

**New York Advanced Placement Expansion (APEX)  
Advanced Placement Literature and Composition**

2014-2015

**AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature and Composition  
Assessment Three**

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**AP English Literature  
2003 Scoring Guidelines (Form B)**

**Question 1 – George Meredith’s *Modern Love***

General Directions: The score that you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. **Reward the writers 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 well-focused and persuasive essays analyze in detail how the poet conveys a view of “modern love (c. 1862), demonstrating an understanding of the poem’s setting (“common bed”), its two figures (“he” and “she”), and the presence of deep conflicts between them. These essays explore in depth the implications of the poem’s ambiguous language and suggest interesting interpretations, particularly with regard to imagery and diction. Not without flaws, these essays respond skillfully to the language and structure of the poem. Essays scored a nine (9) demonstrate exceptional clarity, consistency, and sophistication.
- 7-6** These competent essays comprehend the basic situation presented in the poem and explain clearly how the poet conveys a view of modern love, or at least of a particular relationship. They contain some insights, but their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific than that of the essays in the 9-8 range. Generally well written, these essays are free from significant or sustained misinterpretation, but lack the control and sophistication of essays in the 9-8 range.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the poem, but they tend to be superficial in their analysis of meaning and technique. They may be vague, generalized, or inadequately supported by references to the text. The writing may be marred by surface errors, weak arguments, or incomplete development.
- 4-3** These lower-half essays fail to offer adequate analysis of the poem and/or fail to respond to the prompt. The writer may misconceive the poem, or ignore *how* the poem conveys its meanings; the writing may lack control and/or fail to develop ideas. Essays scored a three (3) usually contain flagrant misreadings and/or inept writing.
- 2-1** These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief. Although some attempt may be made to answer the question, the writer’s observations are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. The essays may be poorly written on several counts and may contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Essays scored a one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the poem. Especially inept, vacuous, and/or unsound essays must be scored a one (1).
- 0** These essays give a response with no more than a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.

## Sample U – Score 9

In the poetic sequence “Modern Love,” George Meredith uses a wealth of figurative language and metaphor to portray a view of modern love as being akin to living death. This bleak, pessimistic view is communicated primarily through his use of personification and metaphor as means to characterize modern lovers.

The two characters of this piece, an unidentified “he” (line 1) and a similarly unidentified “she” (ln. 1), are round, tragic figures that serve to illustrate modern love at its worst. Their marriage bed, called only a “common bed” (ln. 3), appears to lack the fiery passion and love traditionally associated with marriage. The wife’s internal reality, revealed to us through the poet’s use of indirect characterization, becomes apparent as “she wept with waking eyes” (l. 1). Clearly, she is miserable in her matrimony, and openly demonstrates this discontent through “the strange low sobs that shook their common bed” (l. 3). The wife’s external reality, described as “stone-still” (line 7) in a morbid metaphor, also implies how unhappy she is.

Her husband appears to share a similar attitude toward their “marriage-tomb” (l. 15); he feels that his wife’s weeping is “Dreadfully venomous to him” (l. 6), indicating the feelings of resentment and bitterness he harbours toward her. This gives the reader some insight into his internal reality and serves to illustrate how Meredith views modern love. The lovers in this sequence, characterized with similes comparing them to “sculptured effigies” (l. 14) devoid of life and passion, are one of the primary means that the speaker utilizes to convey his views on modern love. Their stony, passionless attitudes toward each other are painful to read, but they effectively communicate the nature of their love.

Another significant means by which the speaker communicates his ideas on modern love is figurative language and imagery. He employs personification particularly well in illustrating modern love, lending human characteristics to the wife’s “waking eyes” (l. 1), the husband’s “hand’s light quiver” (l. 2), the woman’s sobs “that shook their common bed” (l. 3), and her “giant heart” (line 9) which is egged on to “Drink the pale drug of silence” (line 10). Each of these examples serve to dehumanize the characters; it is as if their individual eyes and hearts and hands must act independently of them because they are so paralyzed, rendered so “stone-still” (l. 7) by their passionless love. The speaker also uses several effective metaphors and similes to portray modern love in all its misery. He makes a comparison between the wife’s sobs and “little gaping snakes” (l. 5), thereby communicating the attitude of revulsion and distaste in which she is held. The clear lack of affection for her is evident. It appears that her response to this is to “lay / stone-still ... / with muffled pulses” (lns. 6-8); in this description, the speaker is employing a metaphor likening her to a corpse. This morbid comparison serves to further emphasize the death like qualities of modern love.

The final, most powerful literary device present in this poem is a conceit comparing the husband and wife to “sculptured effigies ... / upon their marriage-tomb” (lines 14-15). This poignant comparison truly conveys Meredith’s attitude toward modern lovers: through their marriage, they have effectively committed themselves to a lifetime of death. The passion, the joy, the exuberance that once characterized their relationship has been replaced by a single common metaphoric desire: “the sword that severs all” (line 16). The reader, realizing that the modern lovers desire nothing but death, fully understand the tragedy of modern love as portrayed by G. Meredith. Not only does it steal the *joie de vivre* of young, beautiful couples, it leaves them with nothing but a miserable series of “dead black years” (l. 12) behind them, full of sorrow, misery, and regret.

## Sample F – Score 6

The phrase used frequently in weddings, “til death do us part” has lately become void of meaning when modern couples take and brake this oath easily. This was not always the case. People used to endure such incovinent marraiges to the point that both partners suffered. In a time when marrage was forever, the English writer George Merdith sounds his silent rebellion to eternal matrimony in his poem “Modern Love.”

He begans his story by telling how a man first discovers that his wife is unhappy. He describes how at the mere “hand’s light quiver by her head,” (line 2) she begins to cry uncontrollably. Surly this is not the love that the man married. Meredith is portraying how after marriage the woman in love is changed to the extent that the touch of her lover, now husband’s hand is repulsive. And yet inspite of her obvious uncomfot, the marrage continues and she remains sharing his bed.

The apparent unhappyness of the woman has a drastic affect on the man, and Meredith uses images of venomos snakes and poison to portray these feelings. With each tear the woman cries the man feels “gaping snakes” that are “deeply venomous to him” (line 5-6). The man, like the woman, remains in this torturous marrage and feels the pain of its endurance everyday once again, it is pointed out that love is gone, and that only pressure from society is keepin the two together.

The passage continues to reveal the pains of an old fashioned marrage that is not held together by love. In the end all the couple really has left is “vain regret” (line 13) that years of tear filled nights have provided. That is not love. All this could have been prevented if the couple had adhered to a view of modern love. This is a love without regrets and poison. If they had had the courage to end it, they could have eached loved again rather than dying together, bitter and yet alone. The couple had a sword between them their entire life, but lacked the “sword that severs all” (line 16) and as a result were unhappy and without love. Modern love is given freely and taken away just as easily. Modern love is also knowing when to let go.

George Meredith had a modern view of love which can be seen through his poem “Modern Love.” In it he shows a dead, old fashioned love which could have been saved. It shows that love between two people doesn’t always last forever, and in a modern world, this needs to be recognized.

## Sample K – Score 5

The “modern love” concept is seen in the couple’s relationship that has been lost in the past through regret and sorrows.

Lines 1-6 depict the relationship between the husband and the wife. He knows her sorrows simply “at his hand’s light quiver by her head” (l. 2), but they are “dreadfully venomous to him” (l. 6). Her sorrows are too big for her, she cannot escape them, and they poison her husband. Her crying “shook their common bed,” (l. 3) but their bed seems to be the only thing they share. The husband is not able to share in his wife’s sorrow because they are constantly present. This is seen through the simile: “like little gaping snakes,” (l. 5) where the snake, portrayed as evil regrets, stares without rest, ready to strike, yet simply a presence. His wife’s evil sorrows never go anywhere, they are constantly watching to strike the husband.

The wife carries her burdens throughout the night that never seems to end. The author personifies memory and tears, they “Drink the pale drug of silence,” (l. 10) that keep sleep away, and addicted to bringing up the past full of sorrows. They were “looking through their dead black years,/By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.” (12-13) The woman keeps on looking to her past, though this is futile because she cannot change it, and the past is gone, like “the blank wall.” (l. 13)

Even until their death, do they carry the burden of the past, in that they have forgotten to look at what they do have. Both are stuck “wishing for the sword that severs all” (l. 16) because they have lost what they do have to the past. Modern love is empty and full of regrets.

**Scoring Commentary**  
**2003 (Form B) Question 1 AP Literature**  
**George Meredith's *Modern Love***

**Sample U (Score 9):** This well-developed, persuasive essay begins with a sharply-focused introductory paragraph that relates technique and theme, emphasizing from the start Meredith's idea that modern love is "akin to living death." Each paragraph extends and develops that theme, in a remarkably eloquent style that manages to be very specific, replete with brief citations from the poem, and yet broadly inclusive. The writer skillfully identifies techniques like "indirect characterization" and the "external" vs. "internal reality" of both figures and pays careful attention to the controlling effect of the speaker's rhetorical strategies—figurative language, imagery, and personification. The essay is not without flaw, notably when it claims that personification lends "human characteristics to the wife's 'waking eyes,'" but that hardly matters when the writing is so interesting as this. The perception about the way the poem's imagery "serves to *dehumanize* the characters" is particularly fine, and the exceptional power and elegance of the entire last paragraph—with its climactic cadence ("a miserable series of 'dead black years' . . . full of sorrow, misery, and regret")—is perhaps even more impressive.

**Sample F (Score 6):** This essay begins well by contextualizing the marriage in the poem ("when marriage was forever" and both partners suffered") and going on to argue that in modern love "all this could have been prevented." While it is debatable that Meredith in 1862 viewed "modern love" as "a love without regrets and poison," this essay still makes a cogent case for such a contrast and remains well focused on it. The essay aptly summarizes the marital impasse in the poem, noting well how the "gaping snakes" effect for the man is caused by the woman's tears, in a style that is well-controlled despite some mistakes ("brake," "eached"). Nevertheless, the essay's attention to detail is limited: the idea that the couple lacked "the sword that severs all" (i.e., divorce) is not persuasive, and little else in the essay offers closer or deeper analysis. The conclusion of this five paragraph essay merely repeats, less effectively, the good argument made at the start, that Meredith's view of modern love is a "silent rebellion to eternal matrimony."

**Sample K (Score 5):** This essay demonstrates a correct but generalized understanding of the marital relationship in the poem, emphasizing the husband's inability "to share in his wife's sorrow," his perception of "little gaping snakes" as his "wife's evil sorrows," and her role as one who "keeps on looking to her past." Clearly responding to the prompt, the essay mentions the poem's use of simile, imagery, and personification, and concludes simply that "modern love is empty and full of regrets. The essay remains superficial in its failure to develop detailed, fully accurate, and insightful interpretations of either character in the poem, in its inability to connect the craft of the poem with its meaning, and in its failure to discuss with any depth the poem's view of modern love.