



AP[®] English Literature and Composition 2008 Free-Response Questions

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

In the two poems below, Keats and Longfellow reflect on similar concerns. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation.

Mezzo Cammin¹

When I Have Fears

Written at Boppard on the Rhine August 25, 1842,
Just Before Leaving for Home

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Line Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
5 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
10 That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

1818 —John Keats (1795-1821)

Half of my life is gone, and I have let
The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
The aspiration of my youth, to build
Line Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
5 Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
Of restless passions that would not be stilled,
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;
Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past
10 Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—
A city in the twilight dim and vast,
With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—
And hear above me on the autumnal blast
The cataract² of Death far thundering from the heights.

1842 —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

¹ The title is from the first line of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*" ("Midway upon the journey of our life").

² A large waterfall

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Question 2

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

The following passage is taken from *Fasting, Feasting*, a novel published in 1999 by Indian novelist Anita Desai. In the excerpt, Arun, an exchange student from India, joins members of his American host family for an afternoon at the beach. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses such literary devices as speech and point of view to characterize Arun’s experience.

Line 5 It is Saturday. Arun cannot plead work. He stands despondent, and when Melanie comes to the door, dressed in her bathing suit with a big shirt drawn over her shoulders, and stares at him challengingly, he starts wildly to find excuses.

10 Mrs. Patton will not hear them. No, she will not. Absolutely not. So she says, with her hands spread out and pressing against the air. ‘No, no, no. We’re all three of us going. Rod and Daddy have gone sailing on Lake Wyola and we’re not going to sit here waiting for them to come home—oh no.’

15 Arun must go back upstairs and collect his towel and swimming trunks. Then he follows Melanie to the driveway where Mrs. Patton is waiting with baskets of equipment—oils and lotions, paperbacks and dark glasses, sandwiches and lemonade. With that new and animated prance galvanising her dwindled shanks, she leads the way through a gap in the bushes to one of the woodland paths. Melanie and Arun follow

20 silently. They try to find a way to walk that will not compel them to be side by side or in any way close together. But who is to follow whom? It is an awkward problem. Arun finally stops trying to lag behind her—she can lag even better—and goes ahead to catch up with Mrs. Patton. He ought to help carry those baskets anyway. He takes one from her hands and she throws him a radiant, lipsticked smile. Then she swings away and goes confidently forwards.

30 ‘Summertime,’ he hears her singing, ‘when the living is eeh-zee—’

35 They make their way along scuffed paths through layers of old soft pine needles. The woods are thrumming with cicadas: they shrill and shrill as if the sun is playing on their sinews, as if they were small harps suspended in the trees. A bird shrieks hoarsely, flies on, shrieks elsewhere, further off—that ugly, jarring note that does not vary. But there are no birds to be seen, nor animals. It is as if they are in hiding, or have fled. Perhaps they have because the houses of Edge Hill do intrude and one can glimpse a bit of wall here or roof there, a washing line hung with sheets or a plastic gnome, finger to nose, enigmatically winking. Arun finds the hair on the back of his neck begin to prickle, as if in warning. He

45 is sweating, and the palms of his hands are becoming puffy and damp. Why must people live in the vicinity of such benighted wilderness and become a part of it? The town may be small and have little to offer, but how passionately he prefers its post office, its shops, its dry-cleaning stores and picture framers to this creeping curtain of insidious green, these grasses stirring with insidious life, and bushes with poisonous berries—so bright or else so pale. Nearly tripping upon a root, he stumbles and has to steady himself so

55 as not to spill the contents of the basket.

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Question 3

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

In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character.

Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

You may choose a work from the list below or another appropriate novel or play of similar literary quality. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The Age of Innocence
Alias Grace
All the King's Men
All the Pretty Horses
Anna Karenina
Billy Budd
The Brothers Karamazov
Catch-22
Cold Mountain
The Color Purple
Don Quixote
Emma
Equus
Frankenstein
Glass Menagerie
Henry IV, Part I

Huckleberry Finn
Invisible Man
King Lear
The Kite Runner
The Misanthrope
The Piano Lesson
Pride and Prejudice
Pygmalion
Reservation Blues
The Sound and the Fury
A Streetcar Named Desire
Sula
A Tale of Two Cities
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Tom Jones
Wuthering Heights

STOP

END OF EXAM