

Section II: Essay Questions

Time: 2 Hours

3 Questions

Question 1

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

Directions: Read the following passage carefully. Write an essay in which you discuss how the choice of detail, diction, and syntax are used to reveal the speaker’s attitude to Sir Walter Elliot.

Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations arising from domestic affairs changed naturally into pity and contempt as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century; and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest that never failed. This was the page at which the favourite volume was always opened: —

Elliot of Kellynch Hall.

“Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq., of South Park, in the City of Gloucester; by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue, Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne,

born August 9, 1787; a stillborn son, November 5, 1789; Mary born November 20, 1791.”

Precisely such had the paragraph originally stood from the printer’s hands; but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary’s birth: — “Married December 16, 1810, Charles, son and heir of Charles Musgrove, Esq., of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset,” and by inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his wife.

Then followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable family in the usual terms; how it had been first settled in Cheshire, how mentioned in Dugdale, serving the office of high sheriff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II with all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; forming altogether two handsome quarto pages, and concluding

with the arms and motto: — “Principal seat, Kellynch Hall, in the country of Somerset,” and Sir Walter’s handwriting again in this finale: —

(60) “Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great-grandson of the second Sir Walter.”

(65) Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character: vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth, and

(70) at fifty-four was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could the valet of any new-made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion.

Question 2

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

Directions: Read the following poem by the Jamaican-born writer Claude McKay carefully. Then write an essay in which you discuss the ways in which the author’s style (diction, imagery, selection of detail) reveals his feeling about what he recalls and cannot remember about his youth.

Flame-Heart

So much have I forgotten in ten years,
 So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
 What time the purple apples come to juice,
 And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
 (5) I have forgot the special, startling season
 Of the pimento’s flowering and fruiting;
 What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
 And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.
 I have forgotten much, but still remember
 (10) The poinsettia’s red, blood-red in warm December.
 I still recall the honey-fever grass,
 But cannot recollect the high days when
 We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
 To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
 (15) I often try to think in what sweet month
 The languid painted ladies used to dapple
 The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
 Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.
 I have forgotten — strange — but quite remember
 (20) The poinsettia’s red, blood-red in warm December.

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