

2004 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

(Suggested time — 40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following passage comes from the opening of “The Pupil” (1891), a story by Henry James. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the author’s depiction of the three characters and the relationships among them. Pay particular attention to tone and point of view.

Line
5 The poor young man hesitated and procrastinated:
it cost him such an effort to broach the subject of
of feelings and, as it were, of the aristocracy. Yet he
was unwilling to take leave, treating his engagement
as settled, without some more conventional glance in
10 that direction than he could find an opening for in the
manner of the large, affable lady who sat there
drawing a pair of soiled *gants de Suède** through a
fat, jewelled hand and, at once pressing and gliding,
repeated over and over everything but the thing he
would have liked to hear. He would have liked to hear
15 the figure of his salary; but just as he was nervously
about to sound that note the little boy came back—the
little boy Mrs. Moreen had sent out of the room to
fetch her fan. He came back without the fan, only
with the casual observation that he couldn’t find it. As
20 he dropped this cynical confession he looked straight
and hard at the candidate for the honour of taking his
education in hand. This personage reflected, some-
what grimly, that the first thing he should have to
teach his little charge would be to appear to address
himself to his mother when he spoke to her—
25 especially not to make her such an improper answer
as that.

When Mrs. Moreen bethought herself of this
pretext for getting rid of their companion, Pemberton
supposed it was precisely to approach the delicate
subject of his remuneration. But it had been only to
30 say some things about her son which it was better that
a boy of eleven shouldn’t catch. They were
extravagantly to his advantage, save when she
lowered her voice to sigh, tapping her left side
familiarly: “And all over-clouded by *this*, you
35 know — all at the mercy of a weakness — !”
Pemberton gathered that the weakness was in the
region of the heart. He had known the poor child was
not robust: this was the basis on which he had been
invited to treat, through an English lady, an Oxford

40 acquaintance, then at Nice, who happened to know
both his needs and those of the amiable American
family looking out for something really superior in
the way of a resident tutor.

The young man’s impression of his prospective
45 pupil, who had first come into the room, as if to see
for himself, as soon as Pemberton was admitted, was
not quite the soft solicitation the visitor had taken for
granted. Morgan Moreen was, somehow, sickly
without being delicate, and that he looked intelligent
50 (it is true Pemberton wouldn’t have enjoyed his being
stupid), only added to the suggestion that, as with his
big mouth and big ears he really couldn’t be called
pretty, he might be unpleasant. Pemberton was
modest—he was even timid; and the chance that his
55 small scholar might prove cleverer than himself had
quite figured, to his nervousness, among the dangers
of an untried experiment. He reflected, however, that
these were risks one had to run when one accepted a
position, as it was called, in a private family; when as
60 yet one’s University honours had, pecuniarily
speaking, remained barren. At any rate, when Mrs.
Moreen got up as if to intimate that, since it was
understood he would enter upon his duties within the
week she would let him off now, he succeeded, in
65 spite of the presence of the child, in squeezing out a
phrase about the rate of payment. It was not the fault
of the conscious smile which seemed a reference to
the lady’s expensive identity, if the allusion did not
sound rather vulgar. This was exactly because she
70 became still more gracious to reply: “Oh, I can assure
you that all that will be quite regular.”

Pemberton only wondered, while he took up his
hat, what “all that” was to amount to—people had
such different ideas. Mrs. Moreen’s words, however,
75 seemed to commit the family to a pledge definite
enough to elicit from the child a strange little
comment, in the shape of the mocking, foreign
ejaculation, “Oh, là-là!”

*suede gloves

2

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

In his passage, Henry James creates ~~three~~ and develops three characters: Pemberton, Morgan, and Mrs. Moreen. Using multiple rhetorical devices, James assumes a tone of light mocking and irony. ^{From} ~~Using~~ the perspective of an omniscient narrator and focusing on Pemberton's reaction, James elaborates a mocking portrait of a man seeking employment.

Rhetorical devices and details depict the Moreens, mother and son, as frivolous and haughty, invoking a sense of insecurity in Pemberton. In the first paragraph, Mrs. Moreen is described as a "person who spoke only of feelings" (3-4)^o, implying a character of ^{or} "of the aristocracy" (4), an aside, ^{her high value of aristocratic tradition} ~~some depth~~. This implication is ~~obviously~~ ^{agreed} undermined in his description of her "fat, jewelled hand" (10) and her obvious evasion of the topic of concern - Pemberton's salary. Using foreign words in line 9, James ~~shows~~ demonstrates Mrs. Moreen's desire to be aristocratic, but this image is bungled by the fact that these "gantside svéde" are "soiled" (9). James is clearly mocking her self-importance.

Morgan Moreen is no more sympathetic a character than his mother; he is impolite, arrogant and generally a brat. James' attempt to tone down the child's rude behavior - "he might be unpleasant" (53) - is understatement. ~~The~~ the use of understatement brings out the ironic nature of what he is saying. However, these characters are merely a backdrop that reveal the nature of Pemberton.

In this passage, the relationship of Pemberton to the Moreens reveals his insecure, impish nature which is ^{shown} ~~revealed~~ ^{from} ~~through~~ the point of view of the narrator. Because we can see the impressions of both Mrs. Moreen and Pemberton, their interaction



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From the uneasiness of Pemberton's point-of-view to the lamentable observations that Mrs. Noireen makes, all makes their characters. Pemberton's obsessive and overly emphasized self-censure and ~~over~~ contemplation constitutes exaggeration for effect. The characters of "The Pupil" are ultimately sketches, stereotypes, to be mocked and looked down upon, bringing up the reader's opinion of his or her self.

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