

APPENDIX

Sample student essays

This appendix includes six student essays based on five readings, both short stories and non-fiction selections, included on previous English Exit Exams. The markers' assessments for each of the three areas measured by the Exam: Comprehension and Insight, Organization of Response, and Expression, are listed at the beginning of each example. There are no comments on the essays themselves. This is consistent with the practice followed during the marking sessions, as markers do not make any corrections or notes on the original copies. However, for illustrative purposes, certain parts of each essay have been highlighted.

A commentary and a completed assessment sheet follow each example. The commentary provides an explanation of the way the essay was marked. Note that for each criterion, a student may earn an **M+** (well met), an **M** (met), or an **M-** (not met). These assessments translate into letter grades, from A to F, for each of the three areas listed above. For an illustration, refer to page 5 of the *Marking Guide* to review the grid used by markers of the exam. Detailed descriptions of assessments of **M+**, **M**, or **M-** for all criteria may be found in the relevant sections of the *Marking Guide*.

M+, *well met*, means that the student has "clearly met and surpassed the objective."

M, *met*, means that "the student has adequately met the objective."

M-, *not met*, means that "the student has not met the objective."

Note that students may earn an A in a category by indicating that they have very good to excellent mastery of the Exam requirements. An essay that is awarded A's may contain some flaws, but overall it is judged to have "clearly met and surpassed the objective" by earning **M+** in 3 or 4 of the categories associated with the criterion. In contrast, a student may make many errors in one category, thus earning an **M-** in that area, and still earn a **C** on the criterion, overall, if markers assess the student as having met (**M**) the other three objectives.

The grading system was designed specifically to be used to mark this exam and "is not intended to correspond to letter grade systems used elsewhere." (*Marking Guide* 5)

SAMPLE 1

Student grade: **AAA**

The following essay is based on a non-fiction selection that appeared on the **December 2003** exam: **an essay**: "Fathers, Sons, and Hockey" by Roy MacGregor.

Note the following:

- The student's main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student's thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student's references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors' Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

"Fathers, Sons and Hockey", by Roy MacGregor, is a short essay about the nature of father-son relationships in general and, more specifically, in hockey. MacGregor asserts that, despite what may be true about other paternal relationships, in hockey the father-son relationship is reinforced through constant bonding and mutual support. In order to understand precisely how MacGregor makes his case, it is necessary first to explain his exploration of ideas put forth about father-son relationships in general. Second, the reader needs to understand his development of the idea that relationships in hockey provide an exception to general perceptions about the distant nature of father-son interactions. Thirdly, one needs to be able to follow MacGregor's explanation of why this is the case. Overall, however, it is important to pay attention to MacGregor's supporting arguments and justification in order to see that, while his heart is in the right place, his interpretation of the "facts" as he states them is open to criticism.

One of the purposes of MacGregor's text is to make statements and respond to various claims about paternal relationships. For example, MacGregor quotes Bertrand Russell as saying "the fundamental defect of fathers is that they want their children to be a credit to them. (6). In some ways, MacGregor agrees with him and comments that "Fathers can't help themselves . . ." (6). [The argument that MacGregor is attempting to make in his essay, however, is that this 'defect' referred to by Russell does not hinder the development of relationships at all.] In fact, the author sees hockey as an exception to the commonly held views. In further development of this idea, MacGregor gives the example of Olga Silverstein and Beth Rashbaum who presented, in their book "The Courage to Raise Good Men", the notion that there is a salient need for the increased participation of fathers in the family. MacGregor does not dispute this claim, in general, but says in response that there is" . . . little such hunger in hockey" (7). [In support of his views, MacGregor latches on to the theory

proposed by Ken Rappoport that hockey encourages family values and increases the personal bond between father and son.] MacGregor uses examples of various 'star' hockey players who make it clear to him that . . . it is undeniable that there is something about fathers and sons and hockey worthy of examination (7). For MacGregor, it is as much by necessity, as by any virtue or property of the sport that key family values are reinforced. [It is important for a critical understanding of MacGregor's argument to note his justification and explanation for why hockey is an exception to what experts point to as the degradation of the institution of the family in the west.]

MacGregor explains why hockey preserves the father-son bond as being a necessary product of circumstance. He uses **examples** and **comparison** to support his argument. The circumstances in hockey are simply different from those associated with most other North American sports, says MacGregor. [He believes that, in playing hockey, a child needs the economic and emotional support of his family.] Fathers must be willing to make it out to 5 a.m. practices, drive their sons and dress them, watch their practices and support them. For MacGregor, it is the sheer devotion, time and compassion that is required, the ultimate level of personal involvement that lends to hockey families this incredible father-son bond.

A brief analysis of MacGregor's justification provides a better understanding of the techniques and devices that he employs. Much of MacGregor's argument revolves around the **allusion to**, and **comparisons of**, various examples of hockey fathers and sons. He discusses Martin McSorley, who publicly greeted his father with a kiss, and Brett Hull, who was inspired by his father Bobby Hull. Also, MacGregor responds to various theorists who complain about the degradations of family values, comparing Robert Bly's 'ritual space' to hockey dressing rooms, and contrasting 'fathers who lose their sons five minutes after birth' with fathers who attend group sessions. [Unfortunately most of MacGregor's responses are irrelevant or unsatisfactory.] Also, MacGregor comments about Walt Disney, that he retreated to his " . . . empire that portrayed fathers as essentially ineffectual, bumbling and usually absent" (6), after Disney had observed that very few songs were written about fathers. [MacGregor [MacGregor's arguments are faulty here; perhaps Disney does portray fathers pejoratively but that does not decrease the relevance or factuality of his claim. MacGregor also completely ignores the role of the mother, except to say that she might attend a hockey game or two to cheer on her son. In the context of the twenty-first century, MacGregor's focus solely on the father in the hockey family is chauvinistic and unrealistic.] Many mothers perform the same duties as fathers, negating the argument about hockey and its ability to foster father-son relationships. [Lastly, MacGregor uses **anecdotal evidence**, which, while illustrating his point, should be avoided in a formal argument.]

To conclude, MacGregor argues that hockey reinforces the father-son relationship by necessitating the achievement of expectation and consistent bonding. He agrees with experts about father-son relationships in general but claims that hockey is an exception to the rule. MacGregor justifies his argument with **examples**, **responses to arguments** about the family in general and **comparison** of stories and ideas. An analysis of his justification reveals his use of allusion, examples, comparisons, contrast and the dialectical progression of his own argument in responses to others. All of these literary techniques and devices are employed by MacGregor in the text. However, a brief analysis of his argument also reveals certain ambiguities, fallacies and irrelevant points that cast doubt on whether or not MacGregor's text would stand up to sustained criticism. All the same, MacGregor's points still stand, yet the larger question looms as to, regardless of whether he's right or not, what exactly is causing the break-up of the family in the West.

COMMENTARY

The student writer has taken a decided stand against the position expressed by Roy MacGregor. He acknowledges MacGregor's idea in the opening paragraph when he writes, "MacGregor asserts that, despite what may be true about other paternal relationships, in hockey the father-son relationship is reinforced through constant bonding and mutual support." However, the student uses MacGregor's own examples to refute the position taken by the author, rather than simply agreeing with everything MacGregor says. The student sprinkles the text with critical comment. The bracketed sentences throughout the student essay illustrate some of these critical statements. In fact, in his thesis statement (Overall, however, it is important to pay attention to MacGregor's supporting arguments and justification in order to see that, while his heart is in the right place, his interpretation of the "facts" as he states them is open to criticism.), the student clearly sets out his interpretation and reaction to the content of MacGregor's essay.

The student refers to techniques and devices used by the author, although some of the discussion needs further development. However, the content of the essay reinforces the student's understanding of the author's use of example and comparison to present his argument, while explaining that MacGregor's choices are not always appropriate. The student's acknowledgement of MacGregor's use of literary devices shows an understanding of how an nt ret ougo rT anvicel the texr to suppost the

CORRECTOR'S KEY

"Fathers, Sons and Hockey" by Roy MacGregor.

Possible Main Ideas

Male bonding

Parenting

Father-son relationships

Hockey and values

Fathers vs mothers in hockey

Differences in parent's roles in relation to sports

Role of the family in hockey sports

Influence of sports on families

Passion for sports

Rituals

Father-hunger

Hockey traditions

Stereotyping of the roles of males and females

Role of tradition and ritual in a sports context

Ways of participating in sport

ASSESSMENT SHEET
MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH,
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M -
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading	✓		
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author	✓		
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection	✓		
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading	✓		

SAMPLE 2

Student grade: **BBC**

The following essay is based on a reading that appeared on the **May 2003** exam: **an essay**: “The Right to Control One’s Learning” by John Holt.

Note the following:

- The student’s main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student’s thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student’s references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors’ Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

John Holts, in the essay “The Right to Control One’s Learning” expresses his belief that children should make their own decisions when it comes to going to school. In other words he truely believes that everyone, young and old, should have the right to decide what they learn. The author uses arguments such as, if school is an obligation for children, then it should be for adults, the negative consequences of bad teachers, and school does not protect children from the cruelty of the outside world, to prove his point. He also uses **example** and **comparison** to get his arguments through.

Holts first argument is that if children are obligated to go to school, so should adults. Basically, he is saying that as ridiculous as it sounds to force an adult to attend school, is to him, just as ridiculous to push a child to do the same. A person’s freedom is being violated when he is being told what he should know. The author gives the idea that everyone should do hours of homework every night if it is so good for a child to do so emphasizes his point. Holt is clearly not oposing himself to school altogether he is simply expressing that, just as adults, children, should have the control over what they wish to learn.

*Next, an **example** is given about giving drugs to a young one in order for a child with learning disabilities to learn the material that may not wish to know but is forced to.* [The author makes a bigger deal of this than than what it really is to prove how much schools have control on children, and how far they would go to obligate a child to learn what they want.]

This previous example brings me to the next aspect, consequences of bad teachers. All the control teachers have on a child has a big impact on the kind of person that child will become. The example of a friend of Holts whose son became more timid and quarrelsome, less outgoing and confident” due to the bullying and altogether cruel ways of the teacher. [Therefore, this case proves that there can be negative consequences of bad teaching.] For this young one, it changed him forever. [This consequence makes one wonder, if any child should be forced to put up with such treatment; simply because he is forced to attend school.]

Also, the author mentioned that parent s have an important role in the decision making of the child. For example, the son of the author's friend decided to continue going to school even though he had a tough teacher. This is probably due to the fact that the child's mother supported weather the child decides to attend class or not. [Basically, at the end of the day, the child will make a decision for himself weather the parents chose to guide their child into making a rational decision. Giving the children a choice to attend school or not does not mean that parents or even other menters cannot influence these children decisions.]

The final argument the author uses to show that school is not that place where a child should feel safe and protected from the outside world. The setting of a school is just as bad, if not worst, then that of the outside world. When comparing the setting of a school and that of work, school is a much tougher environnement to be in. The jealousy, and competitiveness between peers can make it a very difficult and stresful place to be for a child. Also, the pressure the teachers put on students to do better then the next on every assignment or test and being judged as less intelligent if this is not accomplished can be quite a lot to deal with for a child.

Another arguent that proves how school does not protect children from the cruel world is simply due to the fact that it is at school that we "learn to believe in the totally controlled society". It is in the environment of school that a child learn that he will be placed " in some sort of rank or heirarchy". For example, some schools divide students into a class by looking at their average of the other years. This may be hard for a child to accept at a young age. [Therefore, if people believe that school is a fun and happy place for children, and that they are protected from the harmfull outside world, they are wrong.]

Finally, John Holts believes that children should be able to make their own decisions, and therefore, have the right to decide what they learn. Arguments, such as, if school is so important and should be forced upon children, they should also be forced upon adults, the negative consequences of a bad teacher, and school is not a safer place then the outside world helped proove the point of view of the author. Also, techniques and devices like **example** and **comparison** were used to get his point across.

COMMENTARY

The student expresses, in the opening paragraph, a main idea that reflects the title of Holt's essay. This sentence, "John Holts, in the essay "The Right to Control One's Learning" expresses his belief that children should make their own decisions when it comes to going to school." shows that the student has a clear sense of the central and unifying idea in Holt's essay. In addition, the student indicates a basic awareness of Holt's use of example and comparison to make the points he does, but the student does not explicitly develop the idea of comparison, although he or she does explain the use of example. The discussion of the use of techniques and devices is adequate but basic. The student summarizes Holt's points quite well and uses appropriate references to the text to explain the main idea. There are some critical comments that raise the essay above simple summary, but these are not extensive. Overall, the student earns an **M+** for statement of a main idea and **M's** in the three other sub-criteria, for a **B** in **Comprehension and Insight**.

In the introductory paragraph, the student lists three key ideas that he or she uses to organize the essay. These ideas serve as the topics of the paragraphs. The contents of the paragraphs support the topics in an adequate manner, and there is no irrelevant detail in the paragraphs, so that they are unified and focused, although short and somewhat undeveloped. The essay, however, is well structured, and the student uses transition words, such as previous, next, also, and final to guide the reader from one topic to another. The student earns an **M** for the thesis, which is really more of an organizing statement than an expression of the student's interpretation of Holt's ideas, an **M** for use of detail and an **M** for paragraph unity. However, the student earns an **M+** for structured development of the essay, which converts to a B for **Organization of Response**.

The student uses adequate vocabulary to communicate his or her meaning. There are varied sentence structures in the essay, but some of the phrasing leads to convoluted or incorrectly structured sentences. Sometimes the word order is inaccurate or ineffective. Refer to the shaded sentences for examples of ineffective structure or word order. There are some instances of subject-verb agreement errors, and some of inaccurate pronoun reference. The student ignores or misuses the apostrophe, and makes several spelling or punctuation errors. These errors, particularly in spelling, could have been corrected if the student had referred to a dictionary. The student earns an **M** in the categories of appropriate use of words, correct grammar and spelling, punctuation and mechanics. However, because of awkward and incorrect sentence structures, the essay is awarded an **M-** in this category. It still earns a **C**, overall, for Expression.

CORRECTOR'S KEY

MAY 2004

'The Right to Control One's Learning" by John Holt

Possible Main Ideas/Topics

The right to control one's learning!

Student's right to choose

Freedom of thought vs. mind control

Compulsory education is a violation of civil liberties

The right to decide what goes into our minds

Schools are oppressive and undemocratic

(Criticism of schools as institutions)

Education as an industry

Learning vs. education

Role of parents in child's education

The effects of bad teachers

Role of schools in relation to the real world

Life-long education

Downfalls of compulsory education

Children know what's best for them

ASSESSMENT SHEET

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M -
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading	✓		
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author		✓	
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection		✓	
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading		✓	
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text		✓	
	2. structured development of the essay	✓		
	3. use of supporting detail		✓	
	4. unified paragraph structure		✓	
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words		✓	
	2. varied and correct sentence structures			✓
	3. correct grammar		✓	
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics		✓	
M : signifies that the objective has been met M + : signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M - : signifies that the objective has not been met				

Control Code :

SAMPLE 2

COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

B

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

B

EXPRESSION:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

Failure: _____

Supervisor: _____

PASSING GRADE:

C is a passing grade.Papers graded **D** or **E** or **F** in any category fail.Marker: **JK**Marker's Code: **1100**Marker: **RD**Marker's Code: **900**

SAMPLE 3

Student grade: **DCD**

The following student essay is based on a reading from the **December 1999** exam: **an essay**: “Getting Close to the Machine” by Ellen Ullman.

Note the following:

- The student’s main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student’s thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student’s references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors’ Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

Why do we have computers? Computers are invented everyday in order to facilatate the satisfaction of our needs. We want to satisfy our needs daily and computers are composed of our thoughts and of how we would realize the action performed by the computer. In Ellen Ullman’s “Getting Close to the Machine” the effect and composition of a programmed computer is clearly illustrated through many **examples**. They one by one demonstrate how computers are a reproduction of the human mind and how they will have effect to sepearate each human from realities of life, where there is complications and confusions.

Ellen illustrates many example that take meaning of how we are trying to reproduce the minds of humans in order to satisfy there scare needs. He begins by telling the reader that computer programming is logical which at once does not correspond to how humans are. A human mind is not logical, it is the complete opposite, it is confused and analyzes situations in many different ways so a program cannot be like a mind The author also shows how once again computers cannot be a human reproduction because of feelings. He uses the **example** about how the girl was dreaming about how she could program a computer to make two people make love. [Love is only about feelings and feelings cannot be programmed or understood by any other person then from yourself so this is impossible.] Ellen tells us that when one programs it looses focus of time and can only completely devote himself to this task. What you are actually doing is programming your mind and your thoughts which are those of many others because there is no other way that you could program a computer. We are all alike in many ways and we desire the same things so with the use of computers, we can satisfy these desires.

Then she tells us how computers will affect the lives of every human being on earth. He shows this through the **description** of how the computers are programmed. The engieneers do not interact with one another, not communicating there thoughts and ideas They simply programme everything they think of and wish not to be disturbe will doing it because it will create a bug meaning they will miss a idea. So this only represents how

everything will results as everyone wills seek to satisfy there needs by interacting with programmed computers which are merely not human beings. We will become more and more rational such as they are. Our feelings will slowly disappear and we no longer interact with others.

Concluding the author sums everything up with the perfect object to illustrate how we will be lead by computers. This miticuously chosen object the train has important meaning. The train is first introduced to the reader as an explanation of programming "it's like riding a train and never being able to get off." (3) That is exactly what computers are about. They will create a path that some people will use to satisfy there needs. More and more people will use this transportation" because they don't want to make there own decsions meaning to satisfy our needs. Finally we will all find ourselves at the same place lead by the same person or computer. As we get to the "gare" we will all continue our paths.

This text is great text that shows how computers have changed. The author does this by clear and simple examples that are seen through the eyes of a lady. Her experiences and the discription of them allow us to see the results of computers, which are that we are getting close to the machine. Soon we will programmed by the computerers that where programmed by someone who only merely ressembles myself and that has no feelings at all.

COMMENTARY

The student expresses an idea in the opening paragraph that he or she ties to the overall content of the reading, but this idea is not a main idea in the text. In reality, the student expresses an idea that is only peripheral to the emphasis in the text. (Refer to the Corrector's Key ideas for a list of possible main ideas). In addition, the student lists example and description as techniques used by the author, but there is no subsequent discussion of how the author uses these techniques and devices to communicate ideas about computer programming to readers. Moreover, the student misidentifies the author, mentioning her inappropriately by her first name, Ellen, and then errs by referring to "he". These errors could have been corrected by a more careful reading of the Writing Guidelines sheet that identifies the genre of the reading as well as the gender of the writer. There is an attempt to add some critical comments about the text and use some of the references appropriately, although many are also out of context. The presentation of references is uneven, and the student's thrust is hard to follow. The student earns an **M** for critical interpretation and references, but **M-** for main idea and for techniques and devices, for a **D** in **Comprehension and Insight**.

Ellen Ullman, the author of the reading, does focus on the effect of programming on those engaged in the process, and so the thesis statement that appears in the student's introduction is closer to the author's central points than the statement of main idea: ("They one by one demonstrate how computers are a reproduction of the human mind and how they will have effect to sepearate each human from realities of life, where there is complications and confusions.") In the essay, the student tries to develop ideas that are related to the thesis, but the essay does not build upon this focus. The topic sentences are not accurate reflections of the ideas in the reading, and do not flow from the thesis idea. The contents of each paragraph often appear unrelated to the topic sentences, making the essay seem disconnected and disorganized. The student earns an **M** for thesis statement, for use of detail and unified paragraph structure, but an **M-** for structured development. The student's grade is a **C** in **Organization of Response**.

The vocabulary used by the student is acceptable. There are several spelling errors, but these errors do not interfere with meaning. However, sentence structures are awkward and unclear. Incorrect word order in the sentences makes it hard to follow what the student is trying to communicate. There are many grammar errors throughout the text that also interfere with understanding. The student earns an **M** for appropriate use of words and for spelling, punctuation and mechanics, but an **M-** for sentence structure and for grammar, earning him or her a **D** in this criterion: **Expression**.

CORRECTORS' KEY

"Getting Close To The Machine" By Ellen Ullman

Possible Main Ideas

The negative side of a programmer's life
The disintegration of society mirrored through a programmer's work
The positive aspects of being a programmer (an ode to . . .)
The computer programming sub-world or culture (sense of time, of language)
The social barriers of computers (isolation)

Man vs. machine
Progress vs. alienation
Physical vs. virtual reality
Exploitation of the user
Misanthropy of computer engineers
Obsession
Programmers as the new creators
The sci-fi take-over/intelligent machines

ASSESSMENT SHEET

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M -
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading			✓
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author			✓
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection		✓	
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading		✓	
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text		✓	
	2. structured development of the essay			✓
	3. use of supporting detail		✓	
	4. unified paragraph structure		✓	
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words		✓	
	2. varied and correct sentence structures			✓
	3. correct grammar			✓
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics		✓	
M : signifies that the objective has been met M + : signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M - : signifies that the objective has not been met				

Control Code :

SAMPLE 3

COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

D

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

EXPRESSION:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

D

Failure: _____

Supervisor: _____

PASSING GRADE:

C is a passing grade.Papers graded **D** or **E** or **F** in any category fail.Marker: **JK**Marker's Code: **1100**Marker: **RD**Marker's Code: **900**

SAMPLE 4

Student grade: **AAA**

The following student essay is based upon a short story that appeared on the **December 2003** exam: **a short story:** “Act of God” by Joan Baxter

Note the following:

- The student’s main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student’s thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student’s references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors’ Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

Joan Baxter’s “Act of God” revolves around the consequences of a water cut experienced by Jillian, a white woman who came to Africa to help the inhabitants of a small village. Due to this deliberate water cut, the villagers are forced to obtain unhealthy water from a tank. At the end of the story, Aisha, an African girl, drowns in it. As the action progresses, Baxter portrays Jillian’s changing spectrum of emotions, emphasizing her insecurity, her anger towards the water company and her guilt towards the Africans. Through setting and characterization of Jillian and Aisha, the author suggests that when people are placed in a destabilizing situation, stuck between oppressor and oppressed, their quest for a sense of belonging and their often irrational feelings may become their main driving force.

The short story takes place in a fictitious African village, thus providing the reader with the idea that it could happen anywhere. [Consequently, it shifts the focus from the actual geographical setting to the struggles and feelings of the people who live in it.] The post-colonial world in which the action occurs gives rise to a series of conflictual situations. The **main conflict** opposes the water company and the Africans. Their interests are at opposite ends of the spectrum: the latter need the water whereas the company owners would rather sell it to make money. Bukari, Jillian’s driver, refers to these rich people as “the Talon water mafia—the men who owned tanker trucks—who could sell water to people and ‘grow fat’.” The anger that is expressed is shared by Jillian, who directs her rage towards her own industrialized country in addition to the water company. Ironically, at one point she is also angry at Aisha who tries to fetch water from her tank. [Her indignation towards the oppressing company owners translates into her momentary rage against the oppressed Africans.] The African struggle against the company extends to the authority of the newly independent government. When Jillian asks why the people do not protest against the water cuts, she is told that the police would shoot them. [It emphasizes a feeling of insecurity and helplessness, which Jillian also experiences.] The **setting**, lending itself to conflicts between groups of people, leads to internal conflicts opposing different feelings, including rage and insecurity. In the midst of this struggle, Jillian feels that she does not belong to the group of the oppressor nor to the oppressed.

The **narrative point of view** is **third person** limited to Jillian. *The narration of the story appears to parallel her stream of thought.* [Baxter thus allows the reader to know the character's emotions and to understand the natures of her inner conflicts.] At the very beginning, the **tone** and the weather are used to mirror Jillian's feelings, and subsequently her actions driven by these feelings. The wind is **compared** to "the cold breath of death" and the darkness makes her feel insecure. A **simile** directly links the power outage, due to the storm, to her feelings: "Power outages soured her mood the way they soured the milk in the silent refrigerator." [The constant changes in her emotions are like the changes in weather and the changes in the quality of the milk.] She first feels insecure, not belonging to her destabilizing environment, but rage overcomes her fear. [Yet, her anger increases the distance between her and the people with whom she interacts. Finally, among the main feelings she experiences the most intense is her feeling of guilt.] She feels guilty because she has a much higher income than the villagers, because she has access to water and, lastly, because she first refuses to give Aisha some water and the girl, forced to go to the tank containing bad water, drowns in it. The extent of Jillian's feeling of culpability at the end of the story is not explicitly mentioned. However, it is **foreshadowed** by her comparing guilt and suffering at the beginning of the story: She ask herself, "Was this guilt a western medicine, a placebo to replace real suffering?" [This question suggests that the comparison between what she feels and the suffering that the Africans endure is merely an illusion. Feeling guilty towards a people does not make her belong to it.]

Aisha is another very important character in the story. In herself, she represents the Africans' needs, determination and despair. She is so desperate for water that she first tries to steal some from Jillian's tank, and then is compelled to go to the dangerous water tank, which causes her death. [Her actions reflect the extreme conflictual situations brought by the **setting**, and are a major cause of Jillian's feelings.] Jillian's sudden outburst of rage is against the girl stealing water, and her guilt towards the suffering of the Africans is focused on Aisha's death at the end of the story. On another level, Baxter uses the African girl's search for water in a way that can **symbolize** Jillian's searching for a sense of a belonging. Just like Aisha, desperately looking for water, and who ends up drowning, Jillian seems to be drowning her feelings. It is **foreshadowed** at the beginning, when the author writes: "She lay awake, suffocating in the dark." [Throughout the story, and especially at the end, Jillian is suffocating in her feelings of insecurity, rage and guilt, and in her unmet desire to belong to a group. She seems as hopeless as Aisha who literally dies for need of water.]

In "Act of God", Baxter presents the themes of oppression, belonging and conflicting feelings. The protagonist does not relate to the rich company owners nor to her own western countrymen. In fact, she rages against them. She does not relate to the suffering Africans, either, expressing both rage and guilt. These feelings drive her actions through the story towards a tragic ending: the death of Aisha. It suggests how people's desire to belong to a people, a country or a group can become their main motivation and direct their actions. In Jillian's case this desire leads her to a dead end, where she does not belong to any group and where her feelings overcome her.

COMMENTARY

The student expresses a main idea in the opening paragraph, linking it to the content of the story and to the interpretation of the events in the story. The student also includes a brief overview of the events in the story to provide a context for the discussion and the subsequent analysis. In the introduction, the student presents some techniques and devices that serve as a foundation for the discussion, but throughout the essay, the student mentions other literary elements, and follows up with explicit detail that explains how the author has used these techniques, and others, to develop a theme. This theme is clearly expressed in the student's thesis statement. The student provides a critical comment about the details included to support the focus of the essay. The references are complete and are accurate reflections of the events in the entire story. The student thus earns M+ in all four categories in **Comprehension and Insight**, for an A.

The essay is well organized. It follows the ideas expressed in the organizing statement, which is combined with a thesis statement: "Through **setting and characterization of Jillian and Aisha**, the author suggests that when people are placed in a destabilizing situation, stuck between oppressor and oppressed, their quest for a sense of belonging and their often irrational feelings may become their main driving force." There is more than enough detail to support the ideas the student expresses. The ideas in the paragraphs relate to the topic sentences, earning the student M+ in all four categories for an A in **Organization of Response**.

The essay reads well. There are no consistent errors in any aspects measured under **Expression**. While there are occasional awkward constructions, these are minor and do not interfere with understanding. In fact, they can be overlooked, given the exam conditions under which the essay was written. Again, the student earns M+ in all four categories for an overall grade of A in **Expression**.

CORRECTORS' KEY

"Act of God" by Joan Baxter

Possible Main Ideas

Survival instinct

Cultural clash

Western vs developing countries' values

Conflict between western guilt and aid

Water as a symbol of power, life, death

Conditions in developing world

The alienation of outsiders

Political corruption

Dealing with adversity

Power of God

Privilege, selfishness, and entitlement in the face of need

Misguided government aid

Life goes on in the face of loss

Naiveté of the outsider

The dark side of altruism

Sudden self-awareness or epiphany

Systemic nature of poverty/poverty issues

Nature of suffering

Ambiguity of the title

Responsibility for others

Misguided views of the power of the people

ASSESSMENT SHEET

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M -
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading	✓		
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author	✓		
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection	✓		
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading	✓		
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text	✓		
	2. structured development of the essay	✓		
	3. use of supporting detail	✓		
	4. unified paragraph structure	✓		
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words	✓		
	2. varied and correct sentence structures	✓		
	3. correct grammar	✓		
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics	✓		
M : signifies that the objective has been met M + : signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M - : signifies that the objective has not been met				

Control Code :

SAMPLE 4

COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT:

A	B	C	D	E	F
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

A

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

A	B	C	D	E	F
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

A

EXPRESSION:

A	B	C	D	E	F
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

A

Failure: _____

Supervisor: _____

PASSING GRADE:

C is a passing grade.Papers graded **D** or **E** or **F** in any category fail.Marker: **JK**Marker's Code: **1100**Marker: **RD**Marker's Code: **900**

SAMPLE 5

Student grade: CCC

The following student essay is based on a reading from the **December 2001** exam: a short story: “Cranes Fly South” by Edward McCourt.

Note the following:

- The student’s main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student’s thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student’s references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors’ Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

*Life is full of surprises. One can never know what will happen next. In the short story “Cranes Fly South”, by Edward McCourt, this is demonstrated by the author by showing how the yearnings of an old man to stop the flatness in his life leads him to his death. At the end of his life he knows that he has experienced a miracle, for what he has seen for an instant was amazing to his eyes. The author **foreshadows** death, uses **symbolism and characterisation** to support the main thesis and idea of the text.*

*Lonliness and despair brings a man, Grandpa, to seek joy and amazement before leaving this world filled with flatness. Grandpa is scared of death, yet he knows it is coming. At the sound of the word “crane, he just knew he had to go see them, no matter what. He got all of his energy and “ [he] stood up without laying a hand on the arm rest of the chair” (Mccourt). [His will to go see something different puts him in the situation where he knows what will come after, but is strong enough to deal with it.] His **characteristics** are strong and he yearns for change, but fear of death is also an issue and it brings Grandpa to forget the real reason he goes to see the cranes and thinks that they’d “better go home now. [He’s] tired, awful tired” (Mccourt). Denies that he really wants to see the bird because he knows what will come after. He talks to his grandson Lee, with sometimes the strength of ten, when he accepts his death, and sometimes like a frail old man, afraid of what will happen to him.*

*Grandpa sees his death coming but decides to go see the whoopers any ways it takes a long time to get there, but when they do, Grandpa knows that this was the end. At first, his blindness to the truth about the birds “brings” him to the south, saying that all whoopers are in the south now. **The south is seen as his death approaching.** He talks about how “ [him], he is going to the south, too. You can set in the sun, all winter and see things besides flatness” (Mccourt). He knows he can never go in the south, he is now too old for that. [The south is really his death, his path to his death, where all of his unhappiness will stop. Sees “south” as interesting and not flat like everything around him.] When they leave, to go see the whopper, his death is **foreshadowed** again, but by Bessie,*

their horse. On the way to the Becker's slough, they took the horse, and it moved quite quickly, but when they departed, **she was like the old man**, moving slowly, almost as if she knows what an amazing thing they had seen, but also aware that death was approaching, "Bessie slowed almost at once to a shambling, reluctant walk". (McCourt) [The fear of death coming was too hard to handle, even if the old man knew flatness would soon go away.]

*Messages are sent to Grandpa and are **symbols** of his death.* Slowly, both characters realize it and they put all of the pieces together, the whooper Lee saw was one of the "twenty-eight whoopers left in the whole world". (McCourt). [These animals are rare and therefore something that is out of the ordinary to see.] Grandpa would love to see one, after forty years. The whoopers are seen, in the eyes of Grandpa, as trains, which are amazing things also, trains are big and tough, like Grandpa likes to be seen also. [The whoopers **symbolize** life, but death and departure also, as a train goes from one place to another, leaving what is left behind.] Grandpa also sees them as being big enough and "if there's a moon they fly across it, and the night gits dark—" (McCourt). Darkness is a **symbol** of death, night is also seen as death. The whoopers are **symbols** that bring death and sadness. But because they are such dark and big animals, Grandpa knows what is waiting for him. The **symbols** demonstrate what whoopers really stand for.

[Grandpa and Lee are brought together in the short story by the many things that they share, but they are always aware that one day, and that day is coming soon, that Grandpa is **going south, like the whoopers**, to a better place. All of the short story is about something so beautiful and elegant as opposed to something usually portrayed as dreary and sad, seen through the eyes of an old man who knows what is going to happen to him.]

COMMENTARY

The student presents an acceptable main idea in the opening paragraph. The idea explains the story in a straightforward manner that is the focus throughout the essay. In the introduction, the student presents some of the techniques and devices that he or she addresses in the body of the essay. The explanation of the author's use of these techniques is presented in a simple manner. This discussion is acceptable but limited. The student also takes some distance from the story, although it is at the level of the actions of the characters rather than at the level of the theme of the story. The conclusion contains the strongest statement of a critical approach to the story. There are enough references to the story, although sometimes the phrasing presents them in a confusing manner. The student earns M's in all four categories for a **C** in **Comprehension and Insight**.

The essay follows a basic pattern. The topic sentences are acceptable and the details within the paragraphs are adequate to support the idea in the topic sentences. Sometimes the ideas seem contradictory, but, overall, the student shows a basic competence in **Organization of Response**: 4 M's for a **C**.

The level of vocabulary is acceptable, although word choice is simple, and while there are some grammar errors, they do not interfere significantly with meaning. The student makes some spelling errors, ones that a careful check in the dictionary could have remedied. The most prominent problem here is in sentence structure, however. Some sentences are clear and well constructed, while others are incorrect or inappropriately structured. Note all the shaded areas for examples of ineffective sentences. The student earned M's in all but sentence structure, but the overall result in **Expression** is C.

CORRECTORS' KEY

"Cranes Fly South" by Edward McCourt

Possible Main Ideas

Escaping the mundane

The importance of attending to the things that matter in life

The life cycle

Renewal

A child's insight into life and death

Cross-generational understanding and connections

The enchantment of the natural world

Fulfilling dreams

Death is not so tragic if life has been fully lived

Recapturing the past

ASSESSMENT SHEET

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M –
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading		✓	
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author		✓	
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection		✓	
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading		✓	
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text		✓	
	2. structured development of the essay		✓	
	3. use of supporting detail		✓	
	4. unified paragraph structure		✓	
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words		✓	
	2. varied and correct sentence structures			✓
	3. correct grammar		✓	
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics		✓	
M : signifies that the objective has been met M + : signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M – : signifies that the objective has not been met				

Control Code :

SAMPLE 5

COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

EXPRESSION:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

Failure: _____

Supervisor: _____

PASSING GRADE:

C is a passing grade.Papers graded **D** or **E** or **F** in any category fail.Marker: **JK**Marker's Code: **1100**Marker: **RD**Marker's Code: **900**

SAMPLE 6

Student grade: **CCD**

The following student essay is also based on a reading from the **December 2001** exam: a **short story**: “Cranes Fly South” by Edward McCourt.

Note the following:

- The student’s main idea is underlined once in the introductory paragraph.
- The student’s thesis statement is underlined twice.
- The *topic sentences* of each paragraph appear in italics.
- The student’s references to **techniques and devices** appear in bold letters.
- [Critical comments] appear in square brackets.
- Sample errors in Expression, particularly sentence structure or grammar, are shaded.

For an explanation of how this essay was assessed, refer to the commentary at the end of the selection and to the completed assessment sheet. Note, too, the list of possible main ideas listed on the Correctors’ Key for this reading, included after the commentary.

* * *

In the story “Cranes fly South” written by Edward McCourt, beautiful birds as cranes play an important **symbolic** role. In this essay, I will prove that the old grandfather sees himself into his grandchild, Lee. In fact, he uses him by transposing his old age to its lively grandchild’s energy to pass away and die peacefully. Having both the same excitment for cranes, this kind of birds strongly represents freedom and courage for them. I will also prove that Lee instinctly know and understand what is in his grandfather’s mind.

At the very beginning of the story, when Lee is trying to convince his grandfather that he has saw a crane, the grandfather first show a distance about Lee to have saw one. As Lee persevere, the grandfather clearly say: “And you feel like you want to go, too... Breaks your heart almost, you want to go that bad, when you hear the thunder right over your head . . .” (Mccourt, 7). These words clearly demonstrate the hidden excitment the grandfather had experienced in the past towards those cranes. **FOR EXAMPLE**, he said: “At Becker’s slough, you say? A whoopin’ crane—a real, honest-to-gosh whooper? Boy, I ain’t see a whooper for fourty years!” (Mccourt, 7). It almost express a life expectancy to be both understand in its excitment and again excited to finally seen this symbolic animal fly near its place. Then, we can say that a strong and unconscious link between Lee and his grandfather has been create.

As we follow the reading and the understanding of what those cranes can represent to the grandfather and Lee, a symbolic image of freedom and of courage is feel. In the first lines of the text, the grandfather says: “They fly all night . . . First you hear a sound far off and you figger it’s thunder—and it gits louder and nearer, and soon it’s like a freight train passin’ right over your head, and if there’s a moon they fly across it and the night gits darker—” (Mccourt, 7). The fact that those animals fly and seem to get the control over the sky is something fascinating and fantastic for the characters. When Lee’s mother told him that his grandfather is old and that he must not ever get excited with something, the phenomenon of cranes was and is still something very symbolic for an old man of eighty

years, and Lee know it. Also the fact that the grandfather see himself into Lee is a strong **symbolic** part of the story. [As we know, the grandfather is old and maybe sick, and we have a good proof in the text that something is pushing the old man to go see for the crane.] "A convulsive shudder twisted the shrunken body in the chair. The old man stood up without laying a hand on the arm rest of the chair, and his voice was loud and strong. "Boy, I got to see it. I tell you I got to!" (McCourt,7). With the excitement Lee has shown to his grandfather toward the crane, it kind of gave a supernatural beneficial energy to the old man for pursuing his dream. This is very **symbolic**, but the grandfather also had its reasons.

Thirdly, the fact that Lee instinctively knows what he is doing and why he is doing it shows that he understand this grandfather's mind. At first, when his grandfather tells him that he has to go see the cranes, he has a doubt: "Lee stared, fascinated and irresolute. "But Mum says-- . . . But it's three miles. And Mum's got the car . . . But the buggy hasn't been used for years and years, and the harness-- . . . (McCourt, 9). That is where Lee knew exactly what he was doing and the importance it would have for his grandfather: "The old man's fingers were tight on the boy's arm. Again the harsh cry burst from his lips—"Great God in heaven!"—the cry that was at once a shout of exultation and a prayer. Then the light in his eyes faded and went out." (McCourt, 8). [At his moment, the old man had realized his dream, as if he was relieved and able to die peacefully of its grandchild, who gave him the strength to believe and see.] Lee never regretted what he had did and even his authority parents seemed thankful to Lee: "He just had to see it," he said stubbornly to his father. He just had to." His father nodded slowly from behind the paper he was pretending to read. "I know, son" he said . . . "Wish I'd be along" (McCourt, 9)

To conclude, "Cranes fly South" is a good story to look at where strong beliefs and the unconscious can sometimes bring us. The main idea of this story is clearly stated in the symbolism approach it uses. [Birds are certainly a good example of delivery as the story ends.] **LEE will certainly keep thinking of its grandfather, free as a bird.**

COMMENTARY

The student presents a straightforward understanding of the story in the opening paragraph and also includes a statement outlining an interpretation of the story. There is a basic awareness of techniques and devices, although the student really addresses only symbolism on an acceptable level. However, the student does include some critical and analytical statements in the essay, raising the discussion above simple summary. The clearest examples of critical comment appear in the conclusion. The references are appropriate, although they are not always clearly linked to the idea being expressed. Four **M**'s earn the student a **C** in **Comprehension and Insight**.

There is a basic organizational pattern to the essay, with an acceptable thesis statement in the introduction, followed by three body paragraphs that relate to the thesis idea. Most of the content of the paragraphs supports the topic sentences, and there is an adequate amount of detail to explain the thesis idea. Paragraphs are unified around the topic sentences, and there are transitional phrases like "*finally*" and "*to conclude*" to help the reader follow the student's ideas. The conclusion works appropriately to sum up the essay. Four **M**'s earn the student a **C** in **Organization of Response**.

There are many issues with expression. The student makes pervasive errors in word choice, idioms and homonyms that interfere with meaning. There are also many grammar errors such as subject-verb agreement errors and incorrect verb forms, as well as in pronoun use and pronoun agreement. Sentences are by and large acceptable. There are some spelling and punctuation errors, but these are not pervasive. Therefore the student earns **M**'s in sentence structure and in spelling, punctuation and mechanics, but **M**'s in appropriate use of words and grammar, earning him or her a **D** in **Expression**.

CORRECTOR'S KEY

"Cranes Fly South" by Edward McCourt

Possible Main Ideas

Escaping the mundane

The importance of attending to the things that matter in life

The life cycle

Renewal

A child's insight into life and death

Cross-generational understanding and connections

The enchantment of the natural world

Fulfilling dreams

Death is not so tragic if life has been fully lived

Recapturing the past

ASSESSMENT SHEET

MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE

CRITERION	OBJECTIVES TO BE MET	PLACE A CHECKMARK (✓) WHERE APPROPRIATE		
		M +	M	M -
COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT	1. recognition of a main idea from the selected reading		✓	
	2. identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author		✓	
	3. evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection		✓	
	4. references which demonstrate understanding of the reading		✓	
ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE	1. statement of a thesis about the text		✓	
	2. structured development of the essay		✓	
	3. use of supporting detail		✓	
	4. unified paragraph structure		✓	
EXPRESSION	1. appropriate use of words			✓
	2. varied and correct sentence structures		✓	
	3. correct grammar			✓
	4. conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics		✓	
M : signifies that the objective has been met M + : signifies that the objective has been well and clearly met M - : signifies that the objective has not been met				

Control Code :

SAMPLE 6

COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

C

EXPRESSION:

A	B	C	D	E	F
---	---	---	---	---	---

D

Failure: _____

Supervisor: _____

PASSING GRADE:

C is a passing grade.Papers graded **D** or **E** or **F** in any category fail.Marker: **JK**Marker's Code: **1100**Marker: **RD**Marker's Code: **900**