

2008 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 passage is taken from *Fasting, Feasting*, a novel published in 1999 by Indian novelist Anita Desai. In the excerpt, Arun, an exchange student from India, joins members of his American host family for an afternoon at the beach. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the author uses such literary devices as speech and point of view to characterize Arun's experience.

Line It is Saturday. Arun cannot plead work. He stands
despondent, and when Melanie comes to the door,
dressed in her bathing suit with a big shirt drawn
over her shoulders, and stares at him challengingly,
5 he starts wildly to find excuses.
Mrs. Patton will not hear them. No, she will not.
Absolutely not. So she says, with her hands spread out
and pressing against the air. 'No, no, no. We're all
three of us going. Rod and Daddy have gone sailing
10 on Lake Wyola and we're not going to sit here
waiting for them to come home—oh no.'
Arun must go back upstairs and collect his towel
and swimming trunks. Then he follows Melanie to the
driveway where Mrs. Patton is waiting with baskets of
15 equipment—oils and lotions, paperbacks and dark
glasses, sandwiches and lemonade. With that new and
animated prance galvanising her dwindled shanks, she
leads the way through a gap in the bushes to one of
the woodland paths. Melanie and Arun follow
20 silently. They try to find a way to walk that will not
compel them to be side by side or in any way close
together. But who is to follow whom? It is an
awkward problem. Arun finally stops trying to lag
behind her—she can lag even better—and goes
25 ahead to catch up with Mrs. Patton. He ought to help
carry those baskets anyway. He takes one from her
hands and she throws him a radiant, lipsticked smile.
Then she swings away and goes confidently forwards.

'Summertime,' he hears her singing, 'when the
30 living is eeh-zee—'
They make their way along scuffed paths through
layers of old soft pine needles. The woods are
thrumming with cicadas: they shrill and shrill as if
the sun is playing on their sinews, as if they were
35 small harps suspended in the trees. A bird shrieks
hoarsely, flies on, shrieks elsewhere, further off—that
ugly, jarring note that does not vary. But there are no
birds to be seen, nor animals. It is as if they are in
hiding, or have fled. Perhaps they have because the
40 houses of Edge Hill do intrude and one can glimpse
a bit of wall here or roof there, a washing line hung
with sheets or a plastic gnome, finger to nose,
enigmatically winking. Arun finds the hair on the
back of his neck begin to prickle, as if in warning. He
45 is sweating, and the palms of his hands are becoming
puffy and damp. Why must people live in the vicinity
of such benighted wilderness and become a part of it?
The town may be small and have little to offer, but
how passionately he prefers its post office, its shops,
50 its dry-cleaning stores and picture framers to this
creeping curtain of insidious green, these grasses
stirring with insidious life, and bushes with poisonous
berries—so bright or else so pale. Nearly tripping
upon a root, he stumbles and has to steady himself so
55 as not to spill the contents of the basket.