

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—1 hour and 45 minutes

Question 1

(Suggested time—35 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the selection below, George Eliot presents a conception of leisure that has lost its place in the society of her own time. Write an essay in which you describe her views on “old Leisure” and on leisure in the society of her own time and discuss the stylistic devices she uses to convey those views.

- Leisure is gone—gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow waggon, and the pedlars, who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons. Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps,
- (5) that the great work of the steam-engine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them: it only creates a vacuum for eager thought to rush in. Even idleness is eager now—eager for amusement: prone to excursion-trains, art-museums, periodical literature, and exciting
- (10) novels: prone even to scientific theorising, and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage: he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative,
- (15) rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion,—of quiet perceptions, undiseased by hypothesis: happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. He knew nothing of weekday services, and thought none the worse of the
- (20) Sunday sermon if it allowed him to sleep from the text to the blessing—liking the afternoon service best, because the prayers were the shortest, and not ashamed to say so; for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of
- (30) beer or port-wine,—not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations. Life was not a task to him, but a sinecure: he fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and slept the sleep of the irresponsible; for had he not kept up his charter by
- (35) going to church on the Sunday afternoons?

Fine old Leisure! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard: he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read *Tracts for the Times* or *Sartor Resartus*.*

- George Eliot, *Adam Bede* - 1859

*Religious, political, and philosophical works published between 1833 and 1841

is not important for the purposes of this report, and it would have little meaning in so small a group of samples. It is enough to say here that high refers to scores 9, 8, and 7; middle refers to scores 6, 5, and 4; and low refers to scores 3, 2, and 1. You will see that 5 is relatively isolated in the scoring guide. This is done to encourage Readers to determine whether an essay is better or worse than average, and to discourage assigning a compromise middle score. The scoring guides make clear what each of the scores means for the given question. One important feature of the scoring guides is to ensure that the same level of writing is likely to receive the same score regardless of the question. Furthermore, if you compare these to the ones published in the report of the Chief Reader in English Language and Composition you will find similar language describing the various levels of the students' ability to write clear expository prose. Finally, remember that the scoring guides are only guides; they are not meant to be employed mechanically or to make less demanding the task of evaluating and scoring the students' essays. Each response deserves and gets the considered judgment of a professional teacher of English literature experienced in teaching Advanced Placement studies. The scoring guides are designed to ensure that those teachers are consistently applying the same standards when they make those individual judgments.

Question 1—Commentary

The question asked the student to do two related things: (1) *describe* Eliot's views on "old Leisure" and on leisure as it exists in the society of her own time and (2) *discuss* the stylistic devices she uses to convey those views. There is some help to the student in the question, in that it underlines the presence of two kinds of leisure, one of which has disappeared or "lost its place." However, students still had to confront two abstract concepts and deal with two periods of time before their own. Furthermore, although the language is by no means antiquarian the passage contains a number of contemporary references that one would not expect a college freshman to understand, so it challenges the students' ability to understand by inference the meaning and significance of historical information. The passage is rich in connotative and ironic language; some of it is easy to spot: "only creates a *vacuum* for eager thought"; some of it is more subtle: "*Ingenious* philosophers." As the passage develops, it becomes clear that Eliot has little use for those modern, superficial idlers, "prone" to this and that, including "cursory peeps" through one of the most important scientific devices of her time. Even students of the 1980s can perceive the implicitly presented charm of slow wagons on sunny afternoons over the heavily qualified advantages of steam engines. However, Eliot's lavish and even loving personification of the contemplative, innocent Old Leisure enjoying the scent of apricots in the morning sunshine is so compelling that it requires of the student a particular sensitivity to language in order to recognize the deadening self-satisfaction that is also part of his personality.

The student writers generally responded extremely well to this question, and very few of them were puzzled or thrown by the historical complexity. Most were apparently able to set

aside their own views of leisure and describe those of George Eliot. Nearly every student managed to present an accurate contrast between the two views of leisure, and almost as many were able to point to the techniques Eliot used to present them. Most of the students concentrated on the most obvious literary device, the central personification of Old Leisure, though only the very best dealt with his flaws as well as they did his more endearing features. It seemed to most Readers that the very best students had the ability to recognize and describe the subtle connotations of words in specific contexts, the ironic effect of understatement, and the full implication of questionable behavior presented in a predominantly positive light. This ability separated them from students with excellent skills at reading comprehension but less developed literary sensibilities and less skill at presenting nuances of meaning.

Question 1—Scoring Guide

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays you read, but for cases in which it seems inadequate, consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for a particularly well written essay may be raised by 1 point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 4. Essays with no response or essays unrelated to the question should not be scored but given to your Table Leader.

9-8 These well-written essays accurately describe Eliot's own views on some of the social aspects of leisure in the past and in her own time. They point specifically to some of the devices Eliot used to characterize the old and new leisure, such as personification, contrast, connotative diction, and irony. Writers of these essays demonstrate stylistic maturity by an effective command of sentence structure, diction, and organization. The writing need not be without flaws, but it reveals the writer's ability to choose from and control a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

7-6 These essays also accurately describe Eliot's views on the old and new leisure, but they do so with less accuracy and clarity than do the essays in the top range. Their discussion of the devices Eliot uses to present her views will be less thorough and less specific. These essays are well written in an appropriate style, but with less maturity than the top papers. Some lapses in diction or syntax may appear, but the writing demonstrates sufficient control over the elements of composition to present the writer's ideas clearly.

5 These essays discuss Eliot's views and the elements of the passage that convey them, but they do so imprecisely or less effectively than essays in the 7-6 range. The discussion of the devices Eliot uses to convey those views will be less specific. They are adequately written, but may demonstrate inconsistent control over the elements of composition. Organization is evident, but it may not be fully realized or particularly effective.

- 4-3 These essays discuss Eliot's views but do so either inaccurately or without the support of specific or convincing evidence. They might fail to discuss both the old and the new leisure, or they might confuse Eliot's time with our own. The discussion of Eliot's devices may be vague or concentrate on only one feature. They may limit their discussion to mere paraphrase. The writing is sufficient to convey the writer's ideas, but it suggests weak control over diction, syntax, or organization. These essays may reveal some flaws in grammar or consistent spelling errors.
- 2-1 These essays either ignore Eliot's views or misrepresent them in some significant way; or they may make some accurate observations about the passage, but supply little or no evidence for their assertions. They generally omit discussion of Eliot's devices. Essays in this range are poorly written on several counts or unacceptably brief. The writing reveals consistent weaknesses in grammar or another of the basic elements of composition.

Question 1—Sample Essays and Comments

HIGH SCORE

George Eliot's attitude toward Old Leisure seems an odd mixture of affection and disapproval. She seems to have quite a sentimental attachment to it revealed in the way she chooses to personify it. Old Leisure is a comfortable, content, cheerful middle-aged gentleman. He is slow, unruffled, genial and complacent-happy under the country sunshine and untroubled by any concerns beyond his simple unhurried enjoyment of pleasure. In this light, Old Leisure seems a nice fellow enough, a pleasant friend, and his loss seems regrettable.

However, there is a subtle undercurrent of irony which betrays another, perhaps deeper-buried feeling for the gentleman. He was incurious ("undiseased by hypothesis"), ignorant and undisturbed by it, and went through life with no "doubts or qualms." His interest in religion was as token as it could safely be; he "kept up his charter by going to church." Closely examined, the portrait of leisure depicts an out-of-touch, self-centered, mentally dormant and spiritually comatose man who took life as created specially for his enjoyment, cared for nothing that was not intimately connected with said enjoyment, and "slept the sleep of the irresponsible."

But if Eliot seems dissatisfied with Old Leisure, classing it with out-of-date and wasteful things like spinning wheels, pack-horses and slow wagons, she seems wary of modern leisure for different reasons. Though idleness is eager, its eagerness is for "amusement," and seems seek after things that at bottom are frivolous or pretentious. It is "prone to scientific theorising, and cursory peeps through microscopes." If Old Leisure knew nothing of science or the arts, new leisure is a dilettante, a dabbler in art, literature, and

technology, a busybody with no attention span and little if any brain power. Eliot speaks of "Exeter Hall" and Tracts For The Times and Sartor Resartus with condescending irony including them in a "modern standard" that seem to her the product of a giddy and slightly ludicrous "enlightened" age.

This essay gets right to the point by describing Eliot's attitudes toward the first of the two kinds of leisure she presents. It reveals a perceptive understanding of the central personification and uses terms accurately and effectively. In contrast to most responses to this question, even good ones, this essay recognizes the sentimentality of the portrait of Old Leisure and penetrates the superficial pleasantness of that portrait to describe his very real defects of ignorance and self-satisfaction. After a full description of these flaws, it moves to the newer manifestation of leisure, effectively using the portrait of Old Leisure to contrast with the more modern intellectual dabbler and busybody. It becomes clear that this student is able to see the balance in Eliot's commentary, bringing the last paragraph and the whole essay to a conclusion by suggesting that Eliot sees the "modern standard" in an ironic way.

Most of the essays in the high range were longer than this one, but the reader can have no doubt that this student understood the passage and addressed both aspects of the question. The essay describes Eliot's attitudes as a mixture of affection and disapproval of the old, balanced leisure by a critical and wary view of the new. It also discusses her techniques of personification, ironic undercurrent, and contrast. It is also clear that the student commands a wide range of compositional skills. The essay is well organized; its paragraphs develop logically; and although it is not without flaws, its sentences demonstrate syntactic complexity through the use of adjectives or phrases in series, effective subordination, and unobtrusive variety. Perhaps most striking, the student seems able to find the right words and can therefore express ideas accurately, clearly, and effectively.

MIDDLE SCORE

George Eliot's concept of "old" and "new" leisure are strikingly different. Old leisure is time that is spent relaxed and content with the world. It is personified to be "happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves." The author expresses old leisure sentimentally and nostalgically referring him (old leisure) to simple times. He relaxed in the country peacefully "sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon." "He knew nothing of weekday services and thought none the worse of the Sunday sermon if it allowed him to sleep."

On the other hand, "new leisure" would feel guilty and "irresponsible" if his "Sunday charter" wasn't kept up. New leisure isn't really leisure at all. It's "idleness is eager for amusement" and even when new leisure attempts to relax, it can't because it's mind "is a vacuum for eager new thought to rush in." New leisure is always rushing, pondering, inquisitive and "being made squeamish by doubts and qualms of lofty aspirations."

Because the author relates old and new leisure to the actions that appear and annoy the reader, an effective style is created. The descriptions of old leisure having the time to do things that modern society doesn't have the time for, truly enforces the main idea; "leisure is gone."

This essay is representative of the middle range of papers in that it recognizes the general outlines of Eliot's views and correctly contrasts the old leisure with the new, but it does so with less precision and accuracy than does the better essay above. The writer of this essay points to many of Eliot's telling phrases and details, but often simply by quoting them without specifying exactly what they mean or just how Eliot is employing them. The essay is well organized and comes to an accurate and sensible conclusion, that in effect all leisure is gone, but it does not reach that conclusion persuasively or very effectively. The student doesn't make very effective use of evidence from the text.

The essay shows stylistic complexity in spots, but it often seems quite uncertain in its command of sentence structure, and it frequently makes inaccurate or ambiguous references to the text, as when it says: "It is *personified to be happy* in his inability to know the causes of things.... "It" probably refers to "Old Leisure," but may refer to "time" in the previous sentence, and the pronoun awkwardly switches to "his" in the quotation. Similarly, the student accurately recognizes the sentimentality and nostalgia of the passage, but the syntax of the sentence that reveals this is ambiguous, and the phrase "referring him...to simple times" uses "referring" in an inaccurate and unidiomatic way. The reader can understand generally what the writer means yet recognize that he or she is not saying it accurately. Readers of Advanced Placement Examinations are tolerant of punctuation errors that do not cloud meaning, but the misused commas and semicolon in the last sentence confirm the student's shaky control over some basic compositional skills.

LOW SCORE

Elliot describes "old Leisure" metaphorically through out the section. She sees leisure us the time when everything and everyone had a laid-back attitude toward life. Her view of "old leisure" was set off like a microcasm, in that not much traveling was done, and that people didn't really communicate much with people outside their town (or microcasm.) Elliot does not agree with the ingenious philosophers of her time, when they say that new technology (steam engine) will create new leisure for mankind. She believes that new inventions and technology will cause a sudden influx of eager thought and actions. This sudden on slaught, will cause much hardships and stress, which will defeat the purpose of supposedly creating more leisure for mankind.

This essay is not without some virtues. It distinguishes between "old Leisure" and the new, it makes a valid point about the shortcomings of the ingenious philosophers who are characteristic of the modern age, and it recognizes one of

Eliot's techniques: her metaphoric presentation of Old Leisure. In every respect, however, this disappointing essay falls short of the standards set for Advanced Placement students. "Laid-back attitude" is too casual and imprecise a way to characterize Eliot's representation of Old Leisure, and the somewhat better description of the effects of the new technology make no real use of Eliot's examples. Instead, the essay presents some abstract and imprecise notions of hardship and stress. With respect to its analysis of Eliot's techniques, the essay is particularly thin. The student would not have been penalized for failing to use the term "personification," but mere mention of a literary term—in this case metaphor—falls short of the discussion of Eliot's stylistic devices called for by the question. Finally, the series of causal connections in the last two sentences seem only loosely connected to the evidence in the text.

The writing in this essay reflects the lack of precision and clarity in the ideas it presents. The term "microcosm" is ambiguously applied both to the isolated town and to Eliot's viewpoint. It is difficult to know whether this is a conceptual or a syntactical confusion, but the effect on the essay is to weaken what might have been an important observation. The essay contains no glaring grammatical or mechanical errors, but it demonstrates weak control over such elements of composition as syntax and organization. Essays this short never earn high scores, but quantity is not an overriding virtue, and length alone did not keep this essay from the middle range.

Question 2—Commentary

This kind of question is sometimes called the "open question" in the Literature and Composition Examination, since it asks the student to respond to a question by discussing a novel, play, or other work of his or her own choice. This particular question asserts that some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in the social or political attitudes of their readers or audience. It does not assume that a reader can determine exactly what the author intended in the work, but it does ask the student to choose a work in which the author *apparently* wishes to modify particular attitudes or traditions, and asks the student to analyze the specific techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or the audience's views. In an open question the choice of work can make a significant difference in the quality of the essay. The Development Committee always chooses an open question that can be effectively answered with a wide range of choices, from older literature to new, from classics in translation to modern American, and usually from either plays or novels. However, students who have at their command only a very few works are likely to be at a disadvantage in an open question, particularly a question like this one, which applies much better to some works than to others.

As usual, Readers found that students were able to write excellent essays on a large number of works, including many that are not on the suggested list. Of course, those who chose appropriate works—distinguished novels and plays that seem clearly to advocate changes in society—were better able to answer the question effectively. In this way, the question seemed to the Readers appropriately restrictive. Students had

to choose a work that fit the question rather than write about the last long work they discussed in class. They also had to address the question at hand rather than write generally—however intelligently—about the chosen work. It turned out that almost every student found a work that fit the question and spoke directly to the social issues it contains. Fewer proved able to discuss the literary techniques effectively, partly because it is always difficult to discuss in detail a work from memory and partly because it is inherently difficult to write about the intersection of social and literary issues.

Despite the difficulties presented, most students were able to write very well on this question. In fact, they seemed to welcome the acknowledgment that works of literature are not written in a vacuum, but are part of the society from which they emerge. Since the question focused on the literary techniques rather than on the conditions that inspired the novel or play, students did not need much historical background in order to do well in their essays. Consequently, students were more likely to stress general themes and attitudes, such as the importance of unified effort in the face of economic hardship (*Grapes of Wrath*), than to address specific issues, such as the need for pure food and drug laws (*The Jungle*). Nonetheless, students seemed to have the historical knowledge they needed to write responsive essays on the assigned topic.

The largest flaw demonstrated by the essays on this question, as is often the case in the open question, despite the admonition to the contrary, was the students' tendency to summarize the plot. Of course the line between plot analysis and plot summary is sometimes difficult to draw, especially when the student correctly sees the sequence of events as integral to the author's technique, but the better students followed both parts of the directions carefully: (1) they identified the particular attitudes or traditions the author apparently wished to modify, and (2) they analyzed the techniques the author used to shape the reader's or audience's views. As in most essays on literature, the best students concentrated on showing the *how* of the work rather than the *what*: analyzing how the author shapes material rather than merely discussing what he or she wrote.

Question 2—Scoring Guide

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays you read, but for cases in which it seems inadequate, consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for a particularly well-written essay may be raised by 1 point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 4. Essays with no response or essays unrelated to the question should not be scored but given to your Table Leader.

9-8 These well-written essays accurately identify the treatment of social or political issues in an appropriately chosen work. They also analyze with apt and specific references to the text the techniques used by the author to advocate changes in the attitudes or traditions presented. Writers of these essays demonstrate stylistic maturity by

an effective command of sentence structure, diction, and organization. The writing need not be without flaws, but it reveals the writer's ability to choose from and control a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

- 7-6** These essays discuss the treatment of changes in social or political attitudes in the work, but they do so in a less accurate or convincing way. They deal directly with the techniques the author uses, but they do so with less precision than is the case in the top essays. They are well written in an appropriate style, but with less maturity than the top papers. Some lapses in diction or syntax may appear, but the writing demonstrates sufficient control over the elements of composition to present the writer's ideas clearly. Statements are supported by relevant evidence, but with less specificity or effectiveness than in essays in the 9-8 range.
- 5** These essays deal with social or political issues, but in a more general way, and they may deal only minimally with the techniques the author uses to present those issues. They are adequately written, but may demonstrate inconsistent control over the elements of composition. Organization is evident, but it may not be fully realized or particularly effective. Supporting evidence may be somewhat vague or unpersuasive.
- 4-3** These essays discuss some social or political issues, but they do so either inaccurately, or without dealing specifically with the way they are presented. They might have chosen an inappropriate work for the purposes of the question, or their presentation is largely plot-summary. The writing is sufficient to convey the writer's ideas, but it suggests weak control over diction, syntax, or organization. These essays may contain consistent spelling errors or some flaws in grammar.
- 2-1** These essays either fail to present a clear description of social or political issues, or they completely avoid discussing the techniques the author uses to present them. They attempt to respond to the question and may make some reasonable observations about the work, but they supply little or no evidence for their assertions. Essays in this range are unacceptably brief or poorly written on several counts. The writing reveals consistent weaknesses in grammar or another of the basic elements of composition.

Question 2—Sample Essays and Comments

HIGH SCORE

Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain, is an excellent example of social criticism intermixed with simply pleasurable reading. At first reading, *Huckleberry Finn* can be construed as merely an amusing picaresque, involving the escapades of its youthful hero. Yet on another, deeper level, the reader also finds that Twain is making some very serious statements about society and its mores and traditions.