

## Advanced Placement Examination

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

## Question 1

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

Read the following passage carefully. Then write an essay that describes the attitude of the speaker toward Captain MacWhirr and that analyzes the techniques the speaker uses to define the captain's character.

Line Captain MacWhirr, of the steamer Nan-Shan, had a  
physiognomy that, in the order of material appearances,  
was the exact counterpart of his mind: it presented no  
(5) marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity; it had no  
pronounced characteristics whatever; it was simply ordi-  
nary, irresponsible, and unruffled....

Having just enough imagination to carry him through  
each successive day, and no more, he was tranquilly sure  
of himself; and from the very same cause he was not in  
(10) the least conceited. It is your imaginative superior who is  
touchy, overbearing, and difficult to please; but every  
ship Captain MacWhirr commanded was the floating  
abode of harmony and peace. It was, in truth, as impos-  
sible for him to take a flight of fancy as it would be for a  
(15) watchmaker to put together a chronometer with nothing  
except a two-pound hammer and a whipsaw in the way  
of tools. Yet the uninteresting lives of men so entirely  
given to the actuality of the bare existence have their  
mysterious side. It was impossible in Captain MacWhirr's  
(20) case, for instance, to understand what under heaven  
could have induced that perfectly satisfactory son of a  
petty grocer in Belfast to run away to sea. And yet he  
had done that very thing at the age of fifteen. It was  
enough, when you thought it over, to give you the idea  
(25) of an immense, potent, and invisible hand thrust into the  
ant-heap of the earth, laying hold of shoulders, knocking  
heads together, and setting the unconscious faces of the  
multitude towards inconceivable goals and in undreamt-  
of directions.

(30) His father never really forgave him for this undutiful  
stupidity. "We could have got on without him," he used  
to say later on, "but there's the business. And he an only  
son, too!" His mother wept very much after his disap-  
pearance. As it had never occurred to him to leave word  
(35) behind, he was mourned over for dead till, after eight

months, his first letter arrived from Talcahuano. It was  
short, and contained the statement: "We had very fine  
weather on our passage out." But evidently, in the writer's  
mind, the only important intelligence was to the effect  
(40) that his captain had, on the very day of writing, entered  
him regularly on the ship's articles as Ordinary Seaman.  
"Because I can do the work," he explained. The mother  
again wept copiously, while the remark, "Tom's an ass,"  
expressed the emotions of the father. He was a corpulent  
(45) man, with a gift for sly chaffing, which to the end of his  
life he exercised in his intercourse with his son, a little  
pityingly, as if upon a half-witted person.

MacWhirr's visits to his home were necessarily rare,  
and in the course of years he dispatched other letters to  
his parents, informing them of his successive promotions  
(50) and of his movements upon the vast earth. In these  
missives could be found sentences like this: "The heat  
here is very great," Or: "On Christmas day at 4 p.m. we  
fell in with some icebergs." The old people ultimately  
(55) became acquainted with a good many names of ships,  
and with the names of the skippers who commanded  
them—with the names of Scots and English shipowners—  
with the names of seas, oceans, straits, promontories—  
with outlandish names of lumber-ports, of rice-ports,  
(60) of cotton-ports—with the names of islands—with the  
name of their son's young woman. She was called Lucy.  
It did not suggest itself to him to mention whether he  
thought the name pretty. And then they died.

Go on to Question 2.

## Question 2

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

Read the following poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the poem's organization, diction, and figurative language prepare the reader for the speaker's concluding response. The Great Scarf of Birds

Playing golf on Cape Ann in October,  
I saw something to remember.

Ripe apples were caught like red fish in the nets  
of their branches. The maples  
(5) were colored like apples,  
part orange and red, part green.  
The elms, already transparent trees,  
seemed swaying vases full of sky. The sky  
was dramatic with great straggling V's  
(10) of geese streaming south, mare's-tails above them.  
Their trumpeting made us look up and around.  
The course sloped into salt marshes,  
and this seemed to cause the abundance of birds.

As if out of the Bible  
(15) or science fiction,  
a cloud appeared, a cloud of dots  
like iron filings which a magnet  
underneath the paper undulates.  
It dartingly darkened in spots,  
(20) paled, pulsed, compressed, distended, yet  
held an identity firm: a flock  
of starlings, as much one thing as a rock.  
One will moved above the trees  
the liquid and hesitant drift.

(25) Come nearer, it became less marvellous,  
more legible, and merely huge.  
"I never saw so many birds!" my friend exclaimed.  
We returned our eyes to the game.  
Later, as Lot's wife must have done,  
(30) in a pause of walking, not thinking of calling down a consequence,  
I lazily looked around.

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The rise of the fairway above us was tinted,  
so evenly tinted I might not have noticed  
(35) but that at the rim of the delicate shadow  
the starlings were thicker and outlined the flock  
as an inkstain in drying pronounces its edges.  
The gradual rise of green was vastly covered;  
I had thought nothing in nature could be so broad  
(40) but grass.

And as  
I watched, one bird,  
prompted by accident or will to lead,  
ceased resting; and, lifting in a casual billow,  
(45) the flock ascended as a lady's scarf,  
transparent, of gray, might be twitched  
by one corner, drawn upward and then,  
decided against, negligently tossed toward a chair:  
the southward cloud withdrew into the air.  
(50) Long had it been since my heart  
had been lifted as it was by the lifting of that great  
scarf.

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### Question 3

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

In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has written, "I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see"

Write an essay in which you "make a good case for distortion," as distinct from literary realism. Base your essay on a work from the following list or choose another work of comparable merit that you know well. Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are "distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the effectiveness of the work. Avoid plot summary.

*Wuthering Heights*  
*Wise Blood*  
*The Hairy Ape*  
*King Lear*  
*Catch 22*  
*Notes from the Underground*  
*Invisible Man*  
*The Birthday Party*  
*Moby-Dick*  
*Great Expectations*  
*Gulliver's Travels*  
*Frankenstein*

*The Trial*  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude*  
*The Metamorphosis*  
*The Loved One*  
*Benito Cereno*  
*As I Lay Dying*  
*Miss Lonelyhearts*  
*The Winter's Tale*  
*The House of the Seven Gables*  
*Brave New World*  
*Waiting for Godot*  
*Wide Sargasso Sea*

END OF EXAMINATION



