

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2016 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1: Richard Wilbur, “Juggler”

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 Wilbur’s use of poetic elements to convey how the speaker describes the juggler and what that description reveals about the speaker. The writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations. They provide convincing readings of the description of the juggler, what it reveals about the speaker, and Wilbur’s use of poetic elements such as imagery, figurative language, and tone. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a 9 essay, especially persuasive.

7–6 These essays offer a reasonable analysis of Wilbur’s use of poetic elements to convey how the speaker describes the juggler and what that description reveals about the speaker. They are less thorough or less precise in their analysis of Wilbur’s description of the juggler and what it reveals about the speaker, and their analysis of Wilbur’s use of poetic elements is less thorough or convincing. These essays demonstrate the student’s ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as 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 analysis of Wilbur’s use of poetic elements to describe the juggler and what the description reveals about the speaker, but they tend to be superficial or pedestrian in their analysis of the description and of the use of poetic elements. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the description and what it reveals or of Wilbur’s use of poetic elements may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These writers demonstrate some control of language, but their essays 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 the use of poetic elements to describe the juggler and what it reveals about the speaker. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or it may ignore the description, what it reveals about the speaker, or Wilbur’s use of poetic elements. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates 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 the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the student’s assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poem.

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.

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

1

Within the poem "Juggler" by Richard Wilbur, the speaker depicts a juggler's act, and highlights just how much it brings up the audience's spirits, the speaker among those entertained by the juggling brilliance. Through the utilization of frequent alliteration and somewhat off-kilter rhyme, as well as diction evoking an almost spiritual level of poise in reference to the juggler, the speaker creates an image of a juggler managing to overcome gravity, to lift spirits as well as objects, and reveals their own inability to ~~succeed~~ ^{overcome} dull monotonous days forever lacking brilliance.

Throughout the In the first and last stanzas, no alliteration beyond "daily dark" appears, evoking a tone that could hardly be described as cheerful. The words, disconnected from each other in terms of outright sounds, mimic the speaker's feeling of disappearing brilliance, of melancholy, of utter normalcy. Before the juggler appears, ~~little brilliance~~ people appear unbrilliant, disconnected. However, immediately after the juggler appears "to shake our gravity up," alliteration, assonance, and consonance begin displaying themselves in droves. ~~Word play~~ The juggler plays with balls and also sounds, making ^{the} balls "leaving," "grazing," and "singing." The balls themselves take on a mood of lightness, of free spirit, of airiness; ~~they are no longer~~ the earth no longer bounds them and, instead, they roll free in the air, "singing a small hum" smoothly. The juggler, through his act, creates some wonder, some disobedience of Earth's permanent gravity, a disobedience which lightens the mood of the poet and the speaker alike. This ability to fight against the Earth's inevitable pull is further displayed through the



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unusual rhyme scheme of the poem - end rhyme that, unlike another ^{rhyming} party, follows a somewhat circular abcbac rhyme. ~~stanzas~~ This unusual format continues evoking the break of normalcy which the juggler exhibits - balls no longer come back to earth when expected, like the rhyme ~~stanzas~~ doesn't appear when most readers would likely expect it to. The juggler, thus, unlike anyone else, appears to have broken gravity's spell, a feat which the speaker cannot help be impressed by - the juggler's actions reduce them to childlike joy again.

The speaker's view of the world, as seen through the lens of their observation of the juggler, ~~is also~~ is also observable within the various diction choices made throughout the poem. In the first and last stanzas once again, the speaker uses words such as "resents," "leas," "dusk," and "dully dark," ~~to evoke~~ as well as phrases such as "and the earth falls / So in our hearts from brilliance," make evident the fact that the speaker doesn't exactly have the brightest view of the earth. All the words and phrases used just fall flat, filled with connotations of dullness, earthiness. However, when describing the juggler, this atmosphere of gloom is quickly broken, as the juggler controls his act in an almost godlike capacity. He wills balls to "swing a small town about his ears," balls also compared to "worlds" and "heaven." The speaker describes the juggler with otherworldly diction, ~~evoking~~ creating an atmosphere of adoration and near-worship. In this manner, the speaker's ~~own~~ own amusement comes into play, clarifying the fact that their admiration of the juggler's ability to soar beyond earthly capabilities is a reflection of their own inability to stop falling, to see someone out of millions be capable of "won for once over the world's might" as an

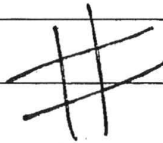


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1

almost miraculous ability.

Thus, through the speaker's reflection of the juggler, the audience observes not only the performance artist himself, but also the affect of that performance ~~and~~ and on the speaker's own realization of their lack of continuing brilliance. Alliteration throughout the poem adds a brevity and childlike wonder not seen when the juggler is not present in the speaker's eye; the diction and rhyme scheme ~~evokes~~ evoke a sense of awe evident in the speaker's amazement at the juggler's ability to move objects beyond the earth's pull. Though the juggler may be capable of breaking the pull of gravity on objects and people alike, the speaker realizes by the poem's end that they are hardly capable of the same.



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Q1, P1

1B
(1 of 3)

In poetry, devices such as imagery, figurative language, and tone establishes the speaker or author's attitude of the subject. Richard Wilbur's poem "Juggler" utilizes several elements to describe the juggler and provide insight on the speaker; elements such as visual imagery (of the juggler and his balls), figurative language (the personification of the balls interacting with the juggler), and tone (the playful mood of the first two stanzas into the one of the last three).

To begin, Wilbur employs imagery to describe the juggler to reveal the ideas of the speaker. Line six of ~~the~~ ~~juggler~~ "Juggler" states, "It takes a sky-blue juggler with five red balls" (Wilbur 6); the use of this instance of visual imagery in the first stanza creates a vivid description of the juggler, a nameless figure who controls ordinary objects such as balls and plates and transforms them into tools for his whimsical show. Wilbur's use of "sky-blue" shows the soft, playful nature of the juggler, and it is through descriptions such as these that euphony constructs a ~~pleasant~~ pleasant and playful character for the speaker to take one of. The use of visual imagery in "Juggler" both describes the juggler himself and provides insight to the speaker's amazement.

Additionally, several forms of figurative language



Write in the box the number of the question you are answering (2 of 3)
on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Q1, pg 2

further create the ~~star~~ title character's image, and ~~the~~ identify the speaker. Throughout the poem, Wilbur adopts personification to give the juggler's balls a playful, lifelike nature; "[the ball is] not / A light-hearted thing, resents its annihilation. / Falling is what it loves" (Wilbur 1-3). Wilbur's choice of personification gives the juggler's balls life, which adds to the mystery and wonder of the juggler. The speaker recognizes the playful spirit of the juggler's balls, which further creates his/her character as an audience member, amazed at the juggler's talent and mastery of his craft. Additionally, the alliteration of "Oh, on his toe the table is turning," (19) adds to the dance-like atmosphere of the juggler's performance. Both personification and alliteration make the juggler a playful ~~character~~ character and the speaker full of wonder.

Further, the changing tone of the piece elaborates on both the juggler and the speaker's identity. ~~The~~ Stanzas one and two employ imagery and personification to form a lighthearted, airy, and playful tone, depicting the balls falling to earth and the sky-blue juggler who catches them. Line 13 begins with the word "but," a common ~~word~~ indicator of a tone shift; the ~~following~~ stanzas following the shift focus less on the juggler's balls and more on the tone of awe the speaker creates while observing the performance.

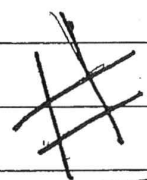


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Q1, P3

By utilizing tone/a shift in tone, Wilbur describes both the juggler and the speaker's experience while watching the performance.

In summation, Richard Wilbur's "Juggler" describes the title character and the speaker through use of visual imagery, personification and alliteration, and tone.



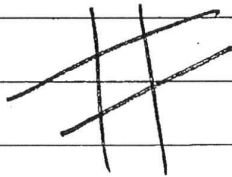
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Question 1

1C
(1 of 1)

"Juggler" by Richard Wilbur is a poem about a juggler to which Wilbur seems to like and admire. The Juggler is a "sky-high" juggler. The Juggler is an amazing and astonishing juggler. The Juggler is a man with powers; he is also a teacher. He teaches skills in "ways of lightness" (9). The poem is all about the Juggler and Wilbur uses imagery, figurative language, and tone to describe him.

Wilbur starts the poem ~~describing~~ by painting an image of a ball that bounces but loses its bounce because of the forces of nature. Then suddenly, it comes to a stop and "is forgot[ten]" (8). ~~He~~ He depicts the juggler as a "sky-blue juggler" (6), not just any juggler and not just any blue. Wilbur describes a unique juggler and a powerful juggler, one that gives life to the simple balls. He transforms them into "spheres" grasping his "finger ends" (9-10). The juggler changes the simple balls to objects like a table, a broom, and a plate making him amazing. Wilbur ~~also~~ ^{conveys} ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~juggler~~ ~~has~~ ~~respect~~ ~~for~~ ~~his~~ ~~audience~~ ^{as he} "bows and says good-bye" to them.



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2016 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

Question 1, the poetry question, asked students to read carefully “Juggler,” a poem by the modern American poet Richard Wilbur, and write an essay in which they analyzed how the speaker in the poem describes the juggler and what that description reveals about the speaker. The prompt suggested that students consider such poetic elements as imagery, figurative language, and tone as ways to engage with the poem and the required focus of the analysis. Since the poetry question is typically the most challenging of the free-response questions, students are usually offered poetic elements as a way to access the poem with an eye toward how the poet employs these elements as vehicles for conveying meaning. Further, this prompt was deliberately worded so that students would remember to engage the poem as a complete work and not fall into the trap of simply commenting haphazardly on how the poet used one element or another or simply listing what the poetic elements describe.

Sample: 1A

Score: 9

This sophisticated essay exhibits many of the qualities of sound college-level composition. It is cogent, organized, and engages thoroughly with the prompt and poem, analyzing both the description of the juggler and what that description reveals about the speaker. The essay analyzes the poem expertly to build a persuasive, well-supported argument that the speaker is amazed and uplifted by the juggler’s ability to transcend constraints that trammel the ordinary individual. The essay purposefully references many poetic elements in the poem, including devices of sound, rhyme scheme, and diction. These, the essay argues, evoke “an image of a juggler managing to overcome gravity, to lift spirits as well as objects” and reveal the speaker’s “own inability to overcome dull monotonous days forever lacking brilliance.” The essay is especially insightful in its discussion of the “unusual format” of the rhyme scheme: the “somewhat circular abcbac rhyme” evokes “the break of normalcy which the juggler exhibits — balls no longer come back to earth when expected, just like the rhyme doesn’t appear when most readers would likely expect it to. The juggler, thus, unlike everyone else, appears to have broken gravity’s spell, a feat which the speaker cannot help be impressed by — the juggler’s actions reduce them to childlike joy again.” While the essay is not error-free, its persuasive analysis of poetic elements elaborates its argument in generally clear, controlled, elegant prose and earned a score of 9.

Sample: 1B

Score: 6

Compared to the 9 essay, which analyzes poetic elements in an integrated way to show how they work together to generate meaning, this mid-range essay is reasonable but less sophisticated and less convincing in its approach to the poem. It lists various devices and treats meaning as almost a secondary concern. The result of this approach is a formulaic and somewhat labored essay that progresses steadily through discussions of figures, sound devices, and tone to support a repeated claim about the speaker’s “awe” of the juggler. The discussion of imagery, for example, yields the simple claim that “Wilbur’s use of ‘sky-blue’ shows the soft, playful nature of the juggler”; combined with euphony, this “constructs a pleasant and playful character for the speaker to take awe of.” Discussions of personification, alliteration, and tone exhibit a similarly limited understanding of the poem as a series of effects. Although the essay references the poem, and its language is clear, it repeatedly returns to the same point about the juggler’s playfulness without elaborating this point. It does not exhibit the same depth, precision, or facility with language as essays at the higher levels on the scoring guide. While the essay as a whole is reasonable, it is not sophisticated or incisive. Consequently, this essay earned a score of 6.

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Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1C

Score: 2

This essay declares in its opening that the poem is “about a juggler which [*sic*] Wilbur seems to like and admire” and observes that the juggler is a teacher who “teaches balls the ‘ways of lightness.’” Although the essay does attempt to elaborate on these observations, it does not adequately analyze these concrete statements or explore their figurative possibilities. It echoes the prompt in stating that the poem uses “imagery, figurative language, and tone to describe” the juggler but does not go on to analyze how any of those elements are deployed in the poem. Thereafter, the essay consists primarily of disjointed paraphrase, but these sentences do not enlighten the reader; they rely on the reader to infer or construct meaning. One example is the sentence “He depicts the juggler as a ‘sky-blue juggler’ . . . not just any juggler and not just any blue,” which is presented without further explanation, leaving the reader to guess at the significance of the specific color. This vagueness reflects the generally poor compositional control of this brief essay; presenting its underdeveloped ideas with little clarity or organization, this essay earned a score of 2.