**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
AP English Literature Mrs. Maloney Period\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**THE OPEN QUESTION (FREE RESPONSE)**

**Directions:  The following outline explains how to organize the writing of a timed essay question that requires an analysis of a specifically defined element of fiction.  Notice how this is not a formula that you force on any question, but a formula that changes based on the play or novel chosen.**   
**Introduction:**   
**1. Use the first sentence or two to begin to identify how the element specifically defined in the question functions in the chosen novel or play.  Allude to something here that will be finished in the conclusion.**   
**2.  In the next sentence or two, explain with clarity and precision how the author manipulates the language to portray the nature of the specifically defined element and the implication that this has for the meaning of the work as a whole.**   
**3.  Include the following three items in your thesis:**   
**A. Real Subject: Name the subject of your novel as directed by the**   
**question.**   
**B.  Inference:  What is your opinion (interpretation) about this subject?**   
**C.  Causations:  What are the shifts in meaning based on your inference**   
**about the subject?  These become the subdivisions of your essays.**   
**These become the topics for the topic sentences of each of the body**   
**paragraphs.  It is important here to show the ambiguity of the task**   
**in the way you define these causations.**   
**Body:**   
**4. The topic sentence should define what the writer/speaker does first to advance the element specifically addressed in the question and now stated in the thesis.**   
**5.  Find evidence in the part of the novel where the author advances the element specifically addressed in the question, previously stated in the thesis, and now mentioned in the evidence.   This evidence should do the following:  analyze what the author does and how the author does it. Name or define the literary choices made by the author to advance the element.  Remember that the question always directs you to do two things:  show the function of the element and the implications it has for the meaning of the work as a whole.**   
**End each paragraph with an interpretation that addresses the significance of the author's purpose and evaluate his/her literary choices.**   
**6.  Switch paragraphs when there is a shift in the second way in which the author chooses to advance to element.  Continue the same strategy as above for the next paragraph.**   
**7.  Remember that the question always directs you to do two things:  show the function of the element and the implications it has for the meaning of the work as a whole.  The previous examples show how the element functions in the work.  The next paragraph analyzes the implications it has for the meaning of the work as a whole.**   
**8.  The last body paragraph should continue the same strategy of the previous paragraph.**   
**Conclusion:**   
**9. State your thesis in the form of a conclusion resulting from the evidence previously examined.**   
**10.  Tie up the loose ends established in the introduction by making a conclusion about how the message of the work just analyzed applies to the overall human experience.**

Additional tips:

Use “word glue” such as repetition of key ideas in the prompt and in your opening paragraph.

Use “word glue” such as synonyms to connect ideas (example: journey/wanderings/travels or figurative/metaphoric/symbolic.

Use transitional words and phrases as needed.

Use the **present** tense when writing about literature!

Remember to **underline** the titles of full-length works of literature!

Try using **action** verbs to enliven your writing:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **dramatizes presents illustrates characterizes underlines** | **asserts posits enacts connects portrays** | **contrasts  juxtaposes  suggests  implies** **shows** | **addresses emphasizes stresses accentuates** **enables** |

**confirms contends reveals proves demonstrates**

PREVIOUS TOPICS

1. Significance of a title   
2. The author's manipulation of time   
3. A predominant allusion in a work   
4. Particular social attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to change   
5. Opening scene of a work   
6. Conflict between a parent (or a parental figure) and a son or daughter   
7. How contrasting places (for example, two countries, two houses) represent opposed forces or ideas   
8. Arguments for or against the work ‘s relevance in today’s world   
9 Similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a work   
10. Implausible or unrealistic incident or character - how it relates to the realistic elements in the work   
11. Character who confronts a mystery - identify the mystery and its investigation   
12. Internal events (mental/psychological) - how they impact external action in a work

Here are some aspects of setting that have been addressed over the past thirty years:

1. A scene or scenes of violence   
2. A scene of social occasion (wedding, funeral, party) - how it shows the values of the character /society   
3. A line or passage in a work and the reasons for its significance and effectiveness   
4. How and why an ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work

Here are some questions that have been based on quotes about literature:

1. "Spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation" evident in the ending of a work   
2. A work which you initially considered conventional, but now see as "uncivilized free and wild thinking"   
3. Explain the "pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of a particular work   
4. A scene or character which awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader   
5. How and why important elements of a work are "distorted"

Here are some questions that have been based on character:

1. How and why a particular immoral character in a work makes us react sympathetically   
2. Characters alienated from society because of gender, race, class, or creed - how that alienation reveals society's assumptions or moral values   
3. Character whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires or influences   
4. Character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, but has a significant presence   
5.  The nature of a character's villainy   
6. Character’s conflict between a private passion and a social responsibility   
7. A conventional or stereotyped character’s function in achieving the author’s purpose   
8. A rebel’s conflict and its ethical implications for the individual and society   
9. The function of a confidante in a work   
 

A Listing of ALL of the Open-ended Questions for Advanced Placement English, 1970-

1970.  Choose a character from a recognized work of literary merit and write an   
essay in which you (a) briefly describe the standards of the fictional   
society in which the character exists and (b) show how the character is   
affected by and responds to those standards.  In your essay do not merely   
summarize the plot.

1971.  The significance of a title such as The Adventures of Huckleberry   
Finn is so easy to discover.  However, in other works (for example, Measure   
for Measure) the full significance of the title becomes apparent to the   
reader only gradually.  Choose two works and show how the significance of   
their respective titles is developed through the authors' use of devices   
such as contrast, repetition, allusion, and point of view.

1972. In retrospect, the reader often discovers that the first chapter of a   
novel or the opening scene of a drama introduces some of the major themes of   
the work.  Write an essay about the opening scene of a drama or the first   
chapter of a novel in which you explain how it functions in this way.

1973.  An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it   
concludes.   In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the   
pleasure of significant closure has terminated with an artistic fault.  A   
satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense;   
significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to   
ambiguity and uncertainty.   In an essay, discuss the ending of a novel or   
play of acknowledged literary merit.  Explain precisely how and why the   
ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work.  Do not merely   
summarize the plot.

1974.  Choose a work of literature written before 1900.  Write an essay in   
which you present arguments for and against the works relevance for a person   
in 1974.  Your own position should emerge in the course of your essay.  You   
may refer to works of literature written after 1900 for the purpose of   
contrast or comparison.

1975.  Although literary critics have tended to praise the unique in   
literary characterizations, many authors have employed the stereotyped   
character successfully.  Select one work of acknowledged literary merit and   
in a well-written essay, show how the conventional or stereotyped character   
or characters function to achieve the author’s purpose.

You may choose of the works listed below or another work of comparable quality that is appropriate to the question.

1976.  The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will   
of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays.    
Select the work of an essayist who is in opposition to his or her society;   
or from a work of recognized literary merit, select a fictional character   
who is in opposition to his or her society.  In a critical essay, analyze   
the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the   
individual and the society.  Do not summarize the plot or action of the work   
you choose.

1977.  In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove   
to be significant.  In an essay, describe the major similarities and   
differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a novel or play   
and discuss the significance of such events.  Do not merely summarize the   
plot.

1978.  Choose an implausible or strikingly unrealistic incident or character   
in a work of fiction or drama of recognized literary merit.  Write an essay   
that explains how the incident or character is related to the more realistic   
or plausible elements in the rest of the work.  Avoid plot summary.

1979.  Choose a complex and important character in a novel or a play of   
recognized literary merit who might on the basis of the character’s actions   
alone be considered evil or immoral.  In a well-organized essay, explain   
both how and why the full presentation of the character in the work makes us   
react more sympathetically than we otherwise might.  Avoid plot summary.

1980.  A recurring theme in literature is the classic war between a passion   
and responsibility.  For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for   
revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive   
may conflict with moral duty.  Choose a literary work in which a character   
confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her   
responsibilities.  In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the   
conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work.

1981.  The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained   
allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature.  Select a   
literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference.  Then write a   
well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in   
the work and analyze how it enhances the work's meaning.

1982.  In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake.    
Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a   
scene or scenes of violence.  In a well-organized essay, explain how the   
scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work.  Avoid plot   
summary.

1983.  From a novel or play of literary merit, select an important character   
who is a villain.  Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of   
the character's villainy and show how it enhances meaning in the work.  Do   
not merely summarize the plot.

1984.  Select a line or so of poetry, or a moment or scene in a novel, epic   
poem, or play that you find especially memorable.  Write an essay in which   
you identify the line or the passage, explain its relationship to the work   
in which it is found, and analyze the reasons for its effectiveness.

1985.  A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of   
literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of   
pleasure and disquietude.  Select a literary work that produces this   
"healthy confusion." Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the   
"pleasure and disquietude" experienced by the readers of the work.

1986.  Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way.    
The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be   
suspended or accelerated.  Choose a novel, an epic, or a play of recognized   
literary merit and show how the author's manipulation of time contributes to   
the effectiveness of the work as a whole.  Do not merely summarize the plot.

1987.  Some novels and plays seem to advocate changes in social or political   
attitudes or in traditions.  Choose such a novel or play and note briefly   
the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to   
modify.  Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the   
reader's or audience's views.  Avoid plot summary.

1988.  Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most   
significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings,   
discoveries, changes in consciousness.  In a well-organized essay, describe   
how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of   
excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action.    
Do not merely summarize the plot.

1989. In questioning the value of literary realism, Flannery O'Connor has   
written, "I am interested in making a good case for distortion because I am   
coming to believe that it is the only way to make people see." Write an   
essay in which you "make a good case for distortion," as distinct from   
literary realism.  Analyze how important elements of the work you choose are   
"distorted" and explain how these distortions contribute to the   
effectiveness of the work.   Avoid plot summary.

1990.  Choose a novel or play that depicts a conflict between a parent (or a   
parental figure) and a son or daughter.  Write an essay in which you analyze   
the sources of the conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the   
meaning of the work.  Avoid plot summary.

1991.  Many plays and novels use contrasting places (for example, two    
countries, two cities or towns, two houses, or the land and the sea) to    
represent opposed forces or ideas that are central to the meaning of the    
work.   Choose a novel or play that contrasts two such places.  Write an   
essay explaining how the places differ, what each place represents, and how   
their contrast contributes to the meaning of the work.

1992. in a novel or play, a confidant (male) or a confidante (female) is a   
character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is   
to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to   
confide in.  Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the   
confidant or confidante can be as much "the reader's friend as the   
protagonist's." However, the author sometimes uses this character for other   
purposes as well.  Choose a confidant or confidante from a novel or play of   
recognized literary merit and write an essay in which you discuss the   
various ways this character functions in the work.   You may write your   
essay on one of the following novels or plays or on another of comparable   
quality.  Do not write on a poem or short story.

1993.  "The true test of comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful   
laughter."  Choose a novel, play, or long poem in which a scene or character   
awakens "thoughtful laughter" in the reader.  Write an essay in which you   
show why this laughter is "thoughtful" and how it contributes to the meaning   
of the work.

1994.  In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does   
not appear at all, is a significant presence.  Choose a novel or play of   
literary merit and write an essay in which you show how such a character   
functions in the work.  You may wish to discuss how the character affects   
action, theme, or the development of other characters.  Avoid plot summary.

1995.  Writers often highlight the values of a culture or a society by using   
characters who are alienated from that culture or society because of gender,   
race, class, or creed.  Choose a novel or a play in which such a character   
plays a significant role and show how that character's alienation reveals   
the surrounding society's assumptions or moral values.

1996.  The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy   
endings.  "The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting   
response from their readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through   
moral development.  By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events such as  
marriage or a last minute rescue from death--but some kind of spiritual   
reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death."    
Choose a novel or play that has the kind of ending Weldon describes.  In a   
well-written essay, identify the "spiritual reassessment or moral   
reconciliation" evident in the ending and explain its significance in the   
work as a whole.

1997.    Novels and plays often include scenes of weddings, funerals,   
parties, and other social occasions.  Such scenes may reveal the values of   
the characters and the society in which they live.  Select a novel or play   
that includes such a scene and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution   
the scene makes to the meaning of the work as a whole.  You may choose a   
work from the list below or another novel or play of literary merit.

1998.       In his essay “Walking,” Henry David Thoreau offers the following   
assessment of literature:

In literature it is only the wild that attracts us. Dullness is but another   
name for tameness.  It is the uncivilized free and wild thinking in Hamlet   
and the Iliad, in all scriptures and mythologies, not learned in schools,   
that delights us.

From the works that you have studied in school, choose a    
novel, play, or epic poem that you may initially have thought was    
conventional and tame but that you now value for its “uncivilized free and    
wild thinking.” Write an essay in which you explain what constitutes its   
 “uncivilized free and wild thinking” and how that thinking is central to the   
value of the work as a whole.  Support your ideas with specific references   
to the work you choose.

1999.       The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote,    
“No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is    
to have a man’s mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both    
obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.”

From a novel or play choose a character (not necessarily the   
protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two   
compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences.  Then, in a   
well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and   
explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the   
work as a whole.  You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or   
another novel or work of similar literary quality.

2000.       Many works of literature not readily identified with the mystery or detective story genre nonetheless involve the investigation of a mystery.  In these works, the solution to the mystery may be less important than the   
knowledge gained in the process of its investigation.  Choose a novel or   
play in which one or more of the characters confront a mystery.  Then write   
an essay in which you identify the mystery and explain how the investigation   
illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.  Do not merely summarize the   
plot.

2001.       One definition of madness is "mental delusion or the eccentric   
behavior arising from it."  But Emily Dickinson wrote

                                    Much madness is divinest Sense--   
                                    To a discerning Eye--

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a "discerning Eye."    
Select a novel or play in which a character's apparent madness or irrational   
behavior plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which   
you explain what this delusion or eccentric behavior consists of and how it   
might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the "madness" to the   
work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.  Do NOT write about a short story, poem or film.

2002: Morally ambiguous characters- characters whose behavior discourages   
readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good - are at the   
heart of many works of literature.  Choose a novel or play in which a   
morally ambiguous character plays a pivotal role.  Then write an essay in   
which you explain how the character can be viewed as morally ambiguous and   
why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole. Avoid   
mere plot summary.

2002 Form B:  Often in literature a character's success in achieving goals depends on keeping a secret and divulging it only at the right moment.  Choose a novel or play of literary merit that requires a character keep a secret.  In a well-organized essay briefly explain the necessity for secrecy and how the character's choice to keep the secret affects the plot and contributes to the overall meaning of the work.  Avoid mere plot summary.  Do NOT write about a short story, poem or film.

2003:  According to critic Northrop Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the    
highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable    
conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by    
lightning than a clump of grass.  Conductors may of course be instruments as   
well as victims of the divine lightning."

Select a novel or play in which a tragic figure functions as an instrument of the suffering of others.  Then write an essay in which you explain how the suffering brought upon others by that figure contributes to the tragic vision of the work as a whole.

2003 Form B:  Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures--national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional.  Such a collision can call a character's identity into question.  Select a novel or play in which a character response to such a cultural collision.  Then write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the work as a whole.

2004:  Critic Roland Barthes has said, "Literature is the question minus the answer."  Choose a novel or play and, considering Barthes' observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers any answers.  Explain how the author's treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole.  Avoid mere plot summary.

2004 Form B:

The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed in scenes in which a death or deaths take place.  Choose a novel or a play and write a well-organized essay in which you show how a specific death scene helps to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole.  Do not merely summarize the plot.

2005:  In Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), protagonist Edna Pontellier is   
said to possess "that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions."  In a novel or play that you have studied, identify a character’s who conforms outwardly while questioning inwardly.  Then write an essay in which you analyze how this tension between outward conformity and inward questioning contributes to the overall meaning of the work.  Avoid mere plot summary.

2005 Form B:  One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power.  Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others.  Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.

**2006.** Many writers use a country setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Choose a novel or play in which such a setting plays a significant role. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the country setting functions in the work as a whole.

**2006, Form B.** In many works of literature, a physical journey - the literal movement from one place to another - plays a central role. Choose a novel, play, or epic poem in which a physical journey is an important element and discuss how the journey adds to the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

**2007.** In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present activities, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2007, Form B.** Works of literature often depict acts of betrayal. Friends and even family may betray a protagonist; main characters may likewise be guilty of treachery or may betray their own values. Select a novel or play that includes such acts of betrayal. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the nature of the betrayal and show how it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2008.** In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of a minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil for the main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

**2008, Form B.** In some works of literature, childhood and adolescence are portrayed as times graced by innocence and a sense of wonder; in other works, they are depicted as times of tribulation and terror. Focusing on a single novel or play, explain how its representation of childhood or adolescence shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

**2009.** A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning. Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2009, Form B.** Many works of literature deal with political or social issues. Choose a novel or play that focuses on a political or social issue. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses literary elements to explore this issue and explain how the issue contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

 2010. Palestinian American literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said has written that “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Yet Said has also said that exile can become “a potent, even enriching” experience. Select a novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from “home,” whether that home is the character’s birthplace, family, homeland, or other special place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character’s experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2010, Form B. “You can leave home all you want, but home will never leave you.” —Sonsyrea Tate Sonsyrea Tate’s statement suggests that “home” may be conceived of as a dwelling, a place, or a state of mind. It may have positive or negative associations, but in either case, it may have a considerable influence on an individual. Choose a novel or play in which a central character leaves home yet finds that home remains significant. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the importance of “home” to this character and the reasons for its continuing influence. Explain how the character’s idea of home illuminates the larger meaning of the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

2011. In a novel by William Styron, a father tells his son that life “is a search for justice.” Choose a character from a novel or play who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a welldeveloped essay in which you analyze the character’s understanding of justice, the degree to which the character’s search for justice is successful, and the significance of this search for the work as a whole.

2011, Form B. In The Writing of Fiction (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following: At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the illuminating incident to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity. Choose a novel or play that you have studied and write a well-organized essay in which you describe an “illuminating” episode or moment and explain how it functions as a “casement,” a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

2012. “And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency.” --Pauline Hopkins, Contending Forces Choose a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how surroundings affect this character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole.

2013. A bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, recounts the psychological or moral development of its protagonist from youth to maturity, when this character recognizes his or her place in the world. Select a single pivotal moment in the psychological or moral development of the protagonist of a bildungsroman. Then write a well-organized essay that analyzes how that single moment shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.

2014. It has often been said that what we value can be determined only by what we sacrifice. Consider how this statement applies to a character from a novel or play. Select a character that has deliberately sacrificed, surrendered, or forfeited something in a way that highlights that character’s values. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the particular sacrifice illuminates the character’s values and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the work as a whole.

2015. In literary works, cruelty often functions as a crucial motivation or a major social or political factor. Select a novel, play, or epic poem in which acts of cruelty are important to the theme. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing how cruelty functions in the work as a whole and what the cruelty reveals about the perpetrator and/or victim.

2016. Many works of literature contain a character who intentionally deceives others. The character’s dishonesty may be intended either to help or to hurt. Such a character, for example, may choose to mislead others for personal safety, to spare someone’s feelings, or to carry out a crime. Choose a novel or play in which a character deceives others. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the motives for that character’s deception and discuss how the deception contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

2017. Select a novel. play or epic poem that features a character whose origins are unusual or mysterious. Then write an essay in which you analyze how these origins shape the character and that character’s relationships, and how the origins contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole.

2018. Many works of literature feature characters who have been given a literal or figurative gift. The gift may be an object, or it may be a quality, such as uncommon beauty, significant social position, great mental or imaginative faculties or extraordinary physical powers. Yet this gift is also a burden or handicap. Select a character from a novel, epic or play who has been given a gift that is both an advantage and a problem. Then write a well-developed essay analyzing the complex nature of the gift and how the gift contributes to the meaning of the work as whole.