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AP® English Literature and Composition
Writing About Literature

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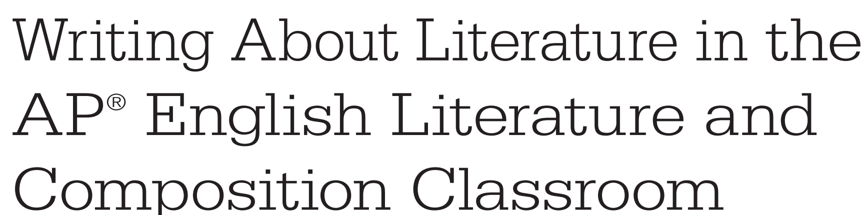

Writing About Literature in the AP® English Literature and Composition Classroom

Sharon Johnston

As an English teacher, I have the goal of helping students master the art of writing, thus equipping them to be successful in any endeavor. The AP® English Literature and Composition course sets the rigorous learning expectations that help me achieve my goal of creating masterful writers, but designing classroom experiences that unlock the writer inside each student is the challenge.

I gave that challenge to the authors of this publication. They write from the context of educators who have served as leaders of the AP English Literature and Composition Reading. From each article I gained insights and techniques that will enhance my work with teachers and students. One reviewer of this publication exclaimed, “Thank you for letting me be a reviewer; I am already using these strategies!” As experts in college and high school English classrooms, these authors share in-depth knowledge and instructional strategies for writing about literature.

Rebecca Daniel details the processes of creating a community of critical thinkers and writers. Her carefully planned and clearly articulated approaches show us how to create an authentic learning environment that encourages students to take risks, to speak and write confidently about their own ideas. Sylvia Jones shares how advice from former students changed the way she teaches writing about literature. Along with lessons learned, she outlines varied reading and writing strategies that engage students in delving deeply into Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Mel MacKay explains how analyzing rhetorical structure engages students and helps them generate well-organized, insightful responses to the literature they read and study. Danny Lawrence offers his well-developed instructional unit that focuses on thinking, presenting, and

writing about poetry. The activities target Lawrence's goal to "encourage students to find multiple meanings of a poem" and "to think for themselves."

One way to know what students need to know and be able to do is to actually write responses to the exam prompts along with our students. I give the Most Courageous Author award to Brian McCrea, who accepted the invitation to assume the role of an AP student and write a response to the *Middlemarch* prompt from the 1998 AP English Literature and Composition Exam. McCrea provides an analysis of what works and what does not work in the "student's" essay.

Using student responses from past exams, Susan Strehle describes how students respond to the AP English Literature and Composition Exam's open question, which requires students to write about a novel or play of literary merit. One reviewer of this publication stated that Strehle's article shows that "AP teachers and college and university professors have to be on the same page, must know what excellent student writing is in its variety of expressions, and must be open to multiple ways of instructing students to effectively respond in their own voices to great works of world literature."

Let the "multiple ways of instructing students" generously given by these authors assist you in unlocking the writer inside each student. Enjoy your students' voices as they respond to literature.

Establishing the AP English Literature and Composition Writing Environment

Rebecca Daniel

You are scheduled to teach a class in AP English Literature and Composition. You imagine a classroom filled with bright students, eager to have college-level discussions about works of literature. You peruse shelves filled with literary works, both traditional and current, making plans to choose stimulating works for your new class to read. In your mind these texts and those students merge into a dialogue that will guarantee success on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam and, beyond that, a lifelong love of reading high-quality literary works.

Then more uncertain images break into this magical picture. How will you engage these students in active dialogue? What role should you assume in the classroom conversation? Will the students know how to read analytically, or will you have to show them how to do this? Will they be able to respond competently to literature when you are not there to guide them? How can an inexperienced AP English Literature and Composition teacher and a classroom full of novice AP students produce genuine dialogue about literature?

While experienced AP teachers might offer a variety of answers to the above questions, the common element of all their answers will involve the creation of a genuine classroom learning environment. Such an environment should provide an atmosphere that meets needs in both attitude and skill; an atmosphere that builds confidence by (1) encouraging exploration of ideas without fear of ridicule, and (2) providing and building on a variety of concrete frameworks for analysis.

Students enter my classroom each fall with an air of trepidation—a result of a reputation I have earned over the years as a teacher with very high expectations. And I *do* want my students to meet high standards. But if I want my students to respond effectively to the literature we read, my first goal must be to reduce their anxiety about the very expectations I hope they will meet. If I am to create genuine dialogue

in the class, students must be willing (even eager) to speak confidently about their own ideas. An appropriate learning environment can encourage this kind of response. A teacher new to AP English Literature and Composition could consider a variety of the following instructional approaches to creating that environment.

Reduce Risk

Provide literature for response that has a variety of interpretations. That way each student's response is no more correct or incorrect than that of any other student. I like to use Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (Is Gregor really a bug? Is the ending positive or negative?), Graham Greene's "The Destructors" (Just why does "T" destroy that house?), Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" (Are the actions of Minnie's "peers" justified?). It is important that students do not read critical writings about the literature until *after* they have shared some conclusions of their own.

Once they have formulated their own ideas, however, it is a valuable approach to ask students to evaluate the responses made by others, first commenting on the responses made by their classmates and then evaluating published criticism. This type of approach builds confidence as students discover that opinions of their classmates, and even those of critically acclaimed reviewers, can be challenged for their faulty arguments. Comments greeted by a student's peers as "weird" or "just too crazy" can be revealed as surprisingly similar to ideas expressed in published works of criticism, causing the student to conclude that her ideas were not so crazy after all —or for her classmates to assert that even the published opinions of academicians can be perceived as arguable with proper textual evidence.

Turn Negatives Into Positives

When a response to literature needs to be more precise, turn an incorrect or weak assertion into what I call "sacrificing oneself for the good of the class." My students learn to accept praise for being brave enough to suggest ideas that may be proven invalid, knowing that their errors can help other students explore ideas more clearly. Ironically, it becomes a point of pride to fail since it is to the benefit of the whole class. Rather than letting a classmate be embarrassed because of an error in response (e.g., an insupportable argument or a factual error), students cheer on the victim turned hero as someone (the teacher or another student) thanks him for "sacrificing for the good of the class." Then we collectively move in a different direction in search of a more supportable conclusion or a clearer analysis of that piece of literature. It takes

only a few days to establish this "sacrificial" approach as one of confidence, comfort, and even fun.

Use Small Groups or Partnerships to Build Confidence

Encourage students to work through ideas with a partner, pointing out each other's flaws in argument, collaborating to help build support through textual evidence. This must not be a "divide the work" approach where students work separately to complete their individual part of the whole analysis. Rather, students need to be shown how to work collaboratively as they debate the issues in order to draw accurate conclusions about the work. In whole-class discussion the teacher can help demonstrate the process, raising questions so that students think more deeply, addressing specific students to be sure all are involved.

Early in the course students can model their discussion in a fishbowl format. In this approach to group analysis, some students conduct a prepared discussion about a literary work while the rest of the class observes and takes notes on the process. Following the initial discussion, the observing students respond to it, pointing out both positive insights made by the group and ways in which the discussion could have been better—e.g., more thorough development, more specific support, more accurate textual references. Members of the class rotate between the discussion group and the observation team so that all students can experience the entire process. In this way the entire class focuses on the literary text but also learns how to more effectively discuss another literary piece in the future.

The use of collaborative pairs or small groups also works well to help the class grow as strong academic readers. Students could be asked to keep a journal of their discussion, listing points that were made and then confirmed or refuted through the partnerships. Throughout all these approaches it is important to have the students develop an awareness of process so that they understand how to improve the quality of their discussion over time, developing skills as readers and confidence as participants in this academic setting.

Remove or Delay Your Reaction to Student Ideas

It is very hard to develop an authentic voice in response to literature if an exploring student's argument is influenced by the teacher's verbal or nonverbal response. A raised eyebrow or quizzical expression can deflate a fledgling argument, while a smile or nod can encourage an argument beyond what a student concretely believes. Find

the means to stay out of the way until your students have a chance to explore and support their own thinking. For example, ask students to tape their group's discussion outside of class, being sure to require responses from all members of the group. Or, ask partners to submit written notes on their discussion. Find something to validate and something to question in these responses, joining the dialogue (verbally or in writing) only *after* students express their initial ideas. It is so rewarding to hear one student say to another something like, "The teacher says that the woman in black represents such and such, but I really think that. . . ." Our students cannot gain that essential confidence to disagree (even with the teacher) until our backing away permits their own voices to emerge.

Make Learning More Important Than the Grade

This is much easier said than accomplished since students who choose to take AP courses tend to be very grade conscious. You can help with this by balancing rigorous assignments with formative assessment. Give students chances to assess their own progress as they become authentic readers of literature. Allow them, especially early in the process, to experience assessment of knowledge in multiple ways or through multiple attempts. For example, my students have opportunities to take three different literary term tests during the first month of school before the best-scoring one is recorded in the grade book. This process stresses the necessity to learn key information and encourages students to try again rather than assuming that particular concepts are beyond their capabilities.

When Responses Take a Written Form, Work One-on-One with Each Student

This approach takes substantial time and energy, but it pays off with increased individual success. I require each of my students to spend time in Dr. D's Hot Seat, a chair next to my desk where we work together on a student's individual writing. Each student must submit six to nine papers to this process each marking period. Rather than receiving a grade, each paper is discussed, edited, revised, and resubmitted until it earns a literal stamp of approval—the sound of which my students say is the sweetest one they know. Stamped papers are then included in the student's writing portfolio at the end of each marking period, counting substantially toward the course grade. You may not have the luxury of a long lunch period or accessible after-school time that permits this much time with each of your students, but a little flexibility and

creativity (perhaps through e-mail or instant messages) can provide the time for you to give each student some individual attention.

Provide Concrete Frameworks for Developing Literary Responses

Pre-AP® materials developed by the College Board address this issue well with a variety of graphic-organizer tools. Three that work especially well are TP-CASTT, SOAPSTone, and Levels of Questions (detailed explanations of which can be found in the *AP Vertical Teams® Guide for English* and other Pre-AP workshop materials).

TP-CASTT is one of the best approaches I have found for poetry analysis. It asks students to examine several elements of a poem, including tone, figurative language, shifts, and theme. The "T" on two occasions asks for close examination of the poem's title, an obvious inclusion too frequently forgotten as students move prematurely to discussion of content. On an AP English Literature and Composition Exam a few years ago, a large number of students misread Anne Bradstreet's "The Author to Her Book" because they ignored the title, incorrectly concluding that the poem *literally* refers to a mother and her child. TP-CASTT serves as a safeguard against this type of error.

SOAPSTone is also an effective anagram for analysis of text. It can be used for poetry that contains a clear speaker and for both fiction and nonfiction works. This tool requires students to consider both speaker and audience, as well as purpose, occasion, and tone. It can be used both for reading analysis and as a format for construction of a student's own writing.

Finally, Levels of Questions is a technique to consider for regular use with students. It asks students to ask *good* questions of the text—from those with answers directly in the text, to those requiring inference, to those that go beyond text to theme. Like the "title" portion of TP-CASTT, the use of questioning techniques can assist students right up to the AP English Literature and Composition Exam itself. Just a few years ago, the open-ended question of the free-response portion of the exam asked students to pose a question raised in a text of literary merit and then conclude to what degree the question is answered in that literary work. Readers of the exam essays expressed concern that AP students had difficulty formulating an actual question, especially one of significance to the work as a whole. Therefore, practice in asking high-quality questions can certainly be useful in an AP English Literature and Composition class.

Clearly all three of these tools, as well as others introduced by the College Board in Pre-AP materials, can be useful reminders for AP students as they become independent readers of complex literature. But AP students need to add layers of depth to their thinking, moving beyond what these introductory tools ask. Following are two in-depth graphic organizers that have helped my students gain confidence in their independent reading.

Literary 3 x 3

William Melvin Kelley suggests that a prospective writer of fiction should create three, three-word sentences that summarize an intended plot to be sure that the story contains a beginning, middle, and end. I ask my students to reverse this format to go well beyond the plot, to state (and analyze) the *essence* of a work they have read (short story, narrative poem, or chapter of a novel). For example, Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" could be summarized as follows:

- Minnie kills husband.
- Men seek evidence.
- Women hide evidence.

Such a summary restates the basic plot but does not say much about the real issues of this short story. It does not answer questions as to why Minnie has killed her husband, how the men differ from the women in their attitude toward her guilt, or whether the concealing of evidence is morally right. Contrast that generic summary with these more insightful versions done by some of my students:

- Apathy strangles devotion.
- Tidiness uncovers truth.
- Sympathy chokes justice.

- Guilt creates bond.
- Chair symbolizes satisfaction.
- Bird justifies death.

- Unpredicted fate evolves.
- Curiosity unearths reality.
- Empathy conceals truth.

- Guilt consumes women.
- Curiosity unveils evidence.
- Lost heart's saved.

Students creating these samples were required to observe the specific literary 3 x 3 guidelines below in their response to this piece of literature:

A literary 3 x 3 *will* use the following:

- complete sentences
- effective word order
- strong words, especially verbs and adjectives

An effective literary 3 x 3 *may* also use the following:

- abstract nouns
- contractions using "is"

A literary 3 x 3 will *not* use the following:

- proper nouns/names
- repeated words
- "to be" verbs
- pronouns
- clichés
- *a, an, the*

Creation of the initial literary 3 x 3 is just one step in a complex analytical process. Students share their responses with the rest of the class, who examine the sentences for accuracy in following the rules. For example, the complete-sentence requirement is occasionally overlooked as students focusing so diligently on word choice neglect the basic subject and predicate rule. Once any errors in guidelines are corrected, we look at each 3 x 3 for its quality. The class makes suggestions as to which word or words are least effective in the response. They might note inaccuracies in interpretation of character motivation or plot details, examine connotations of the diction selected, and perhaps suggest alternative words for the writers to consider. Each pair of students then reassesses their 3 x 3, making at least one change in word choice as they revise. (It is important that all students make changes—even the students who typically are always right in their responses—since this is a process of continuously deepening response.) Finally, students write a short essay analyzing the process, explaining what they had tried to capture about the story in their original response, then analyzing the changes they have made in the final product. Note part of the analysis done by students who created the 3 x 3s above:

- Amber and Amanda explained their first sentence ("Guilt creates bond") this way: "In creating our 3 x 3, we knew that we wanted to explain the

bond between the two women in the story… how it is created through the mutual *guilt* of the women."

- Hannah and Sara also used the word *guilt* ("Guilt consumes women"), adding their rationale that "the women feel *guilty* because they never visited Mrs. Wright prior to the death of her husband. Their guilt is so intense that they are completely *consumed* by it." In analyzing their third line ("Lost heart's saved"), the girls continued: "Mrs. Peters says of Mrs. Wright, 'A person gets discouraged—and loses heart' (319). The women conceal the evidence from the men, causing Mrs. Wright's 'lost heart' to be saved in the end."
- Amber and Lisa explained that they changed "Unpredicted fate *arises*" to "Unpredicted fate *evolves*" because "*evolves* shows how an unpredicted fate continues to happen throughout the story instead of just *arising* and happening at one point in time."
- Kelsey and Danica explain *tidiness* ("evidence is found due to the cleanliness of the women at the scene") and *strangles* ("used both literally and figuratively") as a reference to the manner of killing her husband and the suffocation of the marriage.

This activity can take several variations: (1) The literary 3 x 3 can be done as an individual homework assignment and then discussed with two or three other students for revision purposes. (2) Initial 3 x 3s can be created by individuals and then combined to make a single 3 x 3 that a group can support, merging ideas from each other's responses. (3) A single 3 x 3 can be left on the board for several days as students think about how to fine-tune the response to satisfy the entire class. This process of expressing complex ideas with very specific language helps students examine literature in real depth, as well as explore subtle nuances of specific diction. Students argue persuasively for one word over another as they try to get to the very essence of a story, exploring the text in depth for evidence to support their claims.

T-Chart for Character Analysis

A second graphic organizer that enables students to produce evidence for textual analysis is the T-Chart, a table of data in response to specific questions about two different characters from the same story or play, or from two different literary works (see Figure 1). Examples: (1) Compare Goober from Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (destruction of classroom chapters) with "T" from Graham Greene's "The

Destructors." (2) Compare and contrast Beowulf in the original epic with Beowulf in Richard Wilbur's poem by the same name. (3) Contrast the men and the women in "A Jury of Her Peers."

FIGURE 1

Questions	Character #1	Character #2

The specific questions can vary with the intent of the assignment. One set that works well is suggested by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter in *What If: Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers.* Although their intent in this text is to help budding authors develop fully rounded characters in original fiction, these questions also work well for textual analysis in an AP English Literature and Composition class:

- What does the central character want?
- What are her motives for wanting this?
- Where in the story is this made clear to the reader?
- How do we learn what the central character wants? Dialogue? Actions? Interior thinking?
- What or who stands in the way of her achieving it?
- What does that desire set in motion?

Students are required to answer each question in depth, citing passages from the text to prove the points they are making. This graphic organizer reveals much to the perceptive student. For example, students understand more easily why Cormier's Goober destroys the classroom than why Greene's "T" destroys Old Misery's house because the narrator reveals what Goober *thinks*, but only what "T" *says* and *does*. Students examine the contrasting motivations for Beowulf: Why does he want to defeat Grendel? Does he want fame, or is this simply a duty before going home to a lonely existence? Learning "what a desire sets in motion" through this process is good practice for the open-ended question on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam when students are asked, "How does this affect the work as a whole?" After completing the graphic organizer in thorough detail, students are required to analyze their findings in order to draw conclusions about the relationship between the two characters in an essay, referring *only* to data contained in the chart.

For example, note part of Jordan's response through a T-Chart comparing Jack and Algernon in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (see Figure 2):

FIGURE 2

What does the character want?	Jack wants to rid himself of the fake identity he has used so long for an excuse to travel into town at his every whim.	Algernon, despite his debts and clear faults as a gentleman, wants Cecily badly.
What are the character's motives for wanting this?	His real name (or so he believes), Jack, is not the name that the woman he loves knows him by. He wants to change this by revealing his bluff to Gwendolyn, killing his counterpart Ernest to rid Cecily, his ward, of her obsession with him, and lead an honest life.	Like Jack, Algernon has an alter ego named Bunbury. Algernon's motives, however, are much more devious than Jack's—he actually enjoys the thrill. His fun, however, takes a backseat as Algernon truly develops a love for Cecily, however shallow his infatuation might be.
Where in the story is this made clear to the reader?	"I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolyn accepts me, I'm going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him" (11).	"The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life" (65). "Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her" (66).

Jordan examined the data in his chart and concluded that "the characters of Jack and Algernon are complex and undeniably parallel. Both men seek the love of a lady—both men have a secret identity they use for their own pleasure—both men find themselves in a trap that their own lies set them in. But these foundational similarities, while reoccurring throughout the novel, are set in stone so that they both might take unique paths from there. Jack wants to rid himself of Ernest, but Algernon loves the excitement of Bunburying and even goes as far as using Jack's identity against him… Jack and Algernon are ultimately just two men seeking an escape from their lives and a person to love, and they use the ways they think best to achieve those goals."

This activity can be adapted to a variety of questions for comparison and contrast using questions related to elements such as setting, tone, narrator's point of view, plot structure, or elements of language. Whatever the categories used in the assignment, students should be urged to dig deeply into the literature, searching for evidence to support well-constructed arguments. The use of graphic organizers enables students to construct increasingly complex analysis in a very reassuring setting.

Be a Model for the Learning Process

Above all, an AP English Literature and Composition teacher should remember to combine all characteristics of a classroom environment to make the classroom student-centered, with the teacher participating as a member of the group as well as

a discussion leader. Be willing to permit students to choose some short works for class discussion, hoping that an occasional one will be unfamiliar to you so that you can model a cold reading for the class. Students too often believe that teachers understand complex literature with no effort, assuming that we absorb complicated syntax and intricate plot twists instantaneously, as if by osmosis. By revealing our own questioning process we can give our students confidence that they too can become independent readers of complex literature.

Choosing a combination of approaches like those described here can help the new AP English Literature and Composition teacher create an environment in which students can learn to be authentic readers of literature, bringing their own voice in response to literary text. The class will require hard work on the part of both students and teacher (as it should since high expectations are a necessity for college-level achievement in a high school setting), but it will be challenging without being overwhelming, accessible rather than daunting, welcoming to uncertain learners as well as traditional overachievers. These authentic readers will then be ready to succeed at the kind of literature exploration discussed in the rest of the articles in this publication.

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Discovering Rhetorical Structure: Paths to Better Reading, Thinking, and Writing

Mel MacKay

We commonly do not remember that it is, after all,
always the first person that is speaking. (Thoreau 107)

In recent years, much of my interest as a high school teacher of literature and writing has turned to thinking. What *is* thinking? The brain does not yield forth its secrets easily. When students venture ideas that probably won't stand the test of logic and I ask them to stop and think again, what exactly am I asking them to do? I hope I'm not repeating King Lear's impatient mistake when he says to Cordelia, "Nothing will come of nothing. Think again" (I.i.90). Poor, misguided Lear, who likely meant, "Try again, my precious daughter, and this time come up with the right answer—*my* answer!"

The next time you ask your students to "think again" about the meaning of a line of poetry or a character's motivations, try what I did a year ago during a discussion of a novel. "I know I just asked you to think again," I said after several students had taken a stab at a response to a leading question. "Then I paused and gave you time to think. But I'm going to tell you now that I'm actually not interested in what you're thinking at this moment. Instead, what I want to know is this: After I told you to 'think again,' what exactly is it that you did? What actually occurred in your mind?" I was asking students not only to be thinkers, but metathinkers, conscious of what was happening inside their heads as they practice that thing we call "thinking."

After a pause of a few seconds, a student replied, "This is giving me a headache!"

Thinking and "Thinking About ..."

We know that while we are abstracting from or generalizing about thinking, actual practice requires something to think *about*. The student in the above example was reporting accurately, if somewhat metaphorically. The challenge with which she was

working—in other words, that which she was thinking about—was a situation from a novel. The situation involved several characters and called into question reasons for their behavior. Having proposed one answer, it was frustratingly difficult to try to "see" within her own mind what pathways her thought was traveling—and yet it was possible, especially if the business of thinking could be expressed through questions and analogies.

In practice, what teachers need are ways to turn "think again" into conscious activity. How the brains of a group of students are operating is beyond them and beyond me. What the students are actually doing—what techniques they employ—is, however, well within the realm of the classroom. The technique I teach for moving quickly toward critical thinking—which I maintain in almost all cases is nothing more than thinking itself, since an absence of critical thinking is so often illogical and incomplete—involves understanding *rhetorical structure*.

Any techniques we employ to lead students toward interaction with a text and constructing their own understanding of that text need to be accessible. Based on the concept of rhetorical structure, the technique described in this article is simple to grasp and has an active, visual component. It is designed to work with students who, developmentally speaking, have moved from concrete to abstract thinking. However, while developmental psychology can tell us when learners are likely to be ready for or more comfortable with open-ended questions and philosophical thinking, it is still up to teachers to prompt and reward that cognitive development.

The Rhetoric of Poetry

Perhaps you've noticed how frequently in English classes a first or early reading of a poem begins with easy elements. "What is the rhyme scheme?" the teacher asks. "What is the stanzaic structure?" If we are reading a sonnet, we have the arithmetic of English and Italian sonnets at our fingertips, and it is tempting to start with that arithmetic. But we will quickly run out of easy things and have to start actually reading.

Rhetorical structure is harder than "What's the rhyme scheme?" but easier than a question like, "Do you see a pattern of imagery in the poem?" All "language in thought and action," to use S. I. Hayakawa's term, has a rhetorical structure, because (1) all language has intention (of which the speaker or writer may or may not be conscious) and (2) all language has effect. Every piece of literary art has both an overt physical structure and a rhetorical structure, or *meaning structure*.

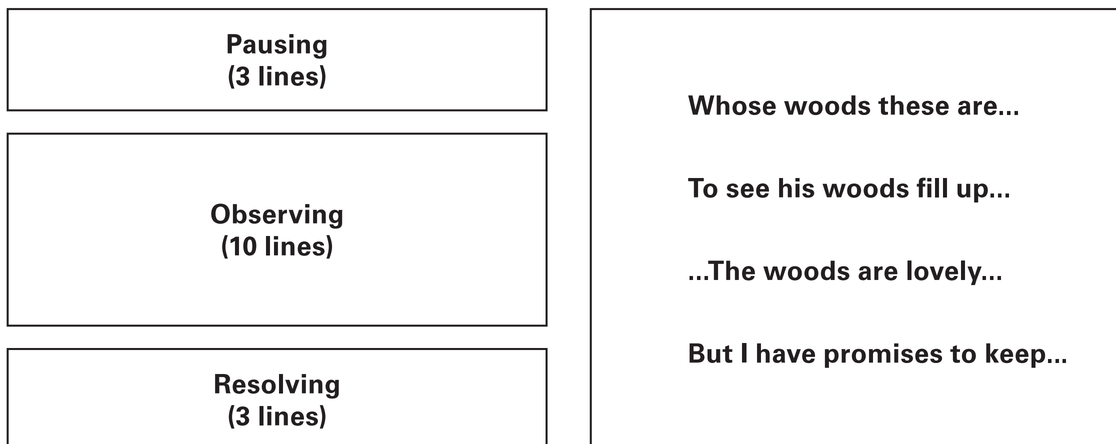
In the simplest terms, art is a conversation. Someone is speaking. Is anyone listening? (I once heard that the Zen master D. T. Suzuki answered the question "Who am I?" by querying, "Who is it that is asking the question?")

I would even go so far as to suggest that among the greatest joys in literature is the conversation offered by writer to reader. I am well aware that in my active reading of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, I may be responding to the story in ways that diverge from the thoughts Austen was experiencing when she wrote the novel, and at the close of this article I will say a word about the intentional fallacy. But Jane Austen wrote her novel, and 200 years later a reader is responding. The poem, the short story, the essay, the novel, the play—all are invitations to a conversation that can occur only when we engage critical *transactional* questions: Who is speaking? What has motivated this piece of language? Who is the intended audience? Taken together, these issues form a major part of what Wayne Booth called *the rhetoric of fiction*. A rhetorical analysis, then, focuses on *intention* and *effect*.

Visualizing Rhetorical Structure

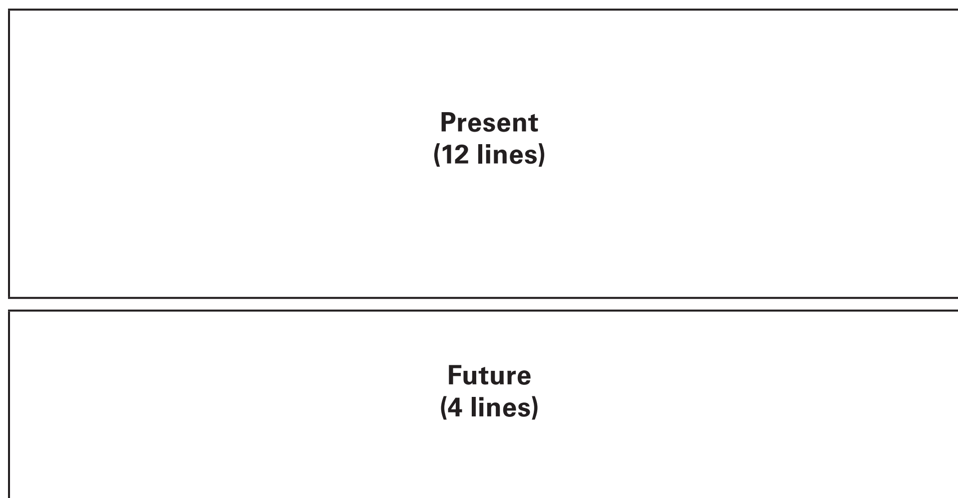
Let's begin thinking about rhetorical structure by examining two poems studied by thousands of high school students around the world each year. Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (Frost 224) has a tidy four-quatrain stanzaic structure, is written in iambic tetrameters, and has a rhyme scheme that effectively knits together one stanza's sounds and images and those of the next. Thinking in terms of *speaker*, *occasion*, *audience*, and *purpose* (SOAP, to use the acronym familiar to many English teachers), or in terms of *intention* and *effect* ("i.e.," if you like), we might propose a rhetorical structure free of the stanzaic structure, like this (see Figure 1):

FIGURE 1



Or we might see this speaker–audience transaction—in which the speaker is essentially talking to himself—in terms of time. The speaker lingers in the present until present obligations and future possibilities intrude (see Figure 2):

FIGURE 2

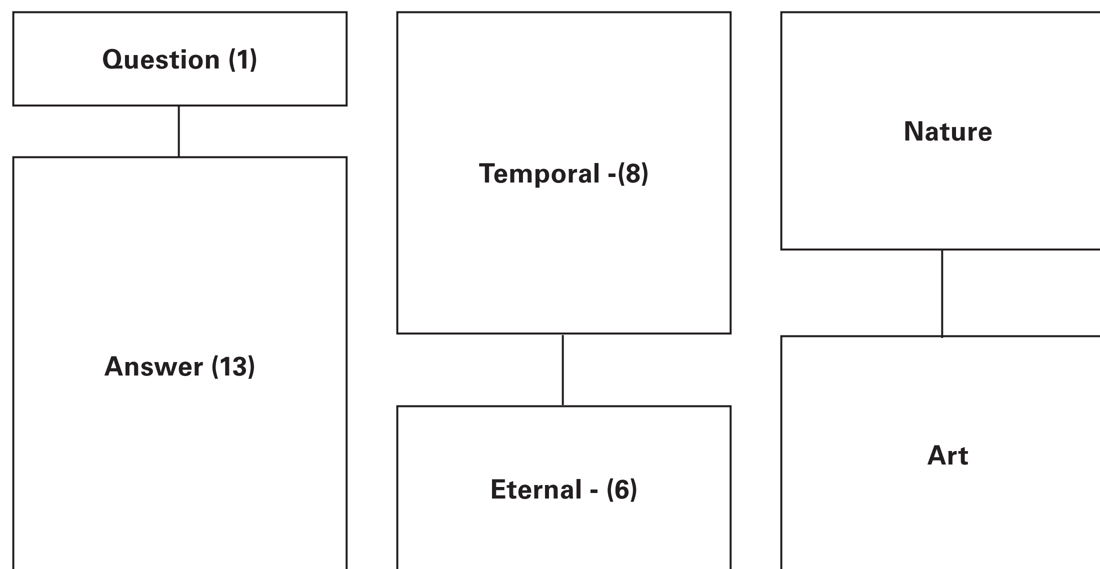


The point is not to arrive at a single rhetorical structure but to force ourselves to read in terms of chunks of meaning, instead of paragraphs or stanzas. A further advantage of having made a box diagram that focuses on language in terms of transaction, structure, and meaning is that our thinking has generated ideas broad enough to act as topic sentences for paragraphs. This is something even our best students sometimes struggle with. Often they "write their way to understanding," rather than beginning with an idea that encompasses whole stanzas, paragraphs, or chapters of a work in front of them. Now they can write a sentence like "Robert Frost's 'Stopping

by Woods on a Snowy Evening' introduces a speaker caught between the present and the future," or "When something important makes us pause, what we ultimately experience depends on the attention we give to the moment." Is that too much of a stretch for our students? I don't think so. On the contrary, it is the kind of idea that depends much more on their being encouraged to join the conversation with Robert Frost than it does on any special knowledge of poetry. Better still, when it comes to a poem's rhetorical structure, there are multiple right answers.

No sonnet of Shakespeare's is more likely to find its way into our classrooms than "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?" To the teacher, its three quatrains and closing couplet are by now too familiar. We are experts at key-word hunting. We move quickly to image clusters, extended metaphors, and transition words—in some cases, moving right past the poem's two-part rhetorical structure, which can be represented in many more ways than I can represent (see Figure 3):

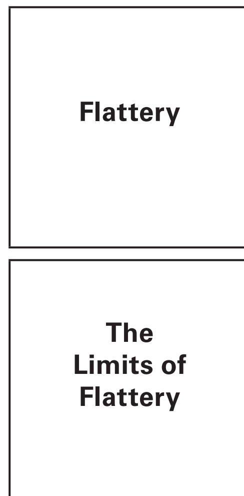
FIGURE 3



The first box diagram proposes that in terms of rhetorical structure, the poem is a one-line question followed by 13 lines of possible responses. The second pair of boxes sees the tension between the here and now and the loved one's eternal fame. In the case of the third pair of boxes, we dispense with the number of lines in each section because this juxtaposition hypothesizes that the sonnet is a kind of tennis match between nature and art—and a potentially ironic one in that it suggests, as Renaissance poetry so often does, that art will outlast nature. But then what is the

speaker's purpose? Asking that question leads us to a discussion well worth having, hinted at in this box diagram (see Figure 4):

FIGURE 4



What is the purpose of flattery? How will the beloved feel when told the speaker's blazoning will last forever? Surely the speaker means for the compliment to be felt—and returned.

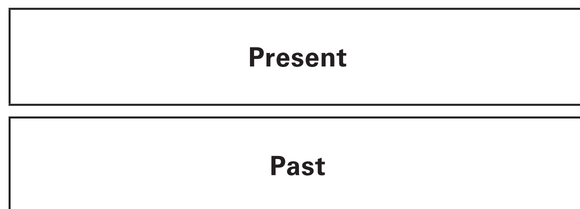
Beginning with Miniatures

Over the years as I have taught rhetorical structure, I have often begun with a very short poem. If your students, like mine, have insisted that they could have written Williams's "This Is Just to Say" or one of the short poems that follow, don't argue with them—tell them, "Prove it!" They might just do it. Frost's "The Span of Life" is a perfect teaching tool:

> The old dog barks backwards without getting up.
> I can remember when he was a pup.
>
> (Frost 308)

Here is a diagram of the rhetorical structure in temporal terms (see Figure 5):

FIGURE 5



Here is the rhetorical structure in terms of the narrator's tone—a key to meaning, as we see that this vignette is eloquent on the subjects of aging and impending loss (see Figure 6):

FIGURE 6

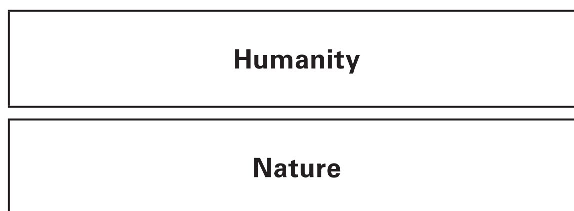
Let me mention that I do not give students the title of Frost's poem. After we've analyzed it rhetorically, students propose apt titles, and only then do I write Frost's title on the board. No student has ever come up with "The Span of Life," but many have proposed "Life" as an appropriate working title.

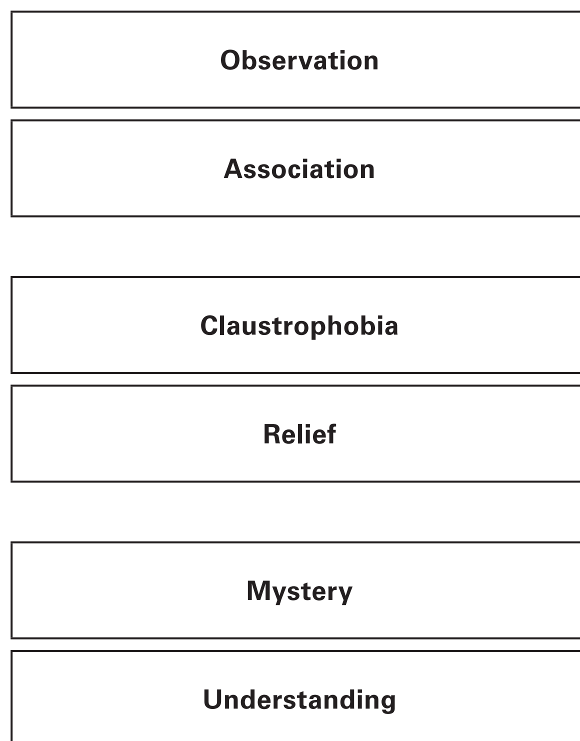
A justly famous imagist poem by Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," seems too short to carve up, but it is in its economy that the poem's tensions reveal themselves:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.
> (Mandelbaum 582)

There are so many fascinating avenues into the speaker–audience conversation in this poem, through point of view, subject matter, tone, effect on audience. The following are four possible box diagrams, each expressive of rhetorical choices and each suggesting meaning or theme (see Figure 7):

FIGURE 7





Out of such analysis can flow whole paragraphs' worth of student writing. In the absence of such analysis, students fall back on anatomizing—beginning their paragraphs with sentences about a single word or image. Their analysis often has everything *except* exposition because, as good as they are with the microscope, they have not trained their telescope on the larger issues of meaning making. Wouldn't I love to pick up a student essay that *began*, "Ezra Pound's two-line poem 'In a Station of the Metro' functions as a dialogue between mystery and understanding"!

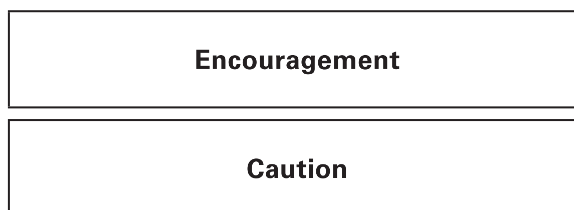
Haiku work beautifully for the exercise of discovering rhetorical structure. Here is perhaps the most famous haiku by the poet Issa, as translated by American poet and former poet laureate Robert Hass:

> Climb Mount Fuji,
> O snail,
> but slowly, slowly.
> (Hass 155)

Physically, the poem presents us with three lines and a certain number of syllables, some accented and some not—none of which helps us much with meaning. So we need a different avenue into meaning than arithmetic. How, we might ask, in terms of the *transaction* between speaker and apostrophized snail, might we divide up

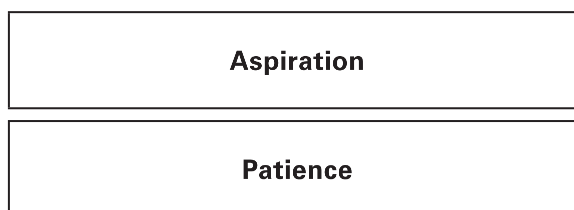
this poem? Once we think of these beautiful lines as transactional, the beginning of a dialogue between speaker and audience, the audience (the reader, like the snail) might hear something like this from the speaker (see Figure 8):

FIGURE 8



. . . or something like this (see Figure 9):

FIGURE 9



Rhetorical Structure and the AP English Literature and Composition Exam

The dividend is this: Once we divide a passage on the basis of its meaning structure, we have before us a suggested paragraph structure for an essay. In one capacity or another, I have scored the AP English Literature and Composition Exam for almost 20 years. Thousands of student essays later, I say with some confidence that our students need tools to think better. Their free-response essays reflect their thinking, and their thinking is too often undeveloped. AP English teachers clearly understand the utility of helping students see that the essential parts of analytical essay writing still apply on the AP Exams. So what turns promising writing into pedestrian writing?

Most students have a structure in mind as they begin to write, beginning their free-response essays with an introduction containing necessary introductory material and some form of a thesis statement. They go on to body paragraphs, with an attempt at a smooth transition between each one and attention to the text. The important question—the one that makes all the difference in terms of quality of writing—has to do with what to put into that thesis and what to put into those body paragraphs. In other words, the difference maker is their thinking.

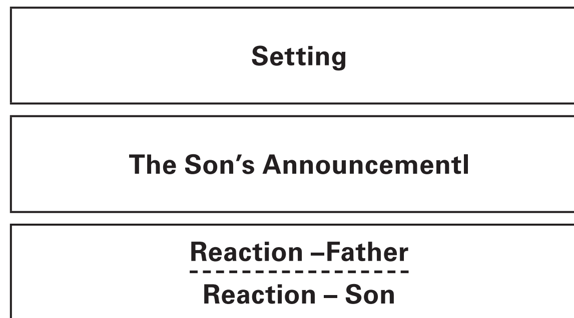
There are two approaches to the literary analyses of the poems and prose passages that AP Exam Readers see fairly constantly. Students either proceed chronologically through a prose passage or poem, interpreting and supporting as they go, or they organize their essays on the basis of technique (often those suggested by the prompt), with a paragraph on diction, followed by one on tone, and so on. Regardless of the paragraph structure, however, is there a way to help students at the outset—to encourage insight at the beginning of the process, allowing those body paragraphs to function as they truly should, developing an already articulated interesting thesis?

The 2007 AP English Literature and Composition Exam's free-response poetry question presented students with paired poems, as occurs fairly often on the exam. With each essay averaging 40 minutes, students need a technique to make shorter work of their thinking. A rhetorical structure of Wilbur's poem "A Barred Owl," the subject of which might be termed childhood fears, sees it in terms of fear and reassurance—though the ominous last image of a child "dreaming of some small thing in a claw / Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw" (Wilbur) is too terrifying for the reassurance to be persuasive. Collins's "The History Teacher" ostensibly about history, is also a contest between childhood and adulthood, reassurance and false reassurance. A relatively quick rhetorical analysis of speaker—audience—purpose shows us how much these poems have in common.

Rhetorical structure extends beyond the province of poetry. All language is transactional. We bear this in mind when confronted with longer prose passages, divided neatly into paragraphs or, in the case of drama or diary (or sometimes Dickens or Faulkner), more or less undivided. Rather than rely on the paragraphing to reveal what rhetorical choices have been made, the reader who is alert to possibilities of narrative intent will see behind the surface structure to the rhetorical choices being made.

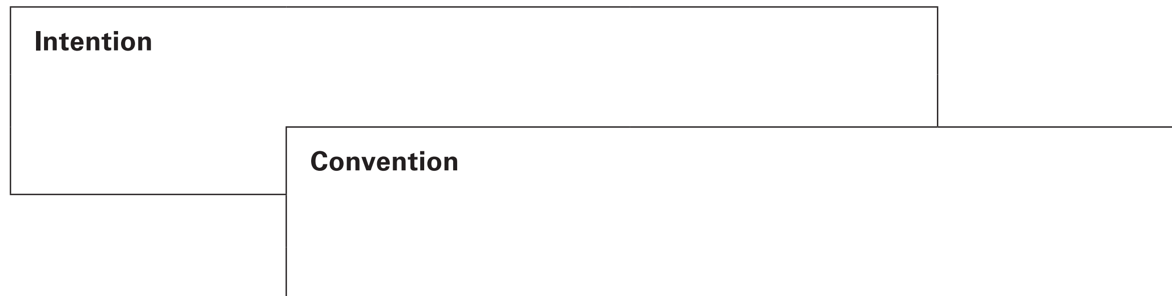
The 2007 AP English Literature and Composition Exam's prose question, a passage from Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, is a long but accessible passage that divides neatly into three or four sections (see Figure 10):

FIGURE 10



A year before, the passage from Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* looks rather neat on paper—as neat as the couplets we looked at earlier. The boxes overlap because with Wilde, as with Jane Austen, there are always at least two things going on at once, as Darlington's witty failures drive him increasingly to have to state his case more plainly and as Lady Windermere's hesitation to "just say no" increases her vulnerability (see Figure 11):

FIGURE 11



For our students, the architecture of the boxes presents its own creative possibilities. If we can have love triangles, surely we can also have rhetorical triangles, and we may need recourse to a three-dimensional chess set to unpack the possibilities of Prospero's drawing the curtain on Ferdinand and Miranda at chess in *The Tempest.*

Conclusion

Still, as effective as making these box diagrams for prose rhetorical structure can be, they're at their best with poetry, where we're often at our worst. Few of us read 5 or 10 poems every day, and while some poems seize us powerfully and seem to require no analysis at all, the great majority we must read slowly and deliberately. For these—and for writing about these—we need technique. No amount of identifying Italian and

English sonnets or of separating the personification from the hyperbole will excuse us from having to come up with a theory about what the writer or speaker is saying.

I am sensitive to the fact that some readers may object that the entire exercise outlined in this article flies in the face of the Intentional Fallacy, so let me close by addressing this concern. The theory of the intentional fallacy holds that while we can interact with a work, we cannot logically or usefully speak of a writer's intention. We do not know what Shakespeare intended, and if he had left us instructions, the works themselves may or may not have accurately communicated that intent—or they may have meant what he intended and many more things as well.

I believe this is a matter of epistemology intended (*sic*) mostly for critics and advanced readers. In the AP English Literature and Composition classroom and certainly on the course's exam, students are asked constantly what a novelist, poet, or playwright may have meant. Perhaps the life-changing conversations we are inviting—because to be in a dialogue with Shakespeare, Austen, Dickinson & Co. has that potential—have an element of fancy to them. But it seems a pity to subtract the writer from the equation, and it surely sharpens the student's mind to balance the equation in just such terms: writer/purpose → reader/effect.

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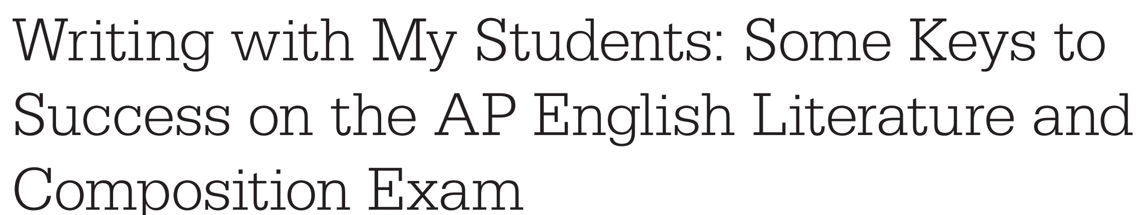

Writing with My Students: Some Keys to Success on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam

Brian McCrea

In his *The Philosophy of Composition* (1977), E. D. Hirsch Jr. proposes that writing teachers write *with* their students rather than *against* them—specifically, that writing teachers complete the assignments they ask their students to do. How hard is it to complete a well-organized and insightful essay on a literary topic in, say, 35 minutes (after all, one has to read the prompt carefully)? What "keys" might students use to succeed in this task? Perhaps most important, what might teachers expect students to learn from the exercises that make up the written portion of the AP English Literature and Composition Examination?

Having been a Reader for the exams between 1996 and 2005, and having scored roughly 9,500 essays on all three questions, I have strong and clear (whether correct remains to be seen) ideas about from whence successful responses come. In my response in this chapter to the 1998 prompt on George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, I tried to suspend any number of professorial impulses and to write as might a talented student whom I had advised. Actually, the prompt includes text from *Middlemarch* so lengthy and so provocative that I suspect 18-year-olds who move quickly through it might do better in 40 minutes than Ph.D.'s in English, who tend to get lost (happily so) in it.

Of this I am sure: My response is not as good as some responses I have read by preternaturally graceful and insightful students—responses that, once the rush of pleasure you feel after reading them fades, leave you wondering, "What sort of parenting, what sort of teaching did that child have?" Those students do not need my help. The following response is from me writing in the voice of a hardworking student who has done her best to take my advice. Rather than offer my "keys" here, let's see

if they become at least partially evident as you review the *Middlemarch* prompt (see Appendix 1), consider how you would respond, and evaluate my attempt.

My Response

In this passage from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the narrator's attitude is difficult to define. Dorothea is described as beautiful, smart, and morally earnest, but these positive descriptions all are undercut by hints that Dorothea is proud or at least self-centered. While the narrator claims that Dorothea is "not in the least self-admiring," he repeatedly describes Dorothea thinking about herself. Dorothea is most "bewitching when she was on horseback." She feels the fresh air, she enjoys the country, she does not think. Dorothea may appear at her best while on horseback, but she eventually thinks of riding as an "indulgence," a "pagan" pleasure, and always looked forward to renouncing it. As her thinking here detracts from an activity she enjoys, so her thinking detracts from her otherwise admirable character. What is wrong with her?

In the description of her beauty, the narrator emphasizes that "poor" and "plain" dress enhances it. Dorothea does best when she keeps life simple, but even here she seems "clever" in contrast to her sister, Celia, who has "common-sense." Though her dress differs very slightly from her sister's, her neighbors sense Dorothea's thoughtfulness.

While the description of her beauty raises indirectly the issue of her intelligence, the description of her education focuses more intently upon it. Because she has read Pascal and Jeremy Taylor, she cannot take seriously matters of fashion, "artificial protrusions of drapery." The narrator adds, "Her mind was theoretic," and this begins the explanation of what is wrong with her otherwise admirable character. Her mind holds a "lofty conception of the world," and she seeks "intensity and greatness." She imagines herself a martyr. Because of this, the parish of Tipton and her neighbors seem small to her. This makes her sister seem much more appealing than Dorothea, and also makes Dorothea seem "knowing and worldly-wise" in contrast to Celia. Neighbors who are prejudiced against Dorothea because of her knowingness find her "charming" when they encounter her directly, particularly when she is riding. But that is because, in those moments, she is not thinking how small they are.

As the narrator moves from Dorothea's beauty and her education to her "ardent" thoughts about her future life, particularly marriage, he emphasizes that Dorothea's mind is fine but her sense of proportion is not. Correcting the impression left by the earlier reference to her as "worldly-wise," the narrator writes, "Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage."

Dorothea does not know the "truths of life"; she only *wants* to know them. She is not "worldly-wise" but childlike. Her problem is not so much with her thinking as it is with her "imagination." She imagines John Milton as her husband and thus will not respond to the overtures of "an amiable handsome baronet." In the marriage she imagines, her husband will be more a father than a lover and will teach her Hebrew.

After describing Dorothea's beauty, education, and ardent imagination, the narrator shows that her problem is not that she is a thinker but that her thinking is out of scale, at least for Tipton. A reader who finds this attitude also can appreciate the subtlety with which Eliot implies it in the opening paragraph. Dorothea's beauty has the "impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible or one from our elder poets—in a paragraph of today's newspaper." Her beauty is a matter of perspective, "relief." Part of the problem here may not lie with her so much as with her guardian. He has sent her to Tipton. There she is beautiful but out of place. She is intelligent but has no cause. She is ardent but only can imagine dead men, albeit great dead men, as suitors.

Using the College Board Scoring Guide (see Appendix B), decide what score you would give this response to the prompt.

What My Student Did Well

First, and probably most important, my student has learned that the prompt is her friend, not her enemy. The prompt may seem the most intimidating part of the exam. It likely asks students a question they have not considered about a poem, play, novel, or author they have not read. The prompt is a friend, however—even a lifesaver—because it gives students a sentence subject, in this case the narrator, in others the author, and words that the narrator/author has used. As my student responded to the prompt, she tried to use either "the narrator" or "Dorothea" as the subject of her sentences. She, thus, repeatedly set herself the task of analyzing what the narrator was doing with words or what Dorothea was thinking about her life. By focusing upon the subjects the prompt gave her—the narrator and Dorothea—my student avoided the weak noun phrases that serve as sentence subjects in unsuccessful responses, i.e., "Another important point about the narrator's role in the characterization of Dorothea Brooke is…"

My student also has learned that words are more important than techniques. The *Middlemarch* prompt, with its general references to "the narrator's attitude" and "literary techniques," is less lethal than those AP English Literature and Composition prompts that ask students to identify how a technique—satire, irony, imagery, figurative language, allegory—contributes to the meaning of a selection. Even so, I

know that I do not want to try to introduce and define such techniques in 40 minutes; scholars take years to write learned tomes about them. Instead of struggling to come up with a catalog of the techniques used by Eliot (and brief, accurate definitions for all of them), my student analyzes how Eliot uses words to achieve effects, most notably the expression of a complicated and mixed attitude toward Dorothea. (If my student could use the word "ambivalent" confidently, she might resort to it.) Following her example, students will help themselves by writing, "In these lines, *author/narrator* uses *word*, *word*, and *word* to create an *image* of decay and death/ light and rebirth/confusion and fear." They will create difficulty for themselves by writing, "Imagery is . . ."

Perhaps most controversially, in these times of statewide achievement tests and teacher complaints that they are being forced to "teach to them," my student organizes her essay around a three-part thesis and writes five paragraphs. Before dismissing this as a dubious achievement, consider this passage from Michael Harvey's popular style manual, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* (2003):
".... lists tend to feel balanced and complete when they contain three items. (People who think about how we process information, both visual and verbal, have long realized that three is a powerful and resonant number for pattern recognition.)
Of course, that doesn't mean you should wrench your material out of its natural arrangement to make it fit a tripartite scheme.... But when you have flexibility in what to say, tricolon is often effective at making a list feel complete."

My student takes advantage of the possibilities for tricolon offered by the excerpt—five paragraphs, one devoted to "rural opinion," one to Dorothea's "charm" as a horsewoman, and the others to her beauty, education, and ardor. My student does not "wrench [her] material out of its natural arrangement," but she does give herself a powerful advantage. While some may associate the three-part thesis with basic writing, we cannot remind ourselves too often that students will have less than 40 minutes to organize their essays (any prompt, but particularly a prompt as lengthy as this *Middlemarch* prompt, takes time to "read carefully"). An introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion will read much better than one or two long paragraphs or, as sometimes happens to students in all their rushing, no paragraphs. Christianity offers us the Trinity, Greek mythology its three realms, our standard version of temporality a past, a present, and a future. My student's organization has powerful precedents.

One qualification is important here. My student's transitions depend on a three-word sequence that she sets up in her introduction: "beautiful, smart, and morally earnest." While the pattern perhaps becomes a bit stilted (I am not claiming that

this essay would receive a score of 9), she uses periodic structure to move between paragraphs. Her introductory subordinate clauses refer to the topic in the previous paragraph; her main clauses name the new topic. Harvey, I believe, would agree that she has not imposed the five-paragraph organization upon her material. If my experience is typical, AP Exam Readers who feel that an essay's five-paragraph organization is artificial will tend to mark down that essay, sometimes quite sharply. Put simply, the five-paragraph essay can be helpful, but only if the student makes strong transitions. Five-paragraph essays with transitions like, "Another important example of how literary techniques reveal the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea is…" will feel the wrath of Readers who have been forced "to teach to the test."

Perhaps the most difficult technique to teach (and most important for success on the exam) is how to use quotations to carry an argument. My student provides evidence for her claims; what she (and Eliot) means by "fashion" is specified by "artful protrusions of drapery." When my student comes to her most important and most complicated point—that Dorothea thinks too grandly for a young girl living in Middlemarch—she has Eliot write it for her; we return to the Bible quotation in today's newspaper. Perhaps I have read AP English Literature and Composition responses that referred too often to the text as the writers try to quote their way into a qualifying score. But I remember far better the hundreds, maybe thousands of responses that I have finished thinking, "It never cites the text."

One final observation about my student's essay: In the late 1980s and on through the 1990s, AP English was attacked for being out of touch with recent developments in composition theory. An argument most thoroughly outlined by David Foster asserts that, by requiring the student to produce a completed draft in 40 minutes, the AP English Literature and Composition Exam does not take into account or value "the recursive elements of the composing process." Because students do not have time to draft, revise, and edit, to carefully reflect and gradually develop, they are denied "the full writing process."

Maybe Foster has a good argument, but (and I did not come to this until I became my student and wrote this response in 40 minutes) I propose that the high point in this essay—one of which a professional critic might make much—comes when the student realizes that the characterization of Dorothea as "worldly-wise" is undercut, even overturned, by the characterization of her as "very childlike." Under the pressure of the 40-minute deadline, my student adjusts her argument—recasts it—in ways that strike me as insightful and imaginative, as worthy of reward.

And this, in my experience, is what happens in the best AP English Literature and Composition essays. Their authors do not always come out where they thought or claimed they would, but they make the journey—the process—worth the while.

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Appendix 1

1998 AP English Literature and Composition Free-Response Questions

Read carefully the following passage from George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* (1871). Then write an essay in which you characterize the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea Brooke and analyze the literary techniques used to convey this attitude. Support your analysis with specific references to the passage.
(Suggested time—40 minutes)

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be
thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so
finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of
style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to
5 Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and
bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain
garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her
the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible, — or
from one of our elder poets, — in a paragraph of today's
10 newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably
clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more
common-sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more
trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress
differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its
15 arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to
mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared…

Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's *Pensées* and of
Jeremy Taylor[1] by heart; and to her the destinies of mankind,
seen by the light of Christianity, made the solicitudes of
20 feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She
could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving
eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp[2] and

1. Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), French philosopher; Jeremy Taylor (1613–1677), English clergyman and writer.
2. A yoke of lace, embroidery, or other material worn with a dress.

artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic,
and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the
25 world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and
her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of
intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever
seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyr-
dom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after
30 all in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such
elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to
interfere with her lot and hinder it from being decided
according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely
canine affection. With all this, she, the elder of the sisters,
35 was not yet twenty, and they had both been educated
since they were about twelve years old and had lost their
parents, on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first
in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at
Lausanne, their bachelor uncle and guardian trying in this
40 way to remedy the disadvantages of their orphaned
condition....

The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even
among the cottagers, was generally in favour of Celia, as
being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss
45 Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual
and striking. Poor Dorothea! compared with her, the
innocent-looking Celia was knowing and worldly-wise; so
much subtler is a human mind than the outside tissues which
make a sort of blazonry or clock-face for it.

50 Yet those who approached Dorothea, although prejudiced
against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a
charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men
thought her bewitching when she was on horseback. She
loved the fresh air and the various aspects of the country,
55 and when her eyes and cheeks glowed with mingled
pleasure she looked very little like a devotee. Riding was an
indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of
conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan
sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.

60 She was open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring;
indeed, it was pretty to see how her imagination adorned her
sister Celia with attractions altogether superior to her own,
and if any gentleman appeared to come to the Grange from
some other motive than that of seeing Mr. Brooke, she
65 concluded that he must be in love with Celia: Sir James
Chettam, for example, whom she constantly considered
from Celia's point of view, inwardly debating whether it
would be good for Celia to accept him. That he should be

regarded as a suitor to herself would have seemed to her a
70 ridiculous irrelevance. Dorothea, with all her eagerness to
know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about
marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the
judicious Hooker,[3] if she had been born in time to save him
from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; of John
75 Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other
great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious
piety to endure; but an amiable handsome baronet, who said
"Exactly" to her remarks even when she expressed
uncertainty, —how could he affect her as a lover? The
80 really delightful marriage must be where your husband was
a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you
wished it.

3. Richard Hooker (1554–1600), Oxford theologian.

Appendix 2

1998 AP English Literature and Composition Scoring Guide

Passage from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871)

This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please 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 an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

9–8 The writers of these well-constructed essays demonstrate a grasp of the ironies and complexities of the passage they have read, as well as the twofold task they have been assigned. Using apt references to the Eliot text, these writers fashion and support a convincing thesis that expresses the relationship between the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea and the literary techniques (such as diction, imagery, allusion, or contrast) that the author uses to create and convey that attitude. Although not without flaws, these essays reflect the writer's ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing to provide a keen analysis of a literary text.

7–6 These essays describe with clarity and conviction both the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea and certain techniques used to convey that attitude, but they may not be entirely responsive to the complexities in the tone of the passage. Although they provide specific references to the text, their analysis is less persuasive and perhaps less sophisticated than that of the essays described above. These essays may seem less insightful or less controlled than the finest papers, they may develop fewer techniques, or their discussion of details may be more limited than papers in

the 9–8 range. Nonetheless, they demonstrate the writer's ability to read literary texts with comprehension and to write with organization and control.

5 These essays offer a reasonable if reductive description of the narrator's attitude toward Dorothea, and they attempt to link the author's literary techniques to the creation of that attitude. However, the discussion may be superficial, pedestrian, and/or lacking in consistent control. The organization may be ineffective or not fully realized. The analysis is less developed, less precise, and less convincing than that of upper half essays; misinterpretations of particular references or illustrations may prove distracting and detract from the overall effect.

4–3 These essays attempt to discuss the narrator's attitude—and perhaps one or more techniques used to convey the attitude—but their discussion is inaccurate or ineffective. They may misread the passage in a fundamental way, rely on paraphrasing, or provide only limited analysis of the relationship of literary technique to the conveyance of the narrator's attitude. Illustrations from the text tend to be misconstrued, inexact, or omitted altogether. The writing may be sufficient to convey ideas, although typically it is characterized by weak diction, syntax, grammar, or organization.

2–1 These essays fail to respond adequately to the question. They may demonstrate confused thinking and/or consistent weaknesses in grammar or another basic element of composition. They are often unacceptably brief. Although the writer may have made some attempt to answer the question, the views presented have little clarity or coherence; significant problems with reading comprehension seem evident. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.

0 A response with no more than a reference to the task.

A blank paper or completely off-topic response.

Writing About the Novel: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Sylvia Jones

There it is on the somewhat secret list AP English teachers all keep under their pillows: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is the novel most often listed on Question 3 of the AP English Literature and Composition Examination. For new and veteran teachers alike, that fact is enough to command our initial attention. And while the title is a favorite of many experienced teachers (who may also have their eye on the test scores as well as appreciating the novel's value), newer AP English teachers hesitate to devote a large chunk of time to such a long, complex novel.

But it is the quality and social importance of Ellison's writing that make this classic worthy of close consideration. I have used this text over a span of 20 years, both in a suburban public high school and an urban private school. While the students' reactions to the reading are grounded in varied experiences, all come to understand, many to their bones, the significance of what the novel tells us about the values of our culture even 50 years after its publication.

The College Board invests teachers of AP English Literature and Composition with incredible freedom of choice in what and how they teach. That freedom places the onus on the teacher to make the best choices. As a newbie AP English teacher, I worried about preparing students well for the exam so I could maintain the same percentage of high scores as the teacher who preceded me. Initially, the majority of my course was thinly veiled test prep. But in my third year, a small group of my former students, now in college and home for winter break, asked me to have lunch with them. And a jolly lunch it was. But as coffee was served, a student whom I highly respected folded her hands, looked me in the eye, and said, "We need to talk." In this article, I share the lessons learned from these former students and from years of experimenting with techniques for moving young people into the roles of careful, thoughtful readers and insightful writers.

My luncheon companions explained that while they had felt prepared for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam, my unrelenting focus on the test had not been much help in their college English classes. My former students gently pointed out that I needed a course correction: I should not try to cover so much, I should do less breadth and more depth, and I should restructure the course so that my scaffolding would allow students to apply their learning to college English and future readings.

That lunch with some of my early students made me realize that I needed to be more thoughtful about how I balance test prep with deeper learning. Even now with two decades of experience teaching AP English, maintaining that symmetry is not easy; I agonize over my choices and approaches each year. How much practice with the prompts? How many papers where the students form their own thesis, as they likely will in college? How much talk about terms in the multiple-choice sections? How many papers held to a rubric? What about research papers? What about facilitating great discussion? What is the best way to begin to turn my seniors into close, sensitive readers and incisive, insightful writers? *Invisible Man* offers a way to meet all of these needs.

With any novel study, teachers have to decide whether to allow students to read the assigned text on their own or to frequently check that they have done the reading. This argument continually rages on the AP listserv. With the study of *Invisible Man*, I hold students responsible with simple reading checks. Over the years, I have built up a bank of quotations, incidents, and ideas from the novel so that I can ask students to write about the assigned reading. My students sit in small groups, so I ask each student in the group to respond to a different incident or idea. Once they understand the approach, students tend to view it not as a dreary Dickensian punishment but as a chance to show their understanding of the text. Some even come to believe that completing AP English Literature and Composition assignments is as important as solving AP Calculus problems.

The first step is to be sure that students move eagerly into the text. In introducing *Invisible Man,* Jeff Wall's photograph "After 'Invisible Man' by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue" takes students into the world of the novel. As students enter the classroom, I project it on the wall while a CD plays Louis Armstrong's "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?" The students respond to the photograph and the song in their writing log. I give them no guiding questions. After we have written (yes, I write, too) and discussed our responses to the image and the music, I ask them to copy this passage from the novel:

> You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. (4)

We each write another short log entry, reflecting on what resonates within each of us. Students share responses in small groups, and then we discuss a few responses with the whole class. In *Teaching Analytical Writing*, edited by George Gadda and others, there is a fine set of questions on how to move students into a consideration of a situation in which they have felt their own invisibility:

- How do you know you are invisible?
- Is anyone aware of your presence? How can you tell?
- Who is with you? Is anyone else invisible?
- Is your invisibility permanent? Can you alter your condition? How?
- What do you feel about being invisible?
  Are there advantages? Disadvantages? (42–43).

We do a third introductory quick write on the word, "race," and the responses are not always what I expect. My suburban Marin County students are not necessarily insensitive to the issues, though they have much still to learn, and my city-raised San Francisco students were not necessarily as sophisticated as they thought they were on the topic, though they had more practical knowledge from their city experience.

The Marin students have been raised in a county that is far from multicultural, and though they say all the right things about respecting everyone, and their hearts are in the right place, their ventures into San Francisco center around shopping and rock concerts rather than coming to know the varied populations of the city. A large percentage of my San Francisco students hailed from many nations and heritages, and while they correctly assumed that they understood the realities of racial issues because those realities were part of their daily lives, they did not always understand all of the complexities that Ellison delineates. Thus, it is/was important with both groups that we explore the Prologue with a very close reading. These spontaneous first responses are our guide as we read the Prologue aloud together, write log responses, and begin to analyze the text with both talk and argument.

One student whose family fled Liberia in recent years told me, as we began *Invisible Man,* that she would not be joining the discussion at all because she had no experience of being raised as a black American. However, she assured me that she would be a close reader and careful listener and she hewed to that. Her adamant invisibility surprised and sometimes discomfited both her peers and me; she later

wrote that it was her favorite book of the year. She shared how the book had helped her realize the origins of the African American anger that exploded in America in the decades following the 1947 publication of Ellison's novel. Another student progressively began to understand and articulate with clarity the roots of black rage that Tod Clifton, Ras the Exhorter, Rinehart the Runner and Reverend, and the Invisible Man experience and express. To help students think about Ellison's novel, we watch the PBS documentary *Ralph Ellison: An American Journey* (long, but well worth the classroom time). I share sections of Arnold Rampersad's *Ralph Ellison: A Biography,* which just won the National Book Award and provides an excellent understanding of his life.

Harold Bloom closes his book *How to Read and Why* by responding to his original question "why read?" with the answer "because you will be haunted by great visions ...of Invisible Man, preparing to come up again, like Jonah, out of the whale's belly" (Bloom 274–75). City or suburb, student or teacher, Ellison tunes us to the same higher frequencies that Ellison writes of and Bloom applauds.

Close Reading of the Text: The Most Important Step to Writing Well About Literature

In teaching the novel, it is imperative that we guide students who are hesitant to push deeper into the story to discover the subtleties of such scenes as:

- Mr. Norton's story of his ocean voyage with his daughter in the context of Trueblood's story;
- Young Mr. Emerson's offer of friendship to the Invisible Man;
- Brother Wrestrum's attack on the Invisible Man; and
- Ras the Exhorter's speech to Tod Clifton.

While Ellison's Introduction and Prologue are central to understanding the text, we read the first few pages of Chapter 1 and then circle back to them. The pages of the Prologue are dense, so I ask students to annotate them after they are far enough into the book to be able to see how that provocative section in the beginning illuminates the book. Of course, the minute I say to students that they should wait to read the Introduction and Prologue, many plunge in, and that's fine because those who make that choice tend to be more sophisticated readers. Some students, though, become engaged through the action of the novel. Waiting to read the Prologue is a merciful suggestion that keeps those without patience from turning against the novel before they actually begin it. While the novel may be taught profitably at any time of the

year, I find it works best in the first semester when I teach how authors employ literary elements to convey meaning in this and other texts.

Logging the Literature: Addressing Literary Elements

The 25-chapter structure of the novel enables me to set up a jigsaw (we call it a Rubik's Cube) structure to practice writing about literary elements in the novel. I split the class into five small groups and divide the reading into five chapter sections (1–5, 6–10, etc.). I categorize the literary elements into five classifications:

1. Characterization
2. Plot
3. Narrative technique
4. Themes, thesis, norms (values of culture)
5. Style

Thus, Group A concentrates on characterization for its log entries on Chapters 1–5, Group B on plot, etc. Initially small groups share insights on the same technique and take notes on their logs on what ideas others in their group had on the same topic. Then once a week we rearrange our Rubik's Cube so that every student is in a group of five with experts on all five techniques. They take notes only on what they think is new and exciting. For Chapters 6–10 Group A concentrates on plot, and by the end of the novel the group will have worked through all five elements.

Students use the questions on *Invisible Man* in Appendix 1 as prompts for ideas about their reading. They choose and vary their forms of response: dialectical journals, reflections, notes to me or to someone in the class who has raised an issue, bullets on what they understand and do not understand in a reading section. The close reading of 25–30 pages per night is demanding, so I do not insist that their log entries be extensive; however, I want them to be insightful.

To lighten my paper load, I collect the students' logs only once every term (every five or six weeks). However, students bring their logs to class each day. I use the log entries to drive discussion by randomly choosing a few each day to project on the screen. The following log entries on the literary element questions show the students moving toward an understanding of the meaning of Ellison's work:

> The plot is not in chronological order; it is in itself a flashback. The Invisible Man often has flashbacks about his grandfather's last words to "keep him running."
>
> Jon Fusco

> Each character speaks according to his race, background and even state of inebriation. Ras the Exhorter speaks with an African accent in order to more clearly identify with the origins of his race, Ras has the heaviest accent and his theories and actions are the most extreme. However, Tod Clifton speaks with the same educated syntax as Brother Jack.
>
> Emily Futterman

> The central themes of invisibility and social isolation remain pertinent; the novel builds to the final sentence, where the Invisible Man asks if he speaks for everyone on the lower frequencies. This implies that on some level, everyone shares in the same sort of trials of self-awareness and visibility.
>
> Kelsey Hartman

> The Invisible Man comes full circle, realizing that he cannot fit the mold of any one philosophy. His revelation is the key driving force of the novel. How he will use his invisibility is another question.
>
> Kai Holden

> The reality is that they are in a cyclone struggle, spinning back and forth with no inherent solution to the racial turbulence in sight.
>
> Jackqui Snell

The quick writes and log entries are designed to bring initial attitudes to the surface, and we often circle back to them in discussion and writing as we make our way through the novel. The goal is to have students make their own meaning but be willing to revise their reading of the text. Final log entries revisit what the students said about these issues initially. After six weeks of writing in their logs, many students gain an understanding of the complexities of invisibility and race.

Our final activity the day before the formal “AP write” on Ellison is to revisit Wall’s painting. Now they are able to spot the artifacts from the novel within the picture. We close the class by replaying Armstrong’s “What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?” and sharing how we have come to better understand the issues of the novel and of the prologue in particular. Thus, by the time we finish the novel, students will have in their logs and from class discussions a great deal of raw material that they have written themselves or garnered from others. It’s time for the “AP write” on the novel, but students come to the writing having given much thought to the novel and having completed much preliminary work on literary elements. In preparing students

for this in-class write and for other writing, I share expectations and writing processes (see Appendix 2).

The issues in Ellison's 1952 book delineate all that we still struggle with in 2008. Through reading *Invisible Man*, suburban and city students can come to know that "the world is just as concrete, ornery, vile, and sublimely wonderful as before, only now I understand my relationship to it and it to me" (Ellison 576). In 1987, as a newbie AP teacher, I taught *Invisible Man* (which to my shame I had never read before) one chapter or sometimes even one page ahead of the students. I constantly reassured myself that I was doing the right thing because the book was on "The List." I marched them through the 568 pages as fast as I could because I had to get to the next novel and practice multiple choice and do vocabulary and . . . Then that long ago lunch with my students, which brought me up short, made me see that I needed to provide the students with more re-reading, more examination of the text together in class, more in-depth discussion of how their backgrounds both help and hinder their reading.

In recent years our enthusiasm for teaching AP English Literature and Composition well has spiraled into many new and useful strategies, but more and more I see the need to use those strategies intentionally without the urge to speedily but inadequately "cover" an overly ambitious syllabus. When I teach Summer Institutes, a recurring question from beginning AP teachers searching for certainties is always, "How long do you spend on ___________?" Remembering my former students' advice, my answer is, "Sometimes six weeks, sometimes more." I make every effort to encourage teachers to consider the "how" rather than the "how long."

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Appendix 1

Questions for *Invisible Man*

Adapted from "Questions for the Analysis of Fiction" (9–13) from Daniel Richter's
The Borzoi Book of Short Fiction

Exposition (Instructor Presents This, Students Write Reflections in Their Logs)

- What does Ralph Ellison give us in the way of exposition to understand the story?
- What do we learn of the pasts of such characters as Mr. Norton, Trueblood, Dr. Bledsoe, Homer Barbee, Tod Clifton, Ras the Exhorter, and other characters?
- What are their situations that prepare us for the conflicts we experience in the story?
- Ellison includes two epigraphs at the opening of his novel: one is by Herman Melville, the other by T. S. Eliot. How these two quotations connect to the story becomes clearer gradually. As you read, be constantly thoughtful about how they may relate to the meaning of the novel.

Characterization

- What are the main personal characteristics of the Invisible Man?
- What do we tend to like or admire about him? Are there things about him of which we disapprove?
- What is the relationship of each of the other characters to the Invisible Man? Which characters might be considered his antagonists? Which are his foils? Which does he come to change his mind about?

- From Trueblood to Brother Wrestrum, the names Ellison chose for his characters have connotations connected to the meaning. What are the connotations of the names of other characters?
- How does the reader feel about the values of the Invisible Man? Are his the highest ones in the story? When might the Invisible Man seem to be speaking for Ralph Ellison?
- Are the characters primarily individuals, or do they represent "walking concepts" that typify a system of values? What do Ras the Exhorter, Brother Jack, and Tod Clifton represent about black society in the 1930s?
- Do we sometimes see the situation more clearly than the Invisible Man does?

Plot

- What are the main stages of the plot (or your current chapters) from beginning to end?
- Because of the Prologue, we know immediately where the story is leading. How does this influence our reading of what happens?
- What do we wish for the Invisible Man at various stages? Is it the same thing that he wants?
- What parts of the Invisible Man's changes are external? What parts are internal?
- How do we feel about the changes?
- What are we placed in suspense about?
- At what points does the Invisible Man begin to try to control his fate? What about the influence of other characters on his fate? What about his passivity? What is the influence of the worlds in which he is forced to function?
- What would be a "happy ending" for the Invisible Man?
- What is over when *Invisible Man* is over? How does the Invisible Man's situation differ from his initial one? What has changed?
- Are the causes of what happens to the Invisible Man realistic? Are any highly improbable or wildly coincidental? Are any incidents meant to be taken symbolically rather than literally?
- What will happen when the Invisible Man emerges from his room?

Narrative Technique

- Does the Invisible Man tell you the entire narrative of the plot or does he slight or omit some incidents?
- Is the plot in chronological order? Where are there flashbacks?
- To what degree is the Invisible Man a reliable narrator? Does he have emotional or intellectual defects that influence how he responds?
- When and how does the Invisible Man show that he is conscious that he is telling you his story?
- Does the narrative technique seem to allow places for Ellison to comment on the characters and the action?
- Which scenes are dramatized? Which scenes are narrated?
- Which characters in addition to the Invisible Man do we have inside views of? To what degree?
- How deeply do we identify with the Invisible Man? How does that help us to understand his situation?

Theme, Thesis, Values of Culture

- Is the book organized so that it presents a thesis that is applicable to our world today?
- To what degree does Ellison want to elicit emotional responses from us? What are specific scenes that do this?
- What are the themes? Remember that themes are not subjects but ideas about subjects. How do the themes relate to characters, point of view, and setting?

Diction, Language, Style, Mode

- How does each character speak? What does her or his manner of speaking show? How has Ellison accomplished this?
- What similes, metaphors, and allusions does Ellison use? How do they add to meaning?
- What are the recurring words or patterns of imagery that become more significant as the novel progresses?

- What are the objects in the novel that seem to be symbolic? How do they make the meaning clearer?
- Does the language in the story sound like usual speech? Is it stylistic in some way in places? Where? What purpose does Ellison have in such shifts?
- Where does the rhythm of the sentences shift? How does the rhythm change when the mood and tone change?
- What incidents or characters seem to ridicule aspects of society?
- Does the novel tend to leave us cynical about the possibility of change or hopeful that change can be accomplished? If so, how?

Appendix 2

Using Orientation, Claims, Evidence, and Commentary to Answer the Prompt

Much of the writing that you do in this class will ask you to analyze the literature you have read. Thus, the kind of commentary you may have been rewarded for in other classes—as you should have been—by praising a piece fulsomely or detailing how it connects to your own experience of life—are not a good fit for the writing of analysis. Be conscious of your need to do the following in your analytical writing:

- Offer the reader an orientation to your idea: who is speaking (it may be the narrator), to whom, what is the context?
- Make an insightful claim about something in the text that fits the prompt.
- Present the evidence from the text—often you will need more than one piece to support your claim:
- Your evidence may be a phrase;
- It may be a passage;
- It may be purposeful summary.
- Follow the evidence with a minimum of two sentences of your own commentary and analysis of *how* the evidence supports your claim and the question you are answering.

Our Writing Processes

Please note that there is no one writing process. Your English teachers use various steps of the process according to the needs of a particular class or assignment.

We will not always follow the steps below in exactly the same way, but for major papers it is important to work your way through several drafts because we write to

find out what we think. Our goal is to help you to internalize the steps of writing so that you can write with confidence on your own in all of your college classes and in your future profession. Be assured that clear analytical writing is vital in all fields of study and work.

Annotation of text/marginalia. Making careful notes is vital if you are going to write about *Invisible Man*.

Organizing Your Work

From the point that we do the class write, think of your responses to *Invisible Man* and other assignments like this as a pancake we are putting together. In your pancake, you should include all notes, drafts, writing samples of others, handouts, and whatever else is connected to the assignment. For *Invisible Man*, each group will choose a prompt from past AP English Literature and Composition Exams that best fits the prompt. Then we will discuss the five possible prompts and select one that everyone will write on. (You will have much more flexibility with prompts as the year progresses, including forming your own theses.)

Each time you hand it in, your pancake will look something like this with the oldest work on the bottom and the newest on the top:

- Annotated prompt chosen
- Notes for class write (on prompt sheet). This is the time to mine your log for ideas.
- Class write (may use log first semester)
- Sophisticated draft (four copies) for response group
- Marked copies of your sophisticated draft from your response group members. (Note that I may ask you to return these copies to the responders so that I can give them credit for their good work at a later date.)
- If we had an individual conference: Marked copy of revised sophisticated draft we reviewed together in your individual conference.
- Any e-mails we exchanged as you worked through the assignment
- Final copy for major grade
- Polished perfect (almost) paper

Here is an explanation for each of the steps above:

Class Write

(50 points—scored with 9-point AP scale)

The night before your class write, review the novel and your notes in your log. Almost always, we will do the first draft as an in-class write. Fluency, getting your ideas out, is important at this stage; I understand that many times you will be writing to find out what you think. This step will provide practice for the essay writing on the May AP English Literature and Composition Exam and for future writing in college classes and in your career.

We will often share your papers in class both before and after I have responded to your in-class write, but your score will always be private. We may also look at samples from the College Board.

Sophisticated Draft

(40 points for four copies—due several days after you receive your in-class write back)

You have your graded in-class write back with a holistic score and teacher comment. Now it's time to revisit your log. In reviewing, mark those entries which connect directly to the prompt. This step continues your effort to write fluently, but it also demands that you begin to shape the form according to the expectations of the prompt.

To receive full credit for your sophisticated draft, you must:

1. Make a major effort to improve and extend your in-class write; papers that are just recopied will receive no credit.
2. Provide four copies for the members of your response group.
3. Refer back to the text to
   - reorganize for clarity;
   - add more claims if needed and revise all claims to fit the prompt and be sure they are insightful;
   - add specific evidence that provides more specific details to prove your claims;
   - add commentary that explains how the evidence connects to the prompt;
   - be sure that you are discussing the meaning, the literary elements, and the connection between the two;
   - begin to make corrections in conventions.

Response Group Process

1. Distribute the four copies of your paper to your group members.
2. Share problems you are having so that the group can make suggestions for improvement.
3. Read your paper aloud *slowly*.
4. As you read, your responders will do the following:
   - Underline sentences that work well;
   - Put a wavy line under phrases and sentences that need revision for clarity;
   - Put a question mark (?) next to anything they do not understand;
   Put an **X** on conventions errors they can easily correct on their own.
5. Readers should point out when your paper needs more specific support or elaboration. Pay special attention to the elements of fiction.
6. Your responder should write you a short note about (at least) one specific thing you did well and one specific thing you need to improve.
7. During the discussion, each member should explain his or her comments.
8. Group members should make sure their names are in the upper left-hand corner of your sophisticated draft and lend it to you for your use in revising your final draft.

Invitation to Teacher Conference

You will have several days after we complete the response groups to complete your final paper for 100 points. I encourage you to write a new version of your sophisticated draft in which you incorporate suggestions from your response group and bring it to me. I will offer further suggestions to improve your paper if you do this. In some cases I will ask that you come in for a conference. Remember that research says that this is the best way for students to improve their writing.

Be sure to include this draft in your pancake as another piece of evidence of your effort to revise.

Feel free to e-mail me if you have questions on structure and/or want a response on a problematic paragraph. Print out any e-mail conversation we had, and include it in your packet to remind me that we worked on an aspect of your paper together.

Of course, I also encourage you to show your revision to members of your response group and ask them questions by e-mail.

Editing Check

On the day your final is due, we will take a few minutes for a last minute editing check. I will give your completed paper to another student, who will write his name as editor in the upper left-hand corner of the paper. That signature is the only mark your editor makes on your paper; if your editor finds a conventions error, she walks over to you, explains the error, and has you correct it on the spot in your own handwriting. No penalty for corrections added in ink.

Final for Major Grade

(100 points, teacher response; grade based on revision effort)

Your first step here should be to review your peer responses. Decide which suggestions from others will work for you, knowing that you must evaluate the suggestions you receive with a critical eye. Remember that you own the paper. Revisit the text and your log a last time.

Polished Perfect (Almost) Paper

(20 points)

After your final is returned to you, you will have an opportunity to make a last revision based upon my comments.

Writing the Free-Response Comparison/Contrast Poetry Essay

Danny Lawrence

Students often find the poetry essay the most challenging of the three free-response essays on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam. For some unknown reason, seniors appear to fear analyzing poetry and writing about it. Despite our efforts to prepare students for conveying their understanding of poetry in an essay, James Barcus, Chief Reader of the Exam, suggests in his commentary on the Poetry Essay for the 2007 exam, "Rather than becoming more adept at reading complex texts, they [students] seem to be reducing poetic texts to the 'sound bites' with which they have become more and more familiar as TV and other technical devices have become ubiquitous." When the task of analyzing poetry is coupled with comparing and contrasting two poems, the essays are often the weakest of the three. The Poetry Presentation activity described below provides students with skills in analyzing poems on their own. Too often students are afraid to write about poetry because they fear that they will be wrong. This fear of not knowing the precise tone or meaning of a poem paralyzes some students. That's why I like the strategies that accompany this activity; they encourage students to find multiple meanings of a poem. My goal in this activity is to help students to gain confidence in their abilities to find supportable meanings of poems and to allow students to share their discoveries about a poem with a group and then with the whole class.

Preliminary Work

As John Donne suggests "no man is an island entire of itself," I suppose no activity in the classroom exists totally alone either. Before I describe the Poetry Presentation unit and the activities accompanying it, I would like to place it in the context of the

academic year. Since the Poetry Presentation occurs early in the second semester, students are already familiar with most of the activities that compose it.

Comparison/Contrast

Most students entering the AP English Literature and Composition class are familiar with writing comparison/contrast essays. Students recognize that when called upon to write such an essay, they need to point out similarities and differences of the two topics or pieces of literature. While most remember the two basic comparison/contrast formats, it is usually a good idea to review the block and point-by-point organizational pattern. Readers of comparison/contrast essays often feel that they are reading two separate essays—one on each poem. Therefore, it is a good idea to remind students to make references to Poem A when they discuss Poem B if they choose to use the block method. Making connections between two poems seems inherent in the point-by-point method. In response to students' questions about which method Readers prefer most, I assure them that we have no preference but that we are looking for some form of organization, as that is a discriminating factor for essays in the upper and lower halves of the scoring guide. Students should choose the format that works best for them.

I assign the comparison/contrast essay for out-of-class writing assignments during the first semester to insure that the form is clearly in most students' frame of reference before we practice the in-class essays that utilize compare and contrast. On out-of-class assignments, I can see organizational problems while reviewing rough drafts. I begin the year with a study of the short story. Near the end of that unit, we read at least three short stories by Flannery O'Connor and three by James Joyce. Students are then assigned to write a comparison/contrast essay on O'Connor and Joyce. Another writing assignment asks students to compare and contrast a scene from a film version of written text. Students will determine which media is most effective in conveying meaning or tone by analyzing the cinematic techniques in the film and comparing and contrasting those with the literary techniques of the corresponding prose passage. (I use either *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* or the film version of *The Dead* and Joyce's short story for this assignment.)

Just before I begin the poetry presentation, I will spend approximately 15 minutes of a class period reviewing the comparison/contrast formats using the poems "The Bat-Poet" by Randall Jarrell and "Bat" by D. H. Lawrence. Both poems are accessible to students and provide easy reference to review the block and the point-by-point organizational format.

[Additional note: Teachers might want to review with students what is expected in the event that only one word (compare or contrast) is used in the prompt. I still remember the discussion around the tables at the AP Reading in 2000 when only *compare* was used in the prompt on the Sirens. Most of us agreed that students who pointed out similarities as well as differences in the portrayals of the Sirens had stronger essays. Students should know that both compare and contrast are meant whether or not just one descriptor appears. In 1994, the prompt asked students to *contrast* the speakers' views of Helen.]

TP-CASTT

Because of vertical teaming, many students in my classes are familiar with TP-CASTT (see Appendix A) as a way of analyzing poems. Therefore, I do not find it necessary to teach the strategy. I do not review in class what students have written in the TP-CASTT grid either. I want them to see the strategy as a way of discovering what a poem means on their own. When we discuss the grid in class, we tend to validate some responses over others—and I prefer not to do that. This technique is helpful in that it asks students to discover what they see in a poem—and not what the teacher or the better students see as important or the theme. I use TP-CASTT two times during first semester. I give students a copy of the TP-CASTT grid and a poem from an old AP English Literature and Composition essay (without the prompt). When students come to class after having applied TP-CASTT to the poem, I give them a copy of the prompt, and ask them to write the essay in class without any discussion. At another time I ask students to use TP-CASTT on a poem from a released multiple-choice exam. Rather than discussing what students filled in on the grid the day it is due, I give the multiple-choice test. Students who complete the grid do much better on the in-class essay and on the practice multiple-choice test than those who did not. My goal in using TP-CASTT is to provide a means for students to unlock poems on their own. The *English Vertical Team Guidebook*, a College Board publication, discusses TP-CASTT fully on pages 94–100.

Rhetorical Triangle

Another technique when initiating a discussion of a poem is the rhetorical triangle (see Appendix B). I first used the rhetorical triangle in the English Language class but discovered it is a good tool for students to use when thinking about the big picture of a poem. The rhetorical triangle asks students to think about the *speaker*, the *audience*, and the *message*. I use the rhetorical triangle as a way to "brainstorm" a

poem. Encouraging students to consider possibilities of who the speaker or intended audience might be gets students away from trying to find the one right answer and from focusing on those smaller details that often lead them down that path of no return. I begin the discussion by asking students who they think the speaker is and then ask for the reason why they think so. The most common answer is "the author." Rather than hearing the explanation for the hundredth time that the author is not necessarily the speaker, I ask them to tell me what in the poem proves that the speaker is the author. Then we speculate on who we think the speaker wanted to hear this poem. Once we discuss those possibilities we discuss what message the author wanted that audience to hear. Once students feel comfortable sharing these initial observations, the discussion is more open, and then we can look at the finer points of the poem—the imagery, the diction, figurative language, etc. and see how those support (or not) our conclusions about speaker, audience, and message. This exercise works well as a class starter. I especially like to use this activity with simple poems like John Updike's "Youth's Progress" and "Ex-Basketball Player."

Vendler's *Poems * Poets * Poetry*

Another resource that models for students how to explore a poem on their own is Helen Vendler's *Poems · Poets · Poetry*, Chapter 4: "Describing Poems." In this chapter, Vendler provides 13 different questions that students might ask when they are exploring a poem. Beyond asking students to think about tone, meaning, and the climax of the poem, Vendler asks students to plot the emotional skeleton of a poem, to speculate on what might have happened before the poem opened that caused the poet to compose the poem, to categorize or classify the poem if the poem were spoken at a public gathering, and many other thought-provoking inquiries into the poem. Answering these 13 questions is a productive group activity for students. I found that these questions were more challenging for the advanced students—and especially for the students who wanted more than what TP-CASTT asked of them. I assign students to read Chapter 4 of the Vendler text and quiz them on her terminology—for example, what does she mean by the terms antecedent scenario, agency, speech acts, and emotional curve. I then divide the class into groups and give them a poem from a previous AP English Literature and Composition Exam (without the prompt) to describe using Vendler's questions. After spending a period with the poem and the questions, students write the essay the following day on the poem they discovered together. Again, I like this activity because it encourages students to explore a poem on their own and with their classmates. I try very hard in my class not to *teach* poetry,

but to provide students with the tools to uncover it on their own. (See Appendix C for an example of a group's description of "It's a Woman's World" by Eavan Boland using Vendler's 13 questions. "It's a Woman's World" was the prompt for the poetry essay on the 1998 exam.)

Choral Reading

Although some students are intimidated the first time they participate in a choral reading, the majority of them enjoy the creativity and the performance associated with a choral reading. They change the volume and inflection of their voices to indicate shifts in tone or speakers. They often incorporate facial expressions and even body movements—especially hand gestures. Students face the front of the room while others face the back—and then they turn or some will stand while others sit. Some students might read only one word or a group of words while the rest of the group reads the poem in unison. Sometimes a different student might repeat lines that are considered important—creating an echo effect. There are too many possibilities to list them all. I tell students what a choral reading is and give a few suggestions or examples, but they often discover ways of presenting the poem aloud that I would never have thought of. Choral readings are often what students remember most about a poem. A good choral reading of a poem demonstrates incredible insight into the meaning of a poem.

Poetry Presentations

I plan the Poetry Presentation assignment during late January or early February. The weather is usually cold, and students are reading *Crime and Punishment* outside of class in installments. On the nights when students are reading a section of the novel, the Poetry Presentation activities would fill the classes during the day.

I divide the class into six groups of five or six students per group. I choose the students in the groups for this activity as I want stronger, more confident students working with those who are less strong or are intimidated by poetry. My classes are approximately 30 students, so six groups of five students work well.

While each day highlights the activities for that day, it is important to remember that not all the work for this unit can be completed during class time. Some reading and work must be done outside of class.

Day 1

Today students receive the handout of poems and the activity schedule for the four days of the activity (see Appendix D). I chose the 2001, 2004, and 2007 prompts; feel free to choose others from the list in Appendix E or choose poems that you would like to pair for comparison and contrast, and write your own prompt. Do *not* include the prompts and do *not* put the paired poems side by side on the handout. I make no reference during the activities that students will write a comparison/contrast essay after the presentations.

Students meet their group members, exchange e-mail addresses or contact numbers, and decide which three students will complete the Vendler grid and which three students will complete the TP-CASTT grid. Because students have practice analyzing poetry using the TP-CASTT and Vendler grids during first semester, little or no explanation of the two are necessary at this time. The stronger students in the group usually opt for the Vendler grid, while the less confident ones choose TP-CASTT. Remind students that these grids are for homework. Students spend the remainder of this first class period reading the poem aloud—each student within a group must read it aloud sometime during the period. The group also completes one rhetorical triangle grid—making certain that they have listed a number of possibilities for *speaker*, *audience*, and *message*. I encourage students to include many possibilities and not focus on a single "right" answer. At the end of the period I ask each group to turn in one rhetorical triangle for assessment. I do *not* give students the Scoring Guide (See Appendix F), but they understand from the assignment handout that each day is worth 20 points for a total of 100 points for the unit. Groups are given three blank grids of TP-CASTT and three blank grids for the Vendler questions.

Day 2

The second day of this activity does not immediately follow Day 1. Students have at least two nights (or more depending on the schedule) to study their poems and complete the assignment they chose (TP-CASTT or Vendler). On Day 2, I circulate throughout the room listening to the groups discuss the poem based on the observations of group members from the homework assignment. When I am asked questions about the poems I try not to give an answer, but ask the group questions that might lead them to some conclusion. At the end of the period I collect the Vendler and TP-CASTT grids and the level of completion contributes to the group's score for that day.

Day 3

The third day may follow immediately after Day 2, but it rarely does in my class. On Day 3, students spend the period preparing the presentation of their poem for the whole class. Students are reminded of the requirements for the presentation: a choral reading of the poem, something visual, and a discussion of the poem. Group members decide who will speak for the group during the presentation and who will draw, paint, or create something visual. All students must participate in the choral reading, but not all must participate in the presentation.

Day 4 (and 5 and 6)

Day 4—the presentations—follow closely after Day 3. The number of presentations that can be delivered in one class period will depend upon the length of the period, but we usually have two presentations in one class period (our classes are 55 minutes). Students are given 15 minutes for the presentation, but it usually takes longer—closer to 25 minutes. I do think it is important that you tell students they only have 15 minutes—and then allow them 25. Students are encouraged to pay close attention to the presentations from the other groups. They have copies of the poems in front of them, and I encourage them to take notes. I tell them that on the day after we finish the presentations there will be some form of assessment. They naturally think there will be an objective test—and I don't tell them they are incorrect in their assumption.

During the presentations, students usually give comments on literary devices that the poet uses to convey a variety of meanings and/or interpretations. I discourage students from giving a single meaning or theme for a poem and encourage them to find multiple meanings/themes. Most groups ask for a transparency of the poem, which I provide, so they can make references to specific parts of the poem during the presentation. Because students sometimes come to the AP English Literature and Composition class too dependent upon connecting the poet's life and times with the meaning of the poem, I also discourage students from giving *any* information about the poet's life and times.

Please note on the Scoring Guide (see Appendix F) that students may score 20 points for the presentation. Those 20 points come from the task at hand—the choral reading, the visual, and the presentation. They may also receive 20 points in the "In-class Essay" heading—those 20 points are based on the "quality" of the discussion of the poem—how insightful the comments are concerning the poem.

Last Day
In-Class Essay

I must decide prior to the final day of the assignment which two poems each group will write about. Students will *not* write the essay on the poem they presented to the class. The following is one plan for the in-class essay:

- ✔ 2001 Essay Prompt—Groups 2 and 4
- ✔ 2004 Essay Prompt—Groups 1 and 5
- ✔ 2007 Essay Prompt—Groups 3 and 6

Students have 40 minutes to write the essay, and I score the essays holistically.

Assessment

For this activity students receive two grades. The first grade is for the Poetry Presentation activity (see Appendix F for the scoring rubric). Each person in the group receives the same score. The second grade is an individual grade for the in-class essay. The in-class essays are scored holistically using the scoring guide for that essay. (The scoring guides, sample essays, and commentary to the questions for these three years may be found at http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_questions/2002.html.)

Conclusion

This activity allows students to hear six poems taught, to study one in depth, and to write on two others. But the most important part of this activity is that students are doing the thinking and the discovering themselves. I try very hard from the beginning of the year not to allow students to become dependent upon me for the answers to what literature means. Instead, I see my role as providing the students with the tools necessary for unlocking poems on their own, and this activity does that well. Obviously, such an activity as the Poetry Presentations can be used with other poems and with other outcomes. I find that this approach to the comparison/contrast essay works because the poems are shorter, it allows students exposure to more poems, and it provides practice for the comparison/contrast essay.

Bibliography

AP Vertical Teams Guide for English. New York: The College Board, 2002.

Vendler, Helen. *Poems · Poets · Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology* (2nd ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Appendix A

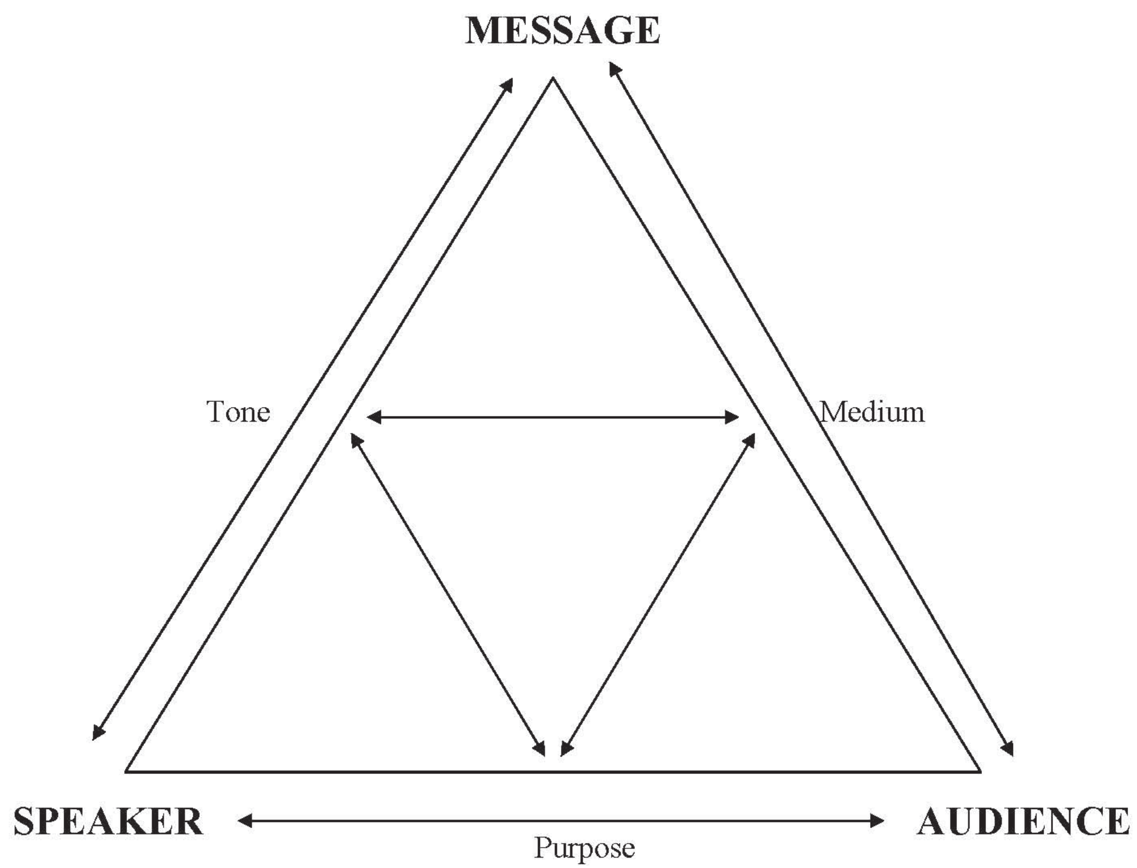
Poetry Analysis—TP-CASTT

T	TITLE	Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem *might* be about based upon the title. Oftentimes authors conceal meaning in the title and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think this poem will be about.
P	PARAPHRASE	Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest mistakes that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Sometimes your teacher may allow you to *summarize* what happens in the poem. Make sure that you understand the difference between a *paraphrase* and a *summary*.
C	CONNOTATION	Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.
A	ATTITUDE	Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on *Tone* that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word. Think *complexity*.

S	SHIFTS	Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most of us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts: key words (but, yet, however, although) punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipses) stanza divisions changes in line or stanza length or both irony changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning changes in diction
T	TITLE	Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem?
T	THEME	What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you to take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence.

Developed from *AP Vertical Teams Guide for English*, page 94.

Appendix B



The Rhetorical Triangle

Appendix C

Exploring a Poem (Vendler)—"It's a Woman's World" by Eavan Boland

Meaning	The speaker—speaking for all women and herself—says that the lives of women have changed little throughout history, and they have played a rather simple role. But as the poem continues, she downplays the role of men and suggests that women have played a significant role, albeit a rather passive role in the development of the world. We don't say "history" because history is associated with men.
Antecedent Scenario	The speaker has seen her neighbors come out in the evening—one for a smoke and the other for a breath of fresh air. These two women have caused her to think about all women. Maybe she read an article or saw a news clip on women's equality. The date on the poem is 1982.
Structural Parts	*division by sentences—* I. Lines 1–4, statement of fact: women's lives haven't changed II. Lines 5–23 a. "Things" are better, but b. We're the same: viewed negative light i. Remembered for what we forgot ii. Defined by what we won't become 1. star-gazers 2. fire-eaters III. Lines 24–28 a. Not on the scene of "history" b. "History" associated with "crime" IV. Lines 29–36—Juxtaposes historical roles of men and women in metaphor of harvest a. Men—rebellion b. Women—cooking and gossiping V. Lines 37–41—Restatement of fact—roles for both haven't changed a. Men—history b. Women—hearth (home) VI. Women are angry at this perception VII. Lines 45–56—Juxtaposition of appearance vs. reality in women (returns to II.—what women will not be, but are) a. star-gazers b. fire-eaters

Climax	Lines 42–44 All this perception of what women are—or aren't—angers them. Women are angry about the *perception* of the role they play, and have played, in history—but they keep the anger inside.
Other Parts	Before the climax, the diction is different for men and women—the men are strong and masculine—star-gazers, fire-eaters, beheaders, kings—but the diction associated with women is passive, domestic—wash, washing powder, cooks, gossips. But after the climax—the diction for women is chosen from the diction used for the men in the first part of the poem.
Skeleton	Before the climax—the speaker seems complacent, passive—yep, we've been pretty much out of the historical picture, until she implies that *hearth* is equal to *history*, maybe better since history = crime. Then after the climax, she returns to the same calm tone, but with a kind of sarcastic victory—we'll never be star-gazers and fire-eaters—yet we are—in our world (title).
Content Genre—games	"It's a Woman's World" is *self-reflective—a meditative poem*. It is also a *feminist poem*. Usually when we think about a poem where the speaker is self-reflective or meditative—we think of the speaker as being sad, maybe sorry for what he/she has done—and in the course of the poem, the speaker asks God or someone for guidance and maybe forgiveness. But in this poem—there is none of that. There is an undercurrent of unfairness and injustice, yet pride. This poem is also a *feminist poem*. But we didn't think it was a typical feminist poem similar to ones we've read this year by Olds, Atwood, Rich, Levertov. It definitely isn't as angry as some by Lorde, Stein, or Piercy. This poem seems more subtle—Boland is proud of the domestic chores women do and gives them value when she says that "our windows moth our children to the flame." Interesting that "moth" is so close to "mother." Where some of the feminist poems we've read are blatantly angry and often shocking—especially poems by Olds where sexual overtones shock the reader—this poem isn't so angry—much more subtle.
Tone	See *Skeleton*
Agency	The subjects of the main clauses before the climax are "we"—the plural, first person. "We" represents all women. The speaker is speaking for all women. In line 19, the speaker uses passive voice to highlight the passive nature of women. After the climax—the subjects shift from first person plural to third person singular—specific, single women. In the climax, the speaker has hidden the subject in a prepositional phrase—and has the subject of that sentence—"page," which is an interesting subject, since history is recorded on "the page." Even in women's anger at this perception of their role—they are hidden.
Roads Not Taken	Ms. Boland could have written a dialogue between two women. She could also have an argument between a man and a woman who would have juxtaposed their different opinions. She could also have had a couple more stanzas where she stated more explicitly her theme—but then she would have been too preachy—this way—ending as she does—she allows the reader to think.
Speech Acts	Apology Celebration Claim Habitual Narration

Outer and Inner Structural Forms	see everything above—already covered this
Imagination	We liked the way Boland addresses the male vs. female issue as a female speaker. She assumes the role of a passive female—not an angry, bra-burning female. And her argument is very subtle and understated—one way women have learned to win an argument—not with tears or shouting—not that those ways don't work also—but this rather subtle way is different and creative here.

Appendix D

Poetry Presentations

Activities Schedule

Day 1 (20/100)

- Meet the members of your group—introductions. Make assignments—3 people Vendler; 3 people TP-CASTT
- Each person read the poem aloud sometime during the class.
- Using the Rhetorical Triangle grid—talk about the poem. Pay close attention to the *speaker, audience,* and *message*. Turn in one RT grid at the end of the period.

Day 2 (20/100)

- Discuss the poem using TP-CASTT grid and the Vendler grid.
- Everyone should have completed their assigned grid before class—and I will collect them at the end of the period.
- Everyone should participate in the discussion either by offering your observations or questioning those of your classmates.
- Begin planning your choral reading of the poem.

Day 3 (20/100)

- Spend the period preparing your presentation of the poem to the class.
- Remember, the first thing you will do is a choral reading of the poem. (Everyone in the group must participate.)
- Remember, you must have something visual for your presentation—be creative.
- You will only have 15 minutes—for your choral reading, explanation of the poem, and answering questions.

Day 4 (20/100)

- 15-minute presentation of your poem

Final Assessment—After presentations (20/100)

- You will be assessed on your understanding of all six poems.

Group #1

"London, 1802" by William Wordsworth

Milton![1] Thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen[2]
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
5 Have forfeited their ancient English dower[3]
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! Raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
10 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

1. John Milton (1608–1674), English poet and political writer, author of *Paradise Lost*, whose famous essay against censorship, "Areopagitica," championed the cause of liberty and public virtue.
2. Swamp
3. Natural endowment

Group #2

"A Barred Owl" by Richard Wilbur

The warping night air having brought the boom
Of an owl's voice into her darkened room,
We tell the wakened child that all she heard
Was an odd question from a forest bird,
5 Asking of us, if rightly listened to,
"Who cooks for you?" and then "Who cooks for you?"
Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,
Can also thus domesticate a fear,
And send a small child back to sleep at night
10 Not listening for the sound of stealthy flight
Or dreaming of some small things in a claw
Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw.

Group #3

untitled by Emily Dickinson

We grow accustomed to the Dark—
When Light is put away—
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye—
5 A Moment—We uncertain step
For newness of the night—
Then—fit our Vision to the Dark—
And meet the Road—erect—
And so of larger—Darknesses—
10 Those Evenings of the Brain—
When not a Moon disclose a sign—
Or Star—come out—within—
The Bravest—grope a little—
And sometimes hit a Tree
15 Directly in the Forehead—
But as they learn to see—
Either the Darkness alters—
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight—
20 And Life steps almost straight.

Group #4

"The History Teacher" by Billy Collins

Trying to protect his students' innocence
he told them the Ice Age was really just
the Chilly Age, a period of a million years
when everyone had to wear sweaters.
5 And the stone Age became the Gravel Age,
named after the long driveways of the time.
The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more
than an outbreak of questions such as
"How far is it from here to Madrid?"
10 "What do you call the matador's hat?"
The War of the Roses took place in a garden,
and the Enola Gay* dropped one tiny atom on Japan.
The children would leave his classroom
for the playground to torment the weak
15 and the smart,
mussing up their hair and breaking their glasses,
while he gathered up his notes and walked home
past flower beds and white picket fences,
wondering if they would believe that soldiers
20 in the Boer War told long, rambling stories

designed to make the enemy nod off.

* The name of the airplane from which an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

Group #5,
"Douglass" by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Ah, Douglass,* we have fall'n on evil days,
Such days as thou, not even thou didst know,
When thee, the eyes of that harsh long ago
Saw, salient, at the cross of devious ways,
5 And all the country heard thee with amaze.
Not ended then, the passionate ebb and flow,
The awful tide that battled to and fro;
We ride amid a tempest of dispraise.
Now, when the waves of swift dissension swarm,
10 And Honor, the strong pilot, lieth stark,
Oh for thy voice high-sounding o'er the storm,
For thy strong arm to guide the shivering bark,
The blast-defying power of thy form,
To give us comfort through the lonely dark.

* Frederick Douglass (1817–1895), American writer, former slave, whose autobiography (1845) made him a leader in the abolitionist cause.

Group #6,
"Acquainted with the Night" by Robert Frost

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.
I have looked down the saddest city lane.
5 I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,
10 But not to call me back or say good-by;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Appendix E

1979—Carefully read the two poems below. Then write a well-organized essay in which you show how the attitudes towards the coming of spring implied in these two poems differ from each other. Support your statements with specific references to the texts. (William Carlos Williams's "Spring and All" and Louise Glück's "For Jane Meyers")

1985—These two poems present encounters with nature, but the two poets handle those encounters very differently. In a well-organized essay, distinguish between the attitudes (toward nature, toward the solitary individual, etc.) expressed in the poems and discuss the techniques that the poets use to present these attitudes. Be sure to support your statements with specific references to the texts. (William Wordsworth's "There Was a Boy" and Robert Frost's "The Most of It")

1988—Read the following two poems very carefully, noting that the second includes an allusion to the first. Then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss their similarities and differences. In your essay, be sure to consider both theme and style. (John Keats's "Bright Star" and Robert Frost's "Choose Something Like a Star")

1994—The following two poems are about Helen of Troy. Renowned in the ancient world for her beauty, Helen was the wife of Menelaus, a Greek king. She was carried off to Troy by the Trojan prince Paris, and her abduction was the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Read the two poems carefully. Considering such elements as speaker, diction, imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you contrast the speakers' views of Helen. (Edgar Allan Poe's "To Helen" and D. H. Lawrence's "Passing Visit to Helen")

2000—The story of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens and their enchanting but deadly song appears in Greek epic poetry in Homer's *Odyssey*. An English translation of the episode is reprinted in the left column below. Margaret Atwood's poem in the right column is a modern commentary on the classical story. Read both texts carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare the portrayals of the Sirens.

Your analysis should include discussion of tone, point of view, and whatever poetic devices (diction, imagery, etc.) seem most important. (Homer's *The Odyssey* [an excerpt] and Margaret Atwood's "Siren Song")

2001—In each of the following poems, the speaker responds to the conditions of a particular place and time—England in 1802 in the first poem, the United States about 100 years later in the second. Read each poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems and analyze the relationship between them. (William Wordsworth's "London, 1802" and Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Douglass")

2003—The following poems are both concerned with Eros, the god of love in Greek mythology. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two concepts of Eros and analyze the techniques used to create them. (Robert Bridges' "ΕΡΩΣ" and Anne Stevenson's "Eros")

2004—The poems below are concerned with darkness and night. Read each poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the poems, analyzing the significance of dark or night in each. In your essay, consider elements such as point of view, imagery, and structure. (Emily Dickinson's "We Grow Accustomed to the Dark" and Robert Frost's "Acquainted with the Night")

2005—The poems below, published in 1789 and 1794, were written by William Blake in response to the condition of chimney sweeps. Usually small children, sweeps were forced inside chimneys to clean their interiors. Read the two poems carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the two poems, taking into consideration the poetic techniques Blake uses in each. (William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper"—from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*)

2005 (B)— Carefully read the two poems below. Then in a well-organized essay compare the speakers' reflections on their early morning surroundings and analyze the techniques the poets use to communicate the speakers' different states of mind. (William Stafford's "Five A.M." and Elizabeth Bishop's "Five Flights Up")

2007—In the following two poems, adults provide explanations for children. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing how each poet uses literary devices to make his point. (Richard Wilbur's "A Barred Owl" and Billy Collins's "The History Teacher")

2008—In the two poems below, Keats and Longfellow reflect on similar concerns. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation. (Keats's "When I Have Fears" and Longfellow's "Mezzo Cammin")

Appendix F

Poetry Presentations—Scoring Guide

Title of Poem:	
Group Members:	

Group Work—Day 1	
Does the group utilize the time wisely discussing the poem? Did each person in the group read the poem aloud? When I listen to (overhear) another group, is the group always talking about the poem using the rhetorical triangle model? Does the rhetorical triangle model grid reflect a basic understanding of the poem?	(20 points)
Group Work—Day 2	
Have three members of the group completed the sheet on "Describing Poems" before coming to class? (turn in) Have three members of the group completed the sheet on TP-CASTT before coming to class? (turn in) When I listen to (overhear) another group, is the discussion always about the poem? Do all members of the group participate in the discussion?	(20 points)
Group Work—Day 3	
Does the group work all period preparing a class presentation? Will the group have something visual? Does the group practice the choral reading? Do all members of the group participate in the discussion?	(20 points)

Presentation—Day 4	
Do all members of the group participate in the choral reading? Does the presentation adhere closely to the time limits? Does the presentation include a visual? Is the presentation entertaining or at least lively enough to keep the rest of the members of the class engaged and awake? Does the presentation explain the poem adequately? Does the group respond to questions adequately from the class?	(20 points)
In-Class Essays	
Has the class been adequately prepared to write an essay on the given topic about this poem?	(20 points)
Final Grade	

Successful Writing on the AP English Literature and Composition Open Question

Susan Strehle

Expressing a shared belief that good reading, thinking, and writing about literature can be taught and measured, many high schools offer students courses in AP English Literature and Composition, and many colleges and universities grant college credit for successful work on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam. As a university faculty member who has participated in grading this exam for many years, I bring a seasoned Reader's reflections to my three topics for today: what the test measures; how well the scoring process works; and what the AP Program contributes to students and teachers of literature. I will focus my remarks on what is called the Open Question, the third question of the free-response section of the exam. This question requires students to select a novel or play of literary merit and write an essay about a specific topic not known to them in advance. The topics change yearly: in 2007 it was the effect of the past, either personal or societal, on the actions, attitudes, or values of a character.

The AP Exam in general, and the open question in particular, measure a student's ability to read, write, and think both analytically and creatively about literature. Some students can quickly formulate a plausible argument that answers the specific question through an insightful reading of their chosen text. To do this they must know the text well and analyze its elements from the perspective introduced by the topic—this year, the effect of the past. They must actually know several literary texts well, so they can select one that will yield a rich essay on the topic before them. Successful students create an argument, design a logical structure for the essay, and recall evidence from the text that illustrates and adds support to their claims; strong students always refer to incidents and sometimes even quote from memory. The best students envision the trajectory of their essays so well that they create flawless transitions, increasingly persuasive claims and evidence, and graceful conclusions.

A few examples from the 2007 open question will show that essays in the upper half begin with an argument that answers the question in a specific and interesting way. One writer begins a fine essay on the impact of Jane Eyre's education on her later life by saying that Jane "is affected very much by her past experiences from eight years of living at Lowood School, a Christian charity school… This radically reserved teaching follows her all her life and influences her feelings, values, and decisions" (see Appendix A).

Looking at Jane's choices and values through the specific lens of her schooling, with what the writer elegantly terms its "radically reserved teaching," the writer identifies a particular phase in her past and proceeds to show how it shapes Jane's later life. Another essay thinks about Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a retrospective narrative in which the protagonist evaluates her past. The novel tells "the story of beautiful Janie… The novel is in fact the narration of past events by Janie herself in which she describes the hardships she suffered through and the life-lessons she learned" (see Appendix B). This essay regards the novel as a meditation on the topic of the effect of the past and thus maintains a clear focus on Janie's self-analysis as an unfolding answer to the question.

Some successful students choose surprising and interesting characters for their focus, developing arguments about the effects of the past in the novel on a secondary character for whom the past bears different burdens. Such an essay remains focused on the effects of the past, from an angle that may lead to a different look at the novel. One student, for example, selects the monster rather than Victor Frankenstein as shaped by the past and writes an essay about the traumatic effects of the monster's abandonment in Shelley's *Frankenstein.* The essay concludes: "The monster's strong tie to his troubling past essentially *is* the novel. All of the action spawns from this source, whether being carried out by the monster or Victor's reaction to the monster" (see Appendix C).

Students who succeed on the open question have learned to write well, without much time for revision, while developing an argument. Students sometimes write with an elegance that surprises, given the 40-minute time limit for the essay: "The past comes a-haunting," one student wrote, and another observed that "humanity is often haunted by memories of the past while living out the rest of their misguided lives in an attempt to undo what has been done to them." In scoring the essays holistically, Readers do not separate strong writing from smart thinking; but we respond positively to writers who use language with sensitivity and grace. Indeed, it is always impressive to see how many high school students *do* write powerful prose,

with a rich control of language and nuance shaped by copious reading. Every year there are essays that, on a 9-point scale, deserve scores of 10. This year, for example, a student wrote that Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* warns the South to relinquish its obsession with the past. Quoting the novel from memory, the student observes that "Clocks, or 'mausoleums of all human hope and desire,' are the subject of Quentin's hate and perpetual speculation… Clocks tick the South's past grandeur away into the recesses of dusty memory."

For Readers of these student essays, it is relatively easy to tell an essay that scores in the upper half of the scoring range from an essay that scores in the lower half. Lower-half essays sometimes impose a five-paragraph template and well-worn assumptions about culture or values onto thin or inadequate readings of the text. They may mistake a character's values for the author's, or they may misread one part of a text's contents for its central theme. One essay on *The Great Gatsby,* for example, asserts that Gatsby's past leaves him "in love with the lifestyle of the rich. The glitz and glamour and all it had to offer." Another on *Death of a Salesman* finds tragedy in Willy Loman's refusing to take a risk that could have made him wealthy: "And so he stayed a salesman while other's got rich." They interpret the relationship between past and present in simplistic, mechanical, or literal ways, avoiding any complex assessment of causality or change in character: "If Pip had not helped this convict then he would not have been caught again which means he would not have been sent to the Americas which means that he would not have been able to work to get the money for Pip." Lower-half essays often simply describe the novel or play, summarizing events that occurred in a character's past, without grappling at all with the way past events alter present actions or values. Paraphrase without analysis fails to answer the question, because the writer does not explore how the past affects the present in the chosen text.

Upper-half essays, in contrast, select a specific focus and develop readings that cohere around a well-chosen angle of approach. Not only do they answer the question and write clearly and often well, they also reject the simplistic, clichéd, and obvious in favor of more sophisticated and original thinking. One essay this year, for example, argued that Jane Eyre emerges from a formative experience when Aunt Reed locks her in the red room where her uncle died:

> "She believes she sees his ghost and faints. From then on, she fears entrapment of any form. She initially does not marry Rochester because it would mean enslavement as a mistress, breaking her principles. When St. John proposes that she be his wife in India, she again refused marriage because of fear of imprisonment.

In this case, she could exercise her principles of charitable work but would be trapped emotionally; there is no affection between her and St. John."

At the end, "She is in no way trapped because she can legally marry Rochester (his wife died), she is financially his equal (because of her inheritance), and his injuries actually make him dependent upon her. They can support each other's emotional needs." While this essay could have used more development of its claims, it was scored in the upper half for its sustained focus on Jane's yearning for a relationship in which her choices and principles matter, a commitment freely chosen rather than imposed and entrapping. The events cited throughout this essay are related to the analytical argument rather than appearing for the sake of summary or paraphrase.

In the Appendix B sample, the writer traces Janie's maturation as she seeks an identity, love, and her own voice. The young Janie "describes her youthful depiction of love as that of a blossoming pear tree. To her it is a naturally progressing event, not something pressed upon her." But she uses her "failed relationship" with Logan "as a catalyst to drive her search for a true relationship." Jody Starks seems to promise happiness, but Janie finds that "she is shut off from society and treated as an object." Then, when Jody dies, Janie discovers a "renewed desire for personal identity." She "lets down her hair and burns her head rags. In the past, Jody had required her to bind up her hair… Now, free of a restricting man, Janie was 'free.'" Tea Cake brings her a natural love that allows her own voice and identity to flourish, and after he dies, Janie finds herself "a new person. Janie, now, is simply content to be. She has found her voice." This writer implicitly discovers that Janie, who begins her life with a quest for romantic love (the "blossoming pear tree"), discovers instead that freedom and self-possession (nicely interpreted through the detail of her unbound hair) are a source of greater satisfaction. While Tea Cake appears to some young readers to be the model of a good relationship, the third suitor and therefore Prince Charming, this writer sees beyond that fairy-tale model to Hurston's emphasis on Janie's "owning" herself, accepting her past, and claiming permission to speak in her own voice. This essay received a score of 9. Not flawless in its writing or development, somewhat marred by its conclusion, it nonetheless develops a subtle interpretation of the effect of the past in this novel.

Scoring Question 3 is both challenging and rewarding for Readers because of the wide variety of texts students write about. This year's most popular choices included *The Great Gatsby, Death of a Salesman, Beloved, Wuthering Heights, Their Eyes Were Watching God, A Streetcar Named Desire,* and *The Kite Runner,* all listed with the question. We also read about *Paradise Lost, Don Quixote, Medea, Anna*

Karenina, My Antonia, Wide Sargasso Sea, Mama Day, The Namesake, Ceremony, Snow Falling on Cedars, and *Grendel*. Students wrote about contemporary global texts including *Midnight's Children, Love in the Time of Cholera, The Bone People, Nervous Conditions,* and *The God of Small Things.* Readers positively enjoy the range and diversity of literary texts they read about and find that they can score consistently across the broad bandwidth of subjects.

By providing a national program in which vital skills in reading, writing, and thinking critically are taught and measured, the Advanced Placement Program® offers a significant opportunity for high school students to learn and practice these skills. The AP Program immerses high school students in thinking about literary texts, those we reflect on when we think about values and meanings. Students engage at least some of the literary classics of the Western tradition, and with many adventurous teachers they range outside it as well. *The Odyssey*, *The Tempest, Great Expectations, Mrs. Dalloway, The American, The Awakening,* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter:* these texts are part of the prize handed to high school students who accept the challenge of AP English Literature and Composition.

AP English Literature and Composition classes resemble college classrooms and give both students and teachers an opportunity to challenge easy answers, replace formulaic writing with original and complex arguments, and grapple with more subtle and divergent understandings of perennial human problems. Indeed, AP classes prepare students to succeed at the most important challenges they will find in college. While AP credit allows students to skip a required freshman writing course in some universities, students who receive grades of 3, 4, and 5 do not always skip English; they may start at higher levels and continue to improve their ability to write college-level analysis. Since learning to read increasingly complicated texts, to analyze in greater depth, to grasp issues that do not resolve themselves in simple, tidy conclusions, and to write increasingly sophisticated essays is one main goal of college education, these students should be imagined, not as getting *out* of important work, but rather as getting more richly *into* it.

While AP programs enrich and enliven high school experiences for teachers and students, they also contribute to college and university teachers. They contribute by giving students an interest in and appreciation for literature, attunement to the nuances of language, and the desire for further reading and study of fiction, poetry, and plays. These students enliven college classes at every level, writing essays that remind faculty how fortunate we are. Some students who complete the AP Program become English majors in college; a few of these become English graduate students,

English teachers at high school and college levels, and eventually, even Readers of the AP English Literature and Composition Exam. A lifelong appreciation for excellent fiction, poetry, and plays often begins in the AP classroom. Some of the students who complete AP English become lawyers, doctors, engineers, and business people; many of these students take college English classes for the pure pleasure of literature. In their later lives, some students who complete AP English subscribe to local drama performances, organize book clubs, attend readings given by local writers, and support bookstores in the community and online. In a culture increasingly given over to visual media, to film and television, they *read*.

Appendix A

Sample KK

In the novel *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist Jane is affected very much by her past experiences from eight years of living at Lowood School, a Christian charity school that emphasized the importance of God, refusing to succumb to temptation and remaining plain and humble in outwardly appearance. This radically reserved teaching follows her all her life and influences her feelings, values and decisions throughout the novel, such as her extreme awkwardness when around genteel company and refusing to become Rochester's mistress.

Jane's uneasiness around the gentry is a result of her harsh environment at Lowood. Poor Jane had spent the last eight years of her life in plain, harsh living conditions, with nothing but the most modest of surroundings and behavior. It is not surprising that she feels out of place amongst Rochester's friends, rich, vain and vibrant with vivacity and brilliance. Jane wishes she did not have to be present around such people because she does not know how to act around them and feels dull and shabby compared to their luxurious elegance. This is a situation that anyone could empathize with. Like poor Jane, it is always uncomfortable for one who, grown completely used to a certain environment, is suddenly forced to behave and interact in a completely new and unfamiliar setting. This past way of behavior and environment is a great influence in how a person feels or acts, and like Jane, a completely new environment can often leave one not knowing what to do, and acting in the way they know best (which oftentimes brings the scorn of others more used to such a living) is the only available choice as they simply have *never* encountered another way.

Similarly, Jane's Lowood moralistic upbringing later affected her decision when, finding out that her love Rochester has a wife, he offers her to be his mistress. Jane is then faced with a great internal conflict: should she sacrifice everything she believes in for the sake of love or spurn her desires in order to sustain the favor of God? The life of Lowood, so rigorous in religious belief and so pious, has made it impossible for

Jane to sacrifice her morals in order to make herself happy. Her teaching has affected her so much that she believed God would make her happy if she did not succumb to temptation. Similarly, Jane's situation can be applied to every man and woman. If one has been brought up with the strictest of morals and it is all one has ever known, it is simply impossible for one ever to give up belief in those morals. One whose parents have instilled the importance of religion will, like Jane, choose religion and what they believe to be right over all else.

Finally, Jane's experiences at Lowood influence her when, after Jane and Rochester's betrothal, Rochester takes Jane out to buy her fancy things. Jane cannot even imagine herself wearing such beautiful jewelry and garments: she is so used to plain fare and the constant reminder of her own plain appearance that she would feel awkward and even stupid wearing such extravagant clothing. She feels as if she would be untrue to herself, to wear such things. Indeed it is difficult for someone to have their circumstances suddenly changed, and accommodation to these changing circumstances are generally slow for one and difficult at first. When one has spent most of their life with the poorest fare (for even before Lowood Jane was poorly treated at Gateshead) when one's circumstances change, even if for the better, it is difficult to give up the lifestyle that one was living before, and there seems to be little point in wasting money on seemingly useless things.

Habits are hard to break—a commentary on life that Jane Eyre reaffirms again and again in her novel. Her difficulty with adjusting to her new life at Thornfield, however, is easy to empathize with. Even if one has not experienced such a sudden change in environment, moral values and fare, one can certainly imagine the actions, values and attitudes one would experience. Jane's experiences and the reader's ability to sympathize with them are the reason why *Jane Eyre* is still considered a great Victorian classic.

Appendix B

Sample N

"Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Hurston is the story of beautiful Janie, her maturation and development, and her quest for an identity, love, and her own voice. The novel is in fact the narration of past events by Janie herself in which she describes the hardships she suffered through and life-lessons she learned. The lessons she learned from past experiences help shape her future until she finally puts all her learnings and understandings together to achieve her goal.

Looking back on her young years, Janie describes her youthful depiction of love as that of a blossoming pear tree. To her it is a naturally progressing event—not something pressed upon her. To Janie, love is a beautiful picture filled with chirping birds, blue skies, and blossoming flowers. As she learns, this is not the reality that she will experience. Janie's ideal depiction of love is ruined at a young age when she is married off to a well-off man who will provide her with protection and security. However, the relationship is doomed from the start. There is no spark, no love, and no connection between the two individuals. Thus, the relationship ends in disaster and Janie leaves. Janie uses this failed relationship as a catalyst to drive her search for a true relationship. Janie believes she has found this in a man named Jody Starks. He is smart, ambitious, and well-off. However, Jodie's search for self-identity is stifled as she is shut off from society and treated as an object. Finally, looking back on how she has been treated, Janie eventually lashes out, insulting Jody's masculinity and embarrassing him in front of the entire town. Eventually Jody falls ill and dies. As a sign of her freedom and her renewed desire for personal identity, Janie lets down her hair and burns her head rags. In the past, Jody had required her to bind up her hair. Everyone had always admired Janie's hair. It was beautifully long and flowing. It had challenged Jody's masculinity as a symbol of his sexual potency and had allowed Janie to be looked upon with awe. Now, free of a restricting man, Janie was "free." She was free to speak, free to be whoever she wanted. In these past two relationships,

Janie had learned of the reality of the world and the foolishness of her disillusioned search for natural love. However, when a man by the name of Tea Cake enters her life, this search is reinvigorated once more. To her, this love is natural. He is funny and they have a connection. However, because of her past relationships she is fearful and at first not trusting of Tea Cake. She is a free woman in this relationship. She speaks her mind and seems to have found her own true identity. However, in a tragic turn of events, she is forced to shoot and kill Tea Cake who has been driven mad by Rabies.

Having returned home, Janie tells this entire story to her friend. Three difficult relationships and a long search for self have resulted in a new person. Janie, now, is simply content to be. She has found her voice. From a time where she was silenced and forcibly prevented from speaking, to a time where she had the freedom to do as she pleased, Janie has learned the value of a voice. Having found it, she has learned to control. Dialogue plays an extremely important role in this novel. The fact that the dialogue of the court trial for Janie's killing of Tea Cake is not included attests to the maturation and progress that Janie has made. Past restrictions of her identity have taught her its value—something that she will always hold onto and never lose, because she is stronger now as a result of living through hardships, that while they may have destroyed her ideal depictions of love, they ultimately made her a stronger person with a voice.

Appendix C

Sample S

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein made many choices that were far from wise. As a result of his actions, his dreams were crushed and his life eventually taken from him. His creation, deemed a monster by the ideals of society, was left without a source of guidance or comfort, and therefore became forever fixated upon his beginning.

While Victor Frankenstein may be seen as the main character of the novel, his creation is truly the fuel for action and motion throughout the work. Because he is spurned by society due to his appearance, he has little hope for a future other than solitude and separation. He is therefore forced to dwell on his past; Victor and his abandonment.

Although his existence is wretched, the monster in actuality has quite a benevolent nature. The first part of his life he hopes for redemption, and believes he can achieve it. His memory of Victor fuels the need and want of a family.

However, most of the action in the novel is caused by the monster's rage. He is forced to re-live his initial abandonment by the rejection of the family he watches, and Victor's constant spurning of him. He begins to haunt Victor, much like the memory of his maker has been haunting him for the entirety of his existence. But unlike a memory, the monster can do physical harm. His hatred of Victor manifests itself in the murder of Victor's most dearly loved ones. Victor's younger brother, one of the servants, Clerval, Elizabeth, and several other characters, some not related to Victor, all die as a result of the monster's actions. His inability to get over his troubled past cause Victors life, and his own, to become full of misery and destruction.

Had Victor not abandoned him, or the family he watched taken him in, perhaps the monster would have behaved differently, but as it stands he is one of the most dynamic characters in the novel. Not only does he cause the movement in the plot, but he also undergoes many changes himself. His tie to Victor seems unbreakable, and

it is so, but his reaction to it shifts all throughout the novel. In the close of the novel, there is a chance for reconciliation, but due to Victors untimely death, it is impossible. However, the death of Victor, and what had been the driving reason of his life, caused him to break free from the cycle, and instead of murdering others, he did so to himself.

The monster's strong tie to his troubling past essentially *is* the novel. All of the action spawns from this source, whether being carried out by the monster or Victor's reaction to the monster. The past is the force that cause change in both characters, and without it, the meaning of the work as a whole would be irreconcilably altered.

About the Editor

Sharon Johnston serves as English content director for Mentoring Advanced Programs for Students, working with teachers and students in Washington public schools to improve student performance on AP English Exams. She has taught both AP English Literature and Composition and AP English Language and Composition. She has participated in the AP Program as an Exam Reader/Table Leader and has conducted workshops for AP Summer Institutes across the nation. In 2004, Florida Council Teachers of English presented Johnston with the Honor Award "for outstanding services to advance the teaching of the language arts." She is a National Board Certified Teacher and earned her Ed.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Sarasota, her M.A. in English from the University of Central Florida, and her B.A. in English and history education from the University of Florida.

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Rebecca Daniel teaches AP English Literature and Composition and serves as English Department Chair at Parkersburg South High School in West Virginia. She has been involved in the Advanced Placement Program as an Exam Reader/Table Leader and College Board consultant for AP Summer Institutes in West Virginia, Missouri, and Ohio, as well as other workshops throughout the College Board's Midwestern Region since 1993. She is a National Board Certified teacher. A graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan College, she earned her master's and doctoral degrees from West Virginia University.

Sylvia Jones is in her fifth decade of teaching English at Redwood High School in Marin County, California. Two years ago she returned to Redwood after five years of teaching AP English at Saint Ignatius College Preparatory High School in San Francisco. She is a fellow of the Bay Area Writing Project at the University of California: Berkeley and has served on the development team and as chief reader for the Golden State Examination in Written Composition and other California writing tests. Jones also reads essays such as the Test of Written English and Praxis for the West Coast office of Educational Testing Service. She has taught AP English for two decades, served as a Table Leader at the AP English Exam Readings, and conducted AP Summer Institutes at Southern Oregon University and at the University of Chicago.

Danny Lawrence taught English for 30 years in North Carolina and AP English for 16 years at the Career Center in Winston-Salem, NC. He has been a Reader for the AP English Literature Exams for 12 years, a Table Leader for four years, and an AP English consultant for 13 years. He is a National Board Certified Teacher in Adolescent/Young Adult English/Language Arts with both an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in English. He currently serves as a National Trainer working with new AP consultants. He also serves as an international consultant presenting workshops in Canada, Taiwan, Saipan, Bolivia, Germany, and most recently at the American International Schools in Africa conferences. He has also presented at the Equity Colloquium and the AP Annual Conference. He currently serves as the school adviser for the 10 high schools that received AP Start-Up Grants in 2005.

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Brian McCrea is professor of English at the University of Florida and formerly director of the university's Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication. He received his B.A. from Kalamazoo College and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. His most recent book is *Impotent Fathers: Patriarchy and Demographic Crisis in the 18th Century Novel*. He has read for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam since 1986.

Susan Strehle teaches literature and composition, together with various topics in contemporary American and global fiction, at the State University of New York at Binghamton. She is the author of *Fiction in the Quantum Universe* and of *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland*, and she co-edited *Doubled Plots: Romance and History*. She earned her B.A. from Stanford and her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California: Berkeley. She has served as an AP Exam Reader, Table Leader, and Question Leader and is currently the Chief Reader for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam.

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