

AP English Literature and Composition
Prompt 1

The poems below both address the subject of euthanasia. Read each poem carefully. Then, compose an essay in which compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the devices each author uses to convey his point. In your essay, you may consider such elements as point of view, imagery, structure, syntax, diction, and tone.

How Annandale Went Out

“They called it Annandale—and I was there
To flourish, to find words, and to attend:
Liar, physician, hypocrite, and friend,
I watched him; and the sight was not so fair
As one or two I have seen elsewhere:
An apparatus not for me to mend—
A wreck with hell between him and the end,
Remained of Annandale; and I was there.

“I knew the ruin as I knew to man;
So put the two together, if you can,
Remembering the worst you know of me.
Now view yourself as I was, on the spot—
With a slight kind of engine.¹ Do you see?
Like this . . . You wouldn’t hang me? I thought not.”

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1910)

To the Mercy Killers

If ever mercy move you murder me,
I pray you, kindly killers, let me live.
Never conspire with death to set me free,
but let me know such life as pain can give.
Even though I be a clot, an aching clench,
a stub, a stump, a butt, a scab, a knob,
a screaming pain, a putrefying stench,
still let me live, so long as life shall throb.
Even though I turn such traitor to myself
as beg to die, do not accomplice me.
Even though I seem not human, a mute shelf
of glucose, bottled blood, machinery
to swell the lung and pump the heart—even so,
do not put out my life. Let me still glow.

Dudley Randall (1973)

¹ a hypodermic needle