

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2007 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

(Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*)

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 techniques to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father. The students make a strong case for their interpretation of the passage. They explore possibilities of character and situation; consider techniques 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 do essays scored an 8.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how the author uses literary techniques to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father. The students provide a sustained, competent reading of the passage, with attention to techniques 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 9–8 essays, the students present their ideas 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 essays 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 the relationship between the young man and his father. While exhibiting some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the discussion of how literary techniques contribute to the author's characterization of the relationship may be slight, and support from the passage may be thin or tend toward paraphrase. While these students demonstrate adequate control of language, their essays may be marred by surface errors. Generally, essays scored a 5 lack the more effective organization and the more sustained development characteristic of 7–6 papers.
- 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 techniques to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father. Often relying on plot summary or paraphrase, the students may fail to articulate a convincing basis for understanding situation and character, or they may misread the passage. These papers 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 the papers in the 4–3 range. They may persistently misread the passage or be unacceptably brief. They may 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 make no more than a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.

In Dalton Trumbo's novel, Johnny Got His Gun, Trumbo establishes a relationship between a young man and his father in just one passage. It takes place in the woods at a campsite, a place where the young man and his father have bonded for many years. Through a simple exchange between the two men, Trumbo portrays a deep relationship between father and son. Through precise detail and serene imagery, Trumbo illustrates the importance of the fishing tradition and how the two men value ~~their~~ each other's company. Trumbo also divulges to the reader the son's careful contemplation of the simultaneous "ending and beginning," proving that their relationship is one of mutual love and respect as well as thoughtfulness.

The opening paragraph of the passage immediately sets the tone as peaceful yet important. The details of the campsite are so carefully constructed that they give an air of familiarity to the setting. Clearly the boy is extremely aware of his surroundings and is very fond of the tradition. The details portraying the pine needles that sounded like rain and the woods "covered with



pine trees and dotted with lakes" establish an appreciation of nature that translates into an appreciation of company. Even the detail that the place was "nine thousand feet high" contributes to the sense of importance, and separation from all other things.

Trumbo also illustrates the men's love, respect and thoughtfulness through letting the reader into the young man's head in the second paragraph. From the point of view of the young man, the reader sees how carefully the boy thinks about the coming of Bill Harper and the change it signifies. He is perceptive and aware of growth — "He knew it was something that had to happen sometime. Yet he also knew that it was the end of something." The young man spends time wondering how to tell his father so as not to hurt his feelings. The boy's point of view gives off a sense of love, thoughtfulness and respect for his father. That the boy can even perceive that his action might be a serious change is thoughtful.

The following conversation between father and son further strengthens their mutual respect.



In a smooth ~~and~~ exchange without quotation marks and similar punctuation, Trumbo shows how simply the father agreed. The kindness here is understated through the simple syntax and straightforwardness. However, the father's next action amplifies their thoughtful and loving relationship to the point that it is almost overwhelmingly poignant. In lending his son ~~his~~ "the only extravagance (his father) had had in his whole life," the father commits an unspoken act of love. The details Trumbo includes emphasize the importance of this act. Trumbo precisely includes that the father sends the fishing rod away for maintenance every spring, increasing its personal value. The father gives a little piece of himself to his son and his son gratefully accepts it.

Even though the passage is relatively short and only a small portion of Johnny Got His Gun, the reader can deduce volumes about the relationship between the young man and his father. Through precise details, revealing point of view/perspective, and understated kindness contrasted by a poignant action, Trumbo characterizes the relationship as one of deep love and respect.

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~~This~~ This passage from "Johnny Got His Gun" by Dalton Trumbo analyzes the relationship between young Joe and his father. The two of them had been fishing together for years, but this year Joe wanted to go fishing with his friend. Through ~~a~~ third person point of view, careful selection of detail, and simple sentences Trumbo characterizes the deep but changing relationship of the father and son.

By telling the story from a third person point of view, Trumbo provides the reader with a more universal ~~view~~ ^{view} of the father-son relationship. Readers are able to see ~~the~~ the feelings of both father and son.

~~The~~ The phrases "For a little while his father didn't say a thing" and "I'm tired and I think I'll rest all day" show how the saddened the father was by his son's actions. However, he felt so deeply for his son that he said, "so you use my rod and ~~let~~ let Bill use yours." ~~The~~ ~~story~~ Thank fully, the love the father felt for his son was always shared by the son for his father. "He felt a little lump in his throat as he thought that even as deserting his father for Bill Harber his father had volunteered the rod." Because the passage is told from a third person viewpoint, we are able to see ^{that} they loved each other and wanted to continue fishing together, sadly, things ~~are~~ can't stay the same forever.

Trumbo constructed this passage very carefully



in order to show the changing dynamics of the father-son relationship. By starting the passage off with peaceful visuals of camping and fishing, Dalton gives the reader an idea of the joy that the father and son received from each other. The line "sitting across from him and staring into the fire was his father" furthers the notion that the son looked up to the father and enjoyed being with him. However, as the passage progresses an outsider, Bill Harper, enters the story. ~~The so~~ Although ~~young~~ the son still loves his father, he ~~feels~~ ~~the~~ ~~is~~ feels a greater desire to be with his friend. Also Trumbo shows the love the father has for his son by telling how he is willing to let his son use his greatest possession. Lastly, the image of the son sneaking away "without ~~waking~~ awakening his father" provides the reader with an image of a ~~confused~~ son being pulled in different directions, and a father who will awaken to a long and lonely day.

Through the use of simple syntax, Trumbo further characterizes the relationship of the father and son. While also ~~and~~ ^{and related} serving to reinforce the ~~simple~~ peaceful ~~camping~~ ~~and~~ ~~related~~ imagery of the poem, the simple syntax has the effect of showing the reader how much of an impact ~~at~~ a small action can have on a relationship. ~~The~~ Although the father and son will always love each other, it ~~is~~ will never be the same ~~between~~ between



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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

2B₃

them again. The ~~son's~~ son's simple action to give off with Bill Harper has forever changed their relationship.

Other ~~fishing~~ fishing trips will come, but the father will always be wondering if his son ~~wishes~~ ^{wants} that he ~~was~~ ^{is} with him or if he'd rather go fishing with Bill Harper.

Many little boys view their father as the greatest man in the world. Unfortunately, as they age, they begin to see his flaws; they desire to ~~be~~, instead, hang around with kids their age. We need to remember that although relationships change, we should always stay close to those who have always been there for us.

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The relationship between the young boy, Joe, and his father is an awkward and changing relationship. Trumbo's use of the young man's view of the situation, the detail of the things once most important in the boy's trip with his father, and flowy yet awkward sentences show so.

The passage is told from Joe's perspective. He has no real clue as to what his father feels about him going fishing with Bill Harper other than what his father says to him. We are put into the mind of a young man which is awkward and changing. Joe's view gives us the taste of knowledge that he feels the torn emotions of choosing a friend over his father. Joe's emotions and thoughts dictate the story of realizing his father cares about him, and wants him to be happy. ~~the father~~ Joe feels guilty when his father ~~still~~ offers to lend Joe his rod to go fishing with Bill. Since the story of this event is told through Joe it gives an idea of the strained relationship between the boy and his father.

Trumbo's use of detail also helps to show to ~~an~~ interesting relationship ~~the~~ between father and son. ~~the~~ Trumbo states that the boy is 15 years old. This detail shows a lot about the character. 15 is an age of change and development. Many boys are awkward at this age. The age represents the relationship. They are paralleled because the relationship is changing and slightly awkward between the two men.



Question 2 cont'd

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

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Trumbo uses the most detail while focusing on the camp grounds. It was the constant in the relationship of the father and son. The camp ground with its pine trees and lakes was what ~~helped~~ ~~the~~ ~~two~~ bonded the two men. And, even when Joe is changing, along with the relationship he still had the comfort of the trip with his father.

Trumbo uses a simple yet complex style of structure. Many sentences are simple, yet have so much meaning behind them. The sentence "it was a very serious thing" is simple, yet the boy feels so torn over the situation. The longest sentences that are used are when Joe is trying to tell his father he wants to fish with Bill Harper. It shows the changes between the past relationship and the now. ~~Also~~ Also, there is no punctuation inside of the sentences, only at the end of a thought. This gives a flowing yet awkward feel to the passage, much like how the ~~sea~~ relationship is between Joe and his father.

The age of fifteen ~~first~~ brought an awkward change to the relationship between the young man and his father. But, it seems the father knew it was coming, and is ready to let his son his freedom.

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Question 2

Overview

Students were asked to read carefully an accessible excerpt from Dalton Trumbo's novel *Johnny Got His Gun* (1939) and then in a well-organized essay to analyze how Trumbo uses such techniques as point of view, selection of detail, and syntax to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father. The question served as a means of testing students' inferential thinking ability. The passage itself takes place in the main character's mind, as he recalls a key event in his boyhood when he summoned up the courage to suggest a departure from tradition to his father, and his father lent him a valuable fishing rod. The passage is a coming-of-age story in miniature.

Sample: 2A

Score: 8

This is a good example of an essay with a perceptive embedded analysis that does not necessarily cite the text with great frequency, yet still provides persuasive insights. The essay begins with a strong introduction characterized by effective diction: "Trumbo . . . divulges to the reader the son's careful contemplation of the simultaneous 'ending and beginning,' proving that their relationship is one of mutual love and respect, as well as thoughtfulness." The student recognizes how Trumbo's detailed description of the camp's high elevation "contributes to the sense of importance and separation from all other things" that has, in the past, established such a close relationship between father and son. Attention to detail and to the significance of techniques—the "smooth exchange" father and son have with each other, the recalled dialogue "without quotation marks and similar punctuation" that shows "how simply the father agreed" [to his son's request]—demonstrates the student's ability to make sense out of small points many other students overlooked. Overall, this is a sustained, thoughtful analysis.

Sample: 2B

Score: 6

This competent essay discusses the effect of the third-person point of view and recognizes the significance of the bond between the father and his son, showing how each is affected by the desertion of the son for Bill Harper. The student sees that the silence of the father shows how saddened he is by his son's decision, and yet that his feelings run so deeply that he surrenders his fishing rod and says, "you use my rod and let Bill use yours." Similarly, the father's love is shared by the son, who "'felt a little lump in his throat'" as he deserts his father. The response recognizes the sadness of the scene and comments on how Trumbo's use of simple syntax characterizes the relationship, but the student is less persuasive in analyzing it, saying only that it is "peaceful and relaxed" without explaining exactly what words convey these qualities. The greater emphasis the student gives to content rather than form kept this essay from rising higher in the upper half of the scoring range.

Sample: 2C

Score: 4

This essay provides a less-than-adequate treatment of how Trumbo uses literary techniques to characterize the relationship between the young man and his father. While the student makes a few accurate claims about the passage ("[T]he story . . . told through Joe . . . gives an idea of the strained relationship between the boy and his father"), these assessments are frequently negated elsewhere in the essay: e.g., Joe "has no real clue as to what his father feels about him going fishing with Bill Harper." Other

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Question 2 (continued)

seemingly contradictory claims include references to the “simple yet complex style of structure” and the “flowing yet awkward feel to the passage.” These curious claims fail to articulate a convincing basis for understanding the situation. The student also identifies techniques imprecisely, such as the “flowy [*sic*] yet awkward sentences” that reveal the “awkward and changing relationship” of parent and child.