

**2003 AP<sup>®</sup> 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 passage from Joyce Carol Oates's novel *We Were the Mulvaney*s (1996). Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the literary techniques Oates uses to characterize the speaker, Judd Mulvaney. Support your analysis with specific references to the passage.

Line  
5 That time in our lower driveway, by the brook.  
I was straddling my bike staring down into the water.  
Fast-flowing clear water, shallow, shale beneath, and  
lots of leaves. Sky the color of lead and the light  
mostly drained so I couldn't see my face only the  
10 dark shape of a head that could be anybody's head.  
Hypnotizing myself the way kids do. Lonely kids,  
or kids not realizing they're lonely. The brook was  
flowing below left to right (east to west, though at  
a slant) and I stood immobile leaning on the railing  
(pretty damn rotted: I'd tell Dad it needed to be  
replaced with new planks, we could do it together)  
15 until it began to happen as it always does the water  
gets slower and slower and you're the one who  
begins to move — oh boy! we-ird! scary and ticklish  
in the groin and I leaned farther and farther over the  
rail staring into the water and I was moving, moving  
helplessly forward, it seemed I was moving somehow  
upward, rising into the air, helpless, in that instant  
20 aware of my heart beating *ONEtwothree*  
*ONEtwothree!* thinking *Every heartbeat is past and*  
*gone! Every heartbeat is past and gone!* A chill came  
over me, I began to shiver. It wasn't warm weather  
now but might have been late as November, most of  
25 the leaves blown from the trees. Only the evergreens  
and some of the black birches remaining but it's a fact  
when dry yellow leaves (like on the birches) don't fall  
from a tree the tree is partly dead. A light gritty film  
of snow on the ground, darkest in the crevices where  
30 you'd expect shadow so it was like a film negative.  
*Every heartbeat is past and gone! Every heartbeat is*  
*past and gone!* in a trance that was like a trance of  
fury, raging hurt *Am I going to die?* because I did not  
believe that Judd Mulvaney could die. (Though on a

35 farm living things are dying, dying, dying all the time,  
and many have been named, and others are born  
taking their places not even knowing that they are  
taking the places of those who have died.) So I knew,  
I wasn't a dope, but I didn't know — not really. Aged  
40 eleven, or maybe twelve. Leaning over the rotted rail  
gaping at the water hypnotized and scared and  
suddenly there came Dad and Mike in the mud-  
colored Ford pickup (Might as well buy our vehicles  
mud-colored to begin with, saves time, was Dad's  
45 logic) barreling up the drive, bouncing and rattling.  
On the truck's doors were neat curving white letters  
sweet to see MULVANEY ROOFING (716) 689-8329.  
They'd be passing so close my bike might snag in a  
fender so I grabbed it and hauled it to the side. Mike  
50 had rolled down his window to lean out and pretend  
to cuff at my head—"Hey Ranger-kid: what's up?"  
Dad at the wheel grinned and laughed and next  
second they were past, the pickup in full throttle  
ascending the drive. And I looked after them, these  
55 two people so remarkable to me, my dad who was like  
nobody else's dad and my big brother who was —  
well, Mike Mulvaney: "Mule" Mulvaney —and the  
most terrible thought came to me.

*Them, too. All of them. Every heartbeat past and*  
60 *gone.*

It stayed with me for a long time, maybe forever.  
Not just that I would lose the people I loved, but they  
would lose me — *Judson Andrew Mulvaney*. And they  
knew nothing of it. (Did they?) And I, just a skinny  
65 kid, the runt of the litter at High Point Farm, would  
have to pretend not to know what I knew.