

2025



AP[®] English Literature and Composition

Scoring Guidelines Set 2

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Question 1: Poetry Analysis

6 points

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.

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|---|--|
| Row A Thesis (0–1 points) | 0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. | 1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the poem. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | |
| | Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the poem that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the poem or features of the poem rather than making a claim that requires a defense. | Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the complex portrayal of the guitars' musical world. |
| | Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The poet conveys the guitars' complex musical world through the use of several literary techniques."</i> Do not relate to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Music is a vital element of many cultures around the world."</i> Describe the poem or features of the poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Victor Hernández Cruz's poem consists of 36 lines and depicts two guitars speaking to one another. He uses figurative language to convey the experiences of the guitars."</i> | Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The poet uses personification and vivid imagery to convey the powerful emotions that bring the guitars' emotional, energetic musical world into being."</i> <i>"The poem depicts the experiences of playing an instrument and hearing music in a way that portrays the guitars inhabiting spaces that connect ordinary life to timeless truths."</i> <i>"In the 2001 poem 'Two Guitars,' Victor Hernández Cruz employs metaphor and simile to portray the guitars' musical world. This musical world reflects life in New York City's vibrant Latino community."</i> |
| | Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. For a thesis to be defensible, the poem must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points) | 0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt. | 1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument. | 2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty. | 3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the poem contributes to its meaning. | 4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the poem contribute to its meaning. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | | | | |
| | Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. | Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary or description of a poem rather than specific details or techniques. Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. | Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. | Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem to build an interpretation. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. | Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem to build an interpretation. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. Explain how the writer’s use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student’s interpretation of the poem. |
| Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the poem. | | | | | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|---|---|
| Row C Sophistication (0–1 points) | 0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point. | 1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | |
| | Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include ...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where ...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time ...</i>”). Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see ...</i>” OR “<i>Though the poem could be said to ...</i>”). Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the poem comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. Oversimplify complexities in the poem. 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 a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poem. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the poem. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. |
| | Additional Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. | |

Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis

6 points

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.

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|--|---|
| Row A Thesis (0–1 points) | 0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. | 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the passage that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the passage or features of the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. | Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the complex portrayal of Father Declan. |
| | Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The portrayal of Father Declan is constructed through the author's use of literary elements and techniques."</i> Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Loneliness can be a heavy burden for many people, but a pet can make life less lonely."</i> Describe the passage or features of the passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The passage shows Father Declan's thoughts about his life as a priest."</i> | Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Haïen uses Father Declan's drive home to reveal how his loneliness is affecting him. Even the happiness of a successful fishing trip is not enough to overcome his feeling of being alone and bound to living according to others' expectations."</i> <i>"Jeannette Haïen uses ellipses, asides, and questions to convey how Father Declan's thoughts wander and are easily shot down by his anticipation of another's disapproval."</i> <i>"In <u>The All of It</u>, Father Declan's detailed daydream of getting a dog reveals the extent of his dissatisfaction with having no one to share his day-to-day life with."</i> |
| Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. | | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points) | 0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt. | 1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument. | 2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty. | 3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the passage contributes to its meaning. | 4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the passage contribute to its meaning. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | | | | |
| | Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. | Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques. Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. | Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. | Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. | Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. Explain how the writer’s use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student’s interpretation of the passage. |
| Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the passage. | | | | | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|--|---|
| Row C Sophistication (0–1 points) | 0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point. | 1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | |
| | Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include ...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where ...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time ...</i>”). Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see ...</i>” OR “<i>Though the passage could be said to ...</i>”). Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the passage comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. Oversimplify complexities in the passage. 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 a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the passage. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the passage. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. |
| | Additional Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. | |

Question 3: Literary Argument

6 points

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.

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|--|---|
| Row A Thesis (0–1 points) | 0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. | 1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the selected work. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | |
| | Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the selected work that doesn't respond to the prompt. Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Secrets can have broad implications for the characters in a novel."</i> Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment about the selected work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"No one knows where Heathcliff's wealth comes from in Emily Bronte's <u>Wuthering Heights</u>."</i> <i>"<u>Passing</u> is a story about two women who have taken very different paths in their lives."</i> <i>"It is difficult to tell exactly what has happened in <u>The Good Soldier</u> because the narrator is unreliable."</i> | Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the effect of the character's secret. OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a claim about how the effect of the character's secret contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"In <u>Hamlet</u>, Claudius's secret that he has killed his brother, the king, is what motivates and drives Hamlet to try to get revenge."</i> <i>"Because Winnie has kept so much of her past a secret in Amy Tan's <u>The Kitchen God's Wife</u>, Pearl feels distant from her mother, and in fact keeps her own secrets from her even though she loves her."</i> <i>"Sethe's secret is central to the themes of <u>Beloved</u>. She must confront the trauma she has experienced and struggle to acknowledge it before she can be released from the past."</i> |
| | Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. A thesis that offers a defensible claim about the effect of the character's secret in the selected work may earn the point; any reasonable student interpretation of "the effect of the character's secret" is acceptable. For a thesis to be defensible, the selected work must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points) | 0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt. | 1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument. | 2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty. | 3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. | 4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | | | | |
| | Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. | Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a selected work rather than specific details. | Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. | Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. | Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details from the selected work to build an interpretation. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. |
| Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response must address the interpretation of the selected work as a whole. | | | | | |

| Reporting Category | Scoring Criteria | |
|--|--|--|
| Row C Sophistication (0–1 points) | 0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point. | 1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument. |
| | Decision Rules and Scoring Notes | |
| | Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include ...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where ...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time ...</i>”). Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see ...</i>” OR “<i>Though the text could be said to ...</i>”). Oversimplify complexities of the topic and/or the selected work. 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 a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the selected work. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the text. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. |
| | Additional Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. | |