

**2009 AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**  
**FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)**

**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.)

The following poem, written by Edward Field, makes use of the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus.\* Read the poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Field employs literary devices in adapting the Icarus myth to a contemporary setting.

*Icarus*

Only the feathers floating around the hat  
Showed that anything more spectacular had occurred  
Than the usual drowning. The police preferred to ignore  
The confusing aspects of the case,  
Line 5 And the witnesses ran off to a gang war.  
So the report filed and forgotten in the archives read simply  
“Drowned,” but it was wrong: Icarus  
Had swum away, coming at last to the city  
Where he rented a house and tended the garden.

10 “That nice Mr. Hicks” the neighbors called him,  
Never dreaming that the gray, respectable suit  
Concealed arms that had controlled huge wings  
Nor that those sad, defeated eyes had once  
Compelled the sun. And had he told them  
15 They would have answered with a shocked, uncomprehending stare.  
No, he could not disturb their neat front yards;  
Yet all his books insisted that this was a horrible mistake:  
What was he doing aging in a suburb?  
Can the genius of the hero fall  
20 To the middling stature of the merely talented?

And nightly Icarus probes his wound  
And daily in his workshop, curtains carefully drawn,  
Constructs small wings and tries to fly  
To the lighting fixture on the ceiling:  
25 Fails every time and hates himself for trying.

He had thought himself a hero, had acted heroically,  
And dreamt of his fall, the tragic fall of the hero;  
But now rides commuter trains,  
Serves on various committees,  
30 And wishes he had drowned.

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\*Daedalus and his son, Icarus, fashioned wings of feathers and wax in an attempt to escape from prison by flying across the sea. Before their flight, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun. But, caught up in the experience of flying, Icarus ignored the warning and soared upward. The heat of the sun melted the wax, the wings fell off, and he plunged to his death in the sea.