

2004 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.)

Read the following poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the techniques the poet uses to develop the relationship between the speaker and the swamp.

Crossing the Swamp

Here is the endless
wet thick
cosmos, the center
of everything — the nugget
5 of dense sap, branching
vines, the dark burred
faintly belching
bogs. Here
is *swamp*, here
10 is struggle,
closure —
pathless, seamless,
peerless mud. My bones
knock together at the pale
15 joints, trying
for foothold, fingerhold,
mindhold over
such slick crossings, deep
hipholes, hummocks*
20 that sink silently
into the black, slack
earthsoup. I feel
not wet so much as
painted and glittered
25 with the fat grassy
mires, the rich
and succulent marrows
of earth — a poor
dry stick given
30 one more chance by the whims
of swamp water — a bough
that still, after all these years,
could take root,
sprout, branch out, bud —
35 make of its life a breathing
palace of leaves.

*low mounds of earth

From AMERICAN PRIMITIVE by Mary Oliver.
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