

## 1999 ENGLISH LITERATURE

### Question 2

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

2. In the following passage from Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Crossing* (1994), the narrator describes a dramatic experience. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, show how McCarthy's techniques convey the impact of the experience on the main character.

(35)

By the time he reached the first talus<sup>1</sup> slides under the tall escarpments<sup>2</sup> of the Pilares the dawn was not far to come. He reined the horse in a grassy swale and stood down and dropped the reins. His trousers were  
(5) stiff with blood. He cradled the wolf in his arms and lowered her to the ground and unfolded the sheet. She was stiff and cold and her fur was bristly with the blood dried upon it. He walked the horse back to the creek and left it standing to water and scouted the  
(10) banks for wood with which to make a fire. Coyotes were yapping along the hills to the south and they were calling from the dark shapes of the rimlands above him where their cries seemed to have no origin other than the night itself.

(15) He got the fire going and lifted the wolf from the sheet and took the sheet to the creek and crouched in the dark and washed the blood out of it and brought it back and he cut forked sticks from a mountain hackberry and drove them into the ground with a rock and  
(20) hung the sheet on a trestlepole where it steamed in the firelight like a burning scrim standing in a wilder-ness where celebrants of some sacred passion had been carried off by rival sects or perhaps had simply fled in the night at the fear of their own doing. He pulled the  
(25) blanket about his shoulders and sat shiver-ing in the cold and waiting for the dawn that he could find the place where he would bury the wolf. After a while the horse came up from the creek trailing the wet reins through the leaves and stood at the edge of the fire.

(30) He fell asleep with his hands palm up before him like some dozing penitent. When he woke it was still dark. The fire had died to a few low flames seething over the coals. He took off his hat and fanned the fire

with it and coaxed it back and fed the wood he'd gathered. He looked for the horse but could not see it. The coyotes were still calling all along the stone  
(40) ramparts of the Pilares and it was graying faintly in the east. He squatted over the wolf and touched her fur. He touched the cold and perfect teeth. The eye turned to the fire gave back no light and he closed it with his thumb and sat by her and put his hand upon her bloodied forehead and closed his own eyes that  
(45) he could see her running in the mountains, running in the starlight where the grass was wet and the sun's coming as yet had not undone the rich matrix of creatures passed in the night before her. Deer and hare and dove and groundvole all richly empaneled  
(50) on the air for her delight, all nations of the possible world ordained by God of which she was one among and not separate from. Where she ran the cries of the coyotes clapped shut as if a door had closed upon them and all was fear and marvel. He took up her stiff head  
(55) out of the leaves and held it or he reached to hold what cannot be held, what already ran among the mountains at once terrible and of a great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh. What blood and bone are made of but can themselves not make on any altar nor by any  
(60) wound of war. What we may well believe has power to cut and shape and hollow out the dark form of the world surely if wind can, if rain can. But which cannot be held never be held and is no flower but is swift and a huntress and the wind itself is in terror of it and the world cannot lose it.

<sup>1</sup> A sloping mass of rock debris at the base of a cliff

<sup>2</sup> Steep slopes

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## Question 3

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

The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, “No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man’s mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.”

From a novel or play choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. You may use one of the novels or plays listed below or another novel or play of similar literary quality.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

*Anna Karenina*

*Antigone*

*The Awakening*

*Beloved*

*Billy Budd*

*Ceremony*

*Crime and Punishment*

*Dr. Faustus*

*An Enemy of the People*

*Equus*

*A Farewell to Arms*

*The Glass Menagerie*

*Hamlet*

*Heart of Darkness*

*Jane Eyre*

*Jasmine*

*Light in August*

*A Lesson Before Dying*

*Macbeth*

*The Mayor of Casterbridge*

*Native Speaker*

*The Piano Lesson*

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

*A Raisin in the Sun*

*The Scarlet Letter*

*Wuthering Heights*

END OF EXAMINATION

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**Question 2**

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General**

**Directions:**

The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay *as a whole*. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

The writers of these well-constructed essays define the dramatic nature of the experience described in Cormac McCarthy's passage and ably demonstrate *how* the author conveys the impact of the experience upon the main character. Having fashioned a convincing thesis about the character's reaction to the death of the wolf, these writers support their assertions by analyzing the use of specific literary techniques (such as point of view, **9-8:** syntax, imagery, or diction) that prove fundamental to their understanding of McCarthy's narrative design. They make appropriate references to the text to illustrate their argument. Although not without flaws, these essays reflect the writer's ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing to provide a keen analysis of a literary text.

Developing a sound thesis, these writers discuss with clarity and conviction both the character's response to the death of the wolf and certain techniques used to convey the impact this experience has upon the main character. These essays may not be entirely responsive to the rich suggestiveness of the passage or as precise in describing the dramatic impact of the event. Although they provide specific references to the text, the **7-6:** analysis is less persuasive and perhaps less sophisticated than papers in the 9-8 range: they seem less insightful or less controlled, they develop fewer techniques, or their discussion of details may be more limited. Nonetheless, they confirm the writer's ability to read literary texts with comprehension and to write with organization and control.

These essays construct a reasonable if reductive thesis; they attempt to link the author's literary techniques to the reader's understanding of the impact of the experience on the main character. However, the discussion may be superficial, pedestrian, and/or lacking in consistent control. The organization may be ineffective or not fully realized. The **5:** analysis is less developed, less precise, and less convincing than that of upper half essays; misinterpretations of particular references or illustrations may detract from the overall effect.

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**Question 2 (cont.)**

These essays attempt to discuss the impact of this dramatic experience upon the main character — and perhaps mention one or more techniques used by McCarthy to effect this end. The discussion, however, may be inaccurate or undeveloped. These writers may misread the passage in an essential way, rely on paraphrase, or provide only limited

**4-3:** attention to technique. Illustrations from the text tend to be misconstrued, inexact, or omitted altogether. The writing may be sufficient to convey ideas, although typically it is characterized by weak diction, syntax, grammar, or organization. Essays scored three are even less able and may not refer to technique at all.

These essays fail to respond adequately to the question. They may demonstrate confused thinking and/or consistent weaknesses in grammar or another basic element of composition. They are often unacceptably brief. Although the writer may have made

**2-1:** some attempt to answer the question, the views presented have little clarity or coherence; significant problems with reading comprehension seem evident. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.

**0:** A response with no more than a reference to the task.

— Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.