

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.)

In the two poems below, Keats and Longfellow reflect on similar concerns. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation.

Mezzo Cammin¹

When I Have Fears

Written at Boppard on the Rhine August 25, 1842,
Just Before Leaving for Home

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
 Before high-piled books, in charactery,
 Line Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
 5 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 10 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

1818

—John Keats (1795-1821)

Half of my life is gone, and I have let
 The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
 The aspiration of my youth, to build
 Line Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
 5 Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
 Of restless passions that would not be stilled,
 But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
 Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;
 Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past
 10 Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—
 A city in the twilight dim and vast,
 With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—
 And hear above me on the autumnal blast
 The cataract² of Death far thundering from the heights.

1842 —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

¹ The title is from the first line of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*" ("Midway upon the journey of our life").

² A large waterfall

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.

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

(Keats's "When I Have Fears" and Longfellow's "Mezzo Cammin")

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a persuasive comparison/contrast of the two poems and present an insightful analysis of the relationship between them and the techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation. Although these essays offer a range of interpretations and choose to emphasize different poetic techniques, they also provide convincing readings of **both** poems and demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their textual references are apt and specific. Although they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear **and** sophisticated, and in the case of an essay that earns 9 points, especially persuasive.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable comparison/contrast of the two poems and an effective analysis of the relationship between them and of the techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation. Such essays demonstrate the ability to express ideas clearly with references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as those in the 9–8 range. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion, and their analysis of the relationship between the two poems is less convincing. Essays scored 7–6 are generally well written, but those earning a 7 demonstrate more sophistication in both substance and style.
- 5** These essays may respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the two poems and their relationship, but they may be superficial in their analysis. They often rely on paraphrase, but paraphrase that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their comparison/contrast of the relationship between the two poems may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the texts. There may be minor misinterpretations of one or both poems. These essays demonstrate control of language, but the writing may be marred by surface errors. They are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as those in the 7–6 range.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the two poems. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or it may ignore one of the poems completely. Evidence from the poems may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poems themselves. The essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics, may offer a complete misreading, or may be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poems.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.