older people in their lives as role models, and attempts to follow their behavior in order to adapt the personality of the person they wish to become. Miranda's role models were her grandmothers, Sophia Jane and Eliza. However, when she listened upon their arguments, Miranda became disheartened as she realized that the women she viewed so highly did not provide the examples of kindness and maturity that she had once believed, instilling fear for her own future self.

[2] The passage opens as Sophia Jane and Eliza begin arguing as both women use snide remarks regarding their old ages, reprimanding each other for not using "appropriate behavior at your time of life". However, while each woman used the same insult, their tones were polar opposites. While Sophia Jane was concerned over her sister's safety while she climbed the ladder, warning her that her body is not as nimble as it was as a young woman, Eliza insulted her sister in this way to be condescending and rude, likely because she did not want her sister to order her around, especially now that they were both older and in no need of parental guidance. Later on in the passage it is revealed that Miranda is more fond of Sophia Jane, as she "knew that she had always been the pretty one", so Eliza's harshness toward her sister must have upset Miranda. This deep love for Sophia Jane would have also caused Miranda to become protective of her grandmother, resulting in her negative thoughts regarding Eliza later on in the passage.

[3] After the argument, Miranda began to leave where her grandmothers were gathered, unwilling to listen to more of their hurtful conversation. While Miranda compared this argument to ones she has had with her sister, she was still disheartened and upset to see two people she loves dearly argue with such harsh words. As a young child, Miranda must have viewed these women as role models, listening to their lessons on behavior and following their commands, desiring to be as mature and wise as her grandmothers when she has grown. However, upon spectating her role models "bickering like two little girls at school", Miranda became "sad and a little frightened". Not only was she sad that her grandmothers were in opposition with each other, but she was also afraid that her and her sister will also grow to argue in this way when they are older. Miranda must have hoped that by following her grandmothers' commands, she would grow to be a wise and mature woman like them, so upon watching this argument, Miranda must have feared that the instruction and guidance given to her by her grandmothers was wrong, and that she would grow to be an unfavorable and undesirable woman, resulting in the sadness and fear that the reader witnessed through Miranda's "eyes watering" and "heart sinking".

[4] By comparing her grandmothers to children, Miranda realizes that her grandmothers do not possess the maturity she once believed, effectively removing them from the pedestal of admiration she had placed them on. Not only does this childish behavior worry Miranda, causing

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

her to fear that she will grow to behave as immaturely as her grandmothers, it also loosens the power her grandmothers hold over her. At the beginning of paragraph 6, the author places an emphasis on the position of power the two women hold over children, placing them as superiors to children, “who spoke to children as if they knew best about everything and children knew nothing”. However, because the women stooped to behavior that can be comparable to a child, their firm superiority over them has loosened, giving small amounts of worth and power to the children. While Miranda is first upset by this disruption in the family structure she was familiar with, she was also empowered by it, using her new voice to criticize her grandmothers, especially Eliza. Instead of refraining from judgment of Eliza’s behavior, Miranda criticizes her “shameful habit”, clearly disgusted by this unlady- like behavior. Instead of believing that “children knew nothing” and “never right”, Miranda stood firm with her judgements, openly staring at her grandmother as she behaved in a way she did not approve of.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample D

[1] Miranda is a young child to whom the world is still new, unlike her grandmother and great aunt who had lived their lives and were very experienced. So for Miranda to see how her two elders would interact with opposing ideas would naturally make her curious as to why that is. The author creates a juxtaposition between the two women to highlight their opinions through the use of imagery and diction to describe Miranda's reaction as she looked at them with fascination and wonder as to how two people of the same family could be so different.

[2] The passage starts off with Great-Aunt-Eliza "half way up a stepladder" leaning against the chicken house to help Hinry to set up her telescope. The use of imagery is used by the author to emphasize the action as Eliza was very much into her old age yet she was still doing dangerous things going against the norm of the people of her age. Due to this action, her sister Sophia told her to not do it and act her age. For Miranda both the women were natural grandmothers who always told the children what was best for them. So an interaction like this would make her feel confused as to why the figures she looked up to would act like her and her sister Maria. The juxtaposing actions of her grandmother and Aunt- Eliza is something she may not have seen before and led to an obliteration of expectation for her as she thought they should be dignified. Also sad because her and her sister might get told off when bickering but now the old women were doing it themselves.

[3] The diction of the author also juxtaposes the two women's ideals and causes Miranda to react the way she did with having a lot of emotions at once. Miranda's grandmother Sophia in the passage acts according to the norms of her age while Aunt Eliza goes against them. She's also seen to be well refined in her speech. Aunt Eliza on the other hand uses diction such as "I s'pose" and "d'ye s'pose" in her speech without fully pronouncing her words which is usually a sign of a lower class woman when she's supposedly from a dignified family. This contrast between the two women also causes Miranda to wonder again how two people from the same family, sisters at that, can be so different. Children learn everything from their elders at the early stages of their lives and usually when in the same family expects people to act the same. Miranda however is almost stunned to see the behavior of her elders as they resembled the behavior of her and her sister which she did not seemingly expect.

[4] Miranda's feelings of strangeness and fright is developed by the author through the development of her grandmother Sophia and Aunt Eliza and their juxtaposing attitude towards life. Although people can be of the same origin, their life experiences shouldn't necessarily be the same. As a result the outcome of their personalities can differ vastly. Eliza and Sophia are embodiments of that idea and Miranda being young made it difficult for her to comprehend such things. Unable to think why that is causes her to react the way she does in the passage to their interaction.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample E

[1] The universality of the right to be treated and perceived as equal in society is one of the most vital presuppositions in our modern society and is a pillar of humanity. Yet even this fundamental right has been withheld from groups of people; namely women, children, and minority groups. Through their utilization of literary devices and techniques in this short story, the author confronts the baseless power of some people over others which undermines equality from the perspective of a child.

[2] Miranda states that “everything in the world was strange to her” Miranda knows that she knows nothing, she knows that she is ignorant. And she nearly affirms the necessity of the overwhelming power of her grandmothers over herself when she says they “spoke to children as if they knew everything and children knew nothing” yet both Grandmother and Great-Aunt Eliza engage in petty bickering. The passage begins with “Grandmother” and “Great-Aunt Eliza” criticising each-other’s decisions. Miranda knows that Grandmother is, and has always been, prettier than Great-Aunt Eliza. Through her statement “at your time of life, that (three years) makes all the difference” Eliza implies that Grandmother is progressively loosing her looks due to her old age. Miranda picks up on this and realizes that they are no more mature or knowledgeable than herself is, and it acts as a catalyst for her internal consideration of the baseless of their power over her.

[3] Furthermore, Grandmother proves herself to be hypocritical by her statement about how climbing ladders was unsuited to Great-Aunt Eliza due to her age and later pretense of seeing nothing when Great-Aunt Eliza engages in dipping stuff, a behavior that is also “unsuited to her age” Great-Aunt Eliza engages in dipping snuff, a behavior unsuited to a lady. She later reveals uncertainty in authority when she cajoles Miranda to stay and bribes her with a gumdrop soon after.

[4] Miranda develops a basic understanding of the biases of her society that permit individuals no more mature or understanding than any other to take power over others on account of age. Such an understanding could lead her to question other baseless biases in society and ultimately come to the realization that societal practice does /not necessarily align with truth. Through Miranda, the author themself criticizes the warped so-called equity in society.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample F

[1] In this piece our author constructs a complex look into the attitude/ demeanor of a presumably young narrator's great aunt and grandmother. In order to achieve such a precise picture of these two elderly ladies our author uses tone and vivid imagery.

[2] In the work's infant phases we are given a small jab from the narrator's grandmother onto the great aunt, "...at your time of life..." While this may seem miniscule or even an insignificant off the cuff comment, it tells more about their relationship than one would come to believe. It is a subtle yet clear insult to the great aunt, who even while younger is being told she is worse off than the speaker(the grandmother.) "...she grasped the ladder one rung higher and ascended another step..." A retort to the comment that speaks volumes, it is a brilliant return by the author, in this we see the great aunt proving that she has little time for the grandmothers comments or concerns, she will do what she pleases and not worry about what it means to the old hag yapping at her. This action is followed up by more of the same, a back and fourth of heated banter between the two.

[3] As the author weaves their tale we begin to see the extent of the tension hanging between these kin, "...said Merianda her heart sinking." When asked our narrator gives an answer laced with sorrow, she was more than likely hoping to escape the sisters without notice, this leads one to ask why she is so set on leaving, if she was just going to the house it doesn't sound like whatever was awaiting her was of urgent business. It must have been what we believed, an escape. Once caught though she is left with the ladies in defeat. Even in our final act we see the tension refuse to break, "...Now take this and don't let me lay eyes on you any more today." It is clear that her great aunt cares little for our narrator, even when she is family.

[4] Our peek into this volatile relationship is engulfed in a wondrous tone made by the author. A volatile stench permeates the entire work, one which ranges from passive aggression to passive disinterest. These two elderly folks undoubtedly love each other, but even with love there is a sense of deep rooted resentment from lives past. It is an excellent example of how an author can construct a vivid snapshot of a family and their relationships. A snapshot taken using expertly crafted tone.

AP English Literature and Composition
Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample G

[1] In the short passage published in 1960 the author effectively uses literary elements and techniques to convey Miranda's complex reaction as she observes her great aunt and grandmother. The author subtly inserts arguments, differences, and complications with the two women. These added elements in the story convey Miranda's reaction.

[2] We see in the beginning that Miranda becomes weary when she realizes that her great aunt and grandmother tend to bicker about as much or more than her and her own sister. The author states "And here they were bickering like two little girls at school." After the argument about the ladder and how the great aunt should not be doing such things at her age, Miranda has this her own reaction which in this case would be to stand off. "Miranda felt sad and strange and a little frightened. She began edging away." From this we can tell that Miranda does not feel comfortable and now has a complex reaction to her great aunt and grandmothers interactions. Along with this Miranda has already had her own reactions to the differences between the two women. The author states "Miranda knew that she had always been the pretty one, and she was pretty still, but Great-Aunt Eliza was not pretty now and never had been." This shows that she knew of this difference before hand