**English Language and Composition**

**Section II**

**Total time – 2 hours**

**Question 1**

(Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

**Directions:** The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Synthesis refers to combining the sources and your position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing sources. *Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.* Avoid merely summarizing sources*.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

**Introduction**

Laughter makes us feel better, both physically and emotionally. Contemporary society seems to relish humorous films, books, television programs, and cartoons, and we laugh at funny song lyrics. Why do some artists seek laughter as appreciation for their creativity? We might consider that the desired effect could be that the artists ask us to look amusingly at ourselves as individuals and as a society. Humor seems to have healing powers, with laughter and thoughtful consideration the primary desired effects for the individual and for some groups. Satire has a broader purpose in that it points out a specific failing of a social institution under attack. Consider these variations of humor and satire as means to attain an end; burlesque, caricature, hyperbole, irony, lampoon, parody, *reduction ad adsurdum*, sarcasm, and solecism. Humorists and satirists ask us to laugh in response to their creative efforts, to laugh at conduct as a means of sharing sentiment about a situation, to laugh at our own conduct and to consider correcting it, and to inspire a sense of outrage about a situation by exposing and ridiculing conduct we consider wrong because of shared values, and by exposing and ridiculing to inspire change.

**Assignment**

Read the following sources including any introductory information carefully. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that argues a clear position about the different ways that humor is used, its intentions and effects, and the extent to which it should be regulated.

Further Discussion Questions for Seminar

1. *How do you know if something is satirical or simply ironic?*
2. *What would generate a harmonious resolution to the failing of the element of society addressed in the source?*
3. *Argue: “Indignation and outrage in response to injustice or absurdity can initiate social change.”*
4. *Explain what you consider to be the author’s intended effect in the passages.*
5. *Find examples of absurdities and explain how each builds on a detail that contributes to humor.*
6. *Note incongruities that produce humor.*
7. *Argue: Bruce Michelson argues, “Wit needs to be appreciated not as a verbal joust but as a strategy for interpreting the complexities of the world. It is a way to integrate thinking about the seriousness and the worries and challenges of life. Wit is not simply an end to itself, a classification for verbal play, a comedic interlude, a joke; it is a means to find and to understand what is important in and about our lives.”*
8. *Develop a position on the value of wit as a means of interpreting the complexities of the world.*

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| Source A Samuel, Clemens. "William Dean Howells' Letters - River Campus Libraries." Marktwainproject.org. 18 May 1880. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following excerpt is a letter from Samuel Clemens to William Dean Howells, who were lifelong friends and writers.*

**To William Dean Howells   
15 June 1872 • Hartford, Conn.   
(MS:**[**NN-B**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;doc.view=biblio;bibID=bib10288;style=letter;brand=mtp)**,**[***UCCL***](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;doc.view=biblio;bibID=bib00027;style=letter;brand=mtp)[**00756**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/search?identifier=UCCL00756;rmode=details;style=mtp;brand=mtp)**)**

Hartford, June 15.

Friend Howells—

Could you tell me how I could get a copy of your portrait as published in Hearth & Home? I hear so much talk about it as being among the finest works of art which have yet appeared in that journal, that I feel a strong desire to see it. Is it suitable for framing? I have written the publishers of H & H time & again, but they say that the demand for the portrait immediately exhausted the edition & now a copy cannot be had, even for the European demand, which has now begun.1 Bret Harte has been here,2 & says his family would not [**[**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp)bel [**]**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp)without that portrait for any consideration. He says his children get up in the night & yell for it.3 I would give anything for a copy of that portrait to put up in my parlor. I have Oliver Wendell Holmes’s & Bret Harte’s, as published in Every Saturday,4 & of all the swarms that come every day to gaze upon them, none go away that are not softened & [**[**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp)humbled[**]**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp) & made more resigned to the will of God. If I had yours to put up alongside of them, I believe the combination would bring more souls to earnest reflection, & ultimate conviction of their lost condition, ~~& infallible~~ than any other kind of warning would. Where in the nation *can* I get that portrait? Here are heaps of people that want it, [**[**](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp) ~~tha~~ **[]](http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00756.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp)**—that *need* it. There is my uncle. *He* wants a copy. He is lying at the point of death. He has *been* lying at the point of death for two years. He wants a copy—& I want him to *have* a copy. ~~If it will not~~ And I want you to send a copy to the man that shot my dog. I want to see if he is dead to every human instinct.

Now you send me that portrait. I am sending you mine, in this letter; & am glad to do it, for it has been greatly admired. People who are judges of art, find in the execution a grandeur which has not been equalled in this country, & an expression which has not been approached in *any*.

Ys Truly

S. L. Clemens.

P. S.—62,000 copies of Roughing It sold & delivered in 4 months.

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| Source B "Tag Archives: Ed Foreman." Adventures in Reading. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following excerpt is one of approximately seventeen to twenty million letters addressed to members of the US Congress delivered each year to the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Many constituents write in to suggest ideas for legislation, request favors, make complaints (the most frequent), offer praise (not so frequent), and simply express their views on a wide range of social issues. The following letter regarding government farm subsidies was sent to Rep. Ed Foreman on March 20, 1963.*

The Honorable Ed Foreman  
House of Representatives  
Congressional District #16  
Washington 25, D.C.  
  
Dear Sir:  
  
 My friend over in Terebone Parish received a $1,000 check from the government this year for not raising hogs. So I am going into the not-raising hogs business next year.  
 What I want to know is, in your opinion, what is the best kind of farm not to raise hogs on and the best kind of hogs not to raise? I would prefer not to raise Razorbacks, but if that is not a good breed not to raise, I will just as gladly not raise any Berkshires or Durocs.  
 The hardest work in this business is going to be in keeping an inventory of how many hogs I haven’t raised.  
 My friend is very joyful about the future of his business. He has been raising hogs for more than 20 years and the best he ever made was $400, until this year, when he got $1,000 for not raising hogs.  
 If I can get $1,000 for not raising 50 hogs, then will I get $2,000 for not raising 100 hogs? I plan to operate on a small scale at first, holding myself down to 4,000 hogs which means I will have $80,000 coming from the government.  
 Now another thing: these hogs I will not raise will not eat 100,000 bushels of corn. So will you pay me anything for not raising 100,000 bushels of corn not to feed the hogs I am not raising?  
 I want to get started as soon as possible as this seems to be a good time of year for not raising hogs.  
 One thing more, can I raise 10 or 12 hogs on the side while I am in the not-raising-hog-business just enough to get a few sides of bacon to eat?  
  
Very truly yours,  
J.B. Lee, Jr.  
Potential Hog Raiser

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| **Source C**  "Packard Humanities Institute: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin." Packard Humanities Institute: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following excerpt is a letter by the statesman and philosopher Benjamin Franklin who may have also been American’s first humorist. Franklin represented the American colonies as a diplomat in Paris during the American Revolution, and it is very likely he received many requests for letters of recommendation.*

“Model of a Letter of Recommendation of a Person You Are Unacquainted with.”

al: (draft): Library of Congress; copy: Morristown National Historical Park

Paris April 2, 1777

Sir

The Bearer of this who is going to America, presses me to give him a Letter of Recommendation, tho’ I know nothing of him, not even his Name. This may seem extraordinary, but I assure you it is not uncommon here. Sometimes indeed one unknown Person brings me another equally unknown, to recommend him; and sometimes they recommend one another! As to this Gentleman, I must refer you to himself for his Character and Merits, with which he is certainly better acquainted than I can possibly be; I recommend him however to those Civilities which every Stranger, of whom one knows no Harm, has a Right to, and I request you will do him all the good Offices and show him all the Favour that on further Acquaintance you shall find him to deserve. I have the honour to be, &c.

*Notation by William Temple Franklin:* Model of a Letter of Recommendation of a Person you are unacquainted with.

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| Source D  "Groucho Marx Letter to Warner Brothers : Free Download & Streaming : Internet Archive." Internet Archive. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following excerpt is a letter from Groucho Marx, a comedian and one of the famous Marx Brothers.*

Dear Warner Bros.,

Apparently there is more than one way of conquering a city and holding it as your own. For example, up to the time that we contemplated making this picture, I had no idea that the city of Casablanca belonged exclusively to Warner Brothers. However, it was only a few days after our announcement appeared that we received your long, ominous legal document warning us not to use the name Casablanca.

It seems that in 1471, Ferdinand Balboa Warner, your great-great-grandfather, while looking for a shortcut to the city of Burbank, had stumbled on the shores of Africa and, raising his alpenstock (which he later turned in for a 100 shares of common), named it Casablanca.

I just don't understand your attitude. Even if you plan on releasing your picture, I am sure that the average movie fan could learn in time to distinguish between Ingrid Bergman and Harpo. I don't know whether I could, but I certainly would like to try.

You claim that you own Casablanca and that no one else can use that name without permission. What about "Warner Brothers"? Do you own that too? You probably have the right to use the name Warner, but what about the name Brothers? Professionally, we were brothers long before you were. We were touring the sticks as the Marx Brothers when Vitaphone was still a gleam in the inventor's eye, and even before there had been other brothers - the Smith Brothers; the Brothers Karamazov; Dan Brothers, an outfielder with Detroit; and Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?. (This was originally "Brothers, Can You Spare a Dime?" but this was spreading a dime pretty thin, so they threw out one brother, gave all the money to the other one, and whittled it down to "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?")

Now Jack, how about you? Do you maintain that yours is an original name? Well it's not. It was used long before you were born. Offhand, I can think of two Jacks - Jack of Jack and the Beanstalk, and Jack the Ripper, who cut quite a figure in his day.

As for you, Harry, you probably sign your checks sure in the belief that you are the first Harry of all time and that all other Harrys are impostors. I can think of two Harrys that preceded you. There was Lighthouse Harry of Revolutionary fame and a Harry Appelbaum who lived on the corner of 93rd Street and Lexington Avenue. Unfortunately, Appelbaum wasn't too well-known. The last I heard of him, he was selling neckties at Weber and Heilbroner.

Now about the Burbank studio. I believe this is what you brothers call your place. Old man Burbank is gone. Perhaps you remember him. He was a great man in a garden. His wife often said Luther had 10 green thumbs.

What a witty woman she must have been! Burbank was the wizard who crossed all those fruits and vegetables until he had the poor plants in such confused and jittery condition that they could never decide whether to enter the dining room on the meat platter or the dessert dish.

This is pure conjecture, of course, but who knows - perhaps Burbank's survivors aren't too happy with the fact that a plant that grinds out pictures on a quota settled in their town, appropriated Burbank's name and uses it as a front for their films.

It is even possible that the Burbank family is prouder of the potato produced by the old man than they are of the fact that your studio emerged Casablanca or even Gold Diggers of 1931.

This all seems to add up to a pretty bitter tirade, but I assure you it's not meant to. I love Warners. Some of my best friends are Warner Brothers. It is even possible that I am doing you an injustice and that you, yourselves, know nothing about this dog-in-the-Wanger attitude.

It wouldn't surprise me at all to discover that the heads of your legal department are unaware of this absurd dispute, for I am acquainted with many of them and they are fine fellows with curly black hair, double-breasted suits and a love of their fellow man that out-Saroyans Saroyan.

I have a hunch that his attempt to prevent us from using the title is the brainchild of some ferret-faced shyster, serving a brief apprenticeship in your legal department. I know the type well - hot out of law school, hungry for success, and too ambitious to follow the natural laws of promotion. This bar sinister probably needled your attorneys, most of whom are fine fellows with curly black hair, double-breasted suits, etc., into attempting to enjoin us.

Well, he won't get away with it! We'll fight him to the highest court! No pasty-faced legal adventurer is going to cause bad blood between the Warners and the Marxes.

We are all brothers under the skin, and we'll remain friends till the last reel of A Night in Casablanca goes tumbling over the spool.

Sincerely,

Groucho Marx

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| Source E  White, E.B. ""Letters"" Working. Holt McDougal, 21 May 1951. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following is a letter from E.B. White, an essayist for The New Yorker. At the time the letter was written, consolidated Edison distributed both gas and electricity.*

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| **Source F**  **"**Breaking the Hungry Teen Code." Ellen Goodman. N.p., June-July 1987. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following is a letter form a Pulitzer Prize-Winning columnist for the Boston Globe. Her syndicated column appears in newspapers in the United States.*

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| Source G  "Girl Moved To Tears By 'Of Mice And Men' Cliffs Notes." www.theonion.com. N.p., 18 Aug. 2006. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA—In what she described as "the most emotional moment" of her academic life, University of Virginia sophomore communications major Grace Weaver sobbed openly upon concluding Steinbeck's seminal work of American fiction Of Mice And Men's Cliffs Notes early last week.

Weaver

"This book has changed me in a way that only great literature summaries can," said Weaver, who was so shaken by the experience that she requested an extension on her English 229 essay. "The humanity displayed in the Character Flowchart really stirred something in me. And Lennie's childlike innocence was beautifully captured through the simple, ranch-hand slang words like 'mentally handicapped' and 'retarded.'"

Added Weaver: "I never wanted the synopsis to end."

Weaver, who formed an "instant connection" with Lennie's character-description paragraph, said she began to suspect the novel might end tragically after reading the fourth sentence which suggested the gentle giant's strength and fascination with soft things would "lead to his untimely demise."

"I was amazed at how attached to him I had become just from the critical commentary," said Weaver, still clutching the yellow-and-black-striped study guide. "When I got to the last sentence—'George shoots Lennie in the head,'—it seemed so abrupt. But I found out later that the 'ephemeral nature of life' is a major theme of the novel."

Weaver was assigned Of Mice And Men—a novel scholars have called "a masterpiece of austere prose" and "the most skillful example of American naturalism under 110 pages"—as part of her early twentieth-century fiction course, and purchased the Cliffs Notes from a cardboard rack at her local Barnes & Noble. John Whittier-Ferguson, her professor for the class, told reporters this was not the first time one of his students has expressed interest in the novel's plot summary.

"It's one of those universal American stories," said Ferguson after being informed of Weaver's choice to read the Cliffs Notes instead of the pocket-sized novel. "I look forward to skimming her essay on the importance of following your dreams and randomly assigning it a grade.

Though she completed the two-page brief synopsis in one sitting, Weaver said she felt strangely drawn into the plot overview and continued on, exploring the more fleshed-out chapter summaries.

"There's something to be said for putting in that extra time with a good story," Weaver said. "You just get more out of it. I'm also going to try to find that book about rabbits that George was always reading to Lennie, so that I can really understand that important allusion."

Within an hour of completing the cliffs notes, Weaver was already telling friends and classmates that Steinbeck was her favorite author, as well as reciting select quotations from the "Important Quotations" section for their benefit.

"When I read those quotes, found out which characters they were attributed to, and inferred their context from the chapter outlines to piece together their significance, I was just blown away," said a teary-eyed Weaver. "And the way Steinbeck wove the theme of hands all the way through the section entitled 'Hands'—he definitely deserved to win that Nobel Prize."

Weaver's roommate, Giulia Crenshaw, has already borrowed the dog-eared, highlighted summary ofthe classic Depression-era saga, and is expecting to enjoy reading what Weaver described as "a really sad story about two brothers who love to farm."

"I loved this book so much, I'm going to read all of Steinbeck's Cliffs Notes," said Weaver. "But first I'm going to go to the library to check out the original version Of Mice And Men starring John Malkovich and Gary Sinise."

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| Source G  "Herblock's History - Political Cartoons from the Crash to the MillenniumOne Nation, Indivisible." One Nation, Indivisible. N.p., 1977. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following cartoon is by Herb Block, who signed his work Herblock. He was a longtime editorial cartoonist for the Washington Post.*



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| Source H  "A Meditation upon a Broomstick (1711)." The Public Domain Review. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2015. |

*The following excerpt is by Jonathon Swift who wrote this short work as a parody of a religious work of the time.*

THIS single Stick, which you now behold Ingloriously lying in that neglected Corner, I once knew in a Flourishing State in a Forest, it was full of Sap, full of Leaves, and full of Boughs; but now, in vain does the busie Art of Man pretend to Vye with Nature, by tying that withered Bundle of Twigs to its sapless Trunk; It’s now at best but the Reverse of what it was, a Tree turned upside down, the Branches on the Earth, and the Root in the Air; ’tis now handled by every Dirty Wench, condemned to doe her Drudgery, and by a Capricious kind of Fate, destined to make other Things Clean, and be Nasty it self: At Length, worn to the Stumps in the Service of the Maids, ’tis either thrown out of Doors, or condemned to its last use of kindling a Fire. When I beheld this, I sigh’d and said within my self, Surely Mortal Man is a Broom Stick; Nature sent him into the World Strong and Lusty, in a Thriving Condition, wearing his own Hair on his Head, the proper Branches of this Reasoning Vegetable, till the Axe of Intemperance has lopt off his Green Boughs, and left him a withered Trunk: He then flies to Art, and puts on a Perewig, valuing himself upon an Unnatural Bundle of Hairs all covered with Powder, that never grew on his Head; but now should this our Broom-Stick pretend to enter the Scene, proud of those Birchen Spoils it never bore, and all covered with Dust, though the Sweepings of the Finest Lady’s Chamber, we should be apt to Ridicule and Despise its Vanity; Partial Judges that we are of Our own Excellencies, and other Men’s Defaults!

BUT a Broom-Stick, perhaps you will say, is an Emblem of a Tree standing on its Head; and pray what is Man, but a Topsy-turvey Creature, his Animal Faculties perpetually mounted on his Rational; His Head where his Heels should be, groveling on the Earth, and yet with all his Faults, he sets up to be an universal Reformer and Corrector of Abuses, a Remover of Grievances, rakes into every Sluts Corner of Nature, bringing hidden Corruptions to the Light, and raises a mighty Dust where there was none before, sharing deeply all the while, in the very same Pollutions he pretends to sweep away: His last Days are spent in Slavery to Women, and generally the least deserving; till worn to the Stumps, like his Brother Bezom, he is either kickt out of Doors, or made use of to kindle Flames, for others to warm themselves by.