

**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.)

Read the following passage from Chapter 2 of *Heart of Darkness* (1901) carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze Marlow's complex attitude towards Kurtz. You may wish to consider such elements as point of view, tone, selection of detail, and syntax.

Mind, I am not trying to excuse or even explain -- I am trying to account to myself for—for —Mr. Kurtz —for the shade of Mr. Kurtz. This initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere honoured me with its  
5 amazing confidence before it vanished altogether. This was because it could speak English to me. The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and -- as he was good enough to say himself -- his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was  
10 half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz; and by and by I learned that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had intrusted him with the making of a report, for its  
15 future guidance. And he had written it, too. I've seen it. I've read it. It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for! But this must have been before his —let us say —  
20 nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which —as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times —were offered up to him —do you understand? —to Mr. Kurtz himself.  
25 But it was a beautiful piece of writing. The opening paragraph, however, in the light of later information, strikes me now as ominous. He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily  
30 appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings —we approach them with the might of a deity,' and so on, and so on. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded,' etc., etc. From that  
35 point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the  
40 unbounded power of eloquence —of words —of burning noble words. There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a

kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be  
45 regarded as the exposition of a method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'Exterminate all the brutes!' The curious part  
50 was that he had apparently forgotten all about that valuable postscriptum, because, later on, when he in a sense came to himself, he repeatedly entreated me to take good care of 'my pamphlet' (he called it), as it was sure to have in the future a good influence  
55 upon his career. I had full information about all these things, and, besides, as it turned out, I was to have the care of his memory. I've done enough for it to give me the indisputable right to lay it, if I choose, for an everlasting rest in the dust-bin of  
60 progress, amongst all the sweepings and, figuratively speaking, all the dead cats of civilization. But then, you see, I can't choose. He won't be forgotten. Whatever he was, he was not common. He had the power to charm or frighten  
65 rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour; he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings: he had one devoted friend at least, and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with  
70 self-seeking. No; I can't forget him, though I am not prepared to affirm the fellow was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him.