

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following two poems are about Helen of Troy. Renowned in the ancient world for her beauty, Helen was the wife of Menelaus, a Greek king. She was carried off to Troy by the Trojan prince Paris, and her abduction was the immediate cause of the Trojan War.

Read the two poems carefully. Considering such elements as speaker, diction, imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you contrast the speakers' views of Helen.

To Helen

Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
Line The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
 (5) To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
 Thy Naiad¹ airs have brought me home
 To the glory that was Greece,
 (10) And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
 How statue-like I see thee stand,
 The agate lamp within thy hand!
 Ah, Psyche,² from the regions which
 Are Holy-Land!

—Edgar Allan Poe

¹In Greek mythology, Naiads are water nymphs who live in lakes, rivers, springs, and fountains.

²The personification of the human soul who married Cupid, the god of love.

Helen

All Greece hates
 the still eyes in the white face,
 the lustre as of olives
Line where she stands,
 (5) and the white hands.

All Greece reviles
 the wan face when she smiles,
 hating it deeper still
 when it grows wan and white,
 (10) remembering past enchantments
 and past ills.

Greece sees, unmoved,
 God's daughter, born of love,
 the beauty of cool feet
 (15) and slenderest knees,
 could love indeed the maid,
 only if she were laid,
 white ash amid funereal cypresses.

—H.D.

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