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NMSI ENGLISH

AP Literature

Approaching the Open-Ended Question - 2014 Deconstruction Lesson

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Approaching the Open-Ended Question

2014 Deconstruction Lesson

Introduction: The Open Question asks a broad question (usually about how a literary element contributes to the theme or character development) in which you select a novel or play of literary merit to answer the question. This is the only one of the three essay questions on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam on which you will be able to choose from the high school readings you have previously analyzed. The more you analyze and understand the novel or play, the better prepared you will be for the Open Question.

Activity 1: Preparing for the Open Question Prompt

In the weeks preceding the exam, begin to review the novels and plays you have read both in class and on your own. From them, you will need to prepare **at least three** novels/plays for possible use on the Open Question.

- Choose a **PRIMARY WORK**. This should be a multi-layered novel or play—which means the novel/play contains multiple themes and has complexity in characterization, setting, and/or plot. Canonical works are appropriate choices.
 - Examples: any Shakespearean tragedy or comedy, *Invisible Man*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Moby Dick*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Wuthering Heights* (or any other novel by the Bröntes), *Pride and Prejudice* (or any other novel by Jane Austen), etc.
- Choose a **SECONDARY WORK**. This novel or play may contain fewer layers of meaning. Contemporary works of literary merit are often appropriate for this choice.
 - Examples: *The Awakening*, *All The Pretty Horses*, *The Road*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, etc.
- Choose a **THIRD WORK** which you know well and can write about with confidence.

Usually preparing one good **PRIMARY WORK** and one good **SECONDARY WORK** will work for any prompt, but having a third work prepared will give you more to choose from as you approach the exam.

**Activity 2: Deconstructing the Prompt
(Individual Activity)**

Read the prompt carefully.

2014 AP* Literature Open-Response Prompt

It has often been said that what we value can be determined only by what we sacrifice. Consider how this statement applies to a character from a novel or play. Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character’s values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character’s values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole.

What does the word “sacrifice” mean? _____

What are some “things” one might sacrifice? (Think abstractly: integrity, honor, truth, etc.) _____

In what situations might these “things” be sacrificed? _____

What is the difference in meaning and connotation between sacrifice versus surrender? _____

What is the difference in meaning and connotation between sacrifice versus forfeit? _____

Activity 3: Organizing Ideas

Now, think of a novel or play you know very well that works with this prompt and write its title and author below:

Choose a character from that novel or play who has made a sacrifice: _____

Now, let's look at the prompt again. Notice the “task” sentences: **Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character's values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character's values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole.**

On the lines below, summarize the character's sacrifice (surrender or forfeit) in the novel you've noted above. _____

What value does the sacrifice illuminate regarding the character? _____

Explain how the sacrifice (surrender or forfeit) illustrates the theme or the meaning of the whole novel. _____

With a partner or in a small group, discuss the character's sacrifice in the novel or play you have chosen. Be sure to discuss how that sacrifice illuminates the character's values. Keep in mind that the sacrifice need not be noble; it could be ignoble. In other words, people may need to, or even choose to, sacrifice a good quality for a bad reason in certain circumstances. For example, one might sacrifice honesty to maintain a relationship with someone who is important to him/her.

After reflecting upon the character's sacrifice and how that sacrifice illuminates the character's values, consider the overall meaning of the work. What is the theme or “big idea” of the novel?

How does this character’s particular sacrifice connect to the theme (universal idea) of the novel?

Now let’s examine the list of novel choices from the exam. When taking the exam “for real,” it is a good idea to cover up the list to help you stay focused on those works you know well and not lose your self-confidence by seeing titles you don’t know. But these are the books that were listed with the 2014 prompt, which appeared on your mock exam.

Which novel or play did you use on the mock exam? _____

Did your choice appear on the provided list? _____

Do you think it was a good choice? Why or why not? _____

The Age of Innocence

Antigone

The Awakening

Beloved

The Crucible

Death of a Salesman

Ethan Frome

King Lear

Linden Hills

The Memory Keeper’s Daughter

Much Ado About Nothing

Noah’s Compass

Oryx and Crake

Othello

The Poisonwood Bible

The Portrait of a Lady

A Prayer for Owen Meany

A Raisin in the Sun

The Scarlet Letter

A Streetcar Named Desire

A Tale of Two Cities

Tess of the d’Urbervilles

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Things Fall Apart

A Thousand Acres

The Women of Brewster Place

What other titles would have been appropriate for this prompt?

**Activity 4: Crafting the Essay
(Individual Activity)**

Using the information from Activity 3, **craft a two-sentence opening paragraph.**

Sentence 1: Identify title, author, setting, key character, and a brief description of the **character’s sacrifice and how it illuminates the character’s values.**

Example: In Macbeth by William Shakespeare, Macbeth sacrifices his honor in order to obtain the crown by killing King Duncan, highlighting his overly ambitious nature.

Sentence 2: Make the **connection between the sacrifice and how it builds the theme.**

Example: This sacrifice highlights how people allow ambition and selfish desires to supersede acting in a moral and honorable manner.

Now write your first two sentences using these patterns:

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Craft a body paragraph.

Be sure to connect the events to the theme. Do not write a plot summary. For the AP test, you will need 2-3 body paragraphs to fully develop the prompt.

Consider the following when writing your body paragraphs:

- Use specific references and details from the work.
- Use connections and transitions between main ideas.
- Refer to the idea of your thesis and be sure to connect the details from the work to your thesis.
- Avoid mere plot summary. You must retell enough of the story in order to make your points, but in your commentary sentences, you must come back to the idea of the prompt.
- Continue to remind your reader of your thesis statement. Every detail you choose to include in your essay must have a reason for being there—to support your thesis.

Craft a conclusion of two or three sentences.

Conclusions on the Open Question are important. You will need to give the essay a feeling of finality. The conclusion is your last chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the meaning of the work as a whole and the “big picture” about human nature or society that is revealed.

Activity 5: Evaluating a Sample Essay (Group Activity)

Read the student sample essay below. The essay is typed exactly as the student wrote it.

Typically, such things as sacrifice and surrender are seen as negative in the sense that something someone cherishes must be given up in order for a greater event to occur. However, it is possible for sacrifice to be a positive aspect of one's personality. Within Charlotte Brontë's, "Jane Eyre", the main protagonist, Jane, repeatedly sacrifices her pride, her time, and her love for the sake of others in most cases and sometimes for the sake of her own well being.

Jane is introduced as a poor girl who is commonly mistreated by those who should care for her the most. She is eventually sent away by her family, but through perseverance she overcomes an influx of adversity and creates a comfortable life for herself. The most significant moment of Jane's sacrifice is when she is called upon to return to the family that rejected her for so many years. Jane surrenders her pride and chooses to take care of her aunt who never showed her the slightest bit of love in all the years she had spent with her. Jane tries to show the sick, dying woman love, but even as her aunt takes her last breaths, that love is not reciprocated.

One of the most difficult things to sacrifice or surrender is one's pride. Pride is something that you build and cherish and for Jane to push back and eliminate all the negative feelings she has against her aunt, was a true sacrifice. Jane swallowing her pride and sacrificing all of her inner rage and anger that she deserves to unleash on her former family must have taken a great degree of strength. This sacrifice allows readers to understand that Jane has positive values and that she is able to forgive even after she has been mistreated so much. It can also be assumed that Jane's forgiveness indicates that she may value her harsh upbringing in the sense that she would not be the strong independent woman she turned out to be.

Jane's sacrifice has a large effect on the book's understanding as a whole. Without her surrender and sacrifice, many would not take the same values and morals away from the book as they did. If it were not for Jane's forgiveness of her aunt, Jane could be viewed as a woman trying to achieve success in spite of her harsh upbringing. They could see Jane as merely trying to find revenge. Due to her sacrifice, readers are able to understand that Jane strives to be the bigger more mature person. No matter what life throws her way. Ultimately Jane's sacrifice shows the true morals of the novel, unconditional perseverance and forgiveness.

In conclusion, within Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre," the main protagonist's sacrifice of pride and her ideals ultimately shapes the understanding and morals of the novel as a whole. Although many may see Jane's sacrifices as negative, one may notice the outcome is positive, for Jane achieves success and happiness regardless of what she is challenged with every day.

Now, read each section of the sample essay below and answer the evaluation questions.

Essay	Evaluation
<p><i>Typically, such things as sacrifice and surrender are seen as negative in the sense that something someone cherishes must be given up in order for a greater event to occur. However, it is possible for sacrifice to be a positive aspect of one's personality. Within Charlotte Brontë's, "Jane Eyre", the main protagonist, Jane, repeatedly sacrifices her pride, her time, and her love for the sake of others in most cases and sometimes for the sake of her own well being.</i></p>	<p>What is the focus or thesis of this essay? Does it <u>fully</u> address the central question of the prompt? Why or why not?</p>
<p><i>Jane is introduced as a poor girl who is commonly mistreated by those who should care for her the most. She is eventually sent away by her family, but through perseverance she overcomes an influx of adversity and creates a comfortable life for herself. The most significant moment of Jane's sacrifice is when she is called upon to return to the family that rejected her for so many years. Jane surrenders her pride and chooses to take care of her aunt who never showed her the slightest bit of love in all the years she had spent with her. Jane tries to show the sick, dying woman love, but even as her aunt takes her last breaths, that love is not reciprocated.</i></p>	<p>Is this paragraph more summary or more analysis? Where does it make a connection to the central question of the prompt?</p>
<p><i>One of the most difficult things to sacrifice or surrender is one's pride. Pride is something that you build and cherish and for Jane to push back and eliminate all the negative feelings she has against her aunt, was a true sacrifice. Jane swallowing her pride and sacrificing all of her inner rage and anger that she deserves to unleash on her former family must have taken a great degree of strength. This sacrifice allows readers to understand that Jane has positive values and that she is able to forgive even after she has been mistreated so much. It can also be assumed that Jane's forgiveness indicates that she may value her harsh upbringing in the sense that she would not be the strong independent woman she turned out to be.</i></p>	<p>Is the description of Jane's sacrifice and how it reflects her values effectively analyzed? What could be added to strengthen the analysis in this paragraph?</p>

<p><i>Janes sacrifice has a large effect on the books understanding as a whole. Without her surrender and sacrifice, many would not take the same values and morals away from the book as they did. If it were not for Janes forgiveness of her aunt, Jane could be viewed as a woman trying to achieve success in spite of her harsh upbringing. They could see Jane as merely trying to find revenge. Due to her sacrifice, readers are able to understand that Jane strives to be the bigger more mature person. No matter what life throws her way. Ultimately Janes sacrifice shows the true morals of the novel, unconditional perseverance and forgiveness.</i></p>	<p>The writer of the essay wants to connect to the meaning of the work as a whole. Does he or she accomplish that? How?</p>
<p><i>In conclusion, within Charlotte Bronte’s “Jane Eyre,” the main protagonist’s sacrifice of pride and her ideals ultimately shapes the understanding and morals of the novel as a whole. Although many may see Jane’s sacrifices as negative, one may notice the outcome is positive, for Jane achieves success and happiness regardless of what she is challenged with every day.</i></p>	<p>Does this concluding paragraph have a “final feeling”? How does it allude to the meaning of the work as a whole? Is it effective?</p>

Review the scoring guide on the following page and assign a score to this student’s essay.

Score: _____

Justify your score with language from the scoring guide.

2014 AP[®] English Literature Scoring Guide
Question #3: The Open Question – Sacrifice

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, style, and mechanics: **Students are rewarded for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a three (3).

9-8 These essays offer a well-focused and persuasive analysis of how a particular sacrifice illuminates a character’s values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole. Using apt and specific textual support, these essays analyze how both the character and the work are shaped by a particular sacrifice. Although these essays may not be error-free, they make a strong case for their interpretation and discuss the literary work with significant insight and understanding. Essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do essays scored an 8.

7-6 These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how a particular sacrifice illuminates a character’s values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole. These essays analyze how both the character and the work are shaped by a particular sacrifice. While these essays demonstrate insight and understanding, their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, or less specific (or some combination of the three) in supporting detail than that of the 9–8 essays. Essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a 6.

5 These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading, but they tend to be superficial or thinly developed in analysis. They often rely upon plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. The essays attempt to discuss how a character’s values are illuminated by a particular sacrifice and how the sacrifice deepens the meaning of the work as a whole. They may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the character’s sacrifice or how that sacrifice impacts the work as a whole. While these essays demonstrate adequate control of language, they may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 essays.

4-3 These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of how a particular sacrifice illuminates a character’s values or provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole. The analysis may be partial, unsupported, or irrelevant. The essays may reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of how a character’s values are illuminated by a particular sacrifice and how the sacrifice deepens the meaning of the work as a whole. They may rely on plot summary alone. These essays may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors; they may also lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading, demonstrate inept writing, or both.

2-1 Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The remarks may be presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the text.

APPENDIX—Novel/Drama Card

You can use this form as you plan and prepare for the AP Literature exam in May. Using a 5x8 index card, complete at least three of these book cards to help you review the novels and plays you have been assigned to read in high school. Work with your classmates to make sure all the details are accurate. Then study your cards frequently to be sure you are able to remember all the specifics about the novels you have selected as your “Question 3 Arsenal.”

- Title
- Author
- Genre (include original copyright date)
- Setting (remember setting is not just time and place)
- Characters and Brief Description (include quotes)
- Point of View (include significance)
- Symbols/Images/Motifs (include quotes and significance)
- Narrative Techniques (include examples, quotes, and significance)
- Description and Significance of Opening Scene
- Description and Significance of Closing Scene
- Plot Details - (include introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement)
- Topics (5)
- Themes (3)
- Thesis Statements for Each Theme (3)
- Significant Quotes to be Memorized and Related to Theme/Thesis (5-10)