

About the Sample Essays

Since I used an actual College Board prompt for this essay, the sample essays are not from Spring Woods writers this time, but are sample essays used by the AP readers as range finders to help them to score. They are in descending order by score point. Note, however, that even the highest scoring essay (Essay One) is not perfect; these are forty minute first drafts, and the AP scoring rubric allows for this obvious limitation.

Essays One and Two are upper half essays (7-9), while Essays Three and Four are lower half essays (1-5). Score point 6 forms a sort of border-land between the two. This distinction is made because the standard for lower-division, undergraduate writing at a first tier university is more like upper half writing, and lower half writing is much closer to what is typically found in a high school setting.

In terms of predicting whether the writer would pass the AP exam: assuming a reasonable score on the multiple choice, the writers of Essays One and Two almost certainly passed the test; the writer of Essay Three possibly passed the test if one of his or her other essays was score point higher than this one; and the writer of Essay Four almost certainly failed the test.

DIRECTIONS: Using the sample essays, write a paragraph for each of the tasks below.

Responding to the Prompt

The Prompt asks the writer to “compose a well-written essay in which you analyze Hardy’s portrayal of the complex relationship between the two characters.” Focusing only on the nature of the “complex relationship,” contrast the handling of this idea in either Essay One or Two to one of the lower half essays, Essays Three or Four. Points of contrast could include the degree to which the two writers narrowed the concept and/or the way that the two writers defined this concept. However, you choose to organize the paragraph, though, it should be clear why one the upper half essay was more effective than the lower half essay in this regard.

Essay Structure

Essays One and Two organize their essays by ideas; Essays Three and Four organize by literary device. Compare either Essay One or Two to either Essay Three or Four and discuss why organizing by ideas made for the better essay. Use specific examples in your paragraph.

Evidence Integration

In terms of setting up evidence, integrating effective evidence, and synthesizing the evidence to create an argument, Essay One and Two do a better job. Locate a point of comparison between one of the upper half essays (Essays One and Two) and the one of the lower half essays (Essays Three and Four) in which the writer is attempting to do something similar with a piece of evidence from the text. Using this example, explain why the upper half essay is more effective.

Analysis

Upper half essays are better written, but in order to score a 7 or above, there has to be some level of insight. Choose something clever that one of the upper half essays does (from Essay One or Two) and contrast it with the more workmanlike (or even incompetent) handling of the same sort of idea in one of the lower half essays (from Essay Three or Four). This can be in terms of development of ideas, understanding of the text, or ability to use smaller ideas to build to something more substantial. Your examples should be specific.