



AP[®] English Language & Composition 2003 Sample Student Responses

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When two people view the same phenomenon, their responses are distinctly different depending on their craft. In this case, Audubon, an ^{obvious} man of science, is very exact in his account of a flock of pigeons flying overhead. He begins with "autumn of 1813... at Henderson... of the Ohio, on [his] way to Louisville;" he pinpoints his location "a few miles beyond Hardensburgh" when he saw pigeons flying overhead "north-east to south-west." Being the exact man of science that he is, he "[felt] an inclination" to count the flocks. He could not resist this opportunity for scientific observation.

Dillard, on the otherhand, is an artist with an artist's soul. She sees things in simile. ~~the birds~~ ~~into the birds~~ When her senses are overwhelmed by "starlings going to roost," she only notes a "dimming sky," not her exact location. ~~at Henderson~~ She sees the starlings as "a loosened skein," unraveling before her. As they fly overhead, "the flight extended like a fluttering banner, an unfurled oriflamme." These images leave her so overwhelmed, she cannot move.

Whereas Dillard uses imagery to describe her experience as the birds are flying overhead, Audubon uses numbers. He counts "163... in twenty-one minutes." Even as the two writers hear the birds, their responses are different. "The continued buzz of wings had a tendency to lull [Audubon's] senses to repose" while Dillard hears the "sound of beaten air, like a million shook rugs, a muffled

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whuff." She does not try to explain what is happening to her senses as Audubon does ~~with the best word choice~~ syntactically; she paints the picture of a million shaken rugs.

Dillard makes many references to weaving throughout ~~her writing~~ ^{this excerpt}. She writes about a skein and describes how "each individual bird bobbed and knitted up and down" like fingers ~~knitting~~ throwing a shuttle through the shed of ~~weave~~ weft on a loom. She compares the birds' beating wings to rugs and ~~knitting~~ as they fly out of view, notes her "eyes... trying to trace a feathered dot's passage through a weft of limbs."

In contrast, Audubon makes many references to the seasons. He begins by clarifying that it is "autumn of 1813." He is very aware of the season and when the pigeons' "dung fell in spots, [it was] not unlike melting flakes of snow." He is anticipating the winter; these migrating birds are only another sign of its arrival. Dillard's references to weaving show her response to the birds is one of a craftswoman and an artist. Audubon's intense awareness of the earth's changes show his response is more observational, like that of a scientific man.

They both end ~~me~~ with literary tools typical to the roles that they have previously established for themselves. ~~And~~ Audubon describes the

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geometry he sees as the flock departs. "They rushed into a compact mass, ... they darted forward in undulating lines and angular lines ... with inconceivable velocity." To him, they resemble "a vast column," yet another ~~piece~~^{construction} of architectural mastery. Dillard ends with the rhetorical question, "Could tiny birds be sitting through me right now...?" She does not expect an answer and enjoys being mystified at her encounter, but Audubon's answer would surely be, "scientifically impossible."

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There are often two points of view in life: a real and an ideal. The realist will see a dot on a map as merely a circle signifying a location. The idealist ~~will~~ will see the same dot as an invitation for adventure. Audubon analytically describes his encounter with flocks of birds, whereas Dillard romantically recounts her unforgettable experience with these flying beings.

Audubon uses his narrative to depict his visions of the birds in a scholarly manner. He begins his passage ~~with~~ in the same way one might tell a story, similar to the trite "once upon a time;" merely a date is inserted. His perceptions are similar to those of a physicist, seeing objects only for their directional motion and numerical count. The "163" birds ~~were flying~~ flew from "north-east to south-west." His cumulative sentences (lines 3-10 and 10-15) emulate his concentration on the counting of the birds, no more and no less.

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His use of semi-colons represents his fragmented thought process. He paid so much attention to the scientific approach to his observation, that he struggled to realize the miraculous migration occurring right before his eyes. He continually viewed the birds as targets of "a capital rifle" instead of living creatures. The "extreme beauty" he viewed was not in the flight pattern of the pigeons. Rather, he viewed beauty as an idea of threat, the morbid concept of a "hawk" attacking its prey. His mathematical diction, "velocity," "perpendicularly," and "lines," parrots his thought process. His objective point-of-view trivializes the beauty of nature.

In contrast, Willard emphatically realizes her fortune in viewing an awesome act of nature. Her loaded words, "dimming," "whirling," "fluttering," and "muffled," epitomize her intense emotions felt when viewing the birds. Her use of onomatopoeias appeal to the senses of the readers, placing them in her very same location. Her repeated use of similes declares that her experience was

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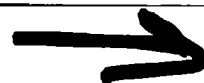
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one on both an intellectual and spiritual level. Her Wordsworthian, Romantic tone elevates nature and all of its beauty. Many of her similes compared the birds' motions to items of nature, further emphasizing their impact on her and her soul. The evolution of a "speck" to ^{*}several "flocks" mirrors her once simple idea of a bird to now a spiritual experience. Her concluding rhetorical question poses the idea of the birds invading her body. This image illustrates that ~~to~~ her experience with the birds has impacted her in mind, body, and soul. These are not just mere "solid masses" as Audubon saw them. No, they are living, breathing, beautiful creatures.

The differing images represented by Audubon and Gillard characterize both the real and the ideal. For Audubon, he simply watched a few birds get attacked by a hawk. However, to Gillard, her life was changed. She became part of

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the beautiful ~~tooooo~~ migration of
the birds from north to south.
A flock of birds can easily be seen
in two ways. One must only
wonder what else one could see
a bird as. ~~that's why, that's why~~
~~with the~~

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

"In Flight"

It surrounds us, no matter where, it is around us, pulsating, living. No one notices, though. It is native, living just as people live but quieter. A major part of nature is the flying denizens of the sky, birds. People only notice when they sing, or astound us. In two essays, one by John James Audubon, the other by Annie Dillard, they take the time to look around, and in amazement, found a spectacular sight all around them in the sky. Both describe birds in flight, but both do it in such a different way. In Audubon's Ornithological Biographies, he describes the birds in a more scientific way, while Dillard's Pilgrim at Tinker Creek is an artful description of bird's movement.

In Audubon's book, pigeons, in massive number ~~are~~ are in flight. Audubon takes a more scientific approach to describing the birds in flight, while not using scientific terms, it is more of just a description such as a narrative form. Audubon doesn't make it difficult to understand, making statements such as "the light of the noon-day ~~was~~ was obscured as by an eclipse." Using general terms such as this, it is simple to understand but his approach is that of observation and not that of imagination.

Using observation but applying a tremendous measure of imagination, Dillard's piece is an antithesis of Audubon's. Ending with a statement such as "could ^{tiny} birds be sitting through me right now, birds winging through the gaps between my cells, touching nothing, but quickening in my tissues, fleet?", would let one to believe that Dillard is a poet and Audubon is a scientist. Dillard makes the birds seem more than birds, that they are rugs, or banners, applying human qualities to them in



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good usage of personification. It is Dillard's artistic tone that sets her apart from Audubon's stern, scientific approach.

Using two completely different ways of approaching the description of the birds makes a huge difference. Audubon seems as if he is a professor, while Dillard is an artist, painting a clear, serene picture in our minds. Both methods are very descriptive, and clearly show the birds in flight. Perhaps everyone should take the time to notice the things around us.

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