

Composition 12 [Essay Exam]: Sporting the Right Tone

Essential Question: How do poets express varying tones toward popular sports?

Sports are about much more than games. Consider columnist Tim Daly's reason for participating in sports: "I feel the need to endanger myself every so often." Tiger Woods makes racial observations about sports: "Hockey is a sport for white men. Basketball is a sport for black men. Golf is a sport for white men dressed like black pimps." Humorist Jim Barry makes this conclusion about how sports and love intertwine: "Guys care about sports teams. I'm not talking about simply rooting; I'm talking about a relationship that guys develop, a commitment to a sport team that guys take way more seriously than, for example, wedding vows." Somehow our fascination with issues like death, race, and love get tangled up in the games we play—sometimes blurring and even crossing the line between the game and real life.



PROMPT: Explain how American, British, and Spanish poets throughout the ages express startlingly diverse tones toward sports—tones ranging from _____ to _____ to _____.

Gifted Differentiation: GIEP students must select three poems or songs on the same subject [like love, alcohol/drug use, or death] and analyze the author's tone independently. The works need not be by the same author but if so should lead to some autobiographical research about what may have influenced the shifting attitudes.

INTRODUCTION: Quote one of the three writers mentioned in the bell-ringer at the top of this page and then explain what you think he is trying to suggest about our fascination with sports. What evidence do you have from your own personal observation and experience that people's personal relationships, identities, values, and egos ultimately get tangled up in the sports that they play and watch—in other words, that their sport is "more than just a game" to them.

CONCLUSION: Summarize the poets' three tones toward the sports they depict, and then indicate which poet gave you the deepest insight into what the sport really might mean to those who play it or watch it in your home town.

Focus Skills for *Exam* Grade [Keystone Literature Exam 5-Step Pyramid] 10 Points per Skill =
50 points

1. Are Details Relevant? [TS/Subs]
2. Are Details Developed? [3.5 pages handwritten, less than 2.5 pages = 0 grade]
3. Are Details Accurate? [No Errors in Text Facts]
4. Are Details Specific? [**HIGHLIGHT at least 1 Cited Quote per paragraph** & Eliminate “thing”]
5. Are Details Interpretive? [**HIGHLIGHT at least 1 Perhaps/Maybe per paragraph**]

*The only non-content skill addressed in this essay will be subject-verb agreement. Your **subject-verb agreement** mastery will add to or reduce your final score on comp 12 by 5 points.

Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio

By American poet JAMES WRIGHT

Literal Summary Notes

In the Shreve [1] High football stadium,
I think of Polacks nursing long beers in Tiltonsville,
And gray faces of Negroes in the blast furnace at Benwood,
And the ruptured night watchman of Wheeling Steel,
5 Dreaming of heroes.

The Fathers of Martins Ferry:

Who is the “I” in line 2 returning years later to his high school’s football stadium?

From footnote 1 for “Shreve,” what might he be implying about both past and present football players from this school?

What might we assume about the Polish fathers if they are “nursing long beers”?

What emotional state might the Negroes’ be in if their faces are “gray”—why might they be in this emotional state?

Medically speaking, what’s it mean to be “ruptured”—in what [a] medical and [b] metaphorical ways might the night watchman’s life be “ruptured”?

How “heroic” have these fathers’ lives turned out? Who might they be “dreaming” [line 5] will achieve the heroism that they failed to achieve?

[1] an act performed by a male in which the privates are hidden behind the legs.

<p>All the proud fathers are ashamed to go home, Their women cluck like starved pullets [2], Dying for love.</p> <p>[2] young hens unable to mate with the rooster</p>	<p>The Mothers of Martins Ferry:</p> <p>What’s Wright suggesting about the mothers through his “starved pullets” simile? See footnote 2.</p> <p>In what [2] ways so far have Martins Ferry fathers failed as manly providers?</p>
<p>Therefore, 10 Their sons grow suicidally beautiful At the beginning of October, And gallop terribly against each other’s bodies.</p>	<p>The Boys of Martins Ferry:</p> <p>If we define suicide as sacrificing one’s own well-being, in what [a] medical and [b] metaphorical ways might the actions of the boys be “suicidal”?</p> <p>In what sense are these boys’ suicidal actions be “beautiful” to their fathers?</p> <p>With the evidence we have, how might the fathers’ obsessions with high school football heroism have been “suicidal” to their own lives?</p>

1. **STATING SUBTOPIC #1:** James Wright’s **tone** toward the traditionally manly sport of football in “Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio” seems [*choose one*] [a] fondly nostalgic [b] unshakably loyal and proud [c] darkly satirical.
2. **Underline** word choices / lines in all 3 stanzas that best convey this tone.

To An Athlete Dying Young

By British poet A.E. HOUSMAN

<p>The time you won your town the race We chaired you through the market-place; Man and boy stood cheering by, And home we brought you shoulder-high.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p>	<p>Who are the “you” and the “We”?</p> <p>Why are the townspeople carrying the young athlete shoulder high?</p>
<p>To-day, the road all runners come, Shoulder-high we bring you home, And set you at your threshold [1] down, Townsmen of a stiller town.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[1] coffin 2</p>	<p><u>Now</u> where are the townspeople carrying the young athlete shoulder high?</p> <p>Where has his “race” ended, as will ours? [see footnote 1]</p>
<p>Smart lad, to slip betimes [2] away From fields where glory does not stay, And early though the laurel [3] grows It withers quicker than the rose.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[2] early [3] flower of victory</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>	<p>Starting in this stanza, the poet will attempt to console the dead boy’s spirit by pointing out <u>six</u> rewards of athletic victory that people treasure but that the lad should not feel like he didn’t get enough time to delight in since they get stripped away long before we die anyway.</p> <p>First, what is the first reward of victory [line 2] that doesn’t last very long--which is why the poet consider it “smart” (or fortunate) for the runner to have died young?</p> <p>What happens to laurel victory flowers [line 4] that metaphorically supports the poet’s point about the benefit of dying early?</p>
<p>Eyes the shady night has shut Cannot see the record cut, And silence sounds no worse than cheers After earth has stopped the ears.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>	<p>What is a second element of victory [line 2] that will not last very long, leading the poet to argue that dying young is desirable for an athlete?</p> <p>What is a third victory element that the poet suggests the dead boy will not miss when he is dead [line 3]?</p> <p>For what macabre reason will he not miss this [line 4]?</p>

<p>Now you will not swell the rout Of lads that wore their honors out, Runners whom renown [4] outran And the name died before the man.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[4] fame 5</p>	<p>What fourth element of victory would other runners have stripped away from the young athlete if he'd been unfortunate enough to live longer [lines 3-4]?</p>
<p>So set, before its echoes fade, The fleet foot on the sill of shade [5], And hold to the low lintel [6] up The still-defended challenge-cup.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[5] death's doorstep [6] headstone 6</p>	<p>What fifth spoil of victory [line 4] does the poet urge the runner to take quickly to his grave because it will eventually be claimed by others?</p>
<p>And round that early-laurelled head Will flock to gaze the strength-less dead, And find un-withered on its curls A garland [7] briefer than a girl's.</p> <p>[7] a victory crown made out of laurels, which is "brief" in the sense that the victory-crown will rot quickly</p> <p style="text-align: right;">7</p>	<p>What sixth spoil of victory [line 4] worn by the young athlete (and referred to in stanza 2 as well) will decay quickly before the eyes of the ghostly spirits in the afterlife?</p> <p>Summarize the [6] spoils of victory that the athlete and the townspeople throughout the poem value highly but that will all fade, rot, or be claimed by others before long, leading the poet to the conclusion that a successful young athlete is better off dead:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the lau_____ c_____ 2. the ch_____ c_____ 3. the rec_____ 4. the f_____ 5. the gl_____ 6. the ch_____

1. **STATING SUBTOPIC #2:** Judging by his reaction to a young runner's death in "To an Athlete Dying Young", A.E. Housman's **tone** toward athletic glory and success seems [*choose one*] [a] almost joyful [b] totally apathetic [c] morbidly pessimistic.
2. **Underline** word choices / lines in all stanzas that best convey this tone.

The Man Who Boxes

By Spanish poet ANA ISTARU

Literal Summary Notes

<p>He is being readied So neatly: cheek- Bones of lead, The quick ligaments, 5 Fine-tuned and violent nerves, His irate arteries, The splendid femurs reveal His perfect disposition to love. Everything designed for love 10 Is dancing with death, A man canceling his pact [1] with the rose.</p> <p>[1] a promise, contract, or commitment</p>	<p>What do we learn about The Boxer?</p> <p>With his “cheekbones of lead” [line 2] and “violent nerves” [line 5], the boxer seems well-constructed for what activity?</p> <p>With his “splendid femurs” and “dancing” ability, for what other activity [line 9] is the boxer well designed?</p> <p>According to the floral metaphor [lines 11-12], which of these two activities will he reject?</p>
<p>Crude, random-prone, Sober and frugal, Death 15 Wants his occipital bone, The thistle of his tongue. She undresses. She sucks His vitreous drops of sweat, Leaving intact an aroma 20 Of anisette [1] perspiration. The man who boxes Brought a slice of his liver.[2] Death touches him, Loves him, wants 25 To rape him. The man who boxes Splits in two: there are two of him, Each terrified, canceling A pact with daybreak.</p> <p>[1] a type of sweet liquor [2] once thought to be the source of fear</p>	<p>What do we learn about The Opponent?</p> <p>Who is the boxer’s opponent [line 14]?</p> <p>In your opinion, does the poet’s personification of Death as a woman makes the boxer’s struggle more or less intriguing than it would be if Death were portrayed as a man? Why?</p> <p>What’s the boxer trying to say to Death by giving her a slice of his liver? See footnote 2.</p> <p>In what metaphorical way does Death “rape” the boxer—and all of us, for that matter? How is death like a rape?</p> <p>Aside from the fact that he is a man, why legally can the boxer’s rape not really be considered a “rape”?</p> <p>He shunned love in line 12. What does the boxer shun in line 29?</p>

<p>30 Spectators watch the man to See his x-ray. But watching the man, They don't see him at all. Everyone came to stare at her,</p> <p>35 To feel the spray of her saliva, To see her gangrene tongue Licking the nape of his neck, and Her coal-black breasts. They pay for the velvety tickets,</p> <p>40 Find their seats, and kiss each other. They wait for the knockout. They pay to goad these Bullfighters, fools who bet On uncorking cranial sockets,</p> <p>45 His hot head a skull of calcium. The man who boxes falls, apologizes, Wants instant horns To back up his knuckles. But death gets up,</p> <p>50 She won't step back Nor point her skeletal finger. At ease in the spotlight She intends something Irremediable [2], to French kiss</p> <p>55 Mouth to mouth. And the man who boxes falls, apologizes. Already dead becoming one of the dead, He leaves his home, His body, memories,</p> <p>60 For a finale of infinite farewells. The man canceling his pact with history.</p> <p>[2] cannot be changed or repaired</p>	<p>What do we learn about The Audience?</p> <p>In lines 32-34, what has the audience really paid to see—the boxer or his Death?</p> <p>Draw an arrow from here across the column to at least [3] death-personified images that best capture the perverted seductiveness of what a boxing audience pays to see?</p> <p>Why do you think the audience “kisses each other” [line 40] as they wait for the knockout? How does the suffering of the boxer make them feel?</p> <p>The boxer seems to be apologizing in lines 46 and 56 to the audience—Do you think he should do this—and if not, why should the audience apologize to him?</p> <p>In line 61, we discover what has driven the boxer to reject love and life in the previous two stanzas. What does the poet mean by “history” when she implies that this was his driving desire?</p> <p>Why will his desire not be fulfilled?</p>
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1. **STATING SUBTOPIC #3:** Ana Istaru's **tone** toward boxers and the danger of their sport in “The Man Who Boxes” seems [*choose one*] [a] religiously judgmental [b] coldly unemotional [c] tragically passionate.
2. **Underline** all word choices / lines that best convey this tone.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Most students know that to turn a **singular subject** into a **plural subject** they must add an -s, as in *dog/dogs* or *pencil/pencils*. But how do you turn a **singular verb** into a **plural verb**? The answer is...you take away the -s. Whenever your subject ends in -s, your verb will not end in one, which is why these sentences sound good: *The dogs run. The dog runs. The raindrops fall. The raindrop falls.* And...why these sound bad: *The dogs runs. The dog run. The raindrops falls. The raindrop fall.*

Compound subjects joined by an and also plural: Jack and Jill are siblings. The dog and the cat are enemies.

If our ears are so good at picking up subject-verb agreement [that is, at deciding whether we should use plural or singular verb to agree with or match our subject], then why do we need to study this skill? The answer is that in a few situations either our minds or our ears get confused. Here are the confusing situations.

1. When either/or and neither/nor get involved, ignore all words up to and including or/nor.
2. When words come between your subject and verb, ignore them.

“Block away everything up to the or,
And what’s between subjects and verbs ignore!”

1. Either the dog or cat is/are in trouble.
2. Either the dog or cats is/are in trouble.
3. Neither the boy nor girl is/are smiling.
4. Neither the boy nor girls is/are smiling.
5. The boy with the very large bag of salted pretzels is/are happy.
6. The pack of howling, ferocious wolves is/are ready to attack.

Do you really understand?

7. Neither the escargot nor the plate of dried spinach leaves is/are appealing.
8. Either the cake or the pie filled with gobs of wild cherries is/are delicious.

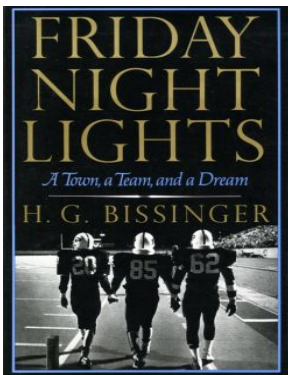
Underline the correct verb in the parentheses.

1. One of my greatest worries (was, were) that I would study hard and still flunk important tests.
2. One of us (is / are) voting in the next election.
3. Milo, Phoebe, and I (was / were) offering our help.
4. Neither the man nor the woman (jump / jumps) to conclusions.
5. The woman with all the dogs (walk / walks) down my street.
6. Either John or Jane (dance / dances) to disco music.
7. The hammer as well as the saw (make / makes) work easier.
8. Our team (play / plays) hard every night.
9. Neither the boys nor the girl (has / have) to shave.

#12 [College Prep Essay Exam 'A']

An Analysis of Tone in Three Classic Sport Poems

Attach this cover sheet to your handwritten essay.



Analyze how American, British, and Spanish poets express distinctive tones towards the sports that shaped their cultures.



Name:
Date:
Period:
Title:

BONUS

+2 Extra Catchy Title

+ [1] Underlined Vocabulary

+5 OR -5: Subject-Verb Agreement after a Self/Peer Edit Scan

/10 Relevant Content: Does the essay stick to the stated topic and subtopics?

/10 Developed Content: Is the essay 3.5 pages hand-printed with normal margins? [no score for papers less than 2.5 pages]

/10 Accurate Content: Are there no errors in text-based details?

/10 Specific Content: Does the essay **Highlight** at least [1] cited quotation per subtopic?

/10 Interpretive Content: Does the essay **Highlight** at least [1] perhaps/maybe per subtopic?

/50 Total Score

80% maximum: Since this is an essay exam, no Works Cited page will be required. Still, a minimum of [3] cited quotes are required to be **Highlighted**.

