

English Language and Composition
Question 1, 1986

(Suggested time—35 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score)

In the following passages, two Native American writers describe similar landscapes. Read the passages carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, explain how the passages reveal the differences in the authors' purposes. Consider such features as diction, syntax, imagery, and tone.

A single knoll rises out of the plain in Oklahoma, north and west of the Wichita Range. For my people, the Kiowas, it is an old landmark, and they gave it the name Rainy Mountain. The hardest weather in the world is there. Winter brings blizzards, hot tornadic winds arise in the spring, and in summer the prairie is an anvil's edge. The grass turns brittle and brown, and it cracks beneath your feet. There are green belts along the rivers and creeks, linear groves of hickory and pecan, willow and witch hazel. At a distance in July or August the steaming foliage seems almost to writhe in fire. Great green and yellow grasshoppers are everywhere in the tall grass, popping up like corn to sting the flesh, and tortoises crawl about on the red earth, going nowhere in the plenty of time. Loneliness is an aspect of the land. All things in the plain are isolate: there is no confusion of objects in the eye, but *one* hill or *one* tree or *one* man. To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, your think is where Creation was begun.

N. S. Momaday

Out on the Plains later that summer it seemed that everything had turned bad. Day after day the sun baked the dry earth drier, the streams stopped running, great whirlwinds of grasshoppers were flung out of the metallic sky to consume the parched grass. If such a season had come upon this land a few years earlier, a thunder of a million buffalo hooves would have shaken the prairie in frantic stampedes for water. But now the herds were gone, replaced by an endless desolation of bones and skulls and rotting hooves. Most of the white hunters departed. Bands of Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos roamed restlessly, finding a few small herds, but many had to return to their reservation to keep from starving.

D. Brown