

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
5 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, he starts wildly to find excuses.
10 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 on Lake Wyola and we're not going to sit here waiting for them to come home—oh no.'
15 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 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 living is eeh-zee—'
30 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 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 houses of Edge Hill do intrude and one can glimpse
40 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 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.

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.

ASK & DISCOVER**Analyzing Text**

Working individually, review the prompt for Question 2 carefully, identifying the “what,” the “how,” and the “why” of the question. Read the passage carefully. Discuss the questions in a small group.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you imagine Arun feels when Melanie appears at his door in her bathing suit? What do you think she is feeling, and why does she approach him?
2. Does Arun at first decline going to the beach? How do you know? Why do you think he prefers not going? Why does he agree to go?
3. Look at Mrs. Patton’s dialogue and the description of her walk. What do these details suggest about her character? How do you imagine Arun feels about her?
4. What is implied by the fact that Arun did not go boating with the father and son?
5. Find details that reveal Mrs. Patton’s character in the paragraphs that begin at line 12 and end at line 20. What is implied? What details show Arun’s attitude toward Mrs. Patton? Define this attitude. Is he more concerned about Melanie or Mrs. Patton in this segment?
6. What is revealed about all three characters and their relationships by the way they walk down the woodland path?
7. What details show the elements of wild nature in the woodland and what shows this setting is not so wild, perhaps not quite natural?
8. Why does Arun prefer the town to the woods? What do the woods represent to him?
9. Are there any connections among Arun’s experiences of the town, the woods, and the Patton family? Is Arun’s different cultural background a factor in his response to nature and to the Patton women?
10. What is the dominate point of view of this narrative passage? What is emphasized by this point of view? What does this choice reveal and what does it hide?
11. Make short lists of words/phrases from the text that best define each of the three characters.
12. Make two lists of words/phrases, one that captures the essence of Arun’s interaction with the female characters and another that captures the essence of his experience of the woods. Is there any connection? What does his situation as an exchange student suggest?