

Sight Passages

On the exam you will see the following instructions:

Choose THREE (3) of the following passages and for EACH passage conduct a detailed close reading. DO NOT simply write paraphrase or "plot summary," but rather explain the thematic importance of the passage and the relationship among its content, form, and context. Be sure to illustrate your ideas with direct references to the passage in question.

Things to remember about sight passages:

1. CLOSE READING: Don't provide a general overview of the issue or passage. Look at, not just WHAT is said (CONTENT), but HOW this is said (FORM):

- patterns of imagery, word choice;
- significant elements of form (stanzaic structure, enjambment, rhythm, rhyme etc.);
- significant symbols;
- **How do these contribute to your understanding of a significant theme, idea etc.**

Sight Passages continued

2. CONTEXT: This can mean a variety of things. You may consider "context" to refer to any or all of the following:

- how the passage relates to the work as a whole (if it is an excerpt);
- how the passage relates to the general themes of the course;
- how the passage relates to issues shaping society and/or literature;
- how the passage relates specifically to other texts we have studied during the course.

3. CHOOSING FOCUS: Each passage may have more than one possible theme or important idea. Don't sacrifice SPECIFICITY in order to talk about them all. Choose the theme or idea

- that is most important in your view;
- that will allow you to be the most COMPREHENSIVE I.e. that accounts for the most elements of the passage;
- SO/ think of the analysis as a little essay and provide a THESIS STATEMENT to unify your observations.

4. CONCRETIZE AND ILLUSTRATE, ILLUSTRATE AND CONCRETIZE. **CONCRETIZE!!! ILLUSTRATE!!!!**

CONCRETIZE: PROVIDE an example that is a **direct**

reference to the text:

- Quotation
- Identification of a pattern

ILLUSTRATE: EXPLAIN how your example **supports** your assertion or observation.

SAMPLE SIGHT PASSAGE

from "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

I lie here on this great immoveable bed--it is nailed down, I believe--and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is a good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way, each breadth stands alone; the bloated curves and flourishes--a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens--go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing sea weeds in full chase.

(1137)

