



AP[®] English Literature 2003 Sample Student Responses Form B

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Question 2

Oates has taken to heart the literary axiom, 'show, don't tell'. By writing this story in the first person, placing Judd Maloney as narrator, he gives the reader direct access to Judd's thoughts, but allows for personal interpretations of Judd's character. Oates does, however, have his own vision of Judd; he makes his characteristics known through the allusions Judd makes, his thoughts, his observations, and, happily, Judd's own reflections on his character at that time. The narrator is indeed Judd but an older Judd recounting to an earlier experience.

Many of Judd's characteristics can be drawn from the observations and allusions he himself makes. He is, quite clearly, a very observant twelve-year-old. At home, down by his river on a bridge that belongs to his father, he contemplates his surroundings. The 'color of lead' recalls his dad's roofing business, the observation that the river flows east to west shows him to be practical, the rotted wood reminds him to tell his dad to fix it - a very responsible thought for a child his age. He knows about seasonal cycles and when leaves should fall; he is reminded of a film negative by the snow. He isn't a 'dope', surely, and when he sees his dad coming along even thinks to move his ~~to~~ bike so as not to obstruct the path. All of these thoughts point Judd as a very mature twelve-year-old, observant, practical, responsible, and down-to-earth. There are hints that he inherited this practicality from his dad, who color



Question 2

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are according to his work, not a sense of style.

It is in this maturity that allows him to come to a realisation of his own mortality. His thoughts brought on by the river, Oates emphasizing the experience with hyphens and interjectory expressions, turn to his heart's beat. The sentences become shorter, repetitive, all trying to convey the same feeling of movement. Then comes the description of his heart-beat, one capitalized for emphasis, his thoughts — "Every heartbeat is part and gone." — keeping time with his heart. This use of repetition and the variation of rhythm is continued throughout the passage, used for emphasis and also as a means to convey the narrator thoughts.

The distance of time also allows for character judgement — Judd judges himself as being having been a 'lonely kid' who doesn't realize that he's lonely. The use of the third-person ~~so in line~~ 35 emphasizes this distance, this abstraction of the self. It is this abstraction that Judd destroys with his realisation that he will die — he and his seemingly invincible dad and big brother. The immediacy of this realization is brought home by direct thoughts, marked by italics, heaving back. Judd sees this moment as a turning-point in his life, something he will never forget.

Judd is a character wise, ~~too~~ beyond two years, introspective, responsible, practical, and, in some ways, very aware of his position as 'rent of the litter'. Oates has shown, not told, and the result is a thousand times more convincing.

II

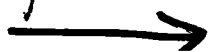
2

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Through dark imagery, Joyce Carol Oates illustrates the ^{helplessly dreary attitude of the} young boy, Judd Mulvaney. In the novel, ~~when~~ we were the Mulvaney's, we experience the melancholy attitude of Judd in a "sky the color of lead and the light mostly drained." In his dreary nature experience, he explains his fear of death, as well as his fear of losing the ones he loved to death. He fears his "moving [#] helplessly forward" and when he expects comfort from his Dad and Mike in their "mud-colored Ford Pickup," he only depressingly realizes they will die too. Oates ~~uses~~ parallels nature with the boy's life to show the uneasy character of a boy who seems far too young to concern himself with ~~his~~ death.

The "lonely kid" ~~is~~ watches nature around him in the brook by his lower driveway, and realizing the passing of nature is much like the ~~passing~~ of his own life and the lives of the ones he loves. As he hypnotizes himself in the flowing water, he begins to see himself moving towards the end; he counts his heartbeats as one more closer to death. "Every heartbeat is past and gone!" Although he, as all kids, feel he is invincible, watching the fleeting life of nature enlightens him on the eventual end of his own life. ~~He~~

Oates uses evident repetition of the words "die," ^{dead} and "dying" which portrays the painful and depressing thoughts of such a young boy.



As the boy watches leaves on a tree, he realizes that just like the tree, ~~he is~~ the young boy is "partly dead." The dreary imagery of rotting wood, black birches, a light, gritty film of snow on the ground, and cold chills ~~make us~~ surround us in the boy's ~~un~~ unpleasant environment.

The appearance of the boy's loved ones, personally referred to as Dad and Mike, bring joy to the unhappy child. This joy soon leaves, however, when "the most terrible thought came to me. Then, too. All of them. Every heartbeat past and gone. Gates emphasizes this thought by italicizing it and putting it separately. This painful realization stands out for our focus and thought.

Whenever the speaker refers to himself he uses his full name, "Judd Mullaney" and "Judson Andrew Mullaney" to give himself a feeling of being ~~somewhat~~ larger than life. To himself, Judd is a very important person as many children of his age view themselves. However, Gates puts him in a ~~at~~ depressing situation that makes him and us think about death seriously. She portrays him as a boy more mature than anyone else his age, and even his elders. "And they know nothing of it. (Did they? Judd does not say he regrets this enlightenment, but that he "would have to pretend not ~~to~~ to know what I knew." This knowledge emphasizes his position as a "lonely kid."

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2

In the passage from We Were the Mulvaney's, by Joyce Carol Oates, the writer uses literary techniques to characterize the speaker.

The speaker in this passage is a young boy named "Judd Mulvaney". At the time he is speaking, he is not young anymore but he is talking about his youth on a farm. The speaker analyzes his actions. Now that he is older, he can understand that he was "Hypnotizing" himself in the water because he was a "lonely kid". To make the passage more realistic, a simple and childlike diction is used.

The wooden railing isn't just ~~rotted~~ rotten, it is "pretty damn rotted". The boy feels some excitement when his reflection changes in the water. He ~~can~~ can't keep himself from saying "oh boy! we-ird! scary and ticklish". The boy is playing by himself, counting playfully "ON'Etwothree ON'Etwothree!", ~~inter~~ He is counting so fast that the words seem to be only one and they resemble an interjection. The word choice and the diction are chosen carefully to resemble the one a child would use and they also convey the excitement and the ~~play~~ playfulness of the child.

But all those trivial games lead to ~~make~~ him to make him think of his ~~a~~ heartbeat which is "past and gone!". He suddenly starts thinking about death. "Am I going to die?" the boy asks himself.



2

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this question because "on ~~at~~ the farm living things are dying, dying, dying". So his logical train of thoughts make him believe that he is also going to die. His death becomes like a secret, ~~he~~ the people he loved "knew nothing of it." At this moment, the idea of his future death was born in him and it would stay with him forever.

In the passage from ~~Joyce~~ We Were the Mulvaney's, Joyce Carol Oates uses simple diction to characterize a boy at the time when he realized that he was going to die.

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