



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2023 AP[®] English Literature and Composition Set 2
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	274,836		
• Number of Readers	1,566		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	53,092	14.91
	4	98,970	27.80
	3	122,774	34.48
	2	51,129	14.36
	1	30,078	8.45
• Global Mean	3.26		

The following comments on the 2023 free-response questions for AP[®] English Literature and Composition were written by the Chief Reader, Steve Price, Mississippi College, assisted by Exam Leaders Eric Bishop and Kathy Keyes and Question Leaders Enithie Hunter, Christine Carson, and John Beynon. These comments give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question 1

Task: Poetry Analysis

Topic: William Ellery Channing, “The Barren Moors”

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.32

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 1, the poetry analysis question, students were asked to read William Ellery Channing’s poem “The Barren Moors” and respond to the following prompt:

In William Ellery Channing’s poem “The Barren Moors,” published in 1843, the speaker addresses moors, open expanses of wild, uncultivated land. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Channing uses literary elements and techniques to develop a complex portrayal of the speaker’s experience of this natural setting.

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 complex portrayal of the speaker’s experience of the natural setting; 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 “The Barren Moors,” students might identify and explore: a variety of devices that impact meaning, including similes (“like crags upon the shores” and “Like desert Islands far at sea”), metaphors (“this deserted hall” and “two silent floors”), and symbols (“The fox” and “a ship”); how the initial repetition of “I stand” is disrupted in the final line (“To stand”); the author’s use of capital letters in “Islands” and “Life”; and how a single exclamation point in the final stanza signals a new awareness of the speaker.

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 “The Barren Moors” students needed to consider how the parts develop a complex portrayal of the speaker’s experience of the natural setting. 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 how elements initially considered negative (the isolation and barrenness of the moors) lead to positive experiences (refuge and escape from the world); how concrete aspects of the moors lead to abstract, philosophical meaning; or how a speaker with “wounds of time” can find a form of restoration in the experience (“O barren moors!”).

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 experience of the natural setting of the moors. 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 grammatically correct writing, and it should be noted that students are not expected in a timed writing situation to write a polished, revised essay.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Overall, responses were solid. Students performed well on the specified tasks, demonstrating their grasp of foundational skills in reading, writing, and analysis. “The Barren Moors” was an accessible poem, both in language and in topic. Students generally understood the poem and what it was literally describing. Most responses were full, complete essays. In particular:

- Most students were able to read and understand the narrative of the poem and how it was literally describing the speaker’s experience on the moors.
- Most students were able to identify at least one literary element in the poem. Simile, metaphor, symbol, and repetition were frequently discussed.
- Many students were able to analyze the function of at least one literary device and make a defensible claim about the speaker’s experience of the natural setting of the moors.
- Many students identified contrasts or a shift in the poem—for instance, how the poem has both negative elements (isolation, barrenness) and positive elements (refuge, escape), or how the speaker learns something important at the end of the poem.
- Some students explored the complexities of the poem (for instance, in the contrasts/shifts), analyzing *how* the severe environment leads to the speaker finding a form of pleasure or learning from the experience.
- The most successful students constructed sophisticated responses by developing extended discussions of the tensions of the poem or by placing the speaker’s experience in a broader context (comparing it, for instance, to resiliency during the COVID pandemic).

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students identify literary devices but miss opportunities to connect the meaning of the device to the complex portrayal of the speaker’s experience on the moors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Furthermore, the speaker’s focus appears to change throughout the poem. In several ways, Channing conveys both the depth of the speaker’s experience, as well as the subtle attraction to contemplation which the setting incites. The enthusiasm in wandering in the moors transforms itself into epiphanic reflections on society overall. While the first stanza is narrowly focused, the following sections reflect on loneliness, then isolation, then freedom, then finally on the speaker’s place in the world: ‘Between, I stand ... between two silent floors.’ It would appear that the speaker has been called to consider his place in the world after having found a place of meditative rest.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students explain a single idea from the poem but neglect to show how it contributes to more complex meaning (how the idea may be related to other shifting, contradictory, or paradoxical aspects of the poem). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In the poem, the speaker describes how they feel at peace when they are isolated. The speaker writes how they are able to heal ‘the wounds of time’ in nature, when they are by themselves in ‘a serious place distinct from all which busy life delights to feel.’ The speaker also implies that they are similar to ‘the fox [which] pursues his lonely way,’ indicating how the speaker may just like a fox instinctively feel the urge to be alone. The narrator continues to depict the peace and tranquility that they find in nature, calling it a ‘dreamy home.’ Overall, the speaker enjoys being isolated from society and being isolated in nature. It is important to note that the speaker states how when they are in the moors, ‘no friend’s cold eye, or sad delay, shall vex me now.’ So even when the speaker is interacting with friends, they would rather be by themselves.”
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- To help students develop initial ideas, use **Think–Pair–Share**, a low-stakes brainstorming activity that can be adapted and elevated for the AP English Literature and Composition classroom. Start with a guiding question, like “What’s the role of the isolation?” or “What’s the meaning of ‘two silent floors?’” in Channing’s poem. Ask students to brainstorm individually for a minute or two (**Think**) before turning to a neighbor or talking in a small group (**Pair**). Encourage the students to focus on differences as they **Share** and to discuss why they see things differently, which evidence contributes to their understanding, etc. Through these discussions, students can collaboratively begin seeing and exploring complexities in the poem.
- To help students to connect ideas—and construct a line of reasoning—use **Idea Maps**. Ask students to think of their thesis as the destination. In order to eventually arrive at that thesis, what’s the first idea that they have to develop? What’s the next main idea? Is there another main idea? These ideas can be arranged as a flow chart or map. Ask students also to think about progression and how they move from point A to point B to point C. How is one idea related to the next? What’s the relationship? Jot those ideas down (they might end up being transitions). Encourage students to be open to gaps in their understanding as well—ideas that don’t have connections yet, that are disconnected, or are standing alone. If they can’t explain how an idea is connected to their thesis, then it may not be relevant to their argument. (Students can also trade drafts and try to construct an Idea Map for one another—sometimes called “reoutlining.”)

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of poetry analysis skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their reading, analysis, and writing skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 2, 5, and 8** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.
- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 2, 5, and 8** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' poetry analysis instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - These videos also examine how individual literary elements contribute to the meaning of the poem, a skill highlighted in the "Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps" column of the table above.
 - The **Faculty Lecture for Unit 2 ("What's a Metaphor for Anyway?")**, for example, explains how a metaphor functions within a poem to create meaning. After watching this video, students can extrapolate how other literary devices may function to create meaning.
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers may simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Poetry and/or for particular skills they wish their students to practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Poetry Analysis Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can help teachers explain the difference between writing that relies on a single interpretive conclusion and writing that explores complexities within a poem, an important distinction highlighted in the "Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps" column in the table above.

Question 2

Task: Prose Fiction Analysis

Topic: Brenda Peynado, “The Rock Eaters”

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.39

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 2, the prose fiction analysis question, students were asked to read an excerpt from Brenda Peynado’s short story “The Rock Eaters” and respond to the following prompt:

The following excerpt is from Brenda Peynado’s short story “The Rock Eaters,” published in 2021. In this passage, the narrator is one of a group of people who left their home country after developing the ability to fly, an ability that is accepted as realistically possible within the story. Years later, the group returns to that country with their children. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Peynado uses literary elements and techniques to convey the narrator’s complex experience of this return home.

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 the narrator’s complex experience of returning home; 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 “The Rock Eaters,” students might identify and explore a variety of devices and techniques that impact meaning, including a first-person narrator and the details they choose to share/not share with readers. Students might also comment on particular diction (for instance, “terrified at the spectacle of millions of their prodigals” and “We dragged our children along”) or syntax (“They eventually, reluctantly, opened their doors”).

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 meaning in the prose passage as a whole. In “The Rock Eaters,” students needed to consider how the parts convey the narrator’s complex experience of the return home. 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 the shift that occurs when the returning group is finally accepted (“They didn’t trust us, not after our betrayal decades ago” becomes “We smiled when we saw [the children] climbing trees together in the patios”). The passage also includes ample tensions for the students to explore (for instance, foreign/familiar, comfortable/uncomfortable, welcome/unwelcome). It should be noted that the prompt supplies students with important background information, that the ability to fly “is accepted as realistically possible within the story.” Students who overlooked this context risked getting off track and questioning how the visitors were able to fly.

Writing a well-written response to a prose passage again means that students demonstrate the ability to establish an overall thesis and build the 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 discuss the passage more fully, with the exploration illuminating the complexity of the passage. It should again be noted that students are not expected in a timed writing situation to write a polished, revised essay but rather are engaged in a process of thinking as they explore the passage and draft their response.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Overall, students performed well on the expected tasks. Students seemed to find the passage from “The Rock Eaters” accessible and again wrote complete essays as responses. In particular:

- Most students were able to read and understand the overall narrative arc of the passage, that a group returns home after a long time away, that their return at first has many challenges, and that their perspective changes over the course of the passage.
- Most students identified multiple particular details from the passage, which was rich and offered students a wide range of descriptions, for instance when they first arrive (“We touched down on our parents’ driveways, skidding to rough landings at their feet, denting cars, squashing flowers, rattling windows”), when they meet people again (“At first we sat stiffly on couches and inquired after their health”), and when they explored their home neighborhoods (“We walked past stray dogs that growled and whined; the most ancient among them remembered us, wagging their tails when they saw us and running to sniff our offspring”).
- Many students identified a range of literary devices, including imagery, diction, syntax, and the first-person point of view.
- Many students identified at least one tension in the passage, like comfort/discomfort, nonimmigrant/immigrant, welcome/unwelcome.
- Many students made at least an overall claim about the passage and the experience of the return home. Some students developed more complex theses, exploring, for instance, the power of the past to heal wounds.
- Some students noted growth or changes that occurred over the course of the passage, like the way that the passage moves from the returning group not being welcomed (“They didn’t trust us, not after our betrayal decades ago”) to their being accepted (“We smiled when we saw [the children] climbing trees together in the patios”).
- Some students constructed sophisticated arguments, linking the narrative in “The Rock Eaters” to broader contexts like immigration or coming of age.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students could supply more evidence for their analysis and to support their claims. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Throughout the narrative, a series of contrasts are used to convey the group’s feelings of excitement and joy gradually shifting to alienation. When the group first returned to their homeland, Peynado described their journey with words such as ‘jackknifed’ and ‘dodged.’ Both express a sense of fun, thrill, and anticipation, reflecting the group’s raw and simple excitement to return home. The fact that they didn’t fully verbalize the reason they returned is revealed by the quote ‘That year, we all decided we were ready to return.’ As there was no reason provided for the return and the passage did not elaborate further into the decision making process, it can be inferred that the decision was made hastily and without much thought. However, this simplistic hope is quickly dntrodden by the terms used to describe their arrival: ‘skidding,’ ‘rough,’ ‘denting,’ ‘squashing,’ ‘rattling.’ These words give an impression of destruction, clumsiness (unlike the agility they demonstrated while flying), and an off-kilter feeling.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make brief claims but miss opportunities to develop the ideas and connect them to their overall arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Peynado also relies on symbolism to convey the complexity of the narrators arrival. As the flying people messily land on their home island they were ‘denting cars, squashing flowers, and rattling windows.’ The clumsiness of their landing is symbolic of the tension created by their arrival and the feeling of intrusiveness as one makes themself known in a place they no longer ‘belong.’ This immediatly offers the reader insight. on both the feelings of those who left the island and those who stayed by presenting the physical image of someone being out of place upon arrival and ‘making a mess of things.’ The arrowheads found by their children are described as ‘remnants lost in the mud.’ This literally is evident of a civilization long forgotten and now found again. Symbolically it represents

the flying people unearthing the memories and community of their own home. This in turn reveals the conflicting nature of feeling out of place in a place once familiar and the memories time has preserved.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

1. **Notice–Focus–Interpret** can be a helpful model to show a *process* for identifying and analyzing, offering students concrete steps, regardless of their skill level. A quick overview: **Notice:** With or without a prompt in mind, what do students see in a text? Don’t judge, just list aspects of the text that seem important. **Focus:** We want to do something with everything we’ve noticed, so we dial in on a question or controlling element. For the AP Literature and Composition exam, the focus could be the main idea of the prompt—in the case of Question 2, if I’m thinking about “the narrator’s complex experience of this return home . . .,” then what’s most relevant in my list? **Interpret:** Using that focus and those relevant items, what is the evidence telling you? Remind students that analysis is always circular and ongoing—they can go back to more Noticing, for instance, any time.

Notice–Focus–Interpret can provide students with a framework for how to approach analysis of a prose excerpt. Sometimes students can struggle to see how textual details “add up” and contribute toward an overall argument. The Notice part of N–F–I can help students identify related details and how they work together to create meaning. As a class, brainstorm important aspects of rich texts, writing everything on the board—the more information the better. Offer small groups a guiding question (a Focus) and ask them to select relevant evidence from the board *and* to draft commentary that explains the relationship of the evidence to the question. Students practice both filtering/narrowing evidence and constructing commentary.

2. To help students push their initial thinking and develop connections between ideas, place them in **Socratic Circles**. As a student makes claims, encourage other students to ask them questions like “So What?” and “Why?” Also encourage students to ask about relationships between ideas (“That’s interesting that the islanders eventually accepted the group who returned home. What changed? Why do both groups now trust one another?”).

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of prose fiction analysis skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their reading, analysis, and writing skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.

- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' prose fiction analysis instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - To support students in the practice of close reading of prose fiction to identify evidence that may support a claim (a common area of struggle as noted in the table above) teachers may want to have students watch the **Faculty Lecture for Unit 1, "The Self in 'The Tell-Tale Heart.'"**
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Prose Fiction Analysis Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers may simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Poetry and/or for particular skills they wish their students to practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Prose Analysis Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can provide teachers with examples of how students can develop ideas and connect to them to an overall argument, a common area of struggle as noted in the "Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps" column in the table above.

Question 3

Task: Literary Argument

Topic: Rebel Character

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.50

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

For Question 3, the literary argument question, students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

Many works of literature feature a rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in the text. They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance. The character’s motivation for this rebellious behavior is often complex.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In a timed writing situation and without access to the text, students were expected to complete three tasks. They were expected to:

- select a work of fiction in which a character changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in a significant way;
- analyze the character’s disruption of the existing state and how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole; and,
- write a well-written response based on that analysis.

Selecting a work of fiction that addresses the focus of the prompt, in this case a text with a significant rebel character, is the first essential step for students. Students benefit from more complex texts, ones that contain multiple viewpoints, a variety of characters or narrative arcs, and language that lends itself to interpretation. Texts with less complexity make analysis more difficult. It should be noted that there is no official list of acceptable texts; rather, students demonstrate the appropriateness of the text through their analysis and writing. The list of texts offered with the prompt is meant to offer suggestions, representing diverse options.

Analyzing the work of fiction here required two steps. First, students were asked to identify a rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. The prompt offered students suggestions on a variety of ways that characters can be disruptive—“They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance”—but it also invited students to define the concept in different or unique ways, depending on the text they chose. Second, students were asked to analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to the work as a whole. In doing so, students could demonstrate both close reading and their ability to negotiate longer texts. Students were cautioned not to summarize the text, a reminder that the evidence they draw from the text should be used in service of analysis.

Writing a well-written literary argument requires students to negotiate a range of information, including the focus of the prompt and evidence from a substantial text. In this instance, they were asked to articulate an overall thesis about how a rebel character changes or disrupts the existing state of affairs as well as how the

character’s motivation contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. They also needed to develop the argument through evidence and commentary, ideally constructing a line of reasoning that shows the complexity of their understanding. Stronger responses use specific, precise evidence, though students are not expected to use direct quotations in their response. Stronger responses use evidence as support for defensible claims rather than merely as plot summary.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Generally, students found the prompt accessible and used a variety of texts to explore a rebel character and their motivation. Students again tended to write full, complete essays in response to the prompt. In particular:

- Most students were able to identify a rebellious character and construct an argument about the character’s motivation and its impact on the interpretation of the work as a whole. (While most students had a thesis, some of these were overly general or generic.)
- Many students explained how unexpected (and often minor) characters were rebellious. They understood the expectations of the prompt and the idea of the concept and were able to “make it their own” by exploring their text in new ways.
- Many students analyzed how the complex motivation of the rebel contributed to an interpretation of the work as a whole.
- Some students used broader context or tension in a text as a pathway to the Sophistication point in Row C.
- Some students relied on plot summary, which often was not directly connected to a thesis and which frequently lacked analysis.
- Some students described a rebellious character, sometimes with strong details, but they did not analyze the character’s motivation for disrupting the existing state of affairs.
- Some students relied on general evidence, which in turn made analysis more difficult.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While most students provided a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation, some of the theses are imprecise, overly general, or overlook complexities of the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Randall McMurphy’s bold motivation of empowering the men of the ward and overthrowing the structure of authority contributes to the author’s ultimate critique of psychiatric care in the 1900s and highlight the importance of acknowledging and addressing power imbalances in society.” • “Janie disrupts societal and familial affairs in her relationships with her husbands, Logan, Joe, and Tea Cake; she is motivated by love and freedom and the rebellion contributes to the meaning of the work that promotes women being able to have both love and freedom.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students relied on plot summary or general evidence. Both made analysis more difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “McMurphy’s motivation for disrupting the existing state of the hospital as stems from his clear desire to overthrow the authority of the ward. At the head of this authority lies Nurse Ratched, an oppressive dictator that rules the hospital and its inhabitants. Despite the mutual fear and hatred felt by the men towards Ratched, attempts to topple her authority are virtually non-existent prior to McMurphy’s arrival as the other patients have been conditioned to obey her out of fear of punitive treatments such as electroshock convulsive therapy and lobotomies, both of which were painfully common at the time. Because McMurphy lacks the ingrained fear of the power structure, he is motivated to disrupt Ratched’s power monopoly as he can see how negatively it affects the men. Over time, McMurphy takes part in blatant acts of defiance that work to belittle Ratched and deprive her of her power. This disruption of the hospital’s structure and balance further highlights Kesey’s belief in the importance of recognizing corrupt power and taking action against it. The author’s sentiments as expressed throughout the plot and characters in the novel undoubtedly serve as a call to action to address the atrocities of psychiatric care that Kesey reveals to his readers.”
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

1. Encourage students to **Start with a Thesis**. Students sometimes use a delayed thesis, one that they work their way into as their response develops. (Again, in a timed writing situation, students are engaged in a process of thinking as they explore the passage and draft their response.) While the delayed thesis earns the student the thesis point, it poses challenges for evidence and commentary and developing a line of reasoning. By helping students to identify their argument first, they can use it to shape their essay, including linking ideas to the thesis and showing relationships between the ideas and the thesis (which creates the line of reasoning).
2. **One-Minute Essay**. This formative assessment can help promote flexible thinking and the sharing of ideas across the class. With a full-class text in mind, introduce students to a Question 3 prompt from a previous year and ask students to write for a few minutes about how it applies to their current text. The next day, choose a new prompt and ask students for another one-minute essay. The next day, choose a new prompt and ask for another one-minute essay. There’s flexibility in how the assessment is shaped and used: for instance, teachers can respond individually in writing to one-minute essays, or they can also verbally comment on trends across the class. The one-minute essays help students see how different texts lend themselves to a variety of prompts, and they also offer low-stakes practice in

identifying a thesis, selecting specific evidence, offering relevant commentary, and connecting ideas and building a line of reasoning.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

To better prepare students for the Literary Argument Free-Response Question, teachers may find the following resources helpful.

- Teachers may benefit from using the **Unit Guides** in the Course and Exam Description to pace and sequence their teaching of literary argumentation skills and to provide students with opportunities to practice these skills at increasing levels of difficulty and complexity.
- Students can develop their literary argumentation skills over the course of the year by practicing with the formative free-response questions in the **Progress Checks for Units 3, 6, and 9** on AP Classroom. Student performance on these formative assessments provides teachers with valuable data that can help inform their lesson planning throughout the year.
- The **AP Daily videos and AP Faculty Lecture videos for Units 3, 6, and 9** on AP Classroom can supplement teachers' literary argumentation instruction, as well as provide remediation for individual students who may struggle with a particular skill.
 - To address the common misconceptions and knowledge gaps noted in the table above, teachers may wish to assign the following AP Daily videos to supplement or reinforce their instruction.
 - **Unit 9: Skill 7.B Daily Video 1**
 - **Unit 9: Skill 7.D Daily Video 1**
- Students can practice with summative free-response questions that appeared on previous AP English Literature and Composition exams when a teacher assigns a Literary Argument Free-Response Question from the **Question Bank** on AP Classroom. Teachers may simply filter the Question Type for FRQ: Poetry and/or for particular skills they wish their students to practice. These questions can be assigned as homework or as in-class assessments.
- **Student Samples, Scoring Guidelines, and Scoring Commentaries** for the Literary Argument Free-Response Question can be found on AP Central. The Scoring Commentaries clarify how the student samples earned the various points described in the Scoring Guidelines. Reviewing the samples and commentaries with students can help teachers explain the difference between plot summary and analysis, an important distinction highlighted in the "Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps" column in the table above. The samples can also provide a range of thesis statements which may help students identify opportunities in their own writing to move beyond imprecise or overly general claims to more specific ones that demonstrate an understanding of complexity within the text, another common area of struggle as noted in the table above.