

**2025**



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# **AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition**

## **Free-Response Questions Set 2**

**ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**

**SECTION II**

**TIME – 2 HOURS**

**Directions:**

Section II has 3 free-response questions and lasts 2 hours.

This section of the exam requires answers in essay form. Each essay will be judged on its clarity and effectiveness in dealing with the assigned topic and on the quality of the writing. In responding to Question 3, select a work of fiction that will be appropriate to the question. Use a work that you are familiar with either from your AP English Literature and Composition class or from other literature you have previously read.

You may pace yourself as you answer the questions in this section, or you may use these optional timing recommendations:

It is suggested that you spend an equal amount of time, approximately 40 minutes, on each question.

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this section until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

Note: This exam was originally administered digitally. It is presented here in a format optimized for teacher and student use in the classroom.

1. In Victor Hernández Cruz’s poem “Two Guitars,” published in 2001, the speaker imagines that two guitars are alive and engaging in conversation about their musical experiences. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Hernández Cruz uses literary elements and techniques to convey a complex portrayal of the guitars’ musical world.

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.

### Two Guitars

Two guitars were left in a room all alone  
They sat on different corners of the parlor  
In this solitude they started talking to each other  
My strings are tight and full of tears  
*Line 5* The man who plays me has no heart  
I have seen it leave out of his mouth  
I have seen it melt out of his eyes  
It dives into the pores of the earth  
When they squeeze me tight I bring  
*10* Down the angels who live off the chorus  
The trios singing loosen organs  
With melodious screwdrivers  
Sentiment comes off the hinges  
Because a song is a mountain put into  
*15* Words and landscape is the feeling that  
Enters something so big in the harmony  
We are always in danger of blowing up  
With passion

The other guitar:

- 20 In 1944 New York  
 When the Trio Los Panchos<sup>1</sup> started  
 With Mexican & Puerto Rican birds<sup>2</sup>  
 I am the one that one of them held  
 Tight like a woman
- 25 Their throats gardenia<sup>3</sup> gardens  
 An airport for dreams  
 I've been in theaters and cabarets  
 I played in an apartment on 102nd street  
 After a baptism pregnant with women
- 30 The men flirted and were offered  
 Chicken soup  
 Echoes came out of hallways as if from caves  
*Someone is opening the door now*  
 The two guitars hushed and there was a
- 35 Resonance in the air like what is left by  
 The last chord of a bolero.<sup>4</sup>

Victor Hernández Cruz, "Two Guitars" from *Maraca: New and Selected Poems, 1965-2000*. Copyright © 2001 by Victor Hernández Cruz. Reprinted with the permission of Coffee House Press. [www.coffeehousepress.org](http://www.coffeehousepress.org).

**1:** a musical group that specializes in boleros and other romantic ballads

**2:** guitars

**3:** a type of plant known for its striking flowers

**4:** a genre of romantic music that originated in Cuba and has been popular throughout the Americas; common themes include unrequited love, betrayal, and abandonment

2. The following excerpt is from Jeannette Haien’s novel *The All of It*, published in 1986. In this passage, Father Declan, an Irish priest, is driving home after a successful fishing trip. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Haien uses literary elements and techniques to develop a complex portrayal of Father Declan.

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.

Par.

- 1 Nothing exaggerates a sense of lonely solitude so much as a long night drive through thrashing rain and dense, culpfit fog.
- 2 Crouched over the steering-wheel of the old Ford, his head thrust forward, turtle-like, out of his collar, the only sound the sidelong loping strokes of the windshield wipers, he peered ahead through the car lights’ gauzy beam at the narrow, winding road which kept vanishing and reappearing like a dark ribbon in a magician’s hand, seen now, now not, depending on the shift of the fog....
- 3 It was terrible the way his splendid excitement had vanished almost the instant he’d left the Castle and started the homeward journey, the lilt and thrill of his great adventure draining from him suddenly, to be as suddenly replaced by a violent flush of self-pity caused (admit it) by the sorrowful fact that at the end of the long night drive there would be nought for him but the bulk emptiness of the bleak parish-house, its outside walls bleeding with damp, its windows dark, its high, cold rooms devoid of life except as he would enter them only to encounter, going before him in the chilly chambers, the exhaled, ghostly haze of his own breath; that...deadliness, juxtaposed to the powerful vividness of its imagined opposite: anticipation—of a lit window, of a waiting presence, of a voice asking those simple, linking, engaging questions which absence inspires: “How are you?” “How did you fare?” “What was it like?”
- 4 Oh, the blanknesses of solitude....
- 5 He ought to get a dog, a lively, sensitive puppy he could rear to companionable habits; one that would accompany him on walks and ride beside him in the car, that would sleep next to his bed and wag him awake of a morning, a warm, affectionate, entertaining little dog. He pictured the creature: a smallish terrier, a brindled,<sup>1</sup> charming cairn or smoothcoated brown-and-white Jack Russell,<sup>2</sup> all spiff and prance and independence but ready ever for a petting. “Father Declan’s little dog,” mothers would say of it in a recommending way, meaning it wouldn’t snap when their children stooped to pat it. “Tis Father Declan’s”: assurance that it wouldn’t forget itself and spot the carpet.... Was there anything written against a priest having a dog? For sure the Bishop didn’t have one. Could he think of a sixtyish priest he knew who did? He couldn’t; though Father Patrick Joyce in Galway kept a toothless, stiff, off-putting thing of a cat, a feature of parish-house life you’d be less surprised by in Galway than in Roonatellin, priests in Galway being laws unto themselves.... And of course, there was the obstacle of Mrs. Duggin, who “did” for him as hasty morning-cleaner and washer and (hastier) cook. (He’d try again hinting to her how much he’d appreciate a bit of noontime meat or fish not fried to the consistency of cement, or a veg not boiled to a rag’s limpness.) Mrs. Duggin wouldn’t take to a dog.... He could hear

her: “I’m hoovering<sup>3</sup> *hairs*, Father, *dog* hairs,” tousling the thin of her own, her mouth dropped disapprovingly. “It’s not that I’m complaining of the work, the amount of it, but *dog* hairs—”

6 But must he forever give in to the Mrs. Duggins of the world? forever keep sublimating wishes? as he was this instant sublimating (*burying*, or trying to) the wish (he struck the word *desire*) to share with someone this singular-in-his-life, brilliantly prodigious, gallimaufry<sup>4</sup> twenty-four-pound-ten-ounce day, the bodily fact of it residing in the car’s boot,<sup>5</sup> causing now that worrisome, unhealthy, grinding sound the engine was making (or so, in his angler’s<sup>6</sup> pride, he fancied the source of the noise to be)....

7 Innocent, the mere wishing of a mere wish.

From *The All of It* by Jeannette Haien. Copyright © 1986 by Jeannette Haien. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

1: brownish or tawny, with streaks of color

2: Cairn and Jack Russell are both breeds of terrier.

3: vacuuming

4: chaotic

5: trunk

6: fisher’s

3. Many works of literature feature a character who holds a secret that can have broader implications for that character or other characters. For example, such secrets may create conflict, provide a source of consolation, protect characters from reality, or allow one character to manipulate other characters.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which an important character holds a secret that affects that character's relationship with one or more other characters. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the effect of the character's secret contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide 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.

*American Spy*  
*Angels in America*  
*Another Country*  
*As I Lay Dying*  
*Atonement*  
*The Awakening*  
*Behold the Dreamers*  
*The Color Purple*  
*A Doll's House*  
*East of Eden*  
*The English Patient*  
*Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*  
*Frankenstein*  
*Great Expectations*  
*The Great Gatsby*  
*Homegoing*  
*Jane Eyre*  
*The Joy Luck Club*  
*The Kite Runner*

*Like Water for Chocolate*  
*Little Fires Everywhere*  
*Macbeth*  
*The Memory Keeper's Daughter*  
*The Namesake*  
*Passing*  
*People of the Whale*  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray*  
*Pride and Prejudice*  
*Rebecca*  
*The Remains of the Day*  
*The Scarlet Letter*  
*Song of Solomon*  
*The Sound of a Voice*  
*Sula*  
*Twelfth Night*  
*Washington Black*  
*The Women of Brewster Place*

**STOP**  
**END OF EXAM**