



AP[®] French Literature 2005 Scoring Commentary

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Note: Student responses are quoted verbatim and may contain grammatical errors.

Analyse—Content: Question 1.1

Overview

The *analyse* consists of two directed questions that require a close reading of a text the students have read and discussed in class during the year. The questions this year focused on Baudelaire’s well-known poem, “Correspondances.” Subquestion 1 asked students to provide commentary on the various connections or parallels (*correspondances*) that appear in the poem. Subquestion 2 directed students to explain how the structure of the poem enables the development of Baudelaire’s ideas.

Sample: 1.1A

Score: 5

This is a comprehensive, insightful, and well-organized analysis of the *correspondances*. After an introduction summarizing three kinds of *correspondances*, the essay uses concrete examples from both the *quatrain*s and the *tercets*. It underlines the role of the poet who can understand these *correspondances*. The paragraphs are logically connected with one another, which makes it easy to follow the student’s reasoning.

Sample: 1.1B

Score: 3

This is a basically satisfactory response, which demonstrates that the student has understood the poem. However, it is often superficial and at times incomprehensible. The essay addresses several *correspondances* described in the poem, but they are not well explained or analyzed.

Sample: 1.1C

Score: 2

This is an unsatisfactory response to the question. The student establishes a *correspondance* between nature and the poet, but it is only minimally explained. The assertions are general, and the examples from the text are not specific enough.

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Analyse—Content: Question 1.2

Sample: 1.2A

Score: 5

This essay clearly addresses the question. Not only does it examine the structure of the poem, but, more importantly, it demonstrates how it reveals the poet's thought. The examples from the *quatrains* and the *tercets* are well chosen, and the paragraphs are logically connected with one another. The response is insightful throughout, reads smoothly, and shows a very good understanding of the poem.

Sample: 1.2B

Score: 3

This essay focuses on one aspect of the structure of the poem: the shift between generalizations and details. The student mentions a few specific examples of details and relates them to the *quatrains* and the *tercets*. Particular attention is devoted to the variations of *parfum*. Overall, the analysis is simple, and the discussion is basically satisfactory.

Sample: 1.2C

Score: 1

This is an example of a response that fails to address the question. The first part of the essay talks about Baudelaire's life. In the second part, there is an incoherent attempt to address the question. The response does not explain how the structure of the poem is related to the development of the poet's thought.

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Analyse—Language: Question 1

Sample: 1D

Score: 5

This essay shows an excellent control of the French language. It reads smoothly, shows a good sense of style, and uses a rich and varied syntax. The sentences are complex and include a variety of well-conjugated verbs. There are few serious errors, and the student demonstrates a good sense of idiom and ease of expression.

Sample: 1E

Score: 3

This response reflects an adequate knowledge of the French language and grammar. It is comprehensible. However, its syntax is often quite elementary and the vocabulary rather limited. There are several incorrect verb conjugations (“*le poète nous mont,*” “*les quatrains introduit,*” “*des choses sont décrire*”). The agreements between nouns and adjectives are often missing or incorrectly used (“*des parfums mauvaises,*” “*le monde spirituelle*”).

Sample: 1F

Score: 1

This response demonstrates inadequate use of language with limited vocabulary resources. The sentences are short, incomplete, and not always comprehensible. The essay includes *anglicismes* that often force interpretation on the part of the reader.

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Essay: Content/Language

Overview

The literary *essai* allows students to show how well they can write critically about a literary work they have read and discussed in class. Here students were asked to assess the importance of fate or destiny in either *Candide* or *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*.

Question 2 (*Candide*)

Sample: C-2A

Content Score: 9

Language Score: 5

Content: In this essay, the student sets out to show that obstacles destiny places in *Candide*'s path serve to refute the idea that we live in the best possible world, and thereby produce a radical change in perspective that makes *Candide* evolve. Each paragraph of the body of the essay provides pertinent examples of how injustices and catastrophes serve to make *Candide* realize the fallacies of Panglossian theories. All is not well in a world where destiny impedes the marriage of young people in love, where good Samaritans drown, where natural disasters and human agents unjustly treat the weak and well-meaning *Candide*. The student has an excellent recall of place names and textual details, including quotes. Although such a level of recall is not strictly necessary for a grade of 9, the student uses the essay to provide examples that are succinct, precise, and especially pertinent in showing how injustices modify *Candide*'s view of the world to the point where he decides to develop his own set of values in cultivating his garden.

Language: Although there are several awkward invented verbs in this essay ("*déprouve*," "*déprive*," "*mature*"), there are also many long, complex, and descriptive sentences. Verbal structures, relative pronouns, causal conjunctions, verb tenses, conjugations, and agreements (subject/verb, adjective/noun) are almost always correct. Moreover, descriptive verbs (*empêcher*, *resurgir*, *accueillir*, *dévaliser*) and rich vocabulary ("*ainsi que*," "*lorsque*," "*dérobés*") suggest that the student has very good control over the linguistic tools used to convey ideas and examples concisely and convincingly in this essay.

Sample: C-2B

Content Score: 6

Language Score: 5

Content: The examples are numerous in this essay, but the overall structure does not subsume the examples provided to a thesis statement that orients our interpretation as to what the examples are supposed to demonstrate. Perhaps the thesis is too vast for a 50-minute essay ("*sans le destin rien peut arriver*"). Instead of strong topic sentences for each paragraph, the reasons various supporting examples were provided are buried in the middle or at the end of paragraphs. The reader is forced to string these reasons together in order to deduce that destiny provides bad experiences and fortuitous reunions for *Candide* and the other characters. The essay's concluding paragraph supports this claim, but to say that Voltaire sought to depict destiny as good and evil and that the events depicted are meant to astonish the audience verges on offering an interpretive flaw as to the author's intent. In the end, sentences scattered through the essay that orient the reader shape the discussion of the examples enough to move the essay out of the "plot summary" of the 3–4 criteria. Similarly, there are enough appropriately described examples to move the essay into the upper end of the 5–6 criteria.

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Question 2 (*Candide*) (continued)

Language: There are some errors in this essay, a few serious (such as the “*si*” clauses in the tenth paragraph). However, the sophisticated syntax, in the form of multiple relative clauses, verbal structures that employ two or more infinitives, etc., and rich vocabulary are present throughout this long essay. The rich vocabulary in particular, retained in part from a careful reading of the novel (“*Inquisiteur*,” “*auto-da-fé*,” “*bien-aimée*,” “*trois maux de la vie [l’ennui, le vice, et le besoin]*”), keeps this essay in the “very good control” zone, in spite of a few serious syntactical flaws.

Sample: C-2C

Content Score: 4

Language Score: 2

Content: Although this essay correctly pinpoints Candide’s initial optimism in the face of expulsion from Thunder-ten-tronckh as being the consequence of Pangloss’s philosophy that destiny is the cause of all events, the essay makes the inaccurate claim, which its examples do not support, that Candide finds true love in Cunégonde and a better world in El Dorado, and that these discoveries support Pangloss’s teachings about destiny. In fact, the body of the essay is full of interpretive flaws. The statement “*La philosophie de Pangloss est tenue par Candide et ses copains*” might be true for Candide but is not at all true for the other characters (Martin, Cacambo, la vieille, etc.). Similarly, the claim “*Les evenements, mal et bien, de la conte illustrée la necessite de maintenir un attitude positif dans la face du disastre*” contradicts the novel’s purpose as satire, as Voltaire’s critique of relentlessly blind optimism in the face of unrelenting horror and injustice. In short, the introductory paragraph and the conclusion are accurate enough to keep the essay in the upper end of the 4–3 criteria, but the interpretive flaws outweigh the examples given, so there is not a “satisfactory” discussion of the novel overall.

Language: Except for the successful “*ni . . . ni*” sentence at the beginning of this essay, the syntax as a rule does not follow standard syntactic patterns in French. Errors in every sentence often force interpretation as the reader struggles to rectify verb tenses and conjugations, and to mentally reinsert the French expressions for the gallicized English vocabulary that appears in some sentences (“*displacer*,” “*impresser*” “*se font un change*”). The student shows more than “very few” vocabulary resources, but there is so little control over syntax that this essay falls into the “weak” rather than “adequate” use of language criterion.

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Question 2 (*La Guerre de Troie*)

Sample: GT-2A

Content Score: 8

Language Score: 4

Content: This essay has an economy of means and a crystal-clear development of supporting paragraphs that places it on the upper end of the “well-developed” essay criteria. Although the thesis is not particularly original, the student sets out to show that since destiny is synonymous with an accelerated form of time, the Trojan war will occur, in spite of the efforts of both Hector and Ulysses, and in spite of Helen’s neutrality (*son indifférence*).

The first paragraph of the body of the essay gives an overview of how destiny structures the plot of the play, in foiling attempts by both Hector and Ulysses to prevent the war by sparking it via a lie rather than a worthy cause. The second paragraph gives a more detailed picture of the way Helen shapes, reads, and reacts to the potential conflict destiny seems to have ordained. The third gives an extremely succinct but accurate description of Hector and Ulysses—their motivations for wanting peace, their negotiation of the best way to present a guarantee of Helen’s virtue—and also briefly discusses conflicting speeches made by the gods in the play. Finally, the conclusion reminds us that destiny’s role is to make the war happen in spite of the efforts of Ulysses, Hector, and Helen.

There is nothing extraneous from the plot in this student’s argument. Although only three characters are discussed, the explanation of their function and evolution is precise and detailed enough in terms of textual evidence to merit a score of 8. The essay is not insightful or detailed enough in its treatment of examples to merit a 9, however.

Language: This student makes excellent use of a set of simple but varied expressions (“*avoir lieu*,” “*empêcher quelque chose de + inf.*,” “*malgré*,” “*à cause du*”). Even short sentences contain multiple clauses (“*Elle accepte les événements parce qu’elle sait que ce qui se passe est le destin*”). The essay does not contain the rich vocabulary necessary to justify a grade of 5, but there is generally apt vocabulary and relatively good control of syntax overall, in spite of some errors (“*si Hélène est retournée aux grecques*”).

Sample: GT-2B

Content Score: 5

Language Score: 3

Content: This essay announces the discussion of three characters—Helen, Ulysses, and Hector—in light of their struggle with the question as to whether or not Trojans and Greeks are destined to wage war. The three supporting paragraphs comprising the body of the essay discuss Helen, Hector, and Ulysses in turn, and the discussion is supported by examples of situations each character encounters. However, there are generalizations in each paragraph that are not accurate. For example, the statement “*Ils veut garder elle, mais aussi, ils ne veut pas un guerre*” is not true of any of the male characters except Hector. Similarly the claim “*Ulysse influence Hector que le destin de guerre est vrai, et Hector, qui est furieux, tue Demokos*” is a very reductive conflation of several events. Hector is not furious because Ulysses convinces him but because Demokos provokes his rage in continuing to push for war. These interpretive flaws, combined with the overly brief and therefore rather cryptic discussion of two weights on a scale (“*Leurs conflit est comme deux pèse sur un plateau de balance*”) put the essay on the lower end of the “satisfactory discussion” criteria.

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Question 2 (*La Guerre de Troie*) (continued)

Language: This essay is “adequate” to the degree that sentences do not force interpretation on the part of the reader. We see some apt vocabulary (“*l’avenir*,” “*ainsi*,” “*le conflit*”) and occasionally successful fragments (“*elle veut laisser l’avenir a l’universe*”), but there are numerous errors of grammar that produce doubt about the relative understanding of French syntax. The fact that the sentences remain largely comprehensible in spite of the numerous errors keeps this essay barely out of the “weak use” criterion.

Sample: GT-2C

Content Score: 2

Language Score: 3

Content: This essay speaks of the Trojan war in the context of Greek mythology, as a struggle motivated largely by the desire of the gods for war and the desire of Meneleas to regain Helen. There is an allusion to the First World War at the beginning of the third paragraph that might serve to reference Giraudoux’s work as being something other than the Greek myth. It is this reference that saves this essay from the lower end of the 2–1 criteria, in that the student is vaguely situating the time frame of the work, as opposed to the thematic content of the work. But there are no examples offered from Giraudoux’s text, and little familiarity with more than the title of the play, which is furnished in the essay question. It is therefore probable that the student has little “familiarity” with the text.

Language: We find “adequate” use of language in this essay, in that there is a “reasonable understanding” of French syntax. Some expressions fall into the “generally apt vocabulary” criterion (“*se déroule*,” “*cependent*,” “*se batter*,” “*s’inquiéter*”). However, numerous errors, combined with some badly chosen word groups that produce *anglicismes* (“*une guerre battue*,” “*prends place*,” “*retourner Hélène*”) keep this language sample in the “adequate use” category.