

2009 AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

Question 2

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

The passage below is the opening of *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948), a novel written by Zora Neale Hurston. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the literary techniques Hurston uses to describe Sawley and to characterize the people who live there.

Line Sawley, the town, is in west Florida, on the famous
Suwanee River. It is flanked on the south by the
curving course of the river which Stephen Foster*
5 made famous without ever having looked upon its
waters, running swift and deep through the primitive
forests, and reddened by the chemicals leached out
of drinking roots. On the north, the town is flanked
by cultivated fields planted to corn, cane, potatoes,
tobacco and small patches of cotton.

10 However, few of these fields were intensively
cultivated. For the most part they were scratchy
plantings, the people being mostly occupied in
the production of turpentine and lumber. The life
of Sawley streamed out from the sawmill and the
15 “teppertime ‘still.” Then too, there was ignorance
and poverty, and the ever-present hookworm. The
farms and the scanty flowers in front yards and in
tin cans and buckets looked like the people. Trees
and plants always look like the people they live
20 with, somehow.

 This was in the first decade of the new century,
when the automobile was known as the horseless
carriage, and had not exerted its tremendous influence
on the roads of the nation. There was then no U.S. 90,
25 the legendary Old Spanish Trail, stretching straight
broad concrete from Jacksonville on the Atlantic to
San Diego on the Pacific. There was the sandy pike,
deeply rutted by wagon wheels over which the folks
of Sawley hauled their tobacco to market at Live Oak,
30 or fresh-killed hogmeat, corn and peanuts to Madison
or Monticello on the west. Few ever dreamed of
venturing any farther east nor west.

 Few were concerned with the past. They had heard
that the stubbornly resisting Indians had been there
35 where they now lived, but they were dead and gone.
Osceola, Miccanope, Billy Bow-Legs were nothing
more than names that had even lost their bitter flavor.
The conquering Spaniards had done their murdering,
robbing, and raping and had long ago withdrawn from
40 the Floridas. Few knew and nobody cared that the
Hidalgos under De Sota had moved westward along
this very route. The people thought no more of them
than they did the magnolias and bay and other
ornamental trees which grew so plentifully in the
45 swamps along the river, nor the fame of the stream.
They knew that there were plenty of black bass,
locally known as trout, in the Suwanee, and bream
and perch and cat-fish. There were soft-shell turtles
that made a mighty nice dish when stewed down to
50 a low gravy, or the “chicken meat” of those same
turtles fried crisp and brown. Fresh water turtles were
a mighty fine article of food anyway you looked at it.
It was commonly said that a turtle had every kind of
meat on him. The white “chicken meat,” the dark
55 “beef” and the in-between “pork.” You could stew,
boil and fry, and none of it cost you a cent. All you
needed was a strip of white side-meat on the hook,
and you had you some turtle meat.

*American songwriter (1826-1864) whose song “Old Folks at Home”
begins “Way down upon the Swanee River”