

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 poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you discuss how such elements as language, imagery, structure, and point of view convey meaning in the poem.

## The Centaur\*

The summer that I was ten—  
Can it be there was only one  
summer that I was ten? It must

*Line* have been a long one then—  
(S) each day I'd go out to choose  
a fresh horse from my stable

which was a willow grove  
down by the old canal.  
I'd go on my two bare feet.

(10) But when, with my brother's jack-knife,  
I had cut me a long limber horse  
with a good thick knob for a head,

and peeled him slick and clean  
except a few leaves for the tail,  
(15) and cinched my brother's belt

around his head for a rein,  
I'd straddle and canter him fast  
up the grass bank to the path,

trot along in the lovely dust  
(20) that talcumed over his hoofs,  
hiding my toes, and turning

his feet to swift half-moons,  
The willow knob with the strap  
jouncing between my thighs

(25) was the pommel and yet the poll  
of my nickering pony's head.  
My head and my neck were mine,

yet they were shaped like a horse.  
My hair flopped to the side  
(30) like the mane of a horse in the wind.

My forelock swung in my eyes,  
my neck arched and I snorted.  
I shied and skittered and reared,

stopped and raised my knees,  
(35) pawed at the ground and quivered.  
My teeth bared as we wheeled

and swished through the dust again.  
I was the horse and the rider,  
and the leather I slapped to his rump

(40) spanked my own behind.  
Doubled, my two hoofs beat  
a gallop along the bank,

the wind twanged in my mane,  
my mouth squared to the bit.  
(45) And yet I sat on my steed

quiet, negligent riding,  
my toes standing the stirrups,  
my thighs hugging his ribs.

At a walk we drew up to the porch.  
(50) I tethered him to a paling.  
Dismounting, I smoothed my skirt

and entered the dusky hail.  
My feet on the clean linoleum  
left ghostly toes in the hail.

(55) *Where have you been?* said my mother.  
*Been riding*, I said from the sink,  
and filled me a glass of water.

*What's that in your pocket?* she said.  
*Just my knife*. It weighted my pocket  
(60) and stretched my dress awry.

*Go tie back your hair*, said my mother,  
and *Why is your mouth all green?*  
*Rob Roy, he pulled some clover*  
as we crossed the field, I told her.

—May Swenson

\* A creature in Greek mythology that had the body of  
a horse and the head and torso of a man.

Question 2

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

In the following excerpts from an essay, Lytton Strachey presents his conception of Florence Nightingale. In a well-organized essay, define Strachey's view and analyze how he conveys it. Consider such elements as diction, imagery, syntax, and tone.

Everyone knows the popular conception of Florence Nightingale." The saintly, self-sacrificing woman, the delicate maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of a life of ease to succour the afflicted, the Lady  
(5) with the Lamp, gliding through the horrors of the hospital at Scutari, and consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying soldier's couch—the vision is familiar to all. But the truth was different. The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile fancy painted her. She worked in  
(10) another fashion, and towards another end; she moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her. Now demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest. And so it happens that in the real Miss Nightingale there was more  
(15) that was interesting than in the legendary one....

What was the secret voice in her ear, if it was not a call? Why had she felt, from her earliest years, those mysterious promptings towards. . . she hardly knew what but certainly towards something very different from anything around  
(20) her? Why, as a child in the nursery, when her sister had shown a healthy pleasure in tearing her dolls to pieces, had *she* shown an almost morbid one in sewing them up again? Why was she driven now to minister to the poor in their cottages, to watch by sick-beds, to put her dog's wounded  
(25) paw into elaborate splints as if it was a human being? Why was her head filled with queer imaginations of the country house at Embley turned, by some enchantment, into a hospital, with herself as matron moving about among the beds? Why was even her vision of heaven itself filled with  
(30) suffering patients to whom she was being useful? So she dreamed and wondered, and, taking out her diary, she poured into it the agitations of her soul.

A weaker spirit would have been overwhelmed by the load of such distresses—would have yielded or snapped. But  
(35) this extraordinary young woman held firm, and fought her way to victory. With an amazing persistency, during the eight years that followed her rebuff over Salisbury Hospital, she struggled and worked and planned. While superficially she was carrying on the life of a brilliant girl in high  
(40) society, while internally she was a prey to the tortures of regret and of remorse, she yet possessed the energy to collect the knowledge and to undergo the experience which alone could enable her to do what she had determined she would do in the end. In secret she devoured the reports of  
(45) medical commissions, the pamphlets of sanitary authorities, the histories of hospitals and homes. She spent the intervals of the London season in ragged schools and work-houses. When she went abroad with her family, she used her spare time so well that there was hardly a great hospital in Europe  
(50) with which she was not acquainted, hardly a great city whose slums she had not passed through.

Three more years passed, and then at last the pressure of time told; her family seemed to realise that she was old enough and strong enough to have her way; and she became  
(55) the superintendent of a charitable nursing home in Harley Street. She had gained her independence, though it was in a meagre sphere enough; and her mother was still not quite resigned: surely Florence might at least spend the summer in the country. At times, indeed,, among her intimates, Mrs.  
(60) Nightingale almost wept. "We are ducks," she said with tears in her eyes, "who have hatched a wild swan." But the poor lady was wrong; it was not a swan that they had hatched; it was an eagle.

\* English nurse and founder of modern nursing  
(1820-1910)

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Question3

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

“The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter.”  
—George Meredith

Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character awakens “thoughtful laughter” in the reader. Write an essay in which you show why this laughter is “thoughtful” and how it contributes to the meaning of the work.

Choose a novel, play, or long poem by one of the following authors or another author of comparable merit.

Aristophanes	Moliere
Margaret Atwood	Vladimir Nabokov
Jane Austen	Gloria Naylor
Samuel Beckett	Walker Percy
Lord Byron	Harold Pinter
Geoffrey Chaucer	Alexander Pope
Charles Dickens	Barbara Pym
T. S. Eliot	Mordecai Richter
William Faulkner	William Shakespeare
Henry Fielding	George Bernard Shaw
Zora Neale Hurston	Tom Stoppard
Aldous Huxley	Jonathan Swift
Henry James	Anthony Trollop.
Ben Jonson	Mark Twain
Franz Kafka	Voltaire
Margaret Laurence	Evelyn Waugh
Bobbie Ann Mason	Oscar Wilde

END OF EXAMINATION