

2009 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

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

The following selection is the opening of Ann Petry's 1946 novel, *The Street*. Read the selection carefully and then write an essay analyzing how Petry establishes Lutie Johnson's relationship to the urban setting through the use of such literary devices as imagery, personification, selection of detail, and figurative language.

Line
5 There was a cold November wind blowing through
116th Street. It rattled the tops of garbage cans,
sucked window shades out through the top of opened
windows and set them flapping back against the
10 windows; and it drove most of the people off the
street in the block between Seventh and Eighth
Avenues except for a few hurried pedestrians who
bent double in an effort to offer the least possible
exposed surface to its violent assault.
15 It found every scrap of paper along the street—
theater throwaways, announcements of dances and
lodge meetings, the heavy waxed paper that loaves
of bread had been wrapped in, the thinner waxed
paper that had enclosed sandwiches, old envelopes,
20 newspapers. Fingering its way along the curb, the
wind set the bits of paper to dancing high in the air,
so that a barrage of paper swirled into the faces of the
people on the street. It even took time to rush into
doorways and areaways and find chicken bones and
25 pork-chop bones and pushed them along the curb.
It did everything it could to discourage the people
walking along the street. It found all the dirt and dust
and grime on the sidewalk and lifted it up so that the
dirt got into their noses, making it difficult to breathe;
30 the dust got into their eyes and blinded them; and the
grit stung their skins. It wrapped newspaper around
their feet entangling them until the people cursed
deep in their throats, stamped their feet, kicked at the
paper. The wind blew it back again and again until
35 they were forced to stoop and dislodge the paper with
their hands. And then the wind grabbed their hats,

pried their scarves from around their necks, stuck its
fingers inside their coat collars, blew their coats away
from their bodies.

35 The wind lifted Lutie Johnson's hair away from the
back of her neck so that she felt suddenly naked and
bald, for her hair had been resting softly and warmly
against her skin. She shivered as the cold fingers of
the wind touched the back of her neck, explored the
40 sides of her head. It even blew her eyelashes away
from her eyes so that her eyeballs were bathed in a
rush of coldness and she had to blink in order to read
the words on the sign swaying back and forth over her
head.

45 Each time she thought she had the sign in focus,
the wind pushed it away from her so that she wasn't
certain whether it said three rooms or two rooms. If
it was three, why, she would go in and ask to see it,
but if it said two—why, there wasn't any point. Even
50 with the wind twisting the sign away from her, she
could see that it had been there for a long time
because its original coat of white paint was streaked
with rust where years of rain and snow had finally
eaten the paint off down to the metal and the metal
55 had slowly rusted, making a dark red stain like blood.

It was three rooms. The wind held it still for an
instant in front of her and then swooped it away until
it was standing at an impossible angle on the rod that
suspended it from the building. She read it rapidly.
60 Three rooms, steam heat, parquet floors, respectable
tenants. Reasonable.