

AP English Literature and Composition
Question 2: Prose Analysis (2018)
Sample Student Responses

Sample E

[1] How do you reconcile your former understanding of someone with the new person she appears to be? In the given passage, Nathaniel Hawthorne's narrator struggles to accept the seemingly new version of Zenobia, and frustrated with the superficiality she employs, attempts to break her façade and to gauge a more honest understanding of who she has become. Through the use of strongly unfavorable diction to underscore Zenobia's unpleasant and false disposition and repeated insinuations on her actions as performance, Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia as one of contempt and disapproval.

[2] The passage opens with the narrator observing, in awe, the luxuries of Zenobia's home. It is beautiful, "the fulfillment of every fantasy of the imagination," but although the narrator is "dazzled," he is uneasy and feels a "bitter sense of shame." Hawthorne magnifies this feeling of shame through terms such as "costly self-indulgence" and "redundance of personal ornament," the narrator expresses his disapproval of Zenobia's overly-indulgent lifestyle, which is fundamentally different from the values of his own community. He further states his dislike of Zenobia when he says he "malevolently [beholds] her true character," implying Zenobia has been hiding her true personality. By claiming she is a "passionate, luxurious" woman "lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste," the narrator harshly criticizes her debauchery and makes evident his disapproval.

[3] Throughout the passage, the narrator's contempt for Zenobia is also stated by his criticism of her superficiality. He describes her as an "illusion," "a great action," underscoring her habit of hiding her true self and authentic emotions. The narrator repeatedly states that Zenobia "[seems] to be acting" and wonders when, or if ever, he has "beheld [her] in her truest attitude." Evidently, this defining falseness causes the narrator to both distrust and detest Zenobia. He longs to witness and genuine reaction from her, whether good or bad, simply to learn if she is capable and willing of any form of emotional vulnerability. This thirst for "a glimpse of something true" reveals his struggle to accept this new version of the woman he once knew, who has now become "self-complacent, condescending," and inauthentic.

[4] Throughout the passage, the narrator's criticism of Zenobia and her extravagant lifestyle reveal his attitude towards her to be one of extreme disapproval and contempt. It is clear that he is deeply frustrated at her false exterior and long for her to abandon such toxic superficiality and unabashedly expose her true character. Although the narrator momentarily succeeds in getting Zenobia to "show [him] the true flesh and blood of her heart," however, she quickly returns to her "proud" and "self-processed" act and shows that she desires to continue her life of pretense.

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Sample G

[1] Blithedale farm can be likened to a Utopian community, one which the narrator and Zenobia lived for a time. The overarching sentiment of the passage is the narrator's disdain for that part life, one which he was unsure if what he experienced and shared with Zenobia was true or real. The narrator very well may have cared for or even loved Zenobia, evident by the internal struggles he deals with about his convictions with her. However, in the end, he strived to break the façade around Zenobia, aiming to find the truest form of her and the state of who they are to one another.

[2] The narrator is highly enchanted by Zenobia as evident by the descriptions of her gorgeousness. Hawthorne parallels the extravagance of the room with the brilliance in which Zenobia surrounded herself. The glowing chandelier a symbol for Zenobia's radiance luxury surrounded the characters, although the narrator saw beyond it, to what it true about the room and Zenobia herself.

[3] The narrator initially struggles to see beyond Zenobia's front, in how hard it was to "perceive in myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect in which Zenobia sought to impose on me" (19-21). The narrator struggles to be strong against Zenobia, an obvious allusion to how she makes him feel weak. Zenobia surrounds herself in gorgeousness, in not only her own beauty but in that which surrounded her. But even in this perfect façade, the narrator "malevolently" sought to break down the walls and see Zenobia's true nature.

[4] The narrator struggles to compare his own memories and fixation on Zenobia with who she truly is questioning "whether then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself in Blithedale" (35-38). He saw the illusion around her, which is evident in the parallel Hawthorne draws on the beauty of Zenobia and the room. Zenobia's conviction of her past life shared with the narrator irritates him. Making him see that what was shared was idealized and fake. The community was not what it was made out to be, even with the words Zenobia, one who the narrator holds up to high praise, can effectively refute.

[5] Throughout the passage Hawthorne writes about the breakdown of what the narrator saw not only in the life on Blithedale, but of who Zenobia was. Zenobia herself can be seen as a symbol of the idealized community, of what life can aspire to be. But the narrator breaks down the illusionistic symbol by finding fallacy and weakness in Zenobia's esteem and beliefs. He finally saw the "true flesh and blood of her heart" by saying she was no better than a man laughed at by society (85). Zenobia reveals barely flicker of her true self before subsequently closing up. However it is enough for the narrator to see.

[6] The narrator, throughout the passage goes from love to [ILLEGIBLE; possibly "loss"] to unfortunate conviction. Zenobia's break of character parallels the narrators break of belief

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in the Blithedale community. He finally saw Zenobia as the “proud and self-posed” woman she had become (90). And although it saddens the narrator that what he thought he loved was true, satisfaction in that he knew it could not be true helped relieve his ache. Hawthorne portrays the falling and failure of illusion and relationships through parallels and symbolism to [ILLEGIBLE] a man who finally glimpsed the truth.

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Sample I

[1] There is often a great divide in society between the selfish and the selfless. It takes a noble courage and sometimes self sacrifice to be selfless, especially because it can be deliciously easy to give in to selfishness. Hawthorne, in these two characters, has created an analysis of both sides options and revealed how one looks to the other.

[2] The narrator, a selfless character living in equality on the Blithedale farm, appears at first lost in the opulence and decadence of Zenobia's house. She struggles at first to "bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on [her]". Though disgusted by the excess of luxury, the narrator cares briefly to the conflicting sides with herself, and momentarily accepts the belief that Zenobia has every right to "make herself as gorgeous as she pleased," and indulge herself however she wishes. Though the narrator begins confused by the "illusion" and act that Zenobia puts on, she is able to resolve her internal conflict.

[3] The shift and internal resolution that the narrator experiences create a resolution in her attitude towards Zenobia. Where at first she was complacent in her acceptance of Zenobia's opulent lifestyle, she turns scornful and resentful as she regains control over Zenobia's proud aura and farad. She even calls to exorcise her of the connotated demonic clutches of this selfishness that she has given into. Though disdainful of Zenobia's luxurious life, the narrator believes that deep down she is ashamed of this selfishness, and endeavors to catch a "glimpse of something true; some nature, some passion, no matter whether right or wrong, provided it were real". And thus with the execution of this endeavor, the narrator's ultimate view of Zenobia is reached. The metaphor of lightening and flame used to describe Zenobia's actions reveal not only the power of her true emotions, but also the sense of victory the narrator feels in her selfrighteousness.

[4] The narrator, though portrayed as selfless, is not perfect in her opinions, and Zenobia's selfishness is not wholly consuming either. The shifts of the narrators attitudes towards Zenobia, first submissive and accepting, then irritated, and lastly righteous and sure, help create the realization that labels, such as selfish or selfless, are not perfect, and people cannot be defined by just one word.

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Sample F

[1] As a species, humans are proud. They are often selfish, narrow minded, and, despite strong efforts to prove otherwise, morally unsound. This is not to say that mankind is evil, or bad, but simply human: a species that is characterizes by these and many more truths. This excerpt from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1852 novel creates a compelling display on mankind's view of human nature. The narrator's attitude towards their companion, Zenobia, is characterized by their view of her as lofty and exuberant. The narrator is disgusted by the mask she wears to hide her true nature. Hawthorne employs disapproving diction and a scornful tone to convey the narrators cold, distasteful attitude towards Zenobia in this excerpt.

[2] The narrator describes their _____ on Zenobia's current situation as being "self-indulgent," "brilliant", & "costly." The diction used creates a sense that the narrator is in awe of what Zenobia has surrounded herself with. However, they also see these furnishings as a reflection on Zenobia being "proud," "imposing" and "incapable of pure and perfect taste." Through the diction used to describe Zenobia's ornate ornamentations, it is clear that the narrator sees them as too beautiful and impressive. They stated that the narrator saw through the "gorgeousness with which she [Zenobia] had surrounded herself" to her true nature, of which she was using the beauty as a mask to hide.

[3] The tone with which the narrator addresses Zenobia is scornful, showing their disapproval of the beautiful mask & mantle she has adorned and hidden herself with. They speak to her with an "inattentive" tone, and coolly scorns her so that she reveals her true nature is an unbecoming, passionate moment. The narrator characterizes Zenobia as being "proud", "self-possessed", "lacking simplicity" and "condescending" Through their tone & disapproving diction it is clear that the narrator is dissatisfied and disgusted by Zenobias' true nature.

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Sample A

[1] In the given by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the two contrasting characters of the narrator and Zenobia undoubtedly have a complex and deeply developed relationship. These complexities stem mainly from the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia and their corresponding actions, most clearly expressed through Hawthorne's use of parallel contrasts and character monologue. It is through these techniques that it is revealed that although the narrator is fond of Zenobia, they are also criticizing of the choices she has made.

[2] The beauty of the room in which the characters are found in is the main focus of the first paragraph. It is described as "gorgeous" and as having many "shapes of luxury", most notably expensive vases and chandeliers. In the same paragraph, the farm house which the pair come from is described as "homely", containing only a "few wicker chairs in the best parlor," providing a stark contrast to the marble and riches of the new house. This description is paralleled with the similar contrast of Zenobia constantly being described as "gorgeous" in following paragraphs and the assumed plainness of the narrator having from the farmhouse. This description of Zenobia unveils the narrator's fondness for her (or at least her appearance) However his disdain for the house as expressed through the narrator preferring to stay at the farm and suggesting Zenobia do the same, reflects his disdain for her actions. In this case, the farm is representative of the narrator and the lavish house of Zenobia, so therefore, the narrator's critique of Zenobia's excessive wants.

[3] In paragraphs 7 and 8 after a brief conversation between characters, the narrator is not afraid to voice his criticism. Hawthorne has him do so in a brief monologue directed at Zenobia. It is within this monologue that his true feelings come out, and have a strong affect on Zenobia's state, causing her to become flustered. By having the narrator express his criticism in the form of a monologue, a stronger effect is delivered on the audience, and, in this case, Zenobia. This reflects the narrator's strong attitude towards Zenobia.

[4] Ultimately, the narrator does not approve of Zenobia's delusion of leaving the farm to live a luxurious life, and he does not allow his high opinion of her and her beauty prevent him from speaking his true feelings on the subject in a way that reflects how he truly feels about the situation.

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Sample D

[1] In the following interchange, excerpted from Nathaniel Hawthorne novel portrays the narrator's love and obsession for Zenobia. Throughout the section, the author uses a lot of diction and imagery to signify the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia.

[2] The first sentence of the interchange caught the narrator's eye for Zenobia. "Her manner bewildered me" and being "dazzled by the brilliancy of the room" already shows the reader that Zenobia stands out with her well-being and wealth. The diction used is positive towards Zenobia. She has a "proud figure", "passionate", "luxurious", "lack of simplicity". Everything about Zenobia that the narrator thinks is perfect. The narrators attitude towards her is compelling since "she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles". Zenobia didn't think too much of others since she already had everything. However, her god-like figure made the narrator curious about her true well-being. If all of this is fake and if she has another side. He wanted to know if "she seemed to be acting". Soon enough with the diction, it soon broke her.

[3] The imagery in this interchange is full with rich details. The description throughout this section shows how powerful Zenobia seems and how wealth controls one-self. Although the narrator doesn't say much about wealth, the first paragraph of the interchange says it all. Zenobia wasn't introduced yet but the detail of the Blithedale farm already hinted out how hi attitude was going to be towards her. It starts with the chandelier that glowed with so many lights. The furniture was "exceedingly rich". It was fresh and it chocked the narrator that "the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination", something everybody dreams of. The pictures, marbles, vases etc were everything that's luxurious. It revelled the "methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease". The imagery of the form shows the wealth and power Zenobia has.

[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia through the use of literary techniques. Two big devices were diction and imagery with the help of the narrators thoughts and emotions towards Zenobia.

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Sample H

[1] The excerpt from the 1852 novel written by Nathaniel Hawthorne analyzes many literary techniques such as tone and imagery. Through these literary devices it demonstrates and portrays the narrator's attitude and feeling she has towards Zenobia who is pretty rich.

[2] the narrator was astonished to be in a room with such luxury. Everything shining and glowing to perfection. The narrator starts off by describing how she saw everything in that house. She stated "A chandelier hung down in the centre...self-indulgence and splendid ease." She was mind blown by what she saw, she couldn't believe what she saw, she thought it was all but pure imagination. In a slow steady manner it gives the reader the impression of how the house really was. It also states "the reflection of a great mirror, which showed me Zenobia's proud figure, likewise, and my own." Though the mirror it was clear to the narrator the difference between them two. Zenobia was filled with rich beauty and powerful as for the narrator it seemed to be the complete opposite.

[3] As for the tone in which the narrator in bodies in this excerpt is a little more harsh and angry. Hawthorne states "it irritated me, this self-complacent condescending, qualified approval and criticism of a system to which many individuals..." The narrator was angry and annoyed at the fact that Zenobia is ungrateful for what she has of the tone the narrator resembles aggravation towards Zenobia. She has the possibilities and luxury anyone wished to have. Hawthorne also states "I determined to make proof if there were any spell that would exorcise her out of the she seemed to be acting". The narrator wanted to truly see and know what Zenobia was like and that her attitude was just to present herself at Blithedale, to resemble herself gorgeous, powerful, and rich. The narrator makes the reader think that her tone towards Zenobia is angry, annoyed and aggravated.

[4] Through this excerpt it resembles what the narrator really feels towards the other character Zenobia. Through the use of the literary techniques such as tone and imagery it portrays the narrator's attitude and feeling of emotion towards Zenobia.

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Sample B

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne shows the way the narrator feels about Zenobia in the se few paragraphs. The narrator feels as though Zenobia may not be entirely authentic. He feels spite towards her and her new life after Blithedale. Hawthorne is able to portray these feelings through the use of first person point of view and sophisticated diction. These literary techniques establish the tense tone of the excerpt.

[2] The first person point of view gives the reader insight on how they narrator is feeling. The reader is able to see the betrayal and disgust the narrator begins to feel for Zenobia and the façade she is attempting to create. He does not know the tree Zenobia and even states, "To this day, however, I hardly know whether I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale." The narrator is unaware of what Zenobia is truly like. The narrator is openly discussing his feelings towards Zenobia. He seems to believe that she is fake.

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Sample C

[1] In the excerpt of the novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hawthorne portrayed the narrator's attitude towards Zenobia as a liar or as an dishonest person through the use of the literary techniques such as imagery and violent diction.

[2] Hawthorne's use of imagery is vital towards his attitude. For example in the last paragraph when he gives the reader a clear image of how Zenobia looks when he discovers the truth about her.