

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

3 Questions

Question 1

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

In Ai's poem "The Man with the Saxophone," published in 1985, the speaker encounters a man playing a saxophone. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Ai uses literary elements and techniques to convey the complexity of the speaker's encounter with the saxophone player at that particular time and place.

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.

The Man with the Saxophone

New York. Five A.M.
The sidewalks empty.
Only the steam
Line pouring from the manhole covers seems alive,
5 as I amble from shop window to shop window,
sometimes stopping to stare, sometimes not.
Last week's snow is brittle now
and unrecognizable as the soft, white hair
that bearded the face of the city.
10 I head farther down Fifth Avenue
toward the thirties,
my mind empty
like the Buddhists tell you is possible
if only you don't try.
15 If only I could
turn myself into a bird
like the shaman¹ I was meant to be,
but I can't,
I'm earthbound
20 and solitude is my companion,
the only one you can count on.
Don't, don't try to tell me otherwise.
I've had it all and lost it
and I never want it back,
25 only give me this morning to keep,
the city asleep
and there on the corner of Thirty-fourth and Fifth,
the man with the saxophone,

his fingerless gloves caked with grime,
30 his face also,
the layers of clothes welded to his skin.
I set down my case,
he steps backward
to let me know I'm welcome,
35 and we stand a few minutes
in the silence so complete
I think I must be somewhere else, not here,
not in this city, this heartland of pure noise.
Then he puts the sax to his lips again
40 and I raise mine.
I suck the air up from my diaphragm
and bend over into the cold, golden reed,
waiting for the notes to come,
and when they do,
45 for that one moment,
I'm the unencumbered bird of my imagination,
rising only to fall back
toward concrete,
each note a black flower,
50 opening, mercifully opening
into the unforgiving new day.

¹ A spiritual leader who is believed to be endowed with magical powers

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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.

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Question 2

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

The following excerpt is from Tim Winton’s novel *Breath*, published in 2008. In this passage, the main character, Bruce Pike, recalls an incident at a nearby river. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Winton uses literary elements and techniques to represent the complex response of the narrator to the incident at the riverbank.

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.

At the first signs of spring giving way to summer townie kids gathered after school near the bridge at the riverbank to dive off the crude springboard. The river was brown with tannin and cold as hell but it was very slow-flowing and safe to swim in. It was there that Loonie and I became friends.

Ivan Loon was twelve and a whole year older than me. He was the publican’s¹ son and although we’d been at school together half our lives we never had the remotest thing in common. That is, before we realized that we’d each independently perfected the art of causing riverside panic.

One November afternoon I coasted down to the river on my bike to have a jump off the plank but when I got there four girls and somebody’s mother were slithering up and down the bank, yanking at their own ears and screaming that there was a boy in the water, that he was drowning right beneath them. Naturally they didn’t know *which* boy because they were from out of town, but they knew he was *a* boy for he’d been there a minute ago and simply hadn’t come up from a dive and were there sharks and couldn’t I for God’s sake stop asking questions and just get on with doing something.

Sun blazed down in rods through the big old gums.² There were dragonflies in the air above us. I saw a towel near the diving plank and beside it a grubby pair of thongs,³ so I had no reason to doubt there was a crisis. Only the sluggish water seemed harmless and these females, who were making a frightful noise, looked so strangely out of place. I should have twigged.⁴ But I went into action on their behalf. As I bolted out to the sagging end of the springboard the wood was hot and familiar underfoot.

I looked down at the wind-ruffled surface of the river and tried to think. I decided that it would be best to wade in from the bank, to work my way out by feel, and just keep diving and groping in the hope of touching something human. There wasn’t time to go looking for help. I was it. I felt myself rise to the moment—put-upon but taller all of a sudden—and before I could embark upon my mission, or even pull my shirt off, Ivan Loon burst from the water. He came up so close to shore with such a feral shriek the woman fell back on the mud as if shot.

I stood bouncing on the plank while she lay in the muck. Then she reared up on her elbows. Loonie started to laugh, which didn’t really help her mood. I had never in my life seen a woman so angry. She charged into the water, lunging and swiping to no avail, while Loonie just ducked and fainted and giggled. He was a freckly sort of kid but he went so red with pleasure and exertion all his freckles disappeared. The poor woman never got close to him. Her frock ballooned about her. She made tanty⁵ noises like a toddler. Loonie sculled himself out of range, bobbed provocatively for a bit, then stroked off to the shadows of the far bank. Left alone with her once again, I realized it was more fun to pull this prank than it was to stand by while someone else did it. I began to feel more guilt than glee. Two Dr. Scholl’s sandals floated upstream in the breeze and I watched until I could bear it no longer and dived dutifully after them. As I snared them and sidestroked back to the bank they clunked together like firewood. It was embarrassing to see this grown woman standing there in her clinging dress with her dimpled knees and chubby legs all muddy.

Question 1: Poetry Analysis

6 points

In Ai’s poem “The Man with the Saxophone,” published in 1985, the speaker encounters a man playing a saxophone. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Ai uses literary elements and techniques to convey the complexity of the speaker’s encounter with the saxophone player at that particular time and place.

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 poem.
	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 poem that doesn't respond to the prompt. Describe the poem or features of the poem rather than making a claim that requires a defense. Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The poet employs various literary techniques to convey the speaker's encounter with a saxophone player."</i> <i>"In the poem 'The Man with the Saxophone,' the speaker has a complex encounter with a man playing the saxophone on the street."</i> Do not relate to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Early morning is a magical time when anything can happen."</i> Describe the poem or features of the poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Over the course of the poem, the speaker describes walking through the city until he finds the saxophonist. Then, instead of just listening to him play, the speaker pulls out his own saxophone and plays with him."</i> 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a defensible interpretation of the speaker's complex encounter with the saxophone player. Examples that earn this point: Provide a defensible interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Ai employs literary techniques like varying line lengths and specific diction to convey the speaker's encounter with the saxophone player as one of joyful union with a stranger."</i> <i>"The poet's decision to set the speaker's encounter with the saxophonist on the empty streets of New York City at five in the morning lends a feeling of otherworldliness and magic to their connection."</i> <i>"In 'The Man with the Saxophone,' Ai presents a speaker who is on a quest, searching through the deserted streets of a city. When the speaker comes upon the saxophone player, we see him as the speaker sees him—as an almost supernatural being bringing music to the city."</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 poem 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 poem 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 poem 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 summary or description of the poem 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 poem 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 poem 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 poem.
	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 poem. 				

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0-1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see...</i>” OR “<i>Though the poem could be said to...</i>”). Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the poem comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. Oversimplify complexities in the poem. Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument. 	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poem. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the poem. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 	