

2018

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# **AP English Literature and Composition**

## **Free-Response Questions**

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# 2018 AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

### SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

#### Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Carefully read Olive Senior’s 2005 poem “Plants.” Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the poet portrays the complex relationships among the speaker, the implied audience, and plant life. You may wish to consider the author’s use of such literary techniques as syntax, diction, and figurative language.

#### Plants

<p>Plants are deceptive. You see them there looking as if once rooted they know their places; not like animals, like us always running around, leaving traces.</p> <p>Line</p> <p>5 Yet from the way they breed (excuse me!) and twine, from their exhibitionist and rather prolific nature, we must infer a sinister not to say imperialistic</p> <p>grand design. Perhaps you’ve regarded, 10 as beneath your notice, armies of mangrove on the march, roots in the air, clinging tendrils anchoring themselves everywhere?</p> <p>The world is full of shoots bent on conquest, invasive seedlings seeking wide open spaces, 15 matériel gathered for explosive dispersal in capsules and seed cases.</p> <p>Maybe you haven’t quite taken in the colonizing ambitions of hitchhiking burrs on your sweater, surf-riding nuts 20 bobbing on ocean, parachuting seeds and other</p>	<p>airborne traffic dropping in. And what about those special agents called flowers? Dressed, perfumed, and made-up for romancing insects, bats, birds, bees, even you—</p> <p>25 —don’t deny it, my dear, I’ve seen you sniff and exclaim. Believe me, Innocent, that sweet fruit, that berry, is nothing more than ovary, the instrument to seduce</p> <p>you into scattering plant progeny. Part of 30 a vast cosmic program that once set in motion cannot be undone though we become plant food and earth wind down.</p> <p>They’ll outlast us, they were always there one step ahead of us: plants gone to seed, 35 generating the original profligate, extravagant, reckless, improvident, weed.</p> <p>Originally published in <i>Gardening in the Tropics</i> by Olive Senior; published by Insomniac Press.</p>
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## Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following interchange, excerpted from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, occurs when two characters who have been living on the Blithedale farm—a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living—are about to part ways. Read the passage carefully. In a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques.

Her manner bewildered me. Literally, moreover, I was dazzled by the brilliancy of the room. A chandelier hung down in the centre, glowing with I know not how many lights; there were separate lamps, also, on two or three tables, and on marble brackets, adding their white radiance to that of the chandelier. The furniture was exceedingly rich. Fresh from our old farm-house, with its homely board and benches in the dining-room, and a few wicker chairs in the best parlor, it struck me that here was the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination, revelling in various methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease. Pictures, marbles, vases; in brief, more shapes of luxury than there could be any object in enumerating, except for an auctioneer’s advertisement—and the whole repeated and doubled by the reflection of a great mirror, which showed me Zenobia’s proud figure, likewise, and my own. It cost me, I acknowledge, a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned against her, in my secret mind, and strove so to keep my footing. In the gorgeousness with which she had surrounded herself—in the redundance of personal ornament, which the largeness of her physical nature and the rich type of her beauty caused to seem so suitable—I malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste. But, the next instant, she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles. I saw how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased, and should do a thousand things that would have been ridiculous in the poor, thin, weakly characters of other women. To this day, however, I hardly know whether I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale. In both, there was something like the illusion which a great actress flings around her.

“Have you given up Blithedale forever?” I inquired.

“Why should you think so?” asked she.

“I cannot tell,” answered I; “except that it appears all like a dream that we were ever there together.”

“It is not so to me,” said Zenobia. “I should think it

a poor and meagre nature, that is capable of but one set of forms, and must convert all the past into a dream, merely because the present happens to be unlike it. Why should we be content with our homely life of a few months past, to the exclusion of all other modes? It was good; but there are other lives as good or better. Not, you will understand, that I condemn those who give themselves up to it more entirely than I, for myself, should deem it wise to do.”

It irritated me, this self-complacent, condescending, qualified approval and criticism of a system to which many individuals—perhaps as highly endowed as our gorgeous Zenobia—had contributed their all of earthly endeavor, and their loftiest aspirations. I determined to make proof if there were any spell that would exorcise her out of the part which she seemed to be acting. She should be compelled to give me a glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real.

“Your allusion to that class of circumscribed characters, who can live in only one mode of life,” remarked I, coolly, “reminds me of our poor friend Hollingsworth.\* Possibly, he was in your thoughts, when you spoke thus. Poor fellow! It is a pity that, by the fault of a narrow education, he should have so completely immolated himself to that one idea of his; especially as the slightest modicum of common-sense would teach him its utter impracticability. Now that I have returned into the world, and can look at his project from a distance, it requires quite all my real regard for this respectable and well-intentioned man to prevent me laughing at him—as, I find, society at large does!”

Zenobia’s eyes darted lightning; her cheeks flushed; the vividness of her expression was like the effect of a powerful light, flaming up suddenly within her. My experiment had fully succeeded. She had shown me the true flesh and blood of her heart, by thus involuntarily resenting my slight, pitying, half-kind, half-scornful mention of the man who was all in all with her. She herself, probably, felt this; for it was hardly a moment before she tranquillized her uneven breath, and seemed as proud and self-possessed as ever.

\* a charismatic member of the Blithedale community who assumes a leadership position

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## Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. The gift may be an object, or it may be a quality such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties, or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is often also a burden or a handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic, or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or another work of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

*The Aeneid*  
*Alias Grace*  
*All the Light We Cannot See*  
*Beloved*  
*Beowulf*  
*Crime and Punishment*  
*Death in Venice*  
*Dracula*  
*Frankenstein*  
*The Goldfinch*  
*Great Expectations*  
*Heart of Darkness*  
*Homegoing*  
*The Iliad*  
*Kindred*

*King Lear*  
*Madame Bovary*  
*Mama Day*  
*Man and Superman*  
*The Metamorphosis*  
*Midnight's Children*  
*A Passage to India*  
*The Picture of Dorian Gray*  
*The Portrait of a Lady*  
*The Power of One*  
*A Raisin in the Sun*  
*The Return of the Native*  
*The Tempest*  
*Things Fall Apart*  
*To the Lighthouse*

**STOP**

**END OF EXAM**