

**AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis
Scoring Commentaries on 2020 Rubrics
(Applied to 2019 Student Responses)**

Index of Scores for Samples: Question 2

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C	1	4	0
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P	1	3	0
RR	1	2	0
TT	1	2	0
B	1	1	0
EE	0	1	0
U	1	0	0

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Sample C

5/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C0)

Row A 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because it responds to the prompt with a defensible interpretation of the sisters' complex relationship to their family and society. While the thesis is somewhat convoluted, and would be more effective if revised into two sentences, it still makes a defensible claim that responds to the prompt: "From an excerpt of his The Rise of Silas Lapham, William Dean Howell portrays sisters Penelope and Irene as dependent on their family yet independent from society through selection of detail, words focused on self-reliance, and a significant shift in tone in order to challenge why we feel the need to constantly seek the acceptance and adoration of others but also warn against the dangers of living an overly sheltered life." (paragraph 1).

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points in Row B because the commentary consistently explains how the specific and well-chosen evidence supports the line of reasoning. In the second paragraph the student integrates short quotations into the response to support the student's claim about the writer's careful selection of detail: "'Irene dressed herself very stylish, and spent hours on her toilet every day', which was not so others could see and admire her, but simply for her own contentment because the Laphams 'lived richly to themselves.'" The argument builds with evidence and commentary depicting this close family's isolation from society and comments on its significance: "In account of the elder daughter, Howell shows how 'she went to many church lectures on a vast variety of secular subjects' and '[made] fun of nearly everything,' her wit deterred potential suitors, differentiating her from the marriage-obsessed girls of her day." Paragraph two concludes with commentary on the irony of the sister's situation and its significance: "Through highlighting the sisters' odd social behavior but apparent contentment and peace, Howell criticizes how most girls and families are obsessed with impressing others and climbing up the social ladder." The response continues engaging specific details from the passage in the subsequent paragraphs to provide evidence in support of the last part of the thesis, that Howell "warn[s] against the dangers of living an overly sheltered life." In each case the commentary is well-developed, explicitly explaining how the selected evidence supports the line of reasoning.

Row C: 0/1

While the thesis statement is ambitious and complex, the evidence and commentary aren't as convincing, clear, and focused as they need to be to maintain that level of complexity in the interpretation and achieve the point for sophistication.

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Sample GG

5/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because it responds to the prompt with a defensible interpretation of the passage: “The social world and the world of the family sit in opposition. The tension between familial intimacy and the inaccessibility of society organize their experience.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points in Row B because it provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning, and the corresponding commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. Numerous specific pieces of evidence are included throughout the response. Short textual excerpts are embedded in clear commentary and are continued throughout the response. For example, in paragraph two the student blends specific details with commentary: “[taking] long naps every day, and [sitting] hours together minutely discussing what they saw out of the window.’ This description set up the image of 3 well dressed, sequestered women who slept for long periods of time and simply stared out the window talking about [illegible] things. His description of them spending ‘hours’ together and taking ‘long naps’ makes them look unusually bonded and surprises the reader, given that in the late 1800s there was a lot occurring in society and work to be done.” The argument builds in paragraph three with the vegetable metaphor: “Howells describes the younger sister as ‘having an innocence almost vegetable’ and as eventually ‘bloom[ing] and glow[ing] with the unconsciousness of a flower.’ Through this Howell conveys the importance of engaging with society and actively contributing to it and learning from it, he also lends support to the natural human state, represented by the family.” The response approaches four points, but incomplete commentary in paragraph four fails to adequately address its evidence: “The girls are unable to exist in the world around them or understand its rules. Her interaction with the boy in Baie St. John shows this clearly.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row C because it demonstrates sophistication of thought. Specifically, the response identifies and explores a tension in the passage between the natural “organic” family and the constructed social world that eludes the sisters. For example: “Howell utilizes the metaphor of vegetable and flower to convey the sisters’ natural state and contrast it with the artificially organized social world around them.” The response cites specific literary techniques that reinforce and develop this tension, which structures the larger interpretation and line of reasoning.

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Sample P

4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because it presents a defensible thesis in response to the prompt: “In the novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, by William Dean Howells, two sisters of different nature both view societal point of view as foreign. Howells uses a plethora of literary devices such as style, tone, and selection of detail when portraying the sisters’ conflicted experience due to society’s influence. Howells shows that the sisters are isolated from the world outside the home and unable to communicate with the people they meet.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points in Row B because it provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning and the corresponding commentary explains how some of the evidence supports the line of reasoning. The response includes appropriate textual detail in the body paragraphs. For example, in paragraph two, the response notes Irene’s extensive attention to appearance, tying that evidence to the claim that she is nevertheless unable to “enter society.” Similarly, in paragraph three, the response harnesses evidence to assert that the sisters “don’t know what to do with society because their family keeps society out.” That said, the commentary is uneven, particularly when it attempts to unpack literary technique. For example, in paragraph three, the response portrays quoted passages as “royal” and “humble” in their tone, but it isn’t apparent how that observation advances the line of reasoning. The one successful evaluation of literary technique occurs in paragraph two, in which the student observes contrasting characterization to advance a counterintuitive interpretation.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point in Row C because the response does not explore the complexities of the passage or textual detail in a sustained way. While incisive at moments, those moments are episodic.

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Sample RR

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because it implies a contrast between the two sisters with the word “yet” and offers a defensible interpretation about how that contrast is portrayed by noting the author’s use of detail and symbolism. The thesis states, “The two sisters, Penelope and Irene, from William Dean Howell’s The Rise of Silas Lapham, have very similar upbringings, yet differ from one another immensely. The author uses selection of detail along with symbolism to convey the differences and similarities between the sister’s life experiences.”

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points in Row B because it provides some specific and relevant evidence: “The author includes details on how the two girls dress. Irene spends much of her time shopping for new clothing while Penelope does not see the point in dressing so fancy and preferred a simpler style” and explains in the commentary how the evidence supports the thesis: “The author’s choice to include these details on their personal styles serves a purpose – it shows that Penelope has developed the same values as her parents.” While it does make this point well, the response includes other simplistic and inaccurate explanations that don’t strengthen the argument: “The Lapham family is portrayed as an uneducated, unexperienced family with an extremely surface level life through selection of detail. The author includes details that may seem random, such as their vacation preferences, daily habits, and style choices to show how elementary the minds of most of the family members are.” These oversimplifications and inaccuracies prevented the response from earning three points.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point in Row C. It makes sweeping generalizations at times, for example, “The author uses selection of detail along with symbolism to convey the differences and similarities between the sister’s life experiences” (paragraph 1). The response does not delve into nuanced reasons for the differing behaviors of the sisters within their family or society.

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Sample TT

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A as it offers a defensible thesis: “This excerpt from *The Rise of Stilas Lapham* discusses the lavish yet helpless lives of sister Irene and Penelope in a satirical way in an attempt to explain the seemingly selfish lives of Laphams ‘because they did not know how to do otherwise’. Author William Dean Howells highlights the clueless and unaware sisters through detailed examples and a satirical tone.”

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points in Row B because it consists of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities, and it offers only two paraphrased citations: “This is exemplified in lines 38-40 when both Irene and Penelope are so focused on each other” (paragraph 2) and “This is shown in Howell’s details about private dance lessons and European travel” (paragraph 3). Furthermore, the commentary oversimplifies the complex passage: “Their affection for each other outweighs their affection for anyone outside of their family, which distracts the sisters from focusing on the rest of the world” (paragraph 2). While the commentary does not contradict the argument, it does not strengthen it: “[T]he girls did not care about [dance and travel] because they did not know about it. This captures the very essence of blissful ignorance, and the role ignorance plays in determining the happiness and success of an individual” (paragraph 3). As a whole, the evidence and commentary are too simplistic and general to reach the level of three points.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point in Row C because the evidence is too thin and the commentary too general to produce sophisticated and complex thinking.

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Sample B

2/6 Points (A1 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because, while somewhat simplistic, it minimally meets the criteria as it does present an assertion that goes beyond restating the prompt or merely summarizing the text: “Irene and the eldest daughter have two completely different views on life and it is described through style, tone, and selection of detail.”

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point in Row B because the two pieces of evidence are mostly general and have little to no commentary: “Irene likes to be stylish when the eldest doesn’t really care”(paragraph 2) and “Irene complained that she scared away the young men whom they got acquainted with...” (paragraph 4). For the most part, the response is a series of unsupported assertions which present an analysis of style unrelated to the argument: “[T]he eldest daughter’s name is not presented anywhere”(paragraph 2) and a misconstrued discussion of tone, “The tone is also very “soft” meaning that there really isn’t any darker than that, It’s just normal” (paragraph 3).

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point in Row C as it oversimplifies the complex relationship the girls have with each other, their parents, and society. The thinking does not move beyond simply asserting that the girls are different from one another.

Sample EE

1/6 Points (A0 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn the point in Row A as it provides a summary of the passage without reference to the complex relationship between the siblings, the family, and society: “From the beginning of the excerpt from “The Rise of Silas Lapham”, William Dean Howell depicts the way of lives of two sisters: Penelope and Irene.” This statement is descriptive rather than defensible.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point in Row B because it does offer some examples of textual support that, while not inaccurate, are only vaguely relevant and are not explained through commentary. Since there is no thesis, the examples cannot connect to a controlling idea.

Row C: 0/1

The response does not earn the point in Row C because it does not demonstrate sophisticated and complex thinking.

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Sample U

1/6 Points (A1 – B0 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point in Row A because it presents a defensible interpretation: “In William Dean Howell’s novel, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, two sisters Penelope and Irene did not care for the views of society but for themselves. Through the use of a self-satfiid and detail we gain insight to the sisters experience within their family and society.”

Row B: 0/1

The response did not earn a point in Row B because it provides neither evidence nor commentary in its one sentence.

Row C: 0/1

The response does not earn the point in row C. The response’s brevity precludes sophisticated thinking.