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# AP English Literature and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 2: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*

The score should reflect the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the students for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

**9–8** These essays offer a persuasive analysis of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. Using apt and specific textual support, the essays demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the discussion of prose. Although these well-focused essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear and effectively organized. Essays scored a 9 have especially convincing analysis and effective control of language.

**7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. Using textual support, they are organized and demonstrate control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the discussion of prose. These focused essays show insight in their analysis, and they offer clear and controlled analysis and writing. Essays scored a 7 have solidly developed analysis and consistent control of organization and language.

**5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques, but the analysis may be superficial and thinly developed. While the essays include some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the analysis of Hawthorne’s portrayal of the narrator’s attitude or the use of literary techniques may be slight, and support from the passage may tend toward summary or paraphrase. Their analysis and discussion may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported. These essays demonstrate some control of language, but they may be marred by surface errors. These essays have difficulty presenting a cohesive idea, clear organization, or sustained development of analysis.

**4–3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the passage. The analysis of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques may be partial, unconvincing, oversimplified, or irrelevant; the essays may ignore Hawthorne’s portrayal of the narrator’s attitude or the use of literary techniques. Evidence from the passage may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely only on paraphrase. The essays often demonstrate a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

**2–1** These essays compound several writing weaknesses. Although they make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they are often unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting their ideas. The essays may be poorly written on several counts; they may contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Ideas may be presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the passage. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the passage.

**0** These essays give a response that is completely off topic or inadequate; there may be some mark or a drawing or a brief reference to the task.

— These essays are entirely blank.

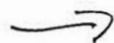
2

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

In an 1852 novel, Nathaniel Hawthorne used a short ~~exchange between~~ scene between two characters to help display the narrator's attitude towards the other character. With a first person perspective, lavish imagery, and probing dialogue, the prose establishes the narrator's initial bewilderment and later disdain for the second character, Zenobia.

The first person perspective helps convey the narrator's vacillating opinion of Zenobia. As the prose develops the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia progresses from "Her manner [bewildering him]" to him accepting "how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased" to her irritating him with "condescending, qualified approval and criticism" of the commune he lived on. ~~that~~

These thoughts and reactions are opened up to the audience, displaying not only the final attitude of the speaker towards Zenobia but also how he develops it. First person perspective



Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

2

2A

2 of 3

taps into the mind of the narrator to explicitly reveal his attitude towards Zenobia.

Furthermore, lavish imagery helps cement the narrator's bewilderment and eventual disdain. In the story, Zenobia once lived on a commune with the narrator ~~where~~ <sup>where</sup> they accepted and promoted the ideal of equality. The "chandelier... in the center [of the room], glowing with [numerous] lights," "exceedingly rich" furniture, and "the ~~full~~ fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination" all contribute to the conflicting emotions in the narrator. Zenobia's jarring transition from a self-sufficient commune to a lavish ~~home~~ lifestyle ~~with~~ forces the narrator to express his wide range of reactions. The dazzling imagery of luxury helps display just how wealthy Zenobia's new lifestyle is.

Lastly, the probing dialogue between the narrator & Zenobia helps flesh out the narrator's feelings. The narrator's



2

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initial bewilderment is a reaction to the level imagery developed in the first paragraph. His ~~pointing~~ ~~stating~~ questions toward Zenobia and her qualified responses help ~~to~~ solidify the narrator's irritation. The narrator further tests ~~the~~ Zenobia's reaction to his own allusion to their common acquaintance, Hollingsworth. Both sets of dialogue are reflected by reactions revealed through a first person perspective. This combination of techniques helps the audience clearly understand the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia.

Through first person perspectives, imagery, and dialogue, Hawthorne ~~characterizes~~ <sup>portrays</sup> the narrator's bewilderment and irritation towards Zenobia.

#

In the 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, he is able to portray the narrator's attitude of confusion ~~or a sense of despair~~ towards Zenobia through the use of ~~the~~ vivid imagery, <sup>and</sup> internal dialogue.

In the very first paragraph of the narrator starts off with a heavily detailed description of the room that he is in, stating that he was "dazzled by the brilliancy of the room," and how <sup>there were</sup> "pictures, marbles, vases... more shapes of luxury than than there could be any object in ~~an~~ enumerating." (2, 13-14). ~~He~~ By immediately giving ~~the~~ the reader an exceptionally grand image of the house of Zenobia, one assumes that she will be ~~as~~ as equally exceptional. ~~suggesting that the~~ ~~that~~ However, the narrator contradicts this thought that one may have in saying that "he "malevolently beheld the true character of the woman," which leads one to assume that she is not the woman she once was." (27-28). In ~~giving~~ a detailed description of what one thinks Zenobia would be like that is immediately contradicted with the narrator's internal thoughts, it shows how ~~the~~ he is confused by her ~~and~~ since he "hardly know[s] whether [he] then beheld Zenobia in her truest ~~attid~~ attitude, or whether



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~~Q1~~ Q2

that were the merer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale." (35-38) It must be especially confusing for the narrator since Blithedale is supposed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living. Yet since Zenobia is putting on this act that suggests she is a facade that suggests that she did not learn much from her time on the farm:

The narrator also has lots of internal dialogue that fully expose his feelings of confusion and annoyance towards her. For example, he strictly says that her mannerism "irritated [him]" (56). In saying this directly, it solidifies that the way she is "acting" is not appreciated by him. In order to sort out his confusion he conducts an "experiment" [which] had fully succeeded." (84). Because the narrator gives us the ability to determine what he is thinking with internal dialogue, it allows the reader to clarify his thoughts for her, which in the end, turned out to be amicable.

Because Nathaniel Hawthorne uses vivid imagery and internal dialogue in this scene, the reader is able to see the transition of thought from



Q2

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

confusion towards zenobia, ~~towards~~ to amicable res.

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#2

In the excerpt of Hawthorne's novel, the narrator, through the use of descriptive detailing and shifting tone, is able to portray an attitude of attractiveness, curiosity, and in the end disapproval towards Zenobia.

In the beginning the narrator starts by describing a luxurious room that represents Zenobia.

The narrator utilizes a plethora of details of that room, which serve to portray the superficial characteristics of Zenobia. As the characteristic depict fancy and beauty, the narrator feels attracted to Zenobia.

But in lines 19-21 "It cost me, ... a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in my self a positive effort to bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned against her, ..." this quite quite implies a shift from an attractive tone towards a curious tone. Likewise the narrator's attitude change.

In lines 77-80, it is revealed that in the inside, Zenobia is not pretty, in fact she is a selfish, judgemental, and cynical woman that makes fun of the people she feels that are lower class than her.

In the last paragraph, the narrator states his disapproval attitude and revealed that Zenobia was emotionally unstable.

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## 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 2

#### Overview

For Question 2, the prose analysis question, students were asked to read an excerpt from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel *The Blithedale Romance* and respond to the following prompt:

The following interchange, excerpted from an 1852 novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, occurs when two characters who have been living on the Blithedale Farm — a community designed to promote an ideal of equality achieved through communal rural living — are about to part ways. Read the passage carefully. In a well-written essay, analyze how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques.

Students were expected to accomplish the following tasks successfully:

- They were to **read** carefully.
- They were to **analyze** how the author portrays the narrator’s attitude toward another character using literary techniques.
- They were to **write** a well-written essay.

Again, the three tasks are interrelated and interdependent.

- **Reading** carefully means reading “closely,” employing the techniques practiced during the Advanced Placement class, and engaging with qualities (that is, the kind of text, the difficulty of the text, and the necessary context), terms (the particular techniques and elements related to analysis), and characteristics (the unique structure or presentation of the text) related to the study of prose. Reading in this way begins with the assumption of meaning, and students should, even at first reading, begin to pay attention to how particular features of the text contribute to meaning.
- **Analyzing** means identifying the important parts of a larger whole and being able to explain how those parts connect to and function within that whole. In this case, students needed to identify the ways in which the author revealed the narrator’s attitude. The prompt did not ask the students to be familiar with utopian communities in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America or to be aware of changing economic and gender contexts, although all of these inform the novel as a whole. Instead, students were to identify how the author, Hawthorne, uses literary techniques to reveal the narrator’s relationship with Zenobia in the given passage.
- Again, **writing** a well-written essay means controlling many features, including a defensible thesis, full development and textual support for ideas, clear connections and transitions that help cue the reader, and an attention to the standard conventions of writing.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Sample: 2A**

**Score: 7**

This well-written essay offers a reasonable analysis of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude toward Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. The introduction identifies the literary devices to be analyzed (“first person perspective, lavish imagery, and probing dialogue”) and notes the complexity of the narrator’s attitude: he is initially bewildered by Zenobia and later disdainful toward her. The essay identifies how the shift from the first attitude to the second is accomplished in the passage, stating that “[t]he first person perspective helps convey the narrator’s vacillating opinion of Zenobia”; the essay then maps the progression of his attitude “from ‘Her manner [bewildering him]’ to him accepting ‘how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased’ to her irritating him with ‘condescending, qualified approval and criticism’ of the commune he lived on.” Here, the selection of appropriate evidence in support of the claim and careful embedding of textual references demonstrates control of both analysis and composition; the essay shows an awareness that the narrator “develops” his attitude as the narration “taps into the mind of the narrator.” Turning its attention to the lavish imagery in the passage, the essay provides brief summary before progressing to why the narrator is conflicted. Because the commune “promoted the ideal of equality,” Zenobia’s “jarring transition from a self-sufficient commune to a lavish lifestyle forces the narrator to express his wide range of reactions.” Zenobia’s “qualified responses” to attempts to engage her in dialogue “solidify the narrator’s irritation” as does her response to his allusion to their mutual acquaintance, Hollingsworth. While the essay presents its ideas clearly and with good attention to textual detail and language appropriate to the discussion of prose, it is not as fully persuasive as it might be. For example, where it introduces point of view, close analysis of diction could help to develop more exact conclusions about the narrator’s state of mind; where it mentions Hollingsworth, it might explain that this reference deepens the contrast between two ways of life. More sustained analysis of successive points and better integration of the three separate body paragraphs on perspective, imagery, and dialogue might have helped to raise the score of this essay from a 7 to an 8.

**Sample: 2B**

**Score: 5**

This essay offers a plausible reading of how Hawthorne portrays the narrator’s attitude toward Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. It initially claims that the narrator’s attitude toward Zenobia is one of “confusion” and that this confusion is portrayed through “vivid imagery and internal dialogue.” This claim evolves over the course of the essay, so that it eventually reaches a clearer understanding that the narrator’s attitude progresses from confusion to amicableness. The essay also provides details of the setting and claims that “[b]y immediately giving the reader an exceptionally grand image of the house of Zenobia, one assumes that she will be as [*sic*] equally exceptional. However, the narrator contradicts this thought ... in saying that he ‘malevolently beheld the true character of the woman.’” The essay argues that the narrator continues to be confused by Zenobia, uncertain as to whether he sees “Zenobia in her truest attitude” in this house or at Blithedale. The essay’s discussion of “internal dialogue” is more superficial. It provides textual references but relies on paraphrase for its slight analysis: “Because the narrator gives us the ability to determine what he is thinking with internal dialogue, it allows the reader to clarify his thoughts for her, which in the end, turned out to be amicable.” While the latter interpretation is plausible, it is not convincing given the preponderance of evidence to the contrary in the passage and the fact that the essay does not offer sufficient evidence to support this reading. The essay also mentions vivid imagery without analyzing this imagery and instead confines itself to a discussion of detail. While the essay demonstrates some control of language, it does not consistently use language appropriate to the analysis of prose. The combination of these characteristics earned this essay a score of 5. However, with more in-depth analysis of the literary techniques it identifies, less reliance on

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**Question 2 (continued)**

paraphrase, and greater attention to how the text signals the narrator’s persisting inner conflict, this 5 essay could perhaps have risen to a score of 6.

**Sample: 2C**

**Score: 2**

This unacceptably brief essay makes some attempt to respond to the prompt, but its ideas are presented with little clarity and pervasive errors interfere with understanding, for example: “the narrator, throug [*sic*] the us [*sic*] of descriptive detailing and shifting tone, is able to portray an attitude of attractiveness [*sic*], curiosity, and in the end disapproval towards Zenobia.” This lack of compositional control is especially pronounced when the essay attempts to communicate the narrator’s conflicted attitude toward Zenobia. The essay relies largely on plot summary rather than analysis, and it offers speculative claims without textual support. For example, although the essay asserts that the narrator is conflicted, there is almost no evidence for this claim, or for the final claim that Zenobia is “emotionally unstable [*sic*].” This essay earned a score of 2 because it compounds several writing weaknesses, but it does offer some response to the prompt and show some understanding of the narrator’s attitude toward Zenobia. With stronger control of composition permitting the effective communication of ideas, this essay might perhaps have risen to a score of 3.