

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2010 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

(Marilyn Nelson Waniek's "The Century Quilt")

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, style and mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a persuasive analysis of Waniek's use of literary techniques to develop the complex meanings that the speaker attributes to the quilt. The essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide convincing readings of both the complex meanings ascribed to the quilt and Waniek's use of literary elements. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition, in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a score of 9, especially persuasive.
- 7–6** These competent essays offer a reasonable analysis of Waniek's use of literary techniques to develop the complex meanings the speaker attributes to the quilt. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the meanings of the quilt and Waniek's use of literary elements, and their analysis of the relationship between the two is less convincing. These essays demonstrate the student's ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9–8 responses. Although essays scored 7–6 are generally well written, those scored a 7 demonstrate more sophistication in both substance and style.
- 5** These essays may respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of Waniek's use of literary techniques to develop the meanings attributed to the quilt, but they may be superficial in their analysis of those meanings. They often rely on paraphrase, but paraphrase that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the quilt's meanings or of Waniek's techniques may be vague, formulaic or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These essays demonstrate some control of language, but the writing may be marred by surface errors. These essays are generally not as well conceived, organized or developed as 7–6 essays.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing or irrelevant, or it may ignore the complexity of the meanings attributed to the quilt or Waniek's use of techniques. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the student's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poem.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

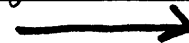
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1A
1#2

Waniek's "The Century Quilt" is a beautifully structured meditation on the importance of ~~a quilt~~ the history behind a quilt she loves. ~~Using~~ With the use of colors, vivid description, and reminiscent tone, the ~~with~~ poet illustrates the meaning of the quilt. ~~her~~.

The poem is written in no particular rhyme scheme, ~~is~~ and no particular meter. This gives it a narrative ^{and personal} quality, though the line breaks are clean and decisive. Each line break is carefully placed, so as to evoke emotion in the reader, ~~or achieve a certain meaning~~ as in: "Within the dream of myself / perhaps I'd meet my son" (41-42), ~~or~~ ~~Placing~~ Placing the break after "myself" ~~depict~~ implies contemplation, that she has literally stopped to think. She also places line breaks to achieve a certain meaning, as in: "My sister and I were in love / with Meema's Indian blanket" (1-2). ~~It is as though~~ Because ~~they~~ the two phrases do not share a line, the first line may be taken in a romantic context, as though the sisters were in love with a person. However, the pause ^{gives} ~~makes~~ the realization that it is a blanket that they love more impact.

Waniek's main ~~use of~~ source of imagery is the use of colors. She describes falling asleep under "army green" (3), a boring, common color, and contrasts it with Meema's Indian blanket, exciting and full of life. Even in describing her own Century Quilt, she illustrates the "Six Van Dyke brown squares / two white ones, and one square / the yellowbrown of Mama's cheeks" (15-17). She begins to associate the colors with family, and love. In questioning what she would dream of sleeping under it, she imagines the quilt would evoke memories of her "father's burnt ~~umber~~ pride" (39), and of her "mother's ochre gentleness" (40).



Even The quilt ~~also~~ evidently symbolizes the races and ethnicities in her family, but not in a derogatory way. She describes Meema's "yellow sisters" (25) and their grandfather's "white family" (26), living in harmony and love, what the quilt has come to mean for her. With ~~with~~ this use of color often comes other. ~~The poem's imagery is also effective in~~ ~~season~~ imagery. She imagines the sweet gum leaves in each square of the quilt as having fingers that "would caress me into the silence" (20) when she ~~is~~ is to die.

The author uses a reminiscent tone in describing her childhood, but ~~she~~ describes ^{her new} the quilt with so much awe that it can be inferred she still feels like a child wrapped in it. ~~she~~ With the words, "Perhaps ^{under} ~~with~~ this quilt I'd dream of myself, of my childhood of miracles" (36-38), she depicts her ability to view her past, while the words, "perhaps I'd meet... my other child, as yet unconceived" (42-43), evidence her longing to see the future, as well. In this way, the name "The Century Quilt" is quite fitting, as, even though she says it is for its pattern of leaves, she alludes to its place in her life, as a compilation of her past and her future. This name also fits with her previous statement, that she thinks she'd "have good dreams / for a hundred years under this quilt" (21-22).²

In allowing the quilt to become part of her life, and her life to become part of the quilt, the ^{poet} ~~author~~ is content to die under it, as she claims in lines 14 and 15, to complete her journey with it. In her style, and vivid use of imagery, Waniek has illustrated the intense connection she feels with The Century Quilt.

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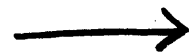
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1B
1 of 2

Marilyn Nelson Wanick's poem "The Century Quilt" compares the quilt of the speaker to a blanket of her grandmother's, comparing the lives of the two in the process. Wanick uses devices such as tone and imagery to convey her deep meaning behind the quilt, that it is a representation of her life and family.

Wanick's tone is soft and reminiscent in the first stanza, describing the blanket the speaker and her sister admired. This builds the foundation of the poem, illustrating the reason the speaker is so connected to her own quilt. Wanick's tone remains soft throughout the poem, illustrating the pleasant feelings that her quilt brings her.

Wanick also uses the structure of her poem to convey her meaning. She begins with discussing her "Meema," ~~her comp~~ and her lovely blanket, then compares her own blanket to it. After presenting the blankets as similar, she likens her life to her grandmother's, speculating about what her grandmother must have dreamed, and how she would dream similarly. She presents this through vivid imagery such as "her yellow sisters" and "grandfather's white family," as well as "my father's burnt umber pride" and "mother's



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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

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ochre gentleness."

Through these devices, Waniek shows how important family is to her, and how her quilt is a symbol of her family. It reminds her of her grandmother's blanket, but the quilt holds pieces of all her loved ones, such as "one square the yellowbrown of Mama's cheeks." The colors she attributes to her family show her love for them, with warm, soft colors such as brown and ochre. Her quilt, a single unit tying different elements together, represents how she ties her family together, and feels safe and loved in their presence. Waniek also uses dreams, and the possibility of what will come, to illustrate the feelings the quilt bring her. The quilt represents her whole life, and she reminisces of "childhood miracles" and the "Oklahoma field." She dreams of her life as full and complete, just like her grandmothers.

Through structure, imagery, and tone, Waniek shows how her quilt makes her feel connected to her family, particularly her grandmother. Her dreams of her life are vivid and pleasant, and Waniek is comforted by her "Century Quilt."

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1

1C
1 of 1

"The "Century Guilt" by Marilyn Nelson
Wanick portrays a woman relating her childhood
experiences with her sister to display the deep
meaning she attributes to The Century Guilt. Wanick
uses the structure, imagery, and tone to display the
importance of the guilt.

The structure Wanick uses plays a key role
in showing the complexity of the guilt. She shifts
back and forth between the past, present, and future
and ties the meaning of the guilt into all three.
In the first stanza, the main character tells what
an impact her "Meema's" guilt had on her and her
sister as children. She connects this to the last stanza
where she explains that her new guilt will have the
same effect on her that her meema's did in
her childhood. Wanick uses lists in the last stanza

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AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2010 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

This question asked students to read carefully a poem by Marilyn Nelson Waniek entitled “The Century Quilt” and to write an essay analyzing how Waniek employs literary techniques to develop the complex meanings attributed by the speaker to the quilt. The prompt mentioned structure, imagery and tone as examples of the poet’s techniques.

With its phrasing, the question was intended to lead students to consider complexities in the quilt’s meanings for the speaker. Although a bedcovering may generally be regarded as warm and comforting, the prompt urged students to find other dimensions of meaning: the speaker’s identity as shaped and expressed in a family of multiple colors; the power of the past, of imagination and of dreams to create the future; and the links among generations. The prompt asked students to consider how the poet creates these multiple meanings through the use of literary elements, intending to test their abilities to articulate the connections between technique and meaning.

Sample: 1A

Score: 7

Characterized by sentence variety and command of the elements of writing, this insightful response begins with an economical introduction that transforms the prompt and lists techniques to be analyzed. After two sentences we know something about the nature of the poem (“a beautifully structured meditation”), something about its meaning (“the importance of the history behind a quilt”), and something about each technique under consideration. Integrating structural concerns with the poem’s “narrative and personal quality,” the first body paragraph offers a mature discussion of how the music of Waniek’s poem conveys meaning: the lack of rhyme and meter add up to “a narrative and personal quality”; “the break after ‘myself’ implies contemplation.” The third paragraph sustains the essay’s effectiveness by addressing the importance of color: “In questioning what she would dream of sleeping under it, she imagines the quilt would evoke memories of her ‘father’s burnt umber pride’.” Again we see the student incorporating quotations smoothly in the service of interpretation, and the discussion of “a reminiscent tone” in the next paragraph continues the citation-interpretation pattern characteristic of the whole essay. In just a few sentences we learn “that it can be inferred she still feels like a child wrapped in [the quilt]” and that the name of the quilt is itself meaningful. For the speaker, the evocative past exists alongside “her longing to see the future.” The conclusion returns to the poet, who “allow[s] the quilt to become part of her life, and her life to become part of the quilt.” Note that further development of the complexity of the poem is possible in this otherwise impressive effort. The colors of the quilt stand for “family and love,” the essay maintains, but there is no discussion of the ways in which the quilt also evokes painful familial and cultural history.

Sample: 1B

Score: 5

Responding to the task with a plausible reading, this essay’s strengths lie in its clear style and its straightforward organization. The opening echoes the requirements of the prompt and stakes out the analogy between speaker and grandmother, on the one hand, and quilt and blanket, on the other, the purpose being to show that “the quilt . . . is a representation of her life and family.” If we compare the introduction to the conclusion, we see that for all of this essay’s accessibility, it has not probed further than to maintain that “her quilt makes her feel connected to her family” and that the function of such a connection is to comfort the speaker. The paragraph addressing tone is limited by what appears to be a lack of critical diction: “Waniek’s tone remains soft throughout the poem, illustrating the pleasant feelings that her quilt brings her.” A more explicit connection between the characters and the symbolic objects,

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Question 1 (continued)

together with more extended development of *how* Waniek conveys that connection, is missing in this essay. The paragraphs on family members identify the various characters largely for the purpose of commenting on the importance of family. A greater understanding of the quilt's relation to history and struggle does not appear. Ultimately the analysis of family history woven into the blankets and stitched into the quilt is superficial. So too is the consideration of the relationships between the speaker and her many family members ("Her dreams of her life are vivid and pleasant, and Waniek is comforted"). This response is a representative example of a midrange essay full of suggestive possibilities that invite further analysis.

Sample: 1C

Score: 2

This less successful response attempts to outline the terms of a plausible essay, but its unacceptable brevity prevents sufficient consideration of the requirements of the prompt. Following a formula that many essays rely on, it proposes to analyze "deep meaning" and to consider "structure, imagery, and tone." But we note that things are missing: namely, some way — even if tentative — to characterize what that meaning is, and some kind of description of the three techniques to be analyzed. The language reveals reasonable control, but the truncated development does not communicate a sense of confidence with the requirements of essay writing. The low score earned is directly owing to the lack of any sustained argument — much more, in fact, than it suggests analytical inadequacy. The second paragraph makes a promising point about how the structure of the poem mirrors the shifting time frame. With patient development and attention to the text, a brief foray such as this could evolve into a persuasive essay. However, without such development, the essay demonstrates only limited understanding of the poem.