Satire:
The Oldest Trick in the Book

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## Skill Focus

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## Texts and Materials Required:
Satirical articles, film or video clips, cartoons, etc.

## Lesson Introduction/Overview

Almost every year, the A.P. test development committee chooses satirical and ironic passages for analysis on the Language and Literature Advanced Placement tests. Students need practice analyzing satire, not only because they will most likely encounter this literary form in their A.P. assessments, but also because satire has become a favorite mode of expression during modern times in print, television, and other media.
Definitions and Examples

What is Satire?

**Satire:** The use of mockery, irony, humor, and/or wit to attack or ridicule something, such as a person, habit, idea, institution, society, or custom that is, or is considered to be, foolish, flawed, or wrong. The aim of satire is, or should be, to improve human institutions and/or humanity. Satire attempts through humor and laughter to inspire individuals, institutions, and humankind to improve or to encourage its readers to put pressure on individuals and institutions so that they may be improved for the benefit of all.

“The best satire does not seek to do harm or damage by its ridicule, unless we speak of damage to the structure of vice, but rather it seeks to create a shock of recognition and to make vice repulsive so that the vice will be expunged from the person or society under attack or from the person or society intended to benefit by the attack (regardless of who is the immediate object of attack); whenever possible this shock of recognition is to be conveyed through laughter or wit: the formula for satire is one of honey and medicine. Far from being simply destructive, satire is implicitly constructive, and the satirists themselves, whom I trust concerning such matters, often depict themselves as such constructive critics.

Since social pressure seems to be one of the few forces to which fools and knaves will bow, the satirist can more effectively operate by enlisting the readers of the satire to aid him in bringing behavior back in line with publicized values. The satirist by himself is virtually impotent to change the vicious behavior of any particular target, for the satirist as himself is just another small, opinionated prude, and is easily dismissed by any remark that might pass for wit. The target must correct himself when he discovers he is under attack, or he must be driven to correct his behavior when hundreds of his peers join the satirist in ridiculing him or by ostracizing him from their society ...

But social pressure cannot operate when the satire is aimed at widespread folly or vice, as when a whole country or class joins in a universal debauchery; in such cases the reader himself is the target. When the reader is aggressed, he must be moved to change or correct himself by embarrassment for or shock at recognition of his guilt: his crimes must be presented in such a way that they appear truly odious to him, bringing about a willing change (as opposed to the forceful change of the knave).

This general satire, aimed at many, is more common and more important than specific attacks on single persons, since the satirist's ideal is the reformation or regeneration of a whole society. The general correction of vice is the primary aim because the satirist can live with a few very evil men more easily than he can with ten thousand somewhat less evil men who are pulling his world toward doom.”

Techniques of Satire

**Exaggeration/Hyperbole:** making a small blemish bigger or a hidden vice or folly larger in order to make it visible is one of the best ways to point out its existence to the audience or to the target itself. Some specific types of exaggeration include the outrageous suggestions and proposals which often characterize satirical pieces and the writer’s exaggeration of the customary diction and syntax of an individual, an agency, a text, or a publication.

**Distortion:** twisting or emphasizing some aspect of a condition, individual, or event tends to highlight it. A type of distortion may include the juxtaposition of inappropriate or incongruous ideas or things.

**Understatement:** when the folly or evil is so great that further exaggeration is impossible, understatement shows its true extent.

**Innuendo** is a valuable tool for the satirist because it allows him to implicate a target by a completely indirect attack. This is especially useful when the target is dangerous, for it is often possible to deny the insinuation.

**Use of silly or inherently funny words** like “newt” and “nostril” can enhance satire.

**Invective:** a speech that criticizes someone or something fluently and at length. This technique may also be called a diatribe or rant.

*Examples of Invective*

“A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, threesuited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir to a mongrel [female dog]: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deni’st the least syllable of thy addition.” (William Shakespeare, *King Lear*)

“I see. Well, of course, this is just the sort of blinkered philistine pig-ignorance I’ve come to expect from you non-creative garbage. You sit there on your loathsome spotty_behinds squeezing blackheads, not caring a tinker’s cuss for the struggling artist. You excrement, you whining hypocritical toadies with your colour TV sets and your Tony Jacklin golf clubs and your bleeding Masonic secret handshakes.” (John Cleese in Monty Python’s “Architect Sketch”)

Any construction capable of conveying a double meaning is likely to be employed in satire, since multiple meanings form the basis of much of satire. So even the **pun** can be used satirically.
The list: something highly important or even sacred may be included in a long list of mundane and ordinary objects in order to highlight the fact that an individual, institution, or society has lost its sense of proportion.

Oxymoron used satirically makes for a pointed emphasis on some contradiction in the target's philosophy.

Parable and allegory have the same benefits as simile and metaphor, for they can conduct a prolonged discussion on two levels of meaning while at the same time inherently comparing and contrasting those levels without further comment. They also provide the author with some defense if the subject is dangerous, for the satirist can protest that he/she was writing only on the literal level. Famous examples of this technique are Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift and Animal Farm by George Orwell.

Sarcasm and verbal irony are often employed as tools of satire, as well.

Robert Harris says this of the techniques of satire:

“"It is perhaps by now apparent that almost all of these techniques have one element in common: each provides a way to say two or more things at one time, and to compare, equate, or contrast those things, usually with heavy irony. The application of the ironic method of satire uses those techniques which most easily allow the presentation of irony: the several techniques also provide variety, concision, and an opportunity for employing wit and humor. The essential meaning of a satire is seldom if ever consistent with a literal interpretation, yet the literal interpretation is extremely important for what it says about the essential meaning, and about the target or audience which can be reached only in an indirect way.

Men's vices are a threat to the civilization in which the satirist lives, and the satirist feels compelled to expose those vices for the society's good and his own, in a way that will allow the ones attacked to comprehend and remember the attack, and to see a direction they may take for correction. The satire must be presented in a manner which will bring action, and in a world of complacent hypocrites, irony, with its various means of presentation, is essential; the message cannot be delivered without it, if that message is to have any tangible effect. In a two word abstract, the purpose of satire is the correction or deterrence of vice, and its method is to attack hypocrisy through the ironic contrast between values and actions."
### Vices and Follies

#### The Seven Deadly Sins

- Pride/arrogance/hubris
- Avarice (greed)
- Wrath (anger, violence, sullenness/sulking)
- Sloth (laziness, indolence, slovenliness, sloppiness)
- Lust
- Envy
- Gluttony (excessive love of material comforts, food, drink, etc.)

#### Other Vices and Follies

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<td>Narrow mindedness</td>
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<td>Crime</td>
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<td>Rudeness</td>
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<td>Indecisiveness</td>
<td>Careless spending</td>
<td>Immaturity</td>
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<td>Shallow flirtatiousness</td>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
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#### In Politics and Government

- Warmongering
- Unnecessary Taxation and Spending
- Nepotism/favoritism
- Poor handling of crises and disasters
- Misuse of power
- Inappropriate or immoral conduct of leaders
- Injustice
- Human rights violations

#### In Institutions and Businesses

- Inefficiency
- Lack of Effectiveness
- Bad management
- Poor workmanship
- Mendacity (lying)
- False Advertising
- Bad products
- Inhumanity
- Greed
- Immorality
- Exploitation of workers
- Bad environmental impact
**Student Activities**

**To analyze a satirical piece**, employ the following questions:

1. What are the underlying assumptions or unwritten attitudes in the piece?
2. What foolish, flawed, or wrong human action or aspect of society is being lampooned?
3. What would the author’s argument look like stripped of its humor?
4. What resources of language does the satirist use to skewer the target?
5. In what ways do these techniques disarm the intended target or sweeten the criticism to make it acceptable to its target?
6. What is the goal of the satirist (i.e., how does the satirist wish society, the individual, the body politic, or an institution to change or amend itself?)
7. How effective are the methods of this particular satirist?

**To write an analysis of a satirical piece**, employ the following method:

**Write an opening paragraph** identifying the vice, folly, or flaw targeted by the author, naming the target of the piece, outlining the characteristics of the audience of the satire, and explaining what effect the writer hopes to bring about through his or her use of satirical techniques.

**In your body paragraphs**, address the specific techniques of language employed by the author to make the audience laugh (the honey) while criticizing something about an individual, an institution, or a society for the purpose of changing it for the better (the medicine).

**In your conclusion**, predict the probable effect of the satire on its audience and/or evaluate how effectively the author has used the techniques of satire to produce a needed change.
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**Introductory Paragraph:**

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EXAMPLE ONE ~

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DEMAND WARS IN EASIER-TO-FIND COUNTRIES
"How Come No One Fights in Big Famous Nations Anymore?" They Ask

Washington, D.C. (SatireWire.com) — A delegation of American high school students today demanded the United States stop waging war in obscure nations such as Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and instead attack places they've actually heard of, such as France, Australia, and Austria, unless, they said, those last two are the same country.

"People claim we don't know as much geography as our parents and grandparents, but it's so not our fault," Josh Beldoni, a senior at Fischer High School in Los Angeles, told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Back then they only had wars in, like, Germany and England, but we're supposed to know about places like Somalia and Massachusetts."

"Macedonia," corrected committee Chairman Carl Levin of Michigan.

"See?" said Beldoni.

Beldoni's frustration was shared by nearly three dozen students at the hearing, who blamed the U.S. military for making them look bad.

"I totally support our soldiers and all that, but I am seriously failing both geography and social studies because I keep getting asked to find Croatia or Yemvrekia, or whatever bizarre-o country we send troops to," said Amelia Nash, a junior at Clark High School in Orlando, Fla. "Can't we fight in, like, Italy? It's boot-shaped."

Chairman Levin however, explained that Italy was a U.S. ally, and that intervention is usually in response to a specific threat.

"OK, what about Arulco?" interrupted Tyler Boone, a senior at Bellevue High School in Wisconsin. "That's a country in Jagged Alliance 2 run by the evil Queen Deidranna. I'm totally familiar with that place. She's a major threat."

"Jagged...?" said Levin.

"Alliance. It's a computer game."

"Well, no," Levin answered. "We can't attack a fictional country."

"Yeah right," Boone mumbled. "Like Grenada was real."

The students' testimony was supported by a cross-section of high school geography teachers, who urged the committee to help lay a solid foundation for America's young people by curtailing any intervention abroad.

"Since the anti-terror war began, most of my students can now point to Afghanistan on a map, which is fine, but those same kids still don't know the capitals of Nevada and Ohio," said Richard Gerber, who teaches at Rhymony High School in Atlanta. "I think we need to cut back on our activities overseas and take care of business at home, and if that means invading Tallahassee (Fla.) or Trenton (N.J.) so that students learn where they are, so be it."
The hearing adjourned after six hours. An estimated 2,000 more students were expected to hold a march in the nation's capital, but forgot which city it was in.

EXAMPLE TWO ~

MiamiHerald.com

Posted on Mon, Feb. 19, 2007

The right to bear clubs

DAVE BARRY

(This classic Dave Barry column was originally published May 24, 1998.)

Every now and then somebody thinks up a new idea that is so totally revolutionary that it just totally revolutionizes everything.

For example, in 1905 Albert Einstein stunned the scientific community when he announced that "e" is equal to "mc squared." Until that point, scientists had no idea what "e" was equal to. Oh, sure, they had known since the days of the ancient Egyptians that "e" came after "i," except when both letters were preceded by a "c." But nobody had ever even considered the possibility that "e" might have anything to do with "m." We will never know what other amazing things would have been revealed about the alphabet if Einstein had lived longer. We do know that, just before he died, he told friends that he was working on "something really big involving 'k.'"

Albert is gone, but fortunately for humanity in general there are still great minds at work, coming up with breakthrough ideas that a normal person could never even imagine without ingesting fantastic quantities of gin. One such idea was brought to my attention recently by an alert reader named (really) Dwain Vanderhoof, who sent me a brochure for a new type of golf club, which I absolutely swear I am not making up, called the Ballistic Driver.

The Ballistic Driver is a "swing-less" golf club. You grip it as usual, and you position the head of the club next to the golf ball. But instead of swinging the club, you press an "Activator Button" on the grip; this detonates a small explosive charge inside the club head, which causes a metal plate to shoot out the side of the club a distance of 1.5 inches at a speed of 200 miles per hour. The plate hits the golf ball, which then, according to the brochure, goes "250 yards, every time . . . down the middle, exactly where you aimed it, drive after drive."

Is that a great idea, or what? Now you can play golf WITHOUT HAVING TO MANUALLY HIT THE BALL! Talk about a breakthrough! I mean, for me, the worst part of playing golf, by far, has always been hitting the ball. I love standing around on the golf course; I love driving the golf cart; I love saying the word "bogey." But I hate swinging the club at the stupid ball, and, on those rare occasions when I actually hit the ball, I hate watching it take off in some totally random direction and disappear, usually
forever, into a lake, or the woods, or the body of an innocent bystander. So I called the company that makes the Ballistic Driver, GPower, Inc. of Sunnyvale, Calif. I spoke with one of the partners, Elizabeth Poggi, a serious person who confirmed that the Ballistic Driver is a serious product aimed at people who, for various reasons, cannot swing golf clubs, as well as for people like me who would simply prefer not to.

Poggi stressed that the Ballistic Driver, which will sell for around $800, has safety features that prevent it from going off accidentally, as well as (I am still not making this up) a silencer. These features are important: Just imagine what it would be like if golf clubs were randomly detonating with loud bangs on golf courses, not to mention in airports, hotel elevators, etc. It would be a lot of fun! But it would also be wrong, which is why I am urging everybody to remember this basic rule of golf: Always assume your club is loaded.

I think the Ballistic Driver could transform the game. Poggi told me that if the club were fitted with a titanium strike plate, "it could theoretically propel the ball 500 yards." This means that a pathetic schlump like me could propel the ball farther than Tiger Woods Inc. hits it on those rare occasions when he is not filming American Express commercials.

And who knows what lies down the road? I mean, if we can make a club that can hit the ball 500 yards, why not 1,000? Why not 1,500? Why not a mile? We have the technology, darn it! Maybe we will see the day, in our lifetimes, when golfers using a descendant of the Ballistic Driver, perhaps powered by a small quantity of plutonium, are stepping up to the tee and driving the ball into another time zone. Of course, we'll need to develop a technologically advanced golf ball that contained some kind of transmitter, so it could radio its position back to the golfer ("YOUR TEE SHOT LANDED 18 YARDS FROM THE HOLE. IN PAKISTAN.")

Wouldn't that be great? Of course, as with any technology, there's always the danger that it will fall into the wrong hands. You could have street gangs converting these clubs to Fully Automatic mode and driving in their low-rider carts to rival golf courses, where they'd spray out hundreds of balls per minute in vicious "drive-by" tee-offs. Or you could turn on the TV news one morning to see Saddam Hussein wearing lime-green pants and standing next to a golf club the size of the Washington Monument, threatening to hit a massive chemical and/or biological Golf Ball of Doom smack into the fairway of middle America.

So there will be those who will try to ban the Ballistic Driver. To them I say: Forget it. The U.S. Constitution guarantees us -- not in so many words, but the intent is clear -- the right to keep and bear golf clubs. This precious right was fought for in the Revolutionary War by our courageous foreparents, the Minutepersons, who stood up for it on the green at Lexington. Although they did bogey that particular hole.

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As summer approaches, millions of Americans busily plan their weddings, full of hope for the future. That is understandable. In recent years, a number of economists and sociologists, including Christopher Jencks, David Ellwood, Kathryn Edin, Daniel Hamermesh, and David Popenoe have stressed the benefits of marriage. But before you tie the knot, pause for a moment and consider whether a spouse is what you really need. Could it be that you'd be happier if you shacked up with the Sony PlayStation 3?

Economists David Blanchflower and Andrew Oswald have suggested that a lasting marriage produces as much happiness as an extra $100,000 a year in salary. This might sound like a strong case for getting hitched. But many economists have shown that happiness is expensive—$100,000 will buy you only a small amount of joy. Studies like these also hide individual variation. Marriage isn't worth $100,000 to just anybody. A recent German study found that matrimony's hedonic gains go disproportionately to couples who have similar education levels but a wide income gap. Worse yet, on average, people adapt very quickly and completely to marriage. As anyone who's ever consumed seven pumpkin pies in one sitting knows, we quickly get used to our favorite new things, and we just as quickly tire of them. As Harvard psychologist Dan Gilbert artfully puts it, "Psychologists call this habituation, economists call it declining marginal utility, and the rest of us call it marriage."

We submit that a relationship with a PlayStation 3 is worth at least $100,000 a year in happiness for all individuals. Unlike a nagging spouse, the PS3 doesn't care about your income or your level of education—it loves you just the way you are. It is true that you will eventually become accustomed to your sleek new PS3, but this will take an extremely long time. The PS3, after all, has been built expressly to keep mind-blowing novelty coming and coming and coming. Periodic infusions of novelty—new games—will keep the endorphins flowing.

Even if you assume that a good marriage is worth $100,000, you can't discount the vast amount of money it takes to woo a spouse. The costs of daily grooming—calculated at the minimum wage—run into the tens of thousands of dollars over a lifetime, not counting the costs of soap, water, Gillette Fusion cartridges, and Old Spice. Then there are the birthday presents, the anniversary presents, and the occasional meals at popular chain restaurants, not to mention the incalculably expensive psychic toll of accommodating your schedule to the increasingly unreasonable demands of your "partner." Compare with the PS3, which does not demand that you bathe or slather yourself in cologne and is available for guilt-free sensual pleasures 24 hours a day. Admittedly, you will have to purchase new games to keep the romance alive with your
PS3. This, however, is vastly less expensive than renewing your nuptials, the tack taken by human couples such as Kevin Federline and Britney Spears.

Some weak-kneed gamers will object to paying the PS3's high price tag: $500 for the "cheap" version, $600 for a souped-up model. This reluctance is understandable. Amusements like the PS2, the Xbox 360, and the Turbo Grafx 16 were never an adequate substitute for human companionship. Keep in mind, however, that none of these platforms could play Blu-ray DVDs, a fatal flaw rectified by the PS3. Life with the primitive PS2 is best understood as a loveless marriage, a source of stress and anxiety rather than true happiness.

And really, how expensive is $500? According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in America in 2003 was $43,318. Gamers skew young, so let's be conservative and cut that number in half. That's $21,659. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development says Americans worked an average of 1,792 hours in 2003. That comes to $12.09 an hour for those making half the median. At that rate, a $500 PS3 can be had for a little more than 41 hours of work—about half of which you will spend reading blog posts about Lindsay Lohan. That 41 hours of work will earn you how many hours of dopamine-pumping PS3 action? The Entertainment Software Association informs us that the average American gamer spends about seven-and-a-half hours per week, or 390 hours annually, riding the video tiger. Let's again make a conservative estimate and assume that PS3 users will log twice that amount: 780 hours a year of gaming time. Now suppose your PS3 explodes in a dazzling shower of sparks after exactly one year. In that tragic circumstance, each hour of pixelated joy will have cost you about three minutes on the job. If it makes you feel better, you can spend that three minutes in the bathroom.

The Bush administration's "Healthy Marriage Initiative," an innovative effort to encourage stable marriages among the poor, has been one of the hallmarks of compassionate conservatism. Wouldn't it make more sense, though, to establish a "PlayStation 3 Initiative" that will put video game consoles in the hands of the neediest?

Reihan Salam is a writer in Washington.  
Will Wilkinson is a writer and policy analyst in Washington, D.C.

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The following essay, “A Presidential Candidate,” was written by Mark Twain, appearing in the *New York Evening Post* on June 9, 1879. Read the article carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Mark Twain used to achieve his purpose.

I have pretty much made up my mind to run for President. What the country wants is a candidate who cannot be injured by investigation of his past history, so that the enemies of the party will be unable to rake up anything against him that nobody ever heard of before. If you know the worst about a candidate, to begin with, every attempt to spring things on him will be checkmated. Now I am going to enter the field with an open record. I am going to own up in advance to all the wickedness I have done, and if any Congressional committee is disposed to prowl around my biography in the hope of discovering any dark and deadly deed that I have secreted, why--let it prowl.

In the first place, I admit that I treed a rheumatic grandfather of mine in the winter of 1850. He was old and inexpert in climbing trees, but with the heartless brutality that is characteristic of me I ran him out of the front door in his nightshirt at the point of a shotgun, and caused him to bowl up a maple tree, where he remained all night, while I emptied shot into his legs. I did this because he snored. I will do it again if I ever have another grandfather. I am as inhuman now as I was in 1850.

I candidly acknowledge that I ran away at the battle of Gettysburg. My friends have tried to smooth over this fact by asserting that I did so for the purpose of imitating Washington, who went into the woods at Valley Forge for the purpose of saying his prayers. It was a miserable subterfuge. I struck out in a straight line for the Tropic of Cancer because I was scared. I wanted my country saved, but I preferred to have somebody else save it. I entertain that preference yet. If the bubble reputation can be obtained only at the cannon's mouth, I am willing to go there for it, provided the cannon is empty. If it is loaded my immortal and inflexible purpose is to get over the fence and go home. My invariable practice in war has been to bring out of every fight two-thirds more men than when I went in. This seems to me to be Napoleonic in its grandeur.

My financial views are of the most decided character, but they are not likely, perhaps, to increase my popularity with the advocates of inflation. I do not insist upon the special supremacy of rag money or hard money. The great fundamental principle of my life is to take any kind I can get.

The rumor that I buried a dead aunt under my grapevine was correct. The vine needed fertilizing, my aunt had to be buried, and I dedicated her to this high purpose. Does that unfit me for the Presidency? The Constitution of our country does not say so. No other citizen was ever considered unworthy of this office because he enriched his grapevines with his dead relatives. Why should I be selected as the first victim of an absurd prejudice?

I admit also that I am not a friend of the poor man. I regard the poor man, in his present condition, as so much wasted raw material. Cut up and properly canned, he might be made useful to fatten the natives of the cannibal islands and to improve our export trade with that region. I shall recommend legislation upon the subject in my first message. My campaign cry will be: "Desiccate the poor workingman; stuff him into sausages."

These are about the worst parts of my record. On them I come before the country. If my country don't want me, I will go back again. But I recommend myself as a safe man -- a man who starts from the basis of total depravity and proposes to be fiendish to the last.
Purpose, Persona, Audience

1. What is Twain’s main purpose in this essay?

2. What is Twain’s persona?

3. What assumptions does he make about his audience?

Twain’s Style

1. How would you characterize his diction?

2. How would you describe his syntax? (length of sentences, complexity of sentences)

3. How does he use details effectively?

Organization

4. Sum up the introduction.

5. How are the main points organized?
Thinking Outside the Box

Twain mentions five character traits he possesses as a Presidential candidate. Explain how a modern-day politician (or one in Twain’s day) would want to be portrayed according to that trait. The first one is done for you as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait Twain Portrays</th>
<th>How a Politician Would Want to Be Portrayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cruel to family</td>
<td>Politicians want to be photographed with their family to imply a close, intact family unit. They want to be portrayed as “family men or women.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unpatriotic and cowardly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>money-hungry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illogical</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>inhumane</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Satire on the AP Exams

In the past several years, the Advanced Placement English exams, both AP Language and AP Literature, have occasionally included free response prompts which require students to read passages of satire and social commentary. In such instances, students must be alert to the nuances of language the writer may employ to convey his critical stance. In the first example, you will find a free response prompt from the 2003 AP Literature Exam over a short story first published in 1953. The second example presents a question from the 1998 AP Language Exam over two letters from the corporate world. A study of the examples will benefit students in both courses and will help prepare them for similar questions that may appear on this year’s test.

2003 AP English Literature and Composition Free Response Question 2

The following passage is an excerpt from “The Other Paris,” a short story by the Canadian writer Mavis Gallant. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, explain how the author uses narrative voice and characterization to provide social commentary.

If anyone had asked Carol at what precise moment she fell in love, or where Howard Mitchell proposed to her, she would have imagined, quite sincerely, a scene that involved all at once the Seine, moonlight, barrows of violets, acacias in flower, and a confused, misty background of the Eiffel tower and little crooked streets. This was what everyone expected, and she had nearly come to believe it herself.

Actually, he had proposed at lunch, over a tuna-fish salad. He and Carol had known each other less than three weeks, and their conversation, until then, had been limited to their office – an American government agency – and the people in it. Carol was twenty-two; no one had proposed to her before, except an unsuitable medical student with no money and eight years’ training still to go. She was under the illusion that in a short time she would be so old no one would ask her again. She accepted at once, and Howard celebrated by ordering an extra bottle of wine. Both would have liked champagne, as a more emphatic symbol of the unusual, but each was too diffident to suggest it.

The fact that Carol was not in love with Howard Mitchell did not dismay her in the least. From a series of helpful college lectures on marriage she had learned that a common interest, such as a liking for Irish setters, was the true basis for happiness, and that the illusion of love was a blight imposed by the film industry, and almost entirely responsible for the high rate of divorce. Similar economic background, financial security, belonging to the same church – these were the pillars of the married union. By an astonishing coincidence, the fathers of Carol and Howard were both attorneys and both had been defeated in their one attempt to get elected a judge. Carol and Howard were both vaguely Protestant, although a serious discussion of religious beliefs would have gravely embarrassed them. And Howard, best of all, was sober, old enough to know his own mind, and absolutely reliable. He was an economist who had sense enough to attach himself to a corporation that continued to pay his salary during his loan to the government. There was no reason for the engagement or the marriage to fail.

Carol, with great efficiency, nearly at once set about the business of falling in love. Love required only the right conditions, like a geranium. It would wither exposed to bad weather or in dismal surroundings; indeed, Carol rated the chances of love in a cottage or a furnished room at zero. Given a good climate, enough money, and a pair of good-natured, intelligent (her college lectures had stressed this) people, one had only to sit back and watch it grow. All winter, then she looked for these right conditions in Paris. When, at first, nothing happened, she blamed it on the weather. She was often convinced she would fall deeply in love with Howard if only it would stop raining. Undaunted, she waited for better times.
Howard had no notion of any of this. His sudden proposal to Carol had been quite out of character—
he was uncommonly cautious—and he alternated between a state of numbness and a state of self-
congratulation. Before his engagement he had sometimes been lonely, a malaise he put down to overwork,
and he was discontented with his bachelor households, for he did not enjoy collecting old pottery or making
little casserole dishes. Unless he stumbled on a competent housemaid, nothing ever got done. This in itself
would not have spurred him into marriage had he not been seriously unsettled by the visit of one of his
sisters, who advised him to marry some nice girl before it was too late. “Soon,” she told him, “you’ll just
be a person who fills in at dinner.”

Howard saw the picture at once, and was deeply moved by it.

1998 AP English Language and Composition Exam – Question 2

The following letters constitute the complete correspondence between an executive of the
Coca-Cola Company and a representative of Grove Press. Read the letters carefully.
Then write an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies each writer uses to achieve his
purpose and explaining which letter offers the more persuasive case.

March 25, 1970

Mr. R.W. Seaver
Executive Vice President
Grove Press, Inc.
214 Mercer Street
New York, New York 10012

Dear Mr. Seaver:

Several people have called to our attention your advertisement for Diary of a Harlem
is “This book is like a weapon…it’s the real thing.”

Since our company has made use of “It’s the Real Thing” to advertise Coca-Cola long prior to the
publication of the book, we are writing to ask you to stop using this theme or slogan in connection with the
book.

We believe you will agree that it is undesirable for our companies to make simultaneous use of
“the real thing” in connection with our respective products. There will always be likelihood of confusion
as to the source of sponsorship of the goods, and the use by such prominent companies would dilute the
distinctiveness of the trade slogan and diminish its effectiveness and value as an advertising and
merchandising tool.

“It’s the Real Thing” was first used in advertising for Coca-Cola over twenty-seven years ago to
refer to our product. We first used it in print advertising in 1942 and extended it to outdoor advertising,
including painted walls—some of which are still displayed throughout the country. The line has appeared
in advertising for Coca-Cola during succeeding years. For example, in 1954 we used “There’s this about
Coke—You Can’t Beat the Real Thing” in national advertising. We resumed national use of “It’s the Real
Thing” in the summer of 1969 and it is our main thrust for 1970.

Please excuse my writing so fully, but I wanted to explain why we feel it necessary to ask you and
your associates to use another line to advertise Mr. Haskins’ book.

We appreciate your cooperation and your assurance that you will discontinue the use of “It’s the
real thing.”

Sincerely,
Ira C. Herbert
March 31, 1970

Mr. Ira C. Herbert  
Coca-Cola USA  
P.O. Drawer 1734  
Atlanta, Georgia 30301

Dear Mr. Herbert:

Thank you for your letter of March 25th, which has just reached me, doubtless because of the mail strike.

We note with sympathy your feeling that you have a proprietary interest in the phrase “It’s the real thing,” and I can fully understand that the public might be confused by our use of the expression, and mistake a book by a Harlem schoolteacher for a six-pack of Coca-Cola. Accordingly, we have instructed all our salesmen to notify bookstores that whenever a customer comes in and asks for a copy of *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* they should request the sales personnel to make sure that what the customer wants is the book, rather than a Coke. This, we think, should protect your interest and in no way harm ours.

We would certainly not want to dilute the distinctiveness of your trade slogan nor diminish its effectiveness as an advertising and merchandising tool, but it did occur to us that since the slogan is so closely identified with your product, those who read our ad may well tend to go out and buy a Coke rather than our book. We have discussed this problem in an executive committee meeting, and by a vote of seven to six decided that, even if this were the case, we would be happy to give Coke the residual benefit of our advertising.

Problems not unsimilar to the ones you raise in your letter have occurred to us in the past. You may recall that we published *Games People Play* which became one of the biggest nonfiction best-sellers of all time, and spawned conscious imitations (*Games Children Play*, *Games Psychiatrists Play*, *Games Ministers Play*, etc.). I am sure you will agree that this posed a far more direct and deadly threat to both the author and ourselves than our use of “It’s the real thing.” Further, *Games People Play* has become part of our language, and one sees it constantly in advertising, as a newspaper headline, etc. The same is true of another book which we published six or seven years ago, *One Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding*.

Given our strong sentiments concerning the First Amendment, we will defend to the death your right to use “It’s the real thing” in any advertising you care to. We would hope you would do the same for us, especially when no one here or in our advertising agency, I am sorry to say, realized that you owned the phrase. We were merely quoting in our ads Peter S. Prescott’s review of *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* in *Look* which begins “*Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* is the real thing, a short, spare, honest book which will, I suspect, be read a generation hence as a classic….”

With all best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Richard Seaver

Coca-Cola Correspondence from Evergreen Review.  
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