

2010 AP English Literature Sample Essays - Question #2 Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*

Sample SSSS

Clarence Hervey supposes himself to be a Renaissance man, when in reality, he is nothing more than a charlatan. In this passage from her novel *Belinda*, Maria Edgeworth develops the many characters of Mr. Hervey through generalized language, references to Mr. Hervey's inconstancy and Mr. Hervey's ironic and hypocritical fears of Belinda.

Throughout the passage, Edgeworth uses words such as "all" and "every" to emphasize the wide berth of Mr. Hervey's supposed talents. His main flaw, she acknowledges early on is that he "desire[s] [to be] thought superior in every thing" (3). As this is not humanly possible, he relies on pretension to make up a certain amount of his character, described by Edgeworth as "chameleon character" (14). He aspires to be "all things to all men—and to all women" (17), and he is such a good pretender that he has even convinced himself that this is the case. When he meets Belinda, he sees her "every day" (38) in keeping with the personage he has created for himself.

Edgeworth shows the faults in Mr. Hervey's plan, however, through skeptical and speculative diction. She reveals him as inconstant and easily susceptible to manipulation; he varies in "different lights and according to the different situations in which he happen[s] to be placed" (15-16), and this malleability is destructive. He is "so easily led" (23), remarks Edgeworth, "that it [is] probable that he [will] soon become vicious (25-26). His reactions to stimuli are unpredictable -- "By Lord Delacour's jealousy he was sometimes provoked, sometimes amused, and sometimes flattered (34-36), and although he is allegedly one thing, it often turns out he is another.

It is because of his inconstancy that he is so laughably afraid of Belinda. Belinda acts as a double for Hervey – he suspects her of "artifice" (50) and "scientific coquetry" (54) which in reality the only artificial coquette in the story is him. Edgeworth uses similar language in describing his fears of Belinda as she did when she was describing him, just as he was "so easily led" (23) he fears Belinda is being "conducted" (44) by the Delacours. This perceived similarity to himself scares Hervey because he does not want to admit his falsity –so he flees in terror (57) whenever he finds himself too close to her.

Thus Edgeworth crafts a character who, in trying to have many identities, is left with nothing at all. This characterization of Clarence Hervey emerges from the passage as a blurred amalgam of several different people, and, ironically, it is through his perception of Belinda that we get the clearest description of his personality.

Sample U

Clarence Hervey is a very complex character that Edgeworth develops through tone, point of view, and language. The humorous tone of the passage helps exemplify the different sides of Hervey. Even in just the first sentence Hervey is described as a pleasant young man, even though he believes he is better than everyone else. It is humorous how the narrator describes Hervey the way Hervey describes himself. Hervey was "flattered with the idea that he was a man of genius" (5-6) so "he was entitled to be impudent, wild and eccentric." (7-8). Through Hervey's own descriptions of himself, the narrator is able to show how obnoxious he is. The narrator describes Hervey as a chameleon, which is funny since it is usually good to be able to adapt, but Hervey can change for the wrong reasons and can be fake such as when he pretends "to disdain every species of knowledge" (13-14).

It is interesting how Edgeworth mixes the point of view of the narrator with the point of view of Hervey himself. The narrator uses Hervey's own point of view and then essentially argues it. However, each point of view can not be taken at face value. Each has merit in developing Hervey's complex character. He may be a tad obnoxious and fake but he is also smart, humorous, and humane. He may be a tad vicious but that's because he is easily excited and provoked. By intertwining the points of view of both Hervey and the narrator, Edgeworth manages to show the many different sides, both good and bad, of this complex character.

As well Edgeworth develops Hervey's complex character through intricate use of language. For example, Edgeworth compares Hervey to a chameleon, showing that he is constantly changing. As well, Edgeworth uses opposite words to describe Hervey's feelings towards Belinda. For example, the narrator says Hervey saw Belinda with "increasing admiration" (39) and "increasing dread" (40). The narrator also says Hervey was "charmed" (51) by Belinda and "inclined to despise her" (52-53). Through opposite language Edgeworth is able to show not only does Hervey have different attitudes and personalities, he also has different feelings, adding to the complexity of his character. Through a humorous tone, mixed point of views, and opposite language, Edgeworth is able to develop Clarence Hervey's complex character.

Sample Y

The turn of the nineteenth century found itself embarking changing values. The Enlightenment with its core values of Reason and Science was dying slowly. Classicism with its emphasis on the ideal Renaissance man was entrenched into society. Each of these movements can be found influencing Mr. Hervey in Maria Edgeworth's 1801 novel Belinda. However the third artistic movement of the time, Romanticism, while present in the emotional desires of Mr. Hervey, has been stifled. These combating and overlapping styles of living combine to give Mr. Hervey a complex character that is developed through point of view, descriptive language, and time.

When authors wish to emphasize a complex character, usually they want to leave things unsaid so the reader can make some inferences to fully round out the character. By using a third person point of view Edgeworth accomplishes this task through an omniscient narrator. Repeated versions of "he had," "he was," or "he imagined" blatantly start off the general descriptions of the young man. These descriptions, set off by the third person point view allow the reader to infer the truth of the man while distinguishing the society's misinterpretation of him and the consequent effects. For example we learn that he was "most admired...a man of genius," according to the company he kept. While we learn that this is true and he is deserving of the praise by his "distinguished" performance at Oxford, the point of view goes into his mind and actions showing the consequences. Thus his "imprudence, wild, and eccentric" behavior is merely a facade built for attention. This facade later impedes him as he is forced to tone down the emotional Romanticism of his love for Belinda. Instead these "prejudices" coming from his desire for a socially Classical ideal perspective causes him to have "cursed his folly." Thus the omniscient narrator gives us a reason to like this struggling entitled young man.

In keeping with the narrator's astute observation of Mr. Hervey, Edgeworth's use of descriptive language is very precise. Some diction choices are very vibrant like the use of "chameleon," to describe his character. Other words are slight satires at the society. By using "inclined", for example, the reader senses that refinement leaves the character with little choice. He has to be "vain," he must beware the "catch-match-maker," he must be "smitten." Mr. Hervey cannot control himself to do anything even talk to a pretty girl. Also a stab at the application of reason to love is seen through the use of the word

“scientific.” Words, thus, are used to describe and criticize Mr. Hervey. The language used is subtle yet cunning like the societal tricks played in the game of love.

The tone mirrors the feeling of “gallantry” Mr. Hervey has. The nonchalant, matter-of-fact descriptions seem to put a whimsical air around the character. Yet this too is a facade. Like Mr. Hervey, an air is used to conceal the author’s feelings. While one may assume that the writer feels contempt for Mr. Hervey for ignoring the “unaffected, undesigning” Belinda, instead there is a tone of pity that is seen between the lines. One can almost imagine the writer saying something like “Poor Mr. Hervey who can’t even say he loves Belinda.”

Like all satire, this description of Mr. Hervey is one of judgement and one of hope. For he may be shackled by Enlightenment and Classical thoughts. But Romanticism is there. The power of emotional love will prevail, for Belinda’s and Mr. Hervey’s sake. Happiness can be found, but only if the young man finds himself like Edgeworth has.

Sample O

Sometimes in a novel, the complexity of a character is used as a great source of analysis for literary techniques such as with Clarence Hervey from the novel, *Belinda*. Clarence Hervey is seen as a person who is overconfident, prideful, intelligent and arrogant.

One of the literary techniques that is used to further explain Clarence Hervey’s personality and complexity is point of view. For example, in Clarence Hervey’s point of view, he thinks that he is better than everyone else in everything and is the most likeable person there is. However, in the reader’s perspective, he is seen as selfish and arrogant. Point of view helps the poem’s characters and the readers develop their own opinions about certain characters and the events and situations that they face.

Another literary technique that can be analyzed in Clarence Hervey in the novel according to the author, Maria Edgeworth, is tone. Tone is important because it gives an emotional aspect to a novel such as *Belinda*. Maria Edgeworth uses tone to give a more serious and direct manner that helps describe Clarence Hervey’s complexity. For example, Edgeworth describes Hervey’s opinion of Belinda as being unattractive at first, but then pleasing because of her “power of pleasing” and was somewhat surprised.

Through the use of literary techniques such as point of view, and tone, Edgeworth’s development of Hervey’s complex personality is seen from multiples angles and perspectives.

Sample GG

In the passage from *Belinda*, the speaker develops the very complex and somewhat arrogant character of Clarence Hervey through the use of point of view, tone, and language.

One of the primary devices that let’s the reader get a good view of Hervey’s character is through point of view. Because it is third person omniscient, the reader gets a very unbiased view of Mr. Hervey. Had it been through the eyes of one of his acquaintances or even Hervey himself, the details presented to the audience would be biased & some would be completely non-existent. This unbiased view allows the reader to interpret for themselves just what kind of character Hervey had. Is he really as pompous as he seems or is he someone who tries to be respectful and courteous and just is not? This unbiased view leads into the tone of the piece although at times seems critical or condescending, such as in line 2-3, “if he had not been smitten with the desire of being superior in everything,” the overall tone is rather matter of fact. No excessively critical nor overly supportive, simply mild.

The true nature of Harvey, although given the chance to shine through tone and point of view, really comes out in the language of the piece. Having his “desire of being thought superior in everything,” he feels that “he is entitled to be imprudent, wild and eccentric.” He is described as having a “chameleon character” being able to adapt himself to any situation. He is also very worried about his image. When the idea of marrying a niece of “the catch-match-maker” is being tossed about he is filled with dread because he would have to associate himself with someone his friends, and he, looked down on. This fear of losing image is even stronger than his desire for women. Hervey finds Belinda very beautiful but because of her relations “he was most inclined to despise her.” Even at times when he felt himself giving into her attraction he would realize what was happening, “curse his folly, and drew back with sudden terror” the very idea of his image being ruined drawing him back.

The character of Clarence Harvey is found to be one of an arrogant, image conscious, ladies man through the different literary techniques of point of view, tone & language. Through these three devices the reader can see that although Mrs. Stanhope sent her niece to Lady Delacour to win over Mr. Clarence Hervey, the chances of anything happening are slim to none.

Sample T

In the 1801 novel, Belinda Maria Edgeworth creates a social chameleon in Clarence Hervey. An inconstant, excitable young man, Clarence slips from identity to identity to fit the current situation. Clarence Hervey is not quite a con artist, however. He is instead a foolish, vain youth, easily led by appeals to his sense of entitlement and narcissism.

Clarence’s “chameleon character” seems to vary in different lights, shifting colors to be “all things to all men – and to all women.” His foremost goal is simply to be “thought superior in everything” and of everyone. If he cannot be superior, however, he will do all he can to at least seem superior. The boy “affects” singularity, a word with negative connotations of deceit and unfounded snobbery. In order to seem a genius, he feels he must be “imprudent” and “eccentric” rather than simply very intelligent. In fact, in order not to cross into the territory of the “pedant,” he “pretended” to disdain every species of knowledge. Clarence’s chameleon shifts so rapidly that he contradicts himself with each turn, his affectations ironically negating the effects of each other. Already, Clarence has established himself not as a superior, brilliant man but a foolish youth trying to pose as a “man of genius” and failing in his failings.

Like a chameleon, Clarence is “easily led” to shift from persona to persona, perhaps because he neglects the upkeep of his own “color” in his rapid flickering shifts. He “might have been more than a pleasant young man,”—Clarence has a strong sense of humor and humanity, as well as considerable literary talents. However, his vanity spurs him on to aspire for ever loftier goals. He “had been early flattered” with the idea of genius, and devoted his life to being seen as one. He is “easily led” by his peers, excitable enough to deny his own personality and become “vicious.” The narrator seems to disapprove of Clarence in the way a teacher shakes his or her head over lost potential. Clarence Hervey sets aside his considerable claims to admiration in order to chase after an unattainable glory.

Clarence feels that his foremost goal is and should be admiration. He is “dreadfully afraid” of other’s opinions and will do anything to avoid being seen in a negative light. He sees the “catch-match-maker” with increasing “dread,” not because of the admirable, beautiful Belinda, but the loss of power and control, and thus, status that would occur if manipulated by Mrs. Stanhope. Clarence prides himself in his “gallantry,” and would never choose to marry a girl he had been manipulated into pursuing. His prejudice and consequent revulsion stem from his overwhelming first love—himself. Clarence is unable to deny his attraction to Belinda but considers it “folly” to stray from his true passion.

Clarence's narcissism creates a sense of entitlement and false superiority. He feels that "genius" "entitles" him to imprudence and places him outside the confines of society's standards. He considers himself superior to the men around him, even those who are his social betters. The common "Mr. Hervey" is at times "provoked, ...amused...and sometimes flattered" by the noble "Lord" Delacour's reaction to Clarence's flirtation with Lady Delacour. Clarence's response to the husband's reaction is one of a patronizing, confident man in the face of a lovesick swan with a hopeless love. He ignores the fact that Lord Delacour is married to Lady Delacour and is sometimes "amused" by his jealousy.

However, the narrator never paints Clarence as malicious or entirely unredeemable. The narrator's tone is forgiving, although not approving of Clarence's follies. He is painted as a fool rather than a villain, and the ironies of his character and actions contain a hint of amusement. His reactions do not contain calculated harm towards anyone, just a rather increased measure of man's common folly of pride and narcissism.

Clarence Hervey is a flickering, foolish chameleon, darting from identity to identity in an attempt to be the most admired and superior man in society. Although easily led and hypocritical in his sense of vanity and narcissism, he is a foolish, but possibly redeemable young man.

Sample S

In "Belinda" by Maria Edgeworth the character of Clarence Hervey is a very complex character as revealed through Edgeworth's use of literary devices.

Hervey comes off as a stuck up, arrogant man who finds himself entitled to whatever he pleases. Edgeworth's diction emphasizes this as she describes him as: "imprudent, wild and eccentric." He wants to fit in with the distinguished even if it requires him to throw away what he has. He has "considerable literary talents," but as Edgeworth says he "pretended to disdain every species of knowledge, when in company of the "ignorant." Edgeworth compares Hervey to a "chameleon," as his personality changes depending on the situation he is in. She also said that he "valued himself," on his "gallantry" indicating arrogance and a sense of superiority.

Edgeworth also talks about his fatal flaws. She said that he is "easily led . . . by his companions" and these situations could easily become "vicious" because of the type of company he kept. She also said how he was "sometimes provoked sometimes amused, and sometimes flattered," by jealousy. This wishy-washy attitude, emphasized by the repetition of: "sometimes," only enhances the idea of a "chameleon" personality.

Another aspect of Hervey is that he is "favorite with the fair sex," in other words a ladies man. However in the very end of the passage he finds himself "charmed by her powers of pleasing," under Belinda's spell. This turn of events indicates Hervey's vulnerability. He knows he is being pulled in as the narrator said "he was most inclined to despise her" for it but yet he still found himself "within it."

Hervey is a very complex young man with many sides. Through Maria Edgeworth's literary devices, the many sides of Clarence Hervey are unmasked in her novel, "Belinda."

Sample X

At first glance, this piece seems to be a straightforward attack upon Clarence Hervey. However, just as Hervey himself, the statement is far more complex than what first meets the eye. There are, in truth, three goals of this piece: First, to establish the speaker's legitimacy and validity; second to show due caution and balance towards Hervey; and third, to profess to show Hervey not only as an antagonist but also as a victim. In each case, tone, point of view, and language is used discretely differently to achieve different purposes.

The introductory sentence of this passage itself speaks to the unique nature of the narrator. By saying "Clarence Hervey might have been more than a pleasant young man, if he had not been smitten with the desire of being thoroughly superior..." the tone, both of sarcasm and regret, is immediately seen. This edged frustration as a tone survives throughout the section. For example, the description of his great literary mind dragged down into "ignorance" shows a keen sense both of knowledge and hatred. This tone in particular, allows the author to go on the attack without seeming excessive. This liberty is further heightened by a near-omniscient point of view, one that expresses fact, not lonely opinion, and seems to have a clear knowledge of Hervey's history. The final force granting the speaker credence is the astute language through the use of strong vocabulary, as seen by phrases such as "imprudent, wild, and eccentric," and words like "profligate" and "gallantry." The combination of these three factors mark the attack as from an honest and reasonable source of high character; the perfect person to attack poor Hervey.

And poor Hervey indeed, for in the next level of the work, the speaker moves from vituperative attack to a balanced and cautious critique heightening the complex character of Hervey. Whereas language on its face seems to only criticize Hervey, hidden in a second layer are concrete qualities, such as "he was supposed to" and "If he had not," that show an honest potential in Hervey. Of particular importance here is the shift in point of view, showing Hervey's own reasoning from lines 27 to 32. This shift allows us to fill in the otherwise thoroughly negative facade of one Clarence Hervey. Finally, the shift in tone, from describing Hervey's nature to the conditions surrounding Hervey, in particular the nature of the Delacour family, takes some blame off our antagonist.

Yet, by the end, the piece has gone even further, shifting from hatred to caution to downright pity. For one, the point of view shifts again to omniscient, describing with key understanding England's culture. These descriptions of young ladies and their misfortune in some way parallel the anti-Hervey structure of paragraph one, thus full balancing the viewpoint. Hervey's point of view also survives in this last section, showing the range of his understanding of Belinda from "sometimes provoked, sometimes amused, and sometimes flattered." Language also comes to Hervey's defense not only in the use of pithy phrases such as "he had not sufficient resolution", but also in the logical spread from general and analytical to specific, maintaining a far less argumentative viewpoint. Finally, the overall tone of the last paragraph has completely departed from any sense of malice.

Thus, by having three distinct goals that go through shifts, the piece effectively shows how complex Hervey himself is. The variety of points of view and the depth of language show not only a narrator who is conflicted, but also a character himself who is in some way divided. Thus, this piece is interesting but only because we ourselves learn about Hervey, but also because both the narrator and character seem to develop too.