AP

# AP® English Literature and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary
## Set 1

**Inside:**

**Free-Response Question 2**

☑ **Scoring Guidelines**

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## Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis                                    6 points

The following excerpt is from Nisi Shawl's novel *Everfair*, published in 2016. In this passage, the narrator describes the experience of a young woman, Lisette, as she rides her bicycle through the French countryside in July 1889. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Shawl uses literary elements and techniques to portray Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle.

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: <br> • There is no defensible thesis. <br> • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. <br> • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. <br> • 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 passage. |
| | **Decision Rules and Scoring Notes** | |
| | **Responses that do not earn this point:** <br> • Only restate the prompt. <br> • Make a generalized comment about the passage that doesn't respond to the prompt. <br> • Describe the passage or features of the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. | **Responses that earn this point:** <br> • Provide a defensible interpretation of Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle. |
| | **Examples that do not earn this point:** <br> **Restate the prompt** <br> • *"Lisette has a complex experience riding her bike through the French countryside."* <br><br> **Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment** <br> • *"Riding a bicycle is a skill people often pick up in childhood."* <br><br> **Describe the passage or features of the passage** <br> • *"This passage includes a lot of vivid description to depict Lisette's experience."* | **Examples that earn this point:** <br> **Provide a defensible interpretation** <br> • *"Lisette seems to love her bicycle because it gives her freedom and happiness—unlike her usual life."* <br> • *"The freedom Lisette experiences riding her bicycle through the countryside is mildly interrupted by a nervousness of others' judging her, but that worry is not enough to hinder her enjoyment."* <br> • *"The formal diction and rich details convey a scene far more meaningful than a simple bike ride through the countryside. Rather, Lisette's experience suggests a shift in her life toward unrestrained joy."* |
| | **Additional Notes:** <br> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. <br> • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. <br> • 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. <br> • The thesis *may* establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. <br> • A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Row B**<br>**Evidence**<br>**AND**<br>**Commentary**<br>**(0–4 points)** | **0 points**<br>Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt. | **1 point**<br>EVIDENCE:<br>Provides evidence that is mostly general.<br><br>AND<br><br>COMMENTARY:<br>Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student's argument. | **2 points**<br>EVIDENCE:<br>Provides some specific, relevant evidence.<br><br>AND<br><br>COMMENTARY:<br>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**<br>EVIDENCE:<br>Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.<br><br>AND<br><br>COMMENTARY:<br>Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.<br>AND<br>Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the passage contributes to its meaning. | **4 points**<br>EVIDENCE:<br>Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.<br><br>AND<br><br>COMMENTARY:<br>Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.<br>AND<br>Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the passage contribute to its meaning. |
| | **Decision Rules and Scoring Notes** | | | | |
| | **Typical responses that earn 0 points:**<br>• Are incoherent or do not address the prompt.<br>• May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. | **Typical responses that earn 1 point:**<br>• Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques.<br>• Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. | **Typical responses that earn 2 points:**<br>• Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities.<br>• May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument.<br>• May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim.<br>• Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. | **Typical responses that earn 3 points:**<br>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.<br>• Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation.<br>• Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims.<br>• Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. | **Typical responses that earn 4 points:**<br>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.<br>• Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation.<br>• Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.<br>• Explain how the writer's use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student's interpretation of the passage. |

**Additional Notes:**
- 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**<br>**Sophistication**<br>**(0–1 points)** | **0 points**<br>Does not meet the criteria for one point. | **1 point**<br>Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument. |
| | **Decision Rules and Scoring Notes** | |
| | **Responses that do not earn this point:**<br>• Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (*"Human experiences always include …" OR "In a world where …" OR "Since the beginning of time …"*).<br>• Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (*"While another reader may see …" OR "Though the passage could be said to …"*).<br>• Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the passage comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation.<br>• Oversimplify complexities in the passage.<br>• 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:**<br>1. Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the passage.<br>2. Illuminating the student's interpretation by situating it within a broader context.<br>3. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the passage.<br>4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. |
| | **Additional Notes:**<br>• 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. | |

In Nisi Shawl's *Everfair,* Lisette's enjoyment of the freedom and speed of her bike is shown to be liberating, but also undermined by her self-consciousness of how society views her love for it; this is portrayed through dynamic syntax and a shift in the mood of the poem.

Shawl highlights Lisette's intense euphoria when she rides her bike through the intense syntax that accompanies it. Through the quick-paced and frantic structure of sentences in the descriptions of her riding her bike, it is evident that Lisette is positively overjoyed by the rush she gets when riding. She passes nearby trees, homes, and roads in a flurry of "greenbrowngreengrey" and flickers through patches of sunlight and shade, switching between "coolwarmcoolwarm". Shawl mashes together these words to depict the speedy velocity at which Lisette is whipping by the world around her. The world seems to contort to a blur, just as multiple words are contorted into one. This portrays the vivacious sensory experience Lisette has as she is riding her bike and recreates the sense of freedom one gets when moving very fast. When riding her bike, Lisette feels free of the confines of her daily life and can simply enjoy what she is experiencing in the moment. Additionally, Shawl's frequent use of commas and long sentences symbolize the long distance Lisette travels on her bike and the multitude of things she feels at once. Gusts of wind "rushed into her face, whistled in her ears, filled her nose, tore her hair loose". The wind adds to Lisette's sensation that she is traveling very fast and increases her happiness all the more. The wind is often shown to be force untethered by any restrictions, and its control over Lisette can symbolizes her feelings of no boundaries or limits to what she can feel. Lisette's loose hair can also imply that she is able to lose herself while riding the bike and give into her own joy.

An evident shift in Lisette's emotions from excited and gleeful to embarrassed and self-conscious shows how her free spirited ride was looked down upon by onlookers. As Lisette notices the people watching her joyride on her bike, she beings to recognize individuals such as "Mademoiselle Carduner, the schoolmistress" and "Monsieur Lutterayne, the chemist", both upstanding figures of French society. Shawl's inclusion of their formal names emphasizes their sense of dignity and importance. They are portrayed to be of superior social class to Lisette, and are suggested to be disapproving of her lack of restraint on her bike. Because of this, Lisette begins to feel guilty, creating a sense of contrast to her bright and lively attitude when she was on her bike. Additionally, Shawl uses the shift in the excerpt to clarify that Lisette is sixteen years old and cannot even fasten her hair up again in front of others because "this was beyond her skill". Lisette, being a young teenage girl in nineteenth century French society, must have been subjected to traditional class and gender roles throughout her life. Therefore, her actions such as riding her bike and failing to tie her hair up again must have been looked down upon by others. It can be deduced that the pressures of society dictate that young women like Lisette always compose themselves and resort to more feminine activities that do not include such levels of exertion as riding a bike. Shawl uses this shift to clarify that despite Lisette's feelings of freedom when riding, she is not completely free in the society she lives in.

In a time where women where expected to remain at home devoted to their husbands and children, many women utilized any means to have an active life in the community in order to fully experience the world around them. In this excerpt from the novel Everfair, by Nisi Shawl, Lisette is described riding her bike in the countryside through the use of third person narration, unique diction and syntax in order to create a vivid experience of how small moments can matter deeply to an individual.

Lisette's story is told through a third person narration. This type of writing creates a separate character beyond the central character. The narrator experiences the countryside sharing the excitement of "intoxicating" scents around Lisette. This shared excitement allows readers to picture themselves as the narrator and get a true portrayal of what emotions Lisette is experiencing. The efforts of riding her bike are described through her "boots..finding their places". This high energy moment, which could only have spanned for a few seconds in real life, was described in detail as chosen to by Shawl. This leads readers to come to the conclusion that life is made up by small moments however trivial, deserve to be appreciated.

The diction and syntax of this excerpt, is unique in how it adds to the sense of urgency and quick moments, yet further explores the emotions tied to this small experience. While preparing for her journey the flying insects around Lisette has "her face and her hands and her wrists and her ankles" all exposed to the nature around them. This repetition of the phrase "and her..." follows the thought process any excited individual could have when preparing for an anticipated journey. The view that Lisette has upon her bike is one that is quickly passing by due to the speed of her bike. This is further added to by the quick changing colors that pass by of "greenbrowngreengrey" creating a sense of excitement and wonder that Lisette and the reader experience together.

By diving into small detail about this bike riding experience it is inferred that Lisette truly appreciative of the autonomy that her bike grants when living in a patriarchal society. This sense of female empowerment is all done through the use of third person narration, diction, and syntax.

In Nisi Shawl's novel *Everfair*, readers go through an excerpt about the main character, Lisette Toutournier, and her jovial expierience in her bike ride. Shawl utilizes a variety of interesting literary devices in order to best describe Lisette's precise feelings and thoughts throughout.

Shawl primarily uses positive diction to exemplify Lisette's feelings, in the first paragraph. Words such as marvelous, friend, and intoxicating are primarily used to show good in a situation and Shawl uses them flawlessly. Shawl also uses some negative diction such as crushed, bruised, and creepers but alas she uses contradictive literary devices to flip the negative into positive.

Throughout the excerpt we see many varying literary devices being used to show just how powerful she feels about her new bike.

# Question 2

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

## Overview

For Question 2, the prose fiction analysis question, students were asked to read an excerpt from Nisi Shawl's novel *Everfair* and respond to the following prompt:

> The following excerpt is from Nisi Shawl's novel *Everfair*, published in 2016. In this passage, the narrator describes the experience of a young woman, Lisette, as she rides her bicycle through the French countryside in July 1889. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Shawl uses literary elements and techniques to portray Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle.

In a timed writing situation and with an unfamiliar text, students were expected to complete three tasks. They were expected to:
- read the excerpt carefully;
- analyze Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle; and,
- write a well-written response based on that analysis.

**Reading** the prose passage means reading closely for both literary techniques and meaning, which can be an additional challenge for some students given the relative length of the prose passage. Students were expected to view the text specifically as a prose passage, recognizing conventions particular to the genre, and then analyze how those techniques are used to shape the passage and its meaning. For example, in *Everfair*, students might identify and explore a variety of devices and techniques that impact meaning, including sensory details ("insects buzzed," "the scent—intoxicating!") and imagery ("The crest came in sight, the washed-out summer sky showing itself through the beech trees' old silver trunks" and "the valley, the blurred rows of cultivation curving away smaller and smaller in the bluing distance"). Students might also note the descriptions of Lisette ("She was a wild thing, laughing, jouncing over dry watercourses, hanging on for dear, dear life") and how the excerpt is structured into thirds, with Lisette presented differently in each (first learning about the bike and becoming one with it; then back in public, along the river, where she recognizes her awkwardness; and then personifying the bike, talking to it as a friend).

**Analyzing** the prose passage means taking the relevant parts that students identified in their reading and thinking about how the parts function collectively to create the meaning of the prose passage as a whole. In *Everfair* students needed to consider how the parts convey Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle. The word "complex" is again central to the prompt, reminding students to look for and explore the shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical aspects of the prose passage. For instance, students might analyze and explore *how* Lisette learns to ride "her new mechanical friend" in the first part of the passage—how the riding goes from "at first, work" and "wobbling" to "going faster, faster! Flying! Freedom!" They could delve into what "Freedom!" means to Lisette at this moment in time. They might consider why it's important that Lisette bonds (literally, in the final scene) with a "machine." In order to account for the entire passage, students should also have taken into account the middle section of the excerpt, when she is "suddenly conscious of the curious stares of those around her" and considered how this experience adds to / detracts from the earlier "Freedom!"

# Question 2 (continued)

**Writing** a well-written response to a prose passage means that students demonstrate the ability to establish an overall thesis and build an argument through evidence and commentary, ideally constructing a line of reasoning that shows the complexity of their understanding. A challenge of any prose passage lies in the amount of evidence that students must account for and analyze. The more successful responses cover passages more fully, with the exploration illuminating the complexity of the passage with its differences, contrasts, and contradictions. It should again be noted that students are not expected in timed writing to write a polished, fully revised essay but rather to be engaged in a process of thinking as they explore the passage and draft their response.

**Sample: 2A**
**Score: 1-4-1**

**Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**
This essay provides a defensible interpretation of Lisette's complex response to her experience of riding her bicycle. The thesis, "In Nisi Shawl's *Everfair,* Lisette's enjoyment of the freedom and speed of her bike is shown to be liberating, but also undermined by her self-consciousness of how society views her love for it; this is portrayed through dynamic syntax and a shift in the mood of the poem," appears in the introductory paragraph and earned 1 point.

**Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4**
This response combines specific evidence and perceptive commentary to develop a line of reasoning that focuses on Lisette's mixed feelings about her bicycle ride; she finds the experience both "liberating" and "undermined by her self-consciousness." Paragraph 2 focuses on the diction Shawl uses to convey "Lisette's intense euphoria" and offers the examples of "greenbrowngreengrey" and "coolwarmcoolwarm" followed by the commentary that they "depict the speedy velocity at which Lisette is whipping by the world around her. The world seems to contort to a blur, just as multiple words are contorted into one." The essay also argues that "When riding her bike, Lisette feels free of the confines of her daily life and can simply enjoy what she is experiencing in the moment." The same paragraph considers the effect of the wind that "'rushed into her face, whistled in her ears, filled her nose, tore her hair loose'" and argues that the wind is "often shown to be force untethered by any restrictions, and its control over Lisette can symbolizes her feelings of no boundaries or limits to what she can feel." Paragraph 3 examines the shift "from excited and gleeful to embarrassed and self-conscious" that occurs when Lisette encounters others. Pointing out "'Mademoiselle Carduner, the schoolmistress'" and "'Monsieur Lutterayne, the chemist,'" who are both "upstanding figures of French society" demonstrates the significance of the "formal names" and "emphasizes their sense of dignity and importance." This attention to detail strengthens the argument as does the evidence of Lisette's struggle to control her hair: "Lisette is sixteen years old and cannot even fasten her hair up again in front of others because 'this was beyond her skill.'" The essay explains how literary devices contribute to the meaning of the passage through references such as "Lisette begins to feel guilty, creating a sense of contrast to her bright and lively attitude when she was on her bike" (paragraph 3). The combination of specific evidence, consistent commentary, and insightful consideration of literary devices creates a response that thoroughly supports its claims. This essay earned 4 points in Row B.

**Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 1**
The response sustains a sophisticated and insightful exploration of the tensions between Lisette's exhilarated sense of freedom and her recognition of the social constraints she faces. The concluding

# Question 2 (continued)

sentence of the essay emphasizes this complexity: "Shawl uses this shift to clarify that despite Lisette's feelings of freedom when riding, she is not completely free in the society she lives in." Additionally, the essay consistently demonstrates vivid and persuasive writing. Examples include "Through the quick-paced and frantic structure of sentences in the descriptions of her riding her bike, it is evident that Lisette is positively overjoyed by the rush she gets when riding" (paragraph 2) and "It can be deduced that the pressures of society dictate that young women like Lisette always compose themselves and resort to more feminine activities that do not include such levels of exertion as riding a bike" (paragraph 3). The essay earned 1 point in Row C.

**Sample: 2B**
**Score: 1-3-0**

**Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1**
The essay earned 1 point in Row A because it responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the passage. The thesis, "In this excerpt from the novel Everfair, by Nisi Shawl, Lisette is described riding her bike in the countryside through the use of third person narration, unique diction and syntax in order to create a vivid experience of how small moments can matter deeply to an individual," appears as the last sentence of the introduction.

**Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 3**
The essay provides specific evidence and commentary to support the line of reasoning that focuses on the joy that small moments can bring and Lisette's appreciation of these moments. In paragraph 2, the response points out the "third person narration" and the "'intoxicating'" scents that Lisette encounters. The essay characterizes the description of Lisette's boots "'finding their places'" as significant because the "high energy moment, which could only have spanned for a few seconds in real life, was described in detail as chosen to by Shawl." Paragraph 3 focuses on the "diction and syntax of this excerpt" and "how it adds to the sense of urgency and quick moments, yet further explores the emotions tied to this small experience." The essay points out the example of "'greenbrowngreengrey'" and argues that it creates "a sense of excitement and wonder that Lisette and the reader experience together." These details and the commentary support the argument that Lisette appreciates the joy that the act of riding a bicycle brings to her life. Not all the evidence presented, however, is adequately explained through commentary. For example, the example of Lisette having "'her face and her hands and her wrists and her ankles' all exposed to the nature around them" is followed by commentary that focuses on the repetition of "'and her,'" but no connection to the thesis is made. This essay earned 3 points in Row B.

**Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**
Although the essay places the passage within "a patriarchal society" and mentions "female empowerment" in the conclusion, it does not integrate the context into the argument in a sustained way. Additionally, the response oversimplifies the complexity of the passage. It does not employ a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive, nor does it account for an alternative interpretation of the passage. This essay did not earn the sophistication point in Row C.

# Question 2 (continued)

**Sample: 2C**
**Score: 1-1-0**

### Row A: Thesis (0–1 points): 1
This essay earned the point in Row A because it presents a defensible thesis in the introductory paragraph: "Shawl utilizes a variety of interesting literary devices in order to best describe Lisette's precise feelings and thoughts throughout."

### Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 1
The response cites specific words, such as "marvelous, friend, and intoxicating," as examples of "positive diction used to exemplify Lisette's feelings" in paragraph 2; however, the essay does not offer any explanation of how they support the argument beyond stating that they "show good in a situation." The response also notes how "Shawl uses some negative diction such as crushed, bruised, and creepers" but again provides minimal commentary: Shawl "uses contradictive literary devices to flip the negative into positive." This comment is unclear and does not connect the evidence to the thesis. No line of reasoning is established in the essay. This essay earned 1 point in Row B.

### Row C: Sophistication (0–1 points): 0
The underdeveloped essay oversimplifies the complexities in the passage and does not demonstrate sophistication of thought. It did not earn the point in Row C.