

How to Score a 9 on the Prose AP Timed Write from Albert.io

<https://www.albert.io/blog/how-to-get-a-9-on-prose-analysis-frq-in-ap-english-literature/>

When it's time to take the AP English Literature and Composition exam, will you be ready? If you're aiming high, you'll want to know the best route to a five on the AP exam. You know the exam is going to be tough, so how do you prepare for success? To do well on the AP English Literature and Composition exam, you'll need to score high on the essays. For that, you'll need to write a competent, efficient essay that argues an accurate interpretation of the work under examination in the Free Response Question section.

The AP English Literature and Composition exam consists of two sections, the first being a 55-question multiple choice portion worth 45% of the total test grade. This section tests your ability to read drama, verse, or prose fiction excerpts and answer questions about them. The second section, worth 55% of the total score, requires essay responses to three questions demonstrating your ability to analyze literary works. You'll have to discuss a poem analysis, a prose fiction passage analysis, and a concept, issue, or element analysis of a literary work—in two hours.

Before the exam, you should know how to construct a clear, organized essay that defends a focused claim about the work under analysis. You must write a brief introduction that includes the thesis statement, followed by body paragraphs that further the thesis statement with detailed, thorough support, and a short concluding paragraph that reiterates and reinforces the thesis statement without repeating it. Clear organization, specific support, and full explanations or discussions are three critical components of high-scoring essays.

General Tips to Bettering Your Odds at a Nine on the AP English Literature Prose FRQ

You may know already how to approach the prose analysis, but don't forget to keep the following in mind coming into the exam:

1. Carefully read, review, and underline key to-do's in the prompt.
2. Briefly outline where you're going to hit each prompt item — in other words, pencil out a specific order.
3. Be sure you have a clear thesis that includes the terms mentioned in the instructions, literary devices, tone, and meaning.
4. Include the author's name and title of the prose selection in your thesis statement. Refer to characters by name.
5. Use quotes — lots of them — to exemplify the elements and your argument points throughout the essay.
6. Fully explain or discuss how your examples support your thesis. A deeper, fuller, and more focused explanation of fewer elements is better than a shallow discussion of more elements (shotgun approach).
7. Avoid vague, general statements or merely summarizing the plot instead of clearly focusing on the prose passage itself.
8. Use transitions to connect sentences and paragraphs.
9. Write in the present tense with generally good grammar.
10. Keep your introduction and conclusion short, and don't repeat your thesis verbatim in your conclusion.

The newly-released 2016 sample AP English Literature and Composition exam questions, sample responses, and grading rubrics provide a valuable opportunity to analyze how to achieve high scores on each of the three Section II FRQ responses. However, for purposes of this examination, the Prose Analysis FRQ strategies will be the focus. The prose selection for analysis in last year's exam was Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a 19th-century novel. Exam takers had to respond to the following instructions:

- Analyze the complex relationship between the two characters Hardy portrays in the passage.
- Pay attention to tone, word choice, and detail selection.
- Write a well-written essay.

For a clear understanding of the components of a model essay, you'll find it helpful to analyze and compare all three sample answers provided by the CollegeBoard: the high scoring (A) essay, the mid-range scoring (B) essay, and the low scoring (C) essay. All three provide a lesson for you: to achieve a nine on the prose analysis essay, model the 'A' essay's strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the other two.

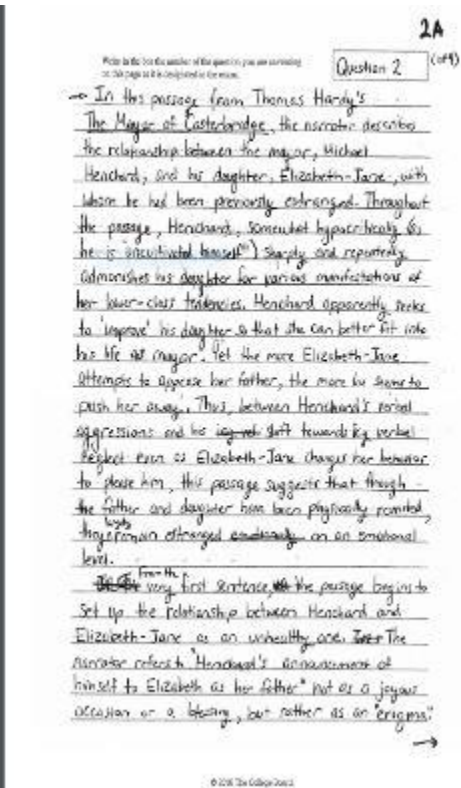
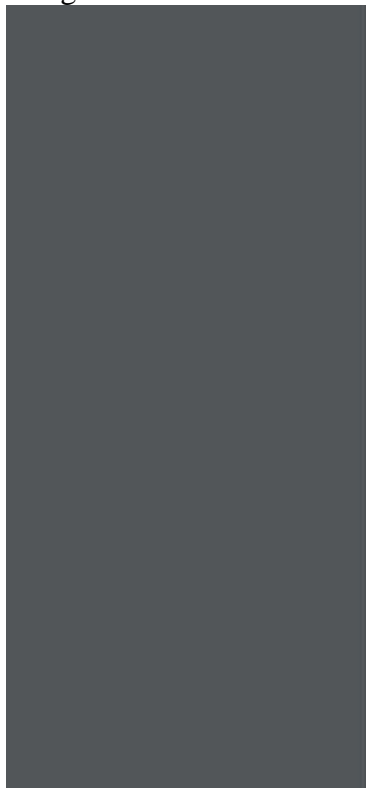
Start with a Succinct Introduction that Includes Your Thesis Statement

The first sample essay (A) begins with a packed first sentence: the title of the work, author, named characters, and the subject alluded to in the prompt that will form the foundation of the upcoming argument — the strained relationship between father and daughter. Then, after summarizing the context of the passage — that tense relationship — the student quotes relevant phrases (“lower-class”, “verbal aggressions”) that depict the behavior and character of each.

By packing each sentence efficiently with details (“uncultivated”, “hypocritical”) on the way to the thesis statement, the writer controls the argument by folding in only the relevant details that support the claim at the end of the introduction: though reunited physically, father and daughter remain separated emotionally. The writer wastes no words and quickly directs the reader’s focus to the characters’ words and actions that define their estranged relationship. From the facts cited, the writer’s claim or thesis is logical.

Sample A – High Scoring

In this passage from Thomas Hardy’s The Mayor of Casterbridge, he portrays the nature of the relationship between a girl and her long-estranged father. Hardy’s characterization of the two actually presents the father as hypocritical and rude, and the daughter as the victim of uncalled for harshness and criticism. This passage captures the unfair double-standards set upon women by men, but also perpetrates stereotypes about women being weak and submissive.



The mid-range B essay introduction also mentions the title, author, and relationship (“strange relationship”) that the instructions direct the writer to examine. However, the student neither names the characters nor identifies what’s “strange” about the relationship. The essay needs more specific details to clarify the complexity in the relationship. Instead, the writer merely hints at that complexity by stating father and daughter “try to become closer to each other’s expectations”. There’s no immediately clear correlation between the “reunification” and the expectations. Finally, the student wastes time and space in the first two sentences with a vague platitude for an “ice breaker” to start the essay. It serves no other function.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designed to be read.

Reunited with a complex relationship. Father and daughter with... they are... mother... back to... strength... the bond... hold... get... together... family... however, a... able to... through... the... relationship... in the... presence of... father... daughter... by... strengthening... the... their... gradually... pulled... apart.

Psychology... has found... that... people... gravitate... towards... others... that... are... more... like... them... There... is... because... an... exception... to... every... rule... Family... being... a... place... to... explore... the... strength... of... the... construction... of... father... and... daughter... in... the... hope... of... understanding... by... depicting... the... physical... separation... of... father... and... daughter... they... try... to... become... closer... to... each... other... respectively.

They... consistently... discuss... or... discuss... separation... a... alone... their... return... to... the... relationship... of... the... passage.

Identify... secondary... focus... on... the... difference... in... Elizabeth's... behavior... and... Richard's... the... other... expectations... because... Elizabeth... struggles... frequently... in... her... dialogue... particularly... family... changing... the... way... Elizabeth... reacts... through... an... adjustment... and... to... become... more... to... become... for... the... and... "because... you... as... my... sister... of... Elizabeth" but... at... "because... I... know" the... dialogue... address... look... into... the... difference... in... action... between... Elizabeth's... lower-class... upbringing... and... Richard's... upper-class... life... style... when... highlighting... Elizabeth's... behavior.

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The third sample lacks cohesiveness, focus, and a clear thesis statement. The first paragraph introduces the writer's feelings about the characters and how the elements in the story helped the student analyze, both irrelevant to the call of the instructions. The introduction gives no details of the passage: no name, title, characters, or relationship. The thesis statement is shallow—the daughter was better off before she reunited with her father—as it doesn't even hint at the complexity of the relationship. The writer merely parrots the prompt instructions about “complex relationship” and “speaker's tone, word choice, and selection of detail”.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designed to be read.

The way family portrayed the complex relationship between the two characters made me feel as though the daughter was doing better before she and her father reconnected. She was able to be herself and more she got with them everything had to be done the way the speaker tone, word choice, and selection of detail helped me also to describe the situation.

The tone is somewhat serious but at times shows sensitivity to Elizabeth because of the way she was being treated. An example of his sensitivity is in lines 27-29 ("Elizabeth being surrounded... had of her own space...") showing how her dad treated her which was precious. The main thing that helped was the details when the speaker says in line 24 "he remained in angry mood for her." The reader can imagine someone getting angry and turning red in the face.

My opinion of why had a better relationship before they reconnected is because she didn't have to deal with his criticism. Elizabeth could take the way she wanted to.

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In sum, make introductions brief and compact. Use specific details from the passage that support a logical thesis statement which clearly directs the argument and addresses the instructions' requirements. Succinct

writing helps. Pack your introduction with specific excerpt details, and don't waste time on sentences that don't do the work ahead for you. Be sure the thesis statement covers all of the relevant facts of the passage for a cohesive argument.

Use Clear Examples to Support Your Argument Points

The A answer supports the thesis by qualifying the relationship as unhealthy in the first sentence. Then the writer includes the quoted examples that contrast what one would expect characterizes a father-daughter relationship — joyous, blessing, support, praise — against the reality of Henchard and Elizabeth's relationship: “enigma”, “coldness”, and “open chiding”.

These and other details in the thorough first body paragraph leave nothing for the reader to misunderstand. The essayist proves the paragraph's main idea with numerous examples. The author controls the first argument point that the relationship is unhealthy by citing excerpted words and actions of the two characters demonstrating the father's aggressive disapproval and the daughter's earnestness and shame.

The second and third body paragraphs not only add more proof of the strained relationship in the well-chosen example of the handwriting incident but also explore the underlying motives of the father. In suggesting the father has good intentions despite his outward hostility, the writer proposes that Henchard wants to elevate his long-lost daughter. Henchard's declaration that handwriting “with bristling characters” defines refinement in a woman both diminishes Elizabeth and reveals his silent hope for her, according to the essayist. This contradiction clearly proves the relationship is “complex”.



The mid-range sample also cites specific details: the words Elizabeth changes (“fay” for “succeed”) for her father. These details are supposed to support the point that class difference causes conflict between the two. However, the writer leaves it to the reader to make the connection between class, expectations, and word choices. The example of the words Elizabeth eliminates from her vocabulary does not illustrate the writer's point of class conflict. In fact, the class difference as the cause of their difficulties is never explicitly stated. Instead, the writer makes general, unsupported statements about Hardy's focus on the language difference without saying why Hardy does that.



Like the A essay, sample C also alludes to the handwriting incident but only to note that the description of Henchard turning red is something the reader can imagine. In fact, the writer gives other examples of sensitive and serious tones in the passage but then doesn't completely explain them. None of the details noted refer to a particular point that supports a focused paragraph. The details don't connect. They're merely a string of details.

Discussion is Crucial to Connect Your Quotes and Examples to Your Argument Points

Rather than merely citing phrases and lines without explanation, as the C sample does, the A response spends time thoroughly discussing the meaning of the quoted words, phrases, and sentences used to exemplify their assertions. For example, the third paragraph begins with the point that Henchard's attempts to elevate Elizabeth in order to better integrate her into the mayor's "lifestyle" actually do her a disservice. The student then quotes descriptive phrases that characterize Elizabeth as "considerate", notes her successfully fulfilling her father's expectations of her as a woman, and concludes that success leads to her failure to get them closer — to un-estrangle him.

The A sample writer follows the same pattern throughout the essay: assertion, example, explanation of how the example and assertion cohere, tying both into the thesis statement. Weaving the well-chosen details into the discussion to make reasonable conclusions about what they prove is the formula for an orderly, coherent argument. The writer starts each paragraph with a topic sentence that supports the thesis statement, followed by a sentence that explains and supports the topic sentence in furtherance of the argument.

On the other hand, the B response begins the second paragraph with a general topic sentence: Hardy focuses on the differences between the daughter's behavior and the father's expectations. The next sentence follows up with examples of the words Elizabeth changes, leading to the broad conclusion that class difference causes clashes. They give no explanation to connect the behavior — changing her words — with how the diction

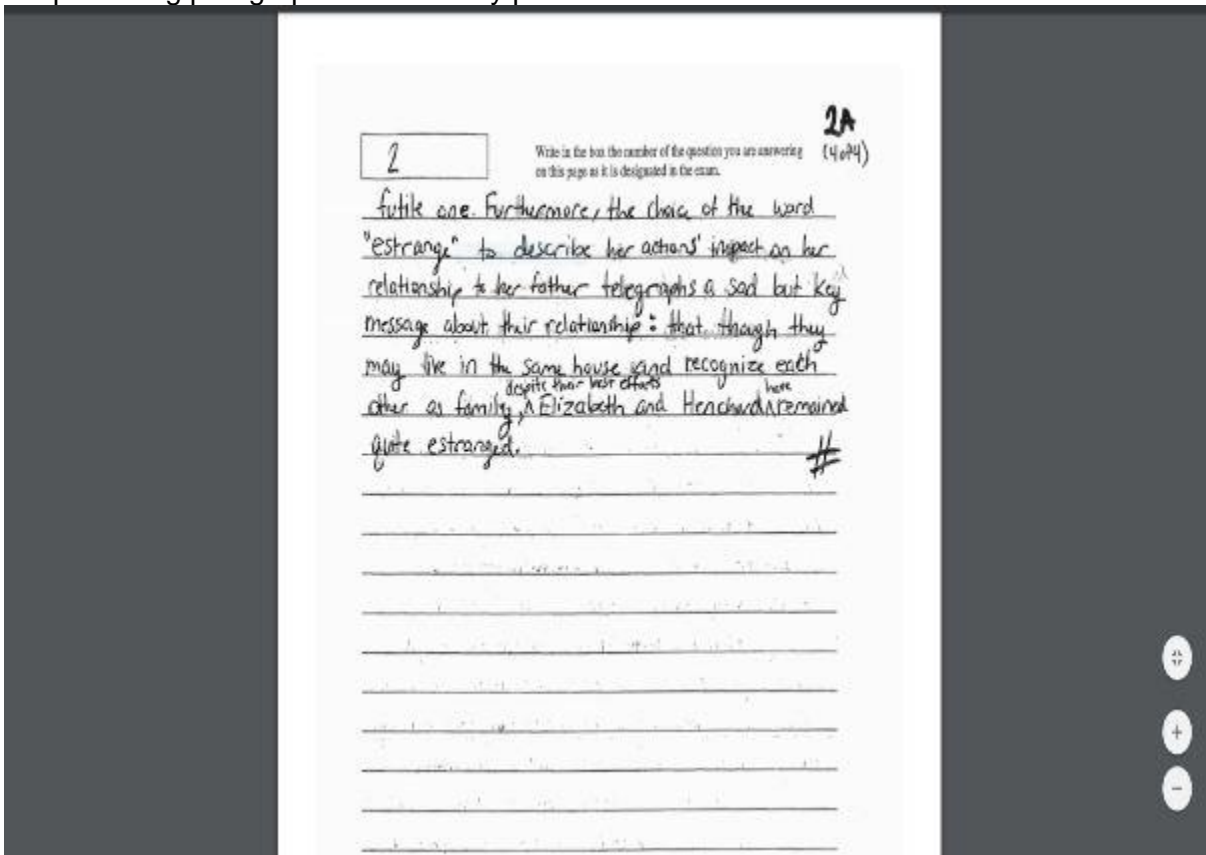
reveals class differences exists. Nor does the writer explain the motivations of the characters to demonstrate the role of class distinction and expectations. The student forces the reader to make the connections.

Similarly, in the second example of the handwriting incident, the student sets out to prove Elizabeth's independence and conformity conflict. However, the writer spends too much time re-telling the writing episode — who said what — only to vaguely conclude that 19th-century gender roles dictated the dominant and submissive roles of father and daughter, resulting in the loss of Elizabeth's independence. The writer doesn't make those connections between gender roles, dominance, handwriting, and lost freedom. The cause and effect of the handwriting humiliation to the loss of independence are never made.

Write a Brief Conclusion

While it's more important to provide a substantive, organized, and clear argument throughout the body paragraphs than it is to conclude, a conclusion provides a satisfying rounding out of the essay and last opportunity to hammer home the content of the preceding paragraphs. If you run out of time for a conclusion because of the thorough preceding paragraphs, that is not as fatal to your score as not concluding or not concluding as robustly as the A essay sample.

The A response not only provides another example of the father-daughter inverse relationship — the more he helps her fit in, the more estranged they become — but also ends where the writer began: though they're physically reunited, they're still emotionally separated. Without repeating it verbatim, the student returns to the thesis statement at the end. This return and recap reinforce the focus and control of the argument when all of the preceding paragraphs successfully proved the thesis statement.



The B response nicely ties up the points necessary to satisfy the prompt had the writer made them clearly. The parting remarks about the inverse relationship building up and breaking down to characterize the complex relationship between father and daughter are intriguing but not well-supported by all that came before them.

Write in complete sentences with proper punctuation and correct grammar. Use the space on this page to develop your response.

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By utilizing these skills, the speaker describes both the speaker and the speaker's response to the speaker's performance.

In summary, Richard Matheson "Tiger" described the speaker and the speaker through use of several key, persuasive and climactic and the

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Write in Complete Sentences with Proper Punctuation and Compositional Skills

Though pressed for time, it's important to write an essay with crisp, correctly punctuated sentences and properly spelled words. Strong compositional skills create a favorable impression to the reader, like using appropriate transitions or signals (however, therefore) to tie sentences and paragraphs together, and making the relationships between sentences clear ("also" — adding information, "however" — contrasting an idea in the preceding sentence).

Starting each paragraph with a clear, focused topic sentence that previews the main idea or focus of the paragraph helps you the writer and the reader keep track of each part of your argument. Each section furthers your points on the way to convincing your reader of your argument. If one point is unclear, unfocused, or grammatically unintelligible, like a house of cards, the entire argument crumbles. Excellent compositional skills help you lay it all out neatly, clearly, and fully.

For example, the A response begins the essay with "In this passage from Thomas Hardy". The second sentence follows with "Throughout the passage" to tie the two sentences together. There's no question that the two thoughts link by the transitional phrases that repeat and reinforce one another as well as direct the reader's attention. The B response, however, uses transitions less frequently, confuses the names of the characters, and switches verb tenses in the essay. It's harder to follow.

So by the time the conclusion takes the reader home, the high-scoring writer has done all of the following:

- followed the prompt
- followed the propounded thesis statement and returned to it in the end
- provided a full discussion with examples
- included quotes proving each assertion
- used clear, grammatically correct sentences
- wrote paragraphs ordered by a thesis statement
- created topic sentences for each paragraph
- ensured each topic sentence furthered the ideas presented in the thesis statement

Have a Plan and Follow it

To get a nine on the prose analysis FRQ essay in the AP Literature and Composition exam, you should practice timed essays. Write as many practice essays as you can. Follow the same procedure each time. After

reading the prompt, map out your thesis statement, paragraph topic sentences, and supporting details and quotes in the order of their presentation. Then follow your plan faithfully.

Be sure to leave time for a brief review to catch mechanical errors, missing words, or clarifications of an unclear thought. With time, an organized approach, and plenty of practice, earning a nine on the poetry analysis is manageable. Be sure to ask your teacher or consult other resources, like albert.io's Prose Analysis practice essays, for questions and more practice opportunities.

High-scoring example:

While the idea of complex relationships come in varying forms, the complexity that characterizes them lie in the little gestures that carry throughout everyday life. These recurring interactions, in turn, characterizes or shape, the relationship. In Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge the complex relationships Hardy relays between Michael Henchard and his daughter Elizabeth-Jane is conveyed through his use of constricting and negative words to describe this relationship, the focus on recurring gestures that take place during his characters' daily lives along with the use of a mostly objective tone.

The unusual nature of the relationship between Henchard and Elizabeth is immediately established through the use of "enigma" to describe Elizabeth's feelings towards her father's announcement. This signals the troubling nature of their relationship that will unfold later. Hardy's use of other words, such as "ardour," "agitation," "constrained," "grievous," and "coldness," all convey the distance between the father and daughter, resulting in the emotional estrangement between them. These negative words set the tone for their relationship, making it seem awful, in contrast to the expected joy and elation one assumes they would feel being reunited. However their distance only increases. Henchard's outward displays of "agitation" towards Elizabeth, through this "sharp reprimand," "chiding," and "sharp" words, only worsen this estrangement. Elizabeth's feeling of "shame and sadness" increase from this, revealing how difficult this relationship is turning out to be.

While the word choices Hardy made to describe the difficult, complex nature of this relationship effectively conveys this estrangement between Henchard and Elizabeth, Hardy's focus on the instances where these estrangements occur—recurring scenes of daily life—convey the difficulty of this relationship. These not ostentatious scenes of daily life almost make the situation seem worse, since daily life cannot be interrupted by the rare big scenes that result in the ultimate confrontation. In contrast, Hardy's use of daily scenes in ordinary, normal life worsens the situation since these scenes are frequent and can make way for more opportunities for reprimands and dismissals. These small gestures, like "sharp reprimands" and dismissals, almost hurt more since they provoke more "coldness" and lack of feeling between the characters. They grow to be leaved off or ignored, making her lack of feeling or emotion between the two. In this way, Elizabeth "shrinks" back into herself, isolating herself from her father and his hurtful words.

While the tone mostly favors Elizabeth and provokes empathy towards her, the tone remains mostly objective, clearly stating what Henchard does and how Elizabeth reacts. The inclusion of both Henchard's "...other ideas" and Elizabeth's responding thoughts exactly "suggest rather than reveal what was underneath." Both parties have equal representation in the argument, since both parties' thoughts are represented freely, however Elizabeth's thoughts conveying her isolation and confusion provoke more empathy towards her.

Hardy's use of daily life and their unostentatious scenes, sharp and negative words to describe the relationship between Henchard and Elizabeth, and the mostly objective tone reveal how complex relationships may be characterized by the contrast between what is real and what is expected.

Low-scoring example:

In the excerpts from Thomas Hardy's, The Mayor of Casterbridge, the reader is introduced to a relationship between an estranged father and daughter, who have been reunited after multiple years of separation. From the start, you become aware of the disconnect between the two characters, but as the story continues, the irony of the situation becomes increasingly evident.

From the start of the excerpt, you know that the father and daughter are estranged. As you dive deeper into the story line, you see that the father constantly ridicules his daughter for multiple things. The most apparent "correction" that he makes, is of his daughter's speech. Because she uses words to address certain topics or objects, that he does not approve of, he makes it his mission to correct her, and in the process embarrass her, whenever he sees fit. The scene that makes his disapproval apparent is one where he asks her to write for him. During this scene, it is explained that a "lady's" handwriting must be delicate and "womanly", so when his daughter begins to write in a manner that he sees as less than adequate, he reprimands her in front of a guest. As the story goes on, he does it again, ridiculing the girl for constantly thanking the maid. Each scenario, only furthers the depth of irony present in the relationship. The daughter's life has been that of one who has supported herself, waiting tables. That life is all she knows, and all she has to pull from. The father rose from poor to wealthy mayor, and now has the blatant audacity to reduce a young girl of a monetary status for which he himself once belonged to, without confronting the fact that he had been absent in her life for years. If he had been present, during her stages of growth, he would have been able to groom her into what he saw or sees as the "perfect daughter". But his absence not only affected her speech, but also her way of life, for she had to support herself, more or less being "the man" figure herself. How he speaks of and to the maid also sheds light on the father's arrogance and forgetfulness of a time when he himself was poor.

Towards the end of the excerpt, we come to see that the father does not always mean to come off as hostile as he is. Seeing the visible embarrassment on the face of his daughter, after reprimanding her, he explains to her, that his intentions are not to be as rough as they come off. This raises the question for the first time, as to whether or not the father's intentions are actually to help his daughter, rather than to just make her feel small.

The relationship between father and daughter in this excerpt is one of great complexity, and unfamiliarity. Because the father and daughter have been estranged for so long, neither of them actually know each other, so when they begin to get to know each other it becomes evident that although the father's intent may be good, his constant ridiculing of his daughter not only shows his distance from knowing her, but also his blatant dislike of her.