

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

## 2015 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3 (Cruelty)

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 one 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 well-focused and persuasive analysis of the nature of how cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or the victim. Using apt and specific textual support, these essays analyze the significance of cruelty in the work. 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 cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim. These essays analyze the significance of cruelty in the work. While these papers have insight and understanding, their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific 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. Although the essays attempt to discuss how cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim, they may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the significance of cruelty, and support from the text may be too general. 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 cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim. The analysis may be partial, unsupported, or irrelevant, and the essays may reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the significance of cruelty, or 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 lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

**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 their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The students' remarks may be presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the text.

**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.

In the play Othello, the evil character Iago instigates the majority of the plot through his cruel ways. At the start of the work, Othello has recently married Desdemona and the couple ~~are~~<sup>is</sup> perfectly content. Othello has also recently appointed Cassio to lieutenant - choosing him over the vengeful Iago. Through his manipulative ways, Iago is able to bring about the downfall of nearly every character in the play. In Shakespeare's Othello, Iago's surreptitious ~~act~~ and subtle cruelty fuels other characters to commit their own acts of cruelty which they may not have otherwise deemed possible.

Iago's acts of cruelty are not overt, but sneaky, so other characters barely even notice what is going on. Iago slithers in and out of people's minds, making them believe his cruel lies. He claims to help his pal Rodrigo in winning over Desdemona from Othello, while secretly using Rodrigo for his own personal gain. Iago's malicious intent at the start of the play is to take down Othello, ~~and Cassio~~<sup>for choosing</sup> Cassio over himself for the position of lieutenant, and Cassio for beating him out for that role. He uses manipulation to frame Cassio ~~for~~ as sleeping with Desdemona as a way of



3

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

3A  
2 of 3

taking them both down at once. Through spreading "news" and "proof" of this ~~other~~ fictitious affair, he instigates a sense of jealousy and rage in Othello. Iago is cruel in his intentions, but also in his actions and words, for making Othello believe his wife is unfaithful drives him into a state of madness. Iago is cruel to nearly every character in the play, whether through spreading lies or planting fake evidence, but the ways in which the characters react to his cruelty tell more about them than when Othello and Rodrigo are victims to Iago's cruelty, they themselves become cruel, but when Desdemona suffers under Iago's words, she remains pure. ~~Iago~~ Iago takes advantage of poor Rodrigo in making him believe he is helping him win over Desdemona, but during this process, it becomes clear that Rodrigo himself possesses the ability to be cruel. When he learns of Cassio and Desdemona's "affair" he becomes fueled by hate and jealousy and attempts to kill Cassio merely at Iago's suggestion. While it is Iago who fuels most of the drama in the play, it is the others ~~who~~ <sup>who</sup> carry it out. Othello also falls prey to this and winds up murdering his wife Desdemona in their bed, though she claims she did nothing





wrong, Othello is so violently fueled by his anger that he can not listen to her. Though he would never have killed her without Iago's cruel rumors, the fact that he did it demonstrates that he had it in him all along. Finally, despite all of Iago's cruel words in tainting Desdemona's reputation and turning him against her, she remains pure throughout it all, even to her death in bed. Though her life is ruined and ended ~~by Iago~~ indirectly by Iago's cruelty, ~~she~~ Desdemona does not turn sour herself. After she is nearly murdered by her husband, she refuses even then to taint his own reputation and claims it is her own fault that she is dying.

Iago's cruelty is the cause of everyone's, including his own, downfall, but he himself is not the only man responsible. His cruelty reveals more about his victims than it does about himself. It is shown through Desdemona that it is not necessary to become cruel when one has had cruelty done on himself, but many characters still fall prey to this. One cruel action fuels another, and the cyclical nature of evil prevails when one has at least a hint of evil in himself. Cruelty functions in many ways, but it is nearly always guaranteed to breed more cruelty.

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3

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

3B  
1 of 3

In the novel Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë Heathcliff is haunted by his past ~~etc~~ of childhood mistreatment and grows up with a mentality seeking revenge to those who he believes took so much from him. His inability to let go of his past abuse, effects not only himself but the people around him.

The cruelty in Wuthering Heights plays an ~~role in the growth~~ influential role in the actions of ~~&~~ some of the characters. Heathcliff, who was brought into <sup>the</sup> home of Catherine and her older brother ~~Hindley~~ Hindley, wins ~~the~~ the affection of their father and the resentment of Hindley. <sup>As a result</sup> Because of this built up resentment, when Hindley inherits the home he mistreats and degrades Heathcliff. the cruelty Heathcliff experiences from Hindley influence Heathcliff to become a ~~the~~ well mannered man in society.

Cruelty did not only have a positive influence on ~~the~~ Heathcliff and his desire to formulate a new person, but also provided him ~~was~~ with a desire for revenge. ~~on Hindley~~ Hindley and Hindley's kin were of the people to whom Heathcliff looked to affect;



However he ~~was~~ also felt betrayed by Catherine for not ~~bet~~ loving him ~~to~~ and being with ~~to~~ him despite their history and feelings towards each other. Cruelty in Wuthering Heights is not just the cruelty that comes with abuse or mistreatment but also the social cruelty one can evoke on another's heart.

In Hindley's circumstance, his acts of cruelty come from a place of abandonment. His desire to be his father's favorite was intercepted by ~~heat~~ Heathcliff. Instead of trying to better himself, Hindley too decided to have someone else take the blame and be punished. ~~This act~~ His actions towards Heathcliff acted as a self-esteem ~~boaster~~ booster as well as a filler for a void of his own past. ~~The~~

Two sides of Heathcliff's character were revealed as a result of the cruelty shown toward him. His ability to follow Hindley's orders ~~and be able to~~ convey his self control. The long term effects of his mistreatment, reveal a much darker side. He is unable to move on with his life ~~to~~ knowing that there are no consequences





3

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

3B  
3 of 3

for Hindley's actions towards him.

Catherine plays a different role in Heathcliff's abuse. She hurts him mentally by loving him by not having the strength to stand up against society and her family to be with him. Since Heathcliff can't stop loving Catherine it pains him to see her married and spending her life with some one else. This influences him to continue to pursue her love.

Cruelty has many effects on people. It can act as a burden that can never leave a person or as a fire rooted in revenge.

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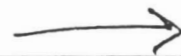
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3C  
1 of 2

In To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, an Alabama town called Maycomb is set in the 1930s. It's a time period of segregation, where the whites think they're above blacks. A lawyer named Atticus Finch agrees to take on a case where a sharecropper named Tom Robinson is convicted of raping a white woman.

Cruelty functions within the work on multiple levels. Atticus's daughter Scout is intensely curious about her secluded neighbor Boo Radley, who is ~~extra~~ ignored by the town and consistently gossiped about. On a more serious level, Tom Robinson is <sup>falsely</sup> convicted of raping a white woman, just because he's black.

When he tries escaping from jail later on, he is shot dead. Atticus Finch is ostracized for helping Tom Robinson in the case, and Scout is taunted for that. Her brother gets injured later on because of their father's work on the case.





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

3C  
2 of 2

The cruelty towards Tom Robinson reveals the people in the town as simple-minded characters with weak moral value. This is consistent with the exclusion of Boo Radley, and the harassment of the Finches. But the cruelty reveals Atticus to be a brave man with strong character, and Boo Radley as a kind individual. The plot also illustrates Boo Radley and Tom Robinson as the town's "mockingbirds".

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**AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**  
**2015 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3**

**Overview**

For the “open question” students were asked to select a novel, play, or epic poem in which acts of cruelty are important to the theme of the work and to write a well-organized essay analyzing how cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim.

This question presented students with a complex, multi-level task of identifying acts of cruelty, determining what the cruelty says about the perpetrator and/or victim, and then analyzing the deeper impact of cruelty on the work as a whole. For the “open question” students were offered a list of texts that would work well for the prompt. While many students made their selections for analysis from this recommended list, others chose from an impressive variety of other texts, ancient to contemporary, classic and noncanonical, for their analyses.

**Sample: 3A — *Othello***

**Score: 8**

This top-range essay confidently articulates two related claims: that Iago’s cruelty “fuels other characters to commit their own acts of cruelty which they may not have otherwise deemed possible” and that Iago’s “cruelty reveals more about his victims than about himself.” The essay makes apt and specific references to the play to develop a thorough and convincing analysis of the social, political, and personal motivation for Iago’s cruelty and its results. It argues that when Roderigo and Othello are victims of cruelty “they themselves become cruel”; Roderigo is “fueled by hate and jealousy,” and Othello’s murder of his wife as a result of Iago’s cruel lies “demonstrates that he had it in him all along.” Similarly, being the victim of cruelty brings out Desdemona’s defining characteristic: in contrast to the others, even under duress, “she remains pure.” The essay occasionally lapses into colloquialism (e.g., “Iago’s acts of cruelty are not overt, but sneaky, so other characters barely even notice what is going on”) and the statement of the theme could perhaps be articulated more gracefully, but this particularly well-focused essay clearly earned its score of 8.

**Sample: 3B — *Wuthering Heights***

**Score: 6**

This reasonable essay claims that Heathcliff is treated cruelly and that his own suffering leads him to perpetrate acts of cruelty on others: “Heathcliff is haunted by his past of childhood mistreatment and grows up with a mentality seeking revenge to those who he believes took so much from him.” Cruelty, this essay suggests, forms and reveals character. This claim is traced through several characters: Hindley is rejected by his father and so punishes Heathcliff; Heathcliff responds by becoming simultaneously mannerly and vengeful and “the long-term effects of his mistreatment, reveal a much darker side [of his character].” While the essay shows insight in identifying mental and physical cruelty, it does not use this distinction to great purpose. Its development of its claim is not thorough, and the supporting examples it offers from the novel are not fully analyzed for what they might contribute to the meaning of the novel as a whole. The writing shows a competent level of control over the elements of composition.

**AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION  
2015 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3 (continued)**

**Sample: 3C** — *To Kill a Mockingbird*

**Score: 3**

This essay accomplishes only a simplistic response to the prompt. Its first paragraph offers a basic recapitulation of the setting and primary action. The essay indicates that there are “multiple levels” of cruelty in the novel, but it does not follow through on this insight except in the most cursory way: “Scout is intensely curious about her secluded neighbor Boo Radley, who is ignored by the town . . . On a more serious level, Tom Robinson is falsely convicted of raping a white woman, just because he’s black.” The essay offers these examples as instances of cruelty without fully explaining how they are connected or what their effects might be. The conclusion of the essay overlooks the complex matrix of political and social factors that motivate cruelty in the novel and reductively explains the treatment of Tom Robinson as attributable to the fact that Maycomb contains “simple-minded characters with weak moral value [*sic*].” This brief essay uses short, simple sentences to articulate its oversimplified approach to the prompt. Its reliance on plot summary and its inadequate analysis earned it a score of 3.