

2017

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AP English Literature and Composition

Free-Response Questions

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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 is by Rachel M. Harper. Read the poem carefully. Then, considering such elements as imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the relationship between music and the speaker's complex memories of her family.

The Myth of Music

for my father

If music can be passed on
like brown eyes or a strong
left hook, this melody
Line is my inheritance, lineage traced
5 through a title track,
displayed on an album cover
that you pin to the wall
as art, oral history taught
on a record player, the lessons
10 sealed into the grooves like fact.
This is the only myth I know.
I sit on the hardwood
floors of a damp November,
my brother dealing cards
15 from an incomplete deck,
and I don't realize that this
moment is the definition
of family, collective memory
cut in rough-textured tones,
20 the voice of a horn so familiar
I don't know I'm listening,
Don't know I'm singing,
a child's improvisation
of Giant Steps or Impressions:¹
25 songs without lyrics
can still be sung.

In six months, when my mother
is 2,000 miles away, deciding
if she wants to come home,
30 I will have forgotten
this moment, the security
of her footsteps, the warmth

of a radiator on my back and you
present in the sound of typing
35 your own accompaniment,
multiphonics disguised as chords
in a distant room, speakers set
on high to fill the whole house
with your spirit, your call
40 as a declaration of love.

But the music will remain.
The timeless notes of jazz
too personal to play out loud,
stay locked in the rhythm
45 of my childhood, memories fading
like the words of a lullaby,
come to life in a saxophone's blow.
They lie when they say
music is universal—this is my song,
50 the notes like fingerprints
as delicate as breath.
I will not share this air
with anyone
but you.

¹*Giant Steps* is a jazz album (1960) by John Coltrane. *Impressions* (1963) is another album by Coltrane.

From "The Myth of Music" in *Mending the World: Stories of Family by Contemporary Black Writers* by Rachel M. Harper, copyright ©1999. Reprinted by permission of Basic Civitas Books, a member of The Perseus Books Group.

Question 2

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

In the passage below, from *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) by Tobias Smollett, Mr. Pickle encounters Godfrey Gauntlet, the brother of his beloved Emilia. Consider how the two men confront their own uncontrolled emotions and yet attempt to abide by their social norms. In a well-developed essay, analyze how the author explores the complex interplay between emotions and social propriety in the passage. You may wish to consider such literary techniques as dialogue, narrative pace, and tone.

Line 5 “Mr. Pickle, you have carried on a correspondence with my sister for some time, and I should be glad to know the nature of it.” To this question our lover replied, “Sir, I should be glad to know what title you have to demand that satisfaction?”—“Sir,” answered the other, “I demand it in the capacity of a brother, jealous of his own honour, as well as of his sister’s reputation; and if your intentions are honourable, you will not refuse it.”—“Sir,” said Peregrine, “I am not at present disposed to appeal to your opinion for the rectitude of my intentions: and I think you assume a little too much importance, in pretending to judge my conduct.”—“Sir,” replied the soldier, “I pretend to judge the conduct of every man who interferes with my concerns, and even to chastise him, if I think he acts amiss.”—“Chastise!” cried the youth, with indignation in his looks, “sure you dare not apply that term to me?”—“You are mistaken,” said Godfrey; “I dare do anything that becomes the character of a gentleman.”—“Gentleman, God wot!” replied the other, looking contemptuously at his equipage,* which was none of the most superb, “a very pretty gentleman, truly!”

25 The soldier’s wrath was inflamed by this ironical repetition, the contempt of which his conscious poverty made him feel; and he called his antagonist presumptuous boy, insolent upstart, and with other epithets, which Perry retorted with great bitterness. A formal challenge having passed between them, they alighted at the first inn, and walked into the next field, in order to decide their quarrel by the sword. Having pitched upon the spot, helped to pull off each other’s boots, and laid aside their coats and waistcoats, Mr. Gauntlet told his opponent, that he himself was

35 looked upon in the army as an expert swordsman, and that if Mr. Pickle had not made that science his particular study, they should be upon a more equal footing in using pistols. Peregrine was too much incensed to thank him for his plain dealing, and too confident of his own skill to relish the other’s proposal, which he accordingly rejected: then, drawing his sword, he observed, that were he to treat Mr. Gauntlet according to his deserts, he would order his man to punish his audacity with a horsewhip. Exasperated at this expression, which he considered an indelible affront, he made no reply, but attacked his adversary with equal ferocity and address. The youth parried his first and second thrust, but received the third in the outside of his sword-arm. Though the wound was superficial, he was transported with rage at the sight of his own blood, and returned the assault with such fury and precipitation, that Gauntlet, loath to take advantage of his unguarded heat, stood upon the defensive. In the second lunge, Peregrine’s weapon entering a kind of network in the shell of Godfrey’s sword, the blade snapped in two, and left him at the mercy of the soldier, who, far from making an insolent use of the victory he had gained, put up his Toledo with great deliberation, like a man who had been used to that kind of rencounters, and observed that such a blade as Peregrine’s was not to be trusted with a man’s life: then advising the owner to treat a gentleman in distress with more respect for the future, he slipped on his boots, and with sullen dignity of demeanour stalked back to the inn.

*carriage and horse

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Question 3

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

Select a novel, play, or epic poem that features a character whose origins are unusual or mysterious. Then write an essay in which you analyze how these origins shape the character and that character’s relationships, and how the origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole.

You may choose a work from the list below or one of comparable literary merit. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Beloved

Brave New World

Dracula

The English Patient

Frankenstein

Great Expectations

Grendel

The Iliad

The Importance of Being Earnest

Jane Eyre

Light in August

Macbeth

The Mayor of Casterbridge

The Metamorphosis

Middlemarch

No Country for Old Men

The Odyssey

Oedipus Rex

Orlando

Oryx and Crake

The Playboy of the Western World

A Prayer for Owen Meany

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Tom Jones

Twelfth Night

Waiting for Godot

Wuthering Heights

STOP

END OF EXAM