

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.

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Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character.

Choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

You may choose a work from the list below or another appropriate novel or play of similar literary quality. Do not merely summarize the plot.

The Age of Innocence
Alias Grace
All the King's Men
All the Pretty Horses
Anna Karenina
Billy Budd
The Brothers Karamazov
Catch-22
Cold Mountain
The Color Purple
Don Quixote
Emma
Equus
Frankenstein
Glass Menagerie
Henry IV, Part I

Huckleberry Finn
Invisible Man
King Lear
The Kite Runner
The Misanthrope
The Piano Lesson
Pride and Prejudice
Pygmalion
Reservation Blues
The Sound and the Fury
A Streetcar Named Desire
Sula
A Tale of Two Cities
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Tom Jones
Wuthering Heights

STOP

END OF EXAM

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

(Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*)

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 analysis of how the author uses literary devices to characterize Arun's experience as an exchange student. The essays make a strong case for their interpretation of the passage: they explore possibilities of character and situation; consider devices such as point of view, selection of detail, syntax, characterization, diction, and tone; and engage the text through apt and specific references. Although these essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear, precise, and effectively organized. Generally, essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than those scored an 8.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how the author uses literary devices to characterize Arun's experience. They reveal a sustained, competent reading of the passage, with attention to devices such as point of view, selection of detail, syntax, characterization, diction, and tone. Although these essays may not be error-free and may be less perceptive or less convincing than those in the 9–8 range, their ideas are presented with clarity and control and refer to the text for support. Generally, essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do those scored a 6.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading of the passage but tend to be superficial or undeveloped in their treatment of how the author uses literary techniques to characterize Arun's experience. While exhibiting some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the discussion of how literary devices contribute to Arun's experience may be slight, and support from the passage may be thin or tend toward paraphrase. Although these essays demonstrate adequate control of language, they may be marred by surface errors. Generally, essays scored a 5 lack the more effective organization and the more sustained development characteristic of those that received 7–6 points.
- 4–3** These essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or a less than adequate treatment of how the author uses literary devices to characterize Arun's experience. Often relying on plot summary or paraphrase, they may fail to articulate a convincing basis for understanding situation and character, or they may misread the passage. These responses may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors. Generally, essays scored a 4 exhibit better control over the elements of composition than those scored a 3.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. They may persistently misread the passage, be unacceptably brief, or contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the ideas are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the passage. Essays that are especially inept or incoherent are scored a 1.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.