

2016 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total *Heart of Darkness* Assessment.)

In the following passage from Chapter 1 of *Heart of Darkness* (1901), Marlow concludes his initial impressions about the Company's role in the Congo. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze Marlow's complex attitude towards the Company and European Imperialism. You may wish to consider such elements as tone, selection of detail, imagery, and syntax.

"But they didn't. Instead of rivets there came an invasion, an infliction, a visitation. It came in sections during the next three weeks, each section headed by a donkey carrying a white
5 man in new clothes and tan shoes, bowing from that elevation right and left to the impressed pilgrims. A quarrelsome band of footsore sulky niggers trod on the heels of the donkeys; a lot of tents, camp-stools, tin
10 boxes, white cases, brown bales would be shot down in the courtyard, and the air of mystery would deepen a little over the muddle of the station. Five such installments came, with their absurd air of disorderly
15 flight with the loot of innumerable outfit shops and provision stores, that, one would think, they were lugging, after a raid, into the wilderness for equitable division. It was an inextricable mess of things decent in
20 themselves but that human folly made look like the spoils of thieving.

"This devoted band called itself the Eldorado¹ Exploring Expedition, and I
25 believe they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage; there was not an atom
30 of foresight or of serious intention in the

whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more
35 moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe. Who paid the expenses of the noble enterprise I don't know; but the uncle of our manager was leader of that lot.

40 "In exterior he resembled a butcher in a poor neighborhood, and his eyes had a look of sleepy cunning. He carried his fat paunch with ostentation on his short legs, and during
45 the time his gang infested the station spoke to no one but his nephew. You could see these two roaming about all day long with their heads close together in an everlasting confab.

50 "I had given up worrying myself about the rivets. One's capacity for that kind of folly is more limited than you would suppose. I said Hang!—and let things slide. I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I
55 would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very interested in him. No. Still, I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all, and how
60 he would set about his work when there."

¹ a city or country of fabulous riches held by 16th century explorers to exist in South America