

# Sample 4 Poetry Essay

Type of poem named for you.

## 2002 AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

### Question 2

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

The following poem is a villanelle, a form having strict rules of rhyme, meter, and repetition. Read the poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the formal elements of the poem contribute to its meaning.

You will have to

determine the meaning of the poem and state it in the intro.

#### If I Could Tell You

Time will say nothing but I told you so,  
Time only knows the price we have to pay;  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

Line If we should weep when clowns put on their show,  
(5) If we should stumble when musicians play,  
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

There are no fortunes to be told, although,  
Because I love you more than I can say,  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

(10) The winds must come from somewhere when they blow,  
There must be reasons why the leaves decay;  
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

Perhaps the roses really want to grow,  
The vision seriously intends to stay;  
(15) If I could tell you I would let you know.

Suppose the lions all get up and go,  
And all the brooks and soldiers run away;  
Will Time say nothing but I told you so?  
If I could tell you I would let you know.

From W. H. Auden: *Collected Poems* by W. H. Auden.  
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Random House, Inc.

Poet name given to you

aka: literary devices

- ① State poet name and poem title.
- ② Name the lit. devices your paper will cover
- ③ State the meaning of the poem

Body P's:

- one per device
- connect info back to meaning/significance

OR

go sequentially through the poem.

Quoting required in GCAP  
Citations not required

If you do not know the gender of the poet, pick one and stick by it. Do not use "he/she" or "he or she." (Auden, if you are interested, is male.)

Sample 2 Poetry Essay

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

Poet's name given to you

Please note the asterisk for the footnote. Read the footnote.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

The following poem, written by Edward Field, makes use of the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus. \* Read the poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Field employs literary devices in adapting the Icarus myth to a contemporary setting.

Icarus

Only the feathers floating around the hat  
 Showed that anything more spectacular had occurred  
 Than the usual drowning. The police preferred to ignore  
 The confusing aspects of the case,  
 5 And the witnesses ran off to a gang war.  
 So the report filed and forgotten in the archives read simply  
 "Drowned," but it was wrong: Icarus  
 Had swum away, coming at last to the city  
 Where he rented a house and tended the garden.

10 "That nice Mr. Hicks" the neighbors called him,  
 Never dreaming that the gray, respectable suit  
 Concealed arms that had controlled huge wings  
 Nor that those sad, defeated eyes had once  
 Compelled the sun. And had he told them  
 15 They would have answered with a shocked, uncomprehending stare.  
 No, he could not disturb their neat front yards;  
 Yet all his books insisted that this was a horrible mistake:  
 What was he doing aging in a suburb?  
 Can the genius of the hero fall  
 20 To the middling stature of the merely talented?

And nightly Icarus probes his wound  
 And daily in his workshop, curtains carefully drawn,  
 Constructs small wings and tries to fly  
 To the lighting fixture on the ceiling:  
 25 Fails every time and hates himself for trying.

He had thought himself a hero, had acted heroically,  
 And dreamt of his fall, the tragic fall of the hero;  
 But now rides commuter trains,  
 Serves on various committees,  
 30 And wishes he had drowned.

Intro:  
 ① State poet name and "Poem Title"  
 ② Name lit. devices you intend to cover  
 ③ Make a statement that indicates you will pay attention to contemporary setting.

Body:  
Same as previous essay

Quoting required  
Citations not required

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\* Daedalus and his son, Icarus, fashioned wings of feathers and wax in an attempt to escape from prison by flying across the sea. Before their flight, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun. But, caught up in the experience of flying, Icarus ignored the warning and soared upward. The heat of the sun melted the wax, the wings fell off, and he plunged to his death in the sea.

Simple 3  
Poetry Essay

Comparison essay (automatically means compare and contrast)  
"laundry list" of devices - it does not hurt you to use others not listed; these are suggestions only.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

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.

... our trim ship was speeding toward  
the Sirens' island, driven by the brisk wind.

...  
Now with a sharp sword I sliced an ample wheel of beeswax  
down into pieces, kneaded them in my two strong hands  
5 and the wax soon grew soft, worked by my strength  
and Helios' burning rays, the sun at high noon,  
and I stopped the ears of my comrades one by one.  
They bound me hand and foot in the tight ship—  
erect at the mast-block, lashed by ropes to the mast—  
10 and rowed and churned the whitecaps stroke on stroke.  
We were just offshore as far as a man's shout can carry,  
scudding close, when the Sirens sensed at once a ship  
was racing past and burst into their high, thrilling song:  
'Come closer, famous Odysseus—Achaea's pride and glory—  
15 moor your ship on our coast so you can hear our song!  
Never has any sailor passed our shores in his black craft  
until he has heard the honeyed voices pouring from our lips,  
and once he hears to his heart's content sails on, a wiser man.'

...  
So they sent their ravishing voices out across the air  
20 and the heart inside me throbbed to listen longer.  
I signaled the crew with frowns to set me free—  
they flung themselves at the oars and rowed on harder,  
Perimedes and Eurylochus springing up at once  
to bind me faster with rope on chafing rope.  
25 But once we'd left the Sirens fading in our wake,  
once we could hear their song no more, their urgent call—  
my steadfast crew was quick to remove the wax I'd used  
to seal their ears and loosed the bonds that lashed me.

SIREN SONG

This is the one song everyone  
would like to learn: the song  
that is irresistible:

Line the song that forces men  
5 to leap overboard in squadrons  
even though they see the beached skull  
the song nobody knows  
because anyone who has heard it  
is dead, and the others can't remember  
10 Shall I tell you the secret  
and if I do, will you get me  
out of this bird suit?\*

I don't enjoy it here  
squatting on this island  
15 looking picturesque and mythical  
with these two feathery maniacs  
I don't enjoy singing  
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,  
20 to you, only to you.  
Come closer. This song  
is a cry for help: Help me!  
Only you, only you can,  
you are unique

25 at last. Alas  
it is a boring song  
but it works every time.

See next page for ~~essay~~ essay structures.

"Siren Song" from *You Are Happy*, SELECTED POEMS 1965-1975. Copyright © 1976 by Margaret Atwood. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co. ([www.hmco.com](http://www.hmco.com)). All rights reserved. Also from the Canadian collection SELECTED POEMS 1966-1984 © 1974, 1990 Margaret Atwood, published by Oxford University Press. First appeared in POETRY, February 1974.

\*In Greek mythology, Sirens are often represented as birds with the heads of women.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Structure(s) for a comparison essay:

- Ⓐ Intro  
 Device 1, poem 1  
 Device 1, poem 2  
 Device 2, poem 1  
 Device 2, poem 2  
 Concl.

- Ⓑ Intro.  
 poem 1, device 1  
 poem 1, device 2  
 poem 2, device 1  
 poem 2, device 2  
 Concl.

↙ This structure a little better in some regards b/c the info is side by side for the reader, which makes it easier to remember.

- Ⓒ Intro.  
 Device 1, poem 1  
 Device 1, poem 2  
 Device 2, poem 1  
 Device 3, poem 2  
 Concl.

Ⓓ or you can flip flop

Do Not write:  
 "These poems share similarities but they are also very different."  
 This is a noting statement  
 Name the similarities etc:  
 These poems both portray the sirens as deadly, but one provides the point of view from the listener, while the other takes the view of a siren.

↗ This structure allows for the idea that different devices might be used in each poem.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total Time—2 hours

Question 1

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

Unnamed: refer to as "the author" and pick a gender. You are not penalized for not knowing.

"(always list) any other devices you find"

Read carefully the following passage from the beginning of a contemporary novel. Note the author's use of such elements as diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author's use of language generates a vivid impression of Quoyle as a character.

→ no meaning of passage required, just an understanding of his character.

Here is an account of a few years in the life of Quoyle, born in Brooklyn and raised in a shuffle of dreary upstate towns.

Line Hive-spangled, gut roaring with gas and cramp, he  
(5) survived childhood; at the state university, hand clapped over his chin, he camouflaged torment with smiles and silence. Stumbled through his twenties and into his thirties learning to separate his feelings from his life, counting on nothing. He ate prodigiously, liked a ham  
(10) knuckle, buttered spuds.

His jobs: distributor of vending machine candy, all-night clerk in a convenience store, a third-rate newspaperman. At thirty-six, bereft, brimming with grief and thwarted love, Quoyle steered away to  
(15) Newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go. A watery place. And Quoyle feared water, could not swim. Again and again the father had broken his clenched grip and thrown him into pools, brooks, lakes,  
(20) and surf. Quoyle knew the flavor of brack and waterweed.

From this youngest son's failure to dog-paddle the father saw other failures multiply like an explosion of virulent cells—failure to speak clearly; failure to sit up  
(25) straight; failure to get up in the morning; failure in attitude; failure in ambition and ability; indeed, in everything. His own failure.

Quoyle shambled, a head taller than any child around him, was soft. He knew it. "Ah, you lout," said the  
(30) father. But no pygmy himself. And brother Dick, the father's favorite, pretended to throw up when Quoyle came into a room, hissed "Snotface, Ugly Pig, Warthog, Stupid, Stinkbomb, Greasebag," pummeled and kicked until Quoyle curled, hands over head, sniveling, on the  
(35) linoleum. All stemmed from Quoyle's chief failure, a failure of normal appearance.

A great damp loaf of a body. At six he weighed eighty pounds. At sixteen he was buried under a casement of flesh. Head shaped like a crenshaw, no  
(40) neck, reddish hair ruched back. Features as bunched as

kissed fingertips. Eyes the color of plastic. The monstrous chin, a freakish shelf jutting from the lower face.

Some anomalous gene had fired up at the moment of his begetting as a single spark sometimes leaps from  
(45) banked coals, had given him a giant's chin. As a child he invented stratagems to deflect stares; a smile, downcast gaze, the right hand darting up to cover the chin.

His earliest sense of self was as a distant figure: there in the foreground was his family; here, at the  
(50) limit of the far view, was he. Until he was fourteen he cherished the idea that he had been given to the wrong family, that somewhere his real people, saddled with the changeling of the Quoyles, longed for him. Then, foraging in a box of excursion mementoes, he found  
(55) photographs of his father beside brothers and sisters at a ship's rail. A girl, somewhat apart from the others, looked toward the sea, eyes squinted, as though she could see the port of destination a thousand miles south. Quoyle recognized himself in their hair, their  
(60) legs, and arms. That sly-looking lump in the shrunken sweater, his father. On the back, scribbled in blue pencil, "Leaving Home, 1946."

At the university he took courses he couldn't understand, humped back and forth without speaking to anyone, went home for weekends of excoriation. At last he  
(65) dropped out of school and looked for a job, kept his hand over his chin.

Nothing was clear to lonesome Quoyle. His thoughts churned like the amorphous thing that ancient sailors, drifting into arctic half-light, called the Sea Lung; a  
(70) heaving sludge of ice under fog where air blurred into water, where liquid was solid, where solids dissolved, where the sky froze and light and dark muddled.

1 crenshaw is a variety of winter melon.  
2 ruche is a pleat or ruffle used for decorating garments.

Note footnotes and be sure to read them.

Intro: (circled)  
1 Name devices  
2 Sum up his character

Sample 5: Prose Essay

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

Author name  
and Novel  
Title on R. 2

Aka: how the author uses  
literary devices. No laundry  
list provided; detect from  
on your own.

In the following excerpt from a recent British novel the narrator, a young man in his early twenties, is attending a play with his new girlfriend Isabel when she unexpectedly discovers that her parents are in the theater. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author produces a comic effect.

Excerpt  
R. 2

Oh my God, I think that's my mum over there,' she gasped.

'Where?'

Line 5 'By the pillar. Careful, don't look. What is she doing here? And what's that dress? It looks like a willow tree. Where's Dad? I hope she didn't come with one of her gentlemen friends. She's really too old for that.'

'Did you tell her you were going?'

10 'No, I mean, I said I wanted to see the play, but I didn't let on I had tickets for tonight.'

'She's talking to someone. Can you see?'

'Phew, it's my dad. He must have gone off to buy programmes. And he's about to sneeze. Look, there

15 we go, aaahhtchooo. Out comes his red handkerchief. I just hope they don't spot us and we can escape quickly at the end. With any luck, they'll be too busy arguing to glance up here. This is prime argument territory for them, Mum will be asking Dad where he put the car park ticket and he'll get flustered because he'll just have dropped it into a bin by mistake.'

Luck was not on Isabel's side, for a moment later, Christopher Rogers happened to glance up to the gallery and recognized his eldest daughter, in the

25 midst of trying her best not to recognize him. So that she might cease to dwell in ignorance, Christopher stood up in the middle of the elegantly suited and scented audience, and began making the vigorous hand gestures of a man waving off a departing cruise ship. In case Isabel had not spotted this maniac, her

30 mother was in turn informed of her eldest daughter's location, and decided that the presence of four hundred people in the auditorium should be no impediment to her desire to shout 'Isabel' at top pitch

35 and with all the excitement of a woman recognizing a long-lost friend on the deck of an in-coming cruise ship.

Isabel smiled feebly, turned a beetroot shade and repeated in panicked diction, 'I can't believe this,

40 please let them shut up.'

Not a second too soon, Lorca\* came to the rescue, the lights faded, and Mr. and Mrs. Rogers reluctantly took their seats, pointing ominously to an exit sign by way of interval rendezvous.

45 An hour and a quarter of Spanish domestic drama later, we found ourselves at the bar.

'What are you doing here, Mum?' asked Isabel.

'Why shouldn't I be here? You're not the only one who does fancy things with your evenings. Your

50 father and I have a right to go out once in a while.'

'I'm sure, I didn't mean it like that, it's just I'm surprised at the coincidence.'

'Where did you buy this dress? Is that the one I paid for at Christmas?'

55 'No, Mum, I got it myself last week.'

'Oh, well, it's very nice, pity you don't have more of a cleavage for it, but that's your father's fault. You know what all the women in his family are like.'

'How are you Dad?' Isabel turned to ask her father,

60 who was looking up at the ceiling with an intent expression.

'Dad?' repeated Isabel.

'Yes, darling, how are you, my bean? Enjoying the show?'

65 'Yup, and you? What are you staring at up there?'

'I'm looking at the light fixtures they have. They're new tungsten bulbs, Japanese things, quite wonderful, they use only a small amount of electricity but give off a very nice light.'

70 'Oh, great, Dad. And, ehm, there's someone I'd like you to both meet.'

'Delighted,' said Mrs. Rogers, confiding in me almost at once: 'She's a lovely girl really,' in case my theatre companion had inspired doubts to the

75 contrary.

'Thanks, Mum,' said Isabel wearily, as though the statement were no one-off.

'Don't mind her, bean, she's had a hard day,'

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explained Dad, now looking more horizontally at the  
80 world.

'My day would be fine if I wasn't lumbered with  
someone who kept losing tickets to the car park,'  
snapped Mrs. Rogers.

'Dad! You haven't?'

85 'Yes, I'm afraid I have. They're so fiddly these days,  
they fall right out of one's hands.'

—Alain de Botton, *Kiss and Tell*

\*Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936): Spanish poet and playwright

Novel title  
Author name

Note  
to note

Please note: Comedy / comic passage still uses literary  
devices; look for situational irony, verbal irony, hyperbole, etc

Intro:

- ① Name author
- ② Name Title of Novel
- ③ Name devices
- ④ Make reference to comedy

Body: see Sample 1 (Poetry)

Sample 6: Prose Essay

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

Title and author named

Question 2

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

The passage below is the opening of *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948), a novel written by Zora Neale Hurston. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the literary techniques Hurston uses to describe Sawley and to characterize the people who live there.

Focus: literary devices

Line  
5  
10  
15  
20  
25  
30

Sawley, the town, is in west Florida, on the famous Suwanee River. It is flanked on the south by the curving course of the river which Stephen Foster\* made famous without ever having looked upon its waters, running swift and deep through the primitive forests, and reddened by the chemicals leached out of drinking roots. On the north, the town is flanked by cultivated fields planted to corn, cane, potatoes, tobacco and small patches of cotton.

However, few of these fields were intensively cultivated. For the most part they were scratchy plantings, the people being mostly occupied in the production of turpentine and lumber. The life of Sawley streamed out from the sawmill and the "teppentime 'still." Then too, there was ignorance and poverty, and the ever-present hookworm. The farms and the scanty flowers in front yards and in tin cans and buckets looked like the people. Trees and plants always look like the people they live with, somehow.

This was in the first decade of the new century, when the automobile was known as the horseless carriage, and had not exerted its tremendous influence on the roads of the nation. There was then no U.S. 90, the legendary Old Spanish Trail, stretching straight broad concrete from Jacksonville on the Atlantic to San Diego on the Pacific. There was the sandy pike, deeply rutted by wagon wheels over which the folks of Sawley hauled their tobacco to market at Live Oak, or fresh-killed hogmeat, corn and peanuts to Madison or Monticello on the west. Few ever dreamed of venturing any farther east nor west.

35  
40  
45  
50  
55

Few were concerned with the past. They had heard that the stubbornly resisting Indians had been there where they now lived, but they were dead and gone. Osceola, Miccanope, Billy Bow-Legs were nothing more than names that had even lost their bitter flavor. The conquering Spaniards had done their murdering, robbing, and raping and had long ago withdrawn from the Floridas. Few knew and nobody cared that the Hidalgos under De Sota had moved westward along this very route. The people thought no more of them than they did the magnolias and bay and other ornamental trees which grew so plentifully in the swamps along the river, nor the fame of the stream. They knew that there were plenty of black bass, locally known as trout, in the Suwanee, and bream and perch and cat-fish. There were soft-shell turtles that made a mighty nice dish when stewed down to a low gravy, or the "chicken meat" of those same turtles fried crisp and brown. Fresh water turtles were a mighty fine article of food anyway you looked at it. It was commonly said that a turtle had every kind of meat on him. The white "chicken meat," the dark "beef" and the in-between "pork." You could stew, boil and fry, and none of it cost you a cent. All you needed was a strip of white side-meat on the hook, and you had you some turtle meat.

\* American songwriter (1826-1864) whose song "Old Folks at Home" begins "Way down upon the Swanee River"

Intro:

- ① Author name
- ② Title
- ③ Devices named
- ④ Summary of Sawley and its people

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Question 3

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

Morally ambiguous characters—characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good—are at the heart of many works of literature. Choose a novel or play in which a morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role. Then write an essay in which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

Choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit.

- The Age of Innocence*
- All the King's Men*
- Anna Karenina*
- The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man*
- The Awakening*
- Billy Budd*
- Crime and Punishment*
- Faust*
- Fences*
- The Glass Menagerie*
- Great Expectations*
- The Great Gatsby*
- Heart of Darkness*
- Hedda Gabler*

- Henry V*
- The Mayor of Casterbridge*
- The Merchant of Venice*
- Mrs. Warren's Profession*
- Père Goriot*
- The Picture of Dorian Gray*
- The Plague*
- Poccho*
- The Scarlet Letter*
- Silas Marner*
- Sister Carrie*
- Sula*
- The Turn of the Screw*
- Typical American*

All boxed or circled titles are those that are or have been studied at VCS 9-12.

See PowerPoint  
You are not penalized for choosing a work not listed so long as the work is of literary merit.  
① is of literary merit  
② Actually works for answering the prompt.

For open-ended questions:

- Review 5-6 novels/plays
- Choose those that cover a range of styles and subject matter

You should know:

- ① author name
- ② major characters' names
- ③ most minor characters' names
- ④ major plot points

END OF EXAMINATION

Do not use the following:  
Short stories  
poems  
movies  
TV shows  
You must use novels and plays to answer open-ended prompts.

3 parts:  
① Choose an appropriate book/play  
② Choose an appropriate character  
③ Universal theme  
Name all 3 in intro

Sample 7: open question

Sample 8: open-ended

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FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

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

Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery. In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the knowledge gained in the process of its investigation. Choose a novel or play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery. Then write an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of similar quality.

*Absalom, Absalom*  
*Agnes of God*  
*Alias Grace*  
*All the King's Men*  
*Bleak House*  
*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*  
*Crime and Punishment*  
*Equus*  
*Fifth Business*  
*Frankenstein*  
*A Gathering of Old Men*  
*Ghosts*  
*Great Expectations*  
*The Good Soldier*  
*The Great Gatsby*  
*Hamlet*  
*Heart of Darkness*

*Hedda Gabler*  
*In the Lake of the Woods*  
*Jane Eyre*  
*Joe Turner's Come and Gone*  
*Lord Jim*  
*The Mayor of Casterbridge*  
*Monkey Bridge*  
*Oedipus Rex*  
*The Remains of the Day*  
*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*  
*Snow Falling on Cedars*  
*Song of Solomon*  
*Tom Jones*  
*The Trial*  
*Trifles*  
*The Turn of the Screw*  
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Intro:

- Name the novel or play
- Identify the mystery
- Universal theme

END OF EXAMINATION

See other notes on Sample 7