

AP English Language and Composition Sample: “A Meditation upon a Broomstick” by Jonathan Swift

The single stick, which you now behold ingloriously lying in that neglected corner, I once knew in a flourishing state in forest; it was full of sap, full of leaves, and full of boughs; but now, in vain does the busy art of man pretend to vie with nature, by tying that withered bundle of twigs to its sapless trunk; 'tis now at best but the reverse of what it was, a tree turned upside down, the branches on the earth, and the root in the air; 'tis now handled by every dirty wench, condemned to do her drudgery, and by a capricious kind of fate, destined to make other things clean, and be nasty itself: at length, worn to the stumps in the service of the maids, 'tis either thrown out of doors, or condemned to its last use, of kindling a fire. When I beheld this I sighed, and said within myself, *Surely mortal man is a Broomstick!*

Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair on his head, the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable, till the axe of intemperance has lopped off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk: he then flies to art, and puts on a periwig¹, valuing himself upon an unnatural bundle of hairs, all covered with powder, that never grew on his head; but now should this our broomstick pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, though the sweepings of the finest lady's chamber, we should be apt to ridicule and despise its vanity. Partial judges that we are of our own excellencies, and other men's faults!

¹ a wig, especially of the kind worn by men in the 17th and 18th centuries

But a broomstick, perhaps you will say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head; and pray what is man, but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually mounted on his rational, his head where his heels should be, groveling on the earth! And yet with all his faults, he sets up to be an universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances, rakes into every slut's² corner of Nature, bringing hidden corruptions to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before; sharing deeply all the while in the very same pollutions he pretends to sweep away. His last days are spent in slavery to women, and generally the least deserving, till, worn out to the stumps, like his brother besom³, he is either kicked out of doors, or made use of to kindle flames for others to warm themselves by.

1701

² (dated) an offensive term for a woman who is regarded as not concerned about conventional standards of domestic cleanliness

³ a broom made from a bundle of twigs

1. Lines 37-39 (“[b]ut a broomstick...on its head”) function as a

- A. generalization in accord with the narrator’s thesis
- B. counterargument to the idea that a broomstick is like a tree
- C. possible thesis proposed by a dissenting view
- D. form of syllogistic logic supporting the narrator’s thesis
- E. refutation of the narrator’s central argument

RATIONALE

C. The passage begins with the narrator’s assertion that a broomstick is a tree removed from its natural environment. Then in line 19, the narrator proposes the idea that a broomstick is like “mortal man.” In lines 37-39, the narrator addresses an unknown “you” who “perhaps...will say” that a broomstick “is an emblem of a tree standing on its head.” The narrator then encourages this “you” to see beyond the tree metaphor to the fact that man is akin to a broomstick.

IDENTIFIED SKILLS: *Author’s Purpose*

2. The primary imagery of the passage is that of

- A. rebellion
- B. insecurity
- C. resignation
- D. confinement
- E. punishment

RATIONALE

C. Though somewhat humorous in tone, the author accepts the situation that man’s “last days are spent in slavery to women...till, worn out to the stumps...he is kicked out of doors...” (lines 50-54).

IDENTIFIED SKILLS: *Author’s Claim, Rhetorical Device (Imagery)*

AP English Language and Composition Sample: “Two Ways of Seeing a River” by Mark Twain

Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest was a smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances, and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the

twilight wrought upon the river’s face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture and should have commented upon it inwardly after this fashion: “This sun means that we are going to have wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody’s steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling ‘boils’ show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the ‘break’ from a new snag and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch, is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?”

No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty’s cheek mean to a doctor but a “break” that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn’t he simply view her professionally and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn’t he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

1. The rhetorical questions in the final paragraph (“What does...learning his trade?” lines 70-80) function to
- A. Illustrate Twain’s growing sense of melancholy
 - B. Demonstrate the paradoxes inherent in medicine
 - C. Redirect his argument into a fundamentally novel claim
 - D. Expand his original thesis through a wholly new example
 - E. Provide a counterexample that balances his previous assertions

RATIONALE

D. The concluding paragraph introduces an apparently new topic, a doctor’s relationship to a beautiful but ill woman who is a patient. Yet Mark Twain connects this example to his previous discussion of the pilot’s relationship to the beautiful yet dangerous river. A careful reader might make the connection and extend the argument to life in general rather than to rivers specifically.

IDENTIFIED SKILLS: *Author’s Claim, Elements of Argument*

2. The word “bewitched” (line 35) functions to
- A. imply the river has mystic abilities that are dangerous
 - B. develop the earlier assertions about the steamboat pilot
 - C. convey the author’s unstable emotional state created by the river
 - D. introduce a counterargument that will be refuted later in the passage
 - E. illuminate the dramatic influence of the river upon anyone who travels it

RATIONALE

E. The word “bewitched” implies the immense force working behind the scenes in nature. The powerful river commands the author and by extension any who travel upon its waters or closely observe its waters.

IDENTIFIED SKILLS: *Words in Context, Author’s Claim*

AP Calculus Sample:

x	-1	2	6
$f(x)$	3	1	-3
$f'(x)$	2	-4	5
$g(x)$	4	-1	0
$g'(x)$	-2	6	8

1. Let $h(x) = f(g(x))$, then the equation of the tangent line to h at $x = 2$ is given by which of the following equations?
- A. $y - 3 = -3(x - 2)$
 - B. $y - 3 = 2(x - 2)$
 - C. $y - 3 = 12(x - 2)$
 - D. $y + 1 = -24(x - 2)$

RATIONALE

C. A composite function of h is given in the stem of the problem and students are asked to find the equation of the tangent line at $x = 2$ utilizing the table given. To do this, students must first find the y -coordinate for h when $x = 2$ using composite functions, $f(g(2)) = f(-1) = 3$. Secondly, students must find the slope of the tangent line by differentiating h using the chain rule, $h'(x) = f'(g(x)) * g'(x)$ and $h'(2) = f'(-1) * g'(2) = 2 * 6 = 12$. Using this information, we can use point-slope form to write the tangent line as: $y - 3 = 12(x - 2)$.

IDENTIFIED SKILLS: *Tangent Lines, techniques of differentiation including chain rule. Utilizing numerical data and working with composite functions.*

AP U.S. History Sample:

“By throwing open the polls to every man that walks, we have placed the power in the hands of those who have neither property, talents, nor influence in other circumstances, and who require in their public officers no higher qualifications than they possess themselves. It would be a disgrace to the city and to republicanism if a ticket so utterly unworthy as theirs should succeed. New York has not always had her just share of influence in the national and state legislatures, on account of the character of her representatives; but never was she reduced to such an extreme as she will be should the Agrarian Party succeed.”

New York Journal of Commerce, editorial – November 7, 1829

1. The author of this editorial is expressing concerns arising from
 - A. states’ removal of property ownership as a requirement for voting.
 - B. growing threats to states’ rights from the growing federal government.
 - C. opening up suffrage to women and free African Americans.
 - D. the growing power of state legislatures.

RATIONALE

A. *The author is addressing the transition to a more participatory democracy which was achieved by extending suffrage from a system based on property ownership to one based on voting by all adult white men.*

TIME PERIOD: 4

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS: *Analyzing Evidence: Content and Sourcing*

2. One direct result of the development addressed in the editorial was
 - A. a growing number of social reform movements.
 - B. greater support for westward expansion.
 - C. the rise of mass political parties.
 - D. the pursuit of increased rights for women.

RATIONALE

C. *New mass political parties emerged as groups tried to mobilize these new voters to support their policies in the 1830s.*

TIME PERIOD: 4

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS: *Causation*