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AP Literature Open-ended Prompts (1970-2012)

- 2000 Choose a character from a novel or play of recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you identify the role the character fulfills in the novel or play. Be sure to cite specific details from the text to support your response to these questions. In your essay, do not merely summarize the plot.
- 2001 The significance of a title, such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *The Scarlet Letter*, is often central to the work. However, in other works, the title may have a different significance. Choose two works and discuss how the significance of their respective titles is developed through the authors' use of language such as content, register, diction, and point of view.
- 2002 In a novel, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a novel or the opening scene of a drama (such as a play) is not the beginning of the work. Write an essay about the opening scene of a drama or the first chapter of a novel in which you analyze how the author uses language to create a sense of mystery.
- 2003 Analyze how literary work does not merely represent a culture, it contributes to the culture. In the case of literary criticism, it provides the pleasure of a critical analysis that is not limited by the author's intent. A literary critic's analysis, however, often contains an element of interpretation. Choose a novel or play of recognized literary merit. Explain your interpretation and why the author's use of language is significant to your interpretation.
- 2004 Choose a work of literature written before 1900. Write an essay in which you present arguments for and against the work's relevance for a particular period. Your arguments should include evidence of your own "literary" and "cultural" knowledge.
- 2005 Although literary critics have been traditionally skeptical of the unique literary characteristics, many authors have employed the dramatic technique of the "soliloquy" to reveal the inner thoughts of their characters and to address the audience. Choose one work of recognized literary merit and, in a well-written essay, show how the soliloquy is an important dramatic device in the author's "playbook."
- 2006 Unlike the novelist, the writer of a play does not use the conventional and orderly means of a narrator's voice to guide the reader. Instead, the writer of a play must use the conventions of the stage to create a sense of drama. Choose a play and explain how the playwright uses the conventions of the stage to create a sense of drama. Your response should include evidence of your own "literary" and "cultural" knowledge.
- 2007 The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and stories. Select the work of recognized literary merit and, in a well-written essay, analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for the individual and the society. Choose a character from the plot or action of the work you discuss.
- 2008 A character's attempt to capture the past is important to many novels, plays, and stories. Choose a literary work in which a character uses the past to understand the present. Write an essay in which you analyze the character's use of the past in understanding the present. Your essay should include evidence of your own "literary" and "cultural" knowledge.
- 2009 In some novels and plays, the author uses a narrator to describe the events. In other works, the author uses a character to describe the events. Write an essay in which you analyze the narrator's or character's role in the work and discuss the significance of each choice. Do not merely summarize the plot.
- 2010 Choose an important or striking symbolic incident or character in a work of literary merit. Write an essay in which you analyze the incident or character in relation to the theme or central idea of the work. Avoid plot summary.
- 2011 Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of recognized literary merit who might be the focus of the author's "soliloquy" as considered in Prompt 2005. Write an essay in which you analyze the character's role in the work and discuss the moral and ethical implications for the individual and the society. Avoid plot summary.

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