

Question 2

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

The following excerpt is from Brenda Peynado’s short story “The Rock Eaters,” published in 2021. In this passage, the narrator is one of a group of people who left their home country after developing the ability to fly, an ability that is accepted as realistically possible within the story. Years later, the group returns to that country with their children. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Peynado uses literary elements and techniques to convey the narrator’s complex experience of this return home.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

We were the first generation to leave our island country. We were the ones who developed a distinct float to our walk on the day we came of age. Soon enough we were hovering inches above the ground, then somersaulting with the clouds, finally discovering we could fly as far as we’d ever wanted. And so we left. Decades later, we brought our children back to see our home country. That year, we all decided we were ready to return.

We jackknifed through clouds and dodged large birds. We held our children tightly; they had not yet learned to fly. Behind us trailed roped-together lines of suitcases packed with gifts from abroad. We wondered who would remember us.

Our parents, those who were still alive, came out to greet us, hands on their brows like visors. Some were expecting us. Others were surprised, terrified at the spectacle of millions of their prodigals¹ blotting the sky with our billowing skirts, our shirts starched for the arrival. We touched down on our parents’ driveways, skidding to rough landings at their feet, denting cars, squashing flowers, rattling windows.

Our old friends and siblings, the ones we’d left behind, kept their doors locked. They peered through window blinds at the flattened flowerbeds, the suitcases that had burst and strewn packages all over the yards and streets, our youngest children squealing now that they’d been released, the peace we’d broken by returning. They didn’t trust us, not after our betrayal decades ago, the whiff of money we’d earned or lost in other countries like a suspect stench. Our parents hugged their grandchildren and brought them inside to houses with no electricity, candles wavering like we were in a séance. “More brownouts,” they told

us. “We remember,” we said, recoiling at how little the place fit us anymore. Those first nights we slept in our old beds, our feet hanging over the edges, the noises of the city and the country crowing and honking us awake, music from radios and guitars, celebrations we’d not been invited to.

We dragged our children along to knock on the doors of old friends and siblings, the ones who never developed the ability to fly. They eventually, reluctantly, opened their doors. At first we sat stiffly on couches and inquired after their health and others we once knew. Then we got them to laugh with us about the time we pulled the nuns’ skirts or put gum in the kink of a rival’s hair, when we caught baby chicks in the village and raised them, or cracked open almonds on the malecón.² Then their children came shyly out of their rooms and took ours by the hand. We smiled when we saw them climbing trees together in the patios, their children showing ours how to eat cajulitos solimán and acerolas³ from the branch.

We introduced our children to everyone we used to know: at colmados,⁴ by the side of the road, at the baseball fields, at country clubs we had to beg to be let back into. We showed our children the flamboyán trees in the parks, blooms of coral red spilling in the dirt. We showed them the granite striated through the rock faces of mountains, the glimmering pebbles under waterfalls, the red dust that stained the seats of their best clothes. We walked past the stray dogs that growled and whined; the most ancient among them remembered us, wagging their tails when they saw us and running to sniff our offspring. We dunked our children into the rivers we’d once swum. We dug through the banks for the arrowheads that belonged to

Question 3

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

Many works of literature feature a rebel character who changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs in the text. They may break social norms, challenge long-held values, subvert expectations, or participate in other forms of resistance. The character’s motivation for this rebellious behavior is often complex.

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a character changes or disrupts the existing state of societal, familial, or political affairs. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the complex motivation of the rebel contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Antigone
Arcadia
Atonement
The Awakening
Brave New World
Catch-22
Ceremony
The Color Purple
The Crucible
Fahrenheit 451
Fences
Frankenstein
The Glass Menagerie
Grendel
Half of a Yellow Sun
The Handmaid’s Tale
House Made of Dawn
The House of the Spirits
In the Time of the Butterflies
Invisible Man
Jane Eyre

The Joy Luck Club
Kindred
King Lear
Let the Great World Spin
Love Medicine
Moll Flanders
The Namesake
Native Son
Never Let Me Go
The Nickel Boys
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest
Paradise Lost
Pride and Prejudice
A Raisin in the Sun
The Scarlet Letter
Southernmost
Sula
Their Eyes Were Watching God
There There
Washington Black
Wuthering Heights

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis

6 points

The following excerpt is from Brenda Peynado’s short story “The Rock Eaters,” published in 2021. In this passage, the narrator is one of a group of people who left their home country after developing the ability to fly, an ability that is accepted as realistically possible within the story. Years later, the group returns to that country with their children. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Peynado uses literary elements and techniques to convey the narrator’s complex experience of this return home.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the passage.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Make a generalized comment about the passage that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the passage or features of the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the narrator's complex experience of this return home.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"In the excerpt from 'The Rock Eaters,' Peynado uses myriad literary devices to convey the narrator's complex experience of returning home."</i> Do not respond to the prompt but make a generalized comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Humans have always longed for the ability to fly through the air like birds."</i> Describe the passage or features of the passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Brenda Peynado paints a vivid picture of people flying through the air on their way home."</i> 	Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The narrator in the 'Rock Eaters' expresses how the group rediscovers their love of their home by introducing it to their kids."</i> <i>"Using richly detailed descriptions, Peynado reveals that the narrator's return home is complex: their 'old friends' are now prickly, and the houses lack the comforts they've grown used to while away, but the visit provides meaningful new experiences for the children in their group."</i> <i>"In 'The Rock Eaters,' the metaphor of flight illustrates the narrator's paradoxical experience of immigration. The narrator's flight from her 'island country' is perceived as a betrayal by some, but her return can be read as a sign of her enduring loyalty."</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the passage contributes to its meaning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the passage contribute to its meaning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on overarching narrative developments or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques. Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an interpretation. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. Explain how the writer’s use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student’s interpretation of the passage.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the passage. 					