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.
In the excerpt from *Fasting, Feasting* by Anita Desai, the writer uses a variety of techniques to detail Arun’s inner emotions and sentiments regarding his experience. Through the use of alternating action, speech, and point of view, the author aptly expresses to the audience Arun’s perception of the events. Due to the nervousness of the situation, Arun’s uneasy air does not share the audience; however, the characterization of such uneasiness through Desai’s words allows the reader a deeper understanding of the character.

In the first paragraph, the matter-of-fact type of diction allows the reader to quickly establish the setting of the passage. By claiming that “Arun cannot please work,” Desai already shows the character as unwilling to participate in the activity he is trying to find an exit strategy. However, as the text progresses, the diction becomes more expressive and imagery becomes a key component in the text. Mrs. Patten’s “animated praise” galvanizes her dwindled stance. She shows the reader the excitement and the American family facts. An emotion that is intensified by Arun’s obvious indifference and awkwardness. The two children follow “silently” carrying an uneasy trek to the beach. However, in the last paragraph, the diction once again becomes more intense. The heavy visual and auditory imagery that the author uses affords the reader in connecting with Arun’s deeper...
emotions. Beyond his outward discomfort, the "humming of wanda" in the "benevolent wilderness" creates a more permanent unsettled feeling in Aron. The repetition of "we as word" insidiously and its use as a contrast to the building construction also serve to highlight Aron's deeper emotion of disgust or outright disbelieve of the situation.

Similarly, by creating some sort of dialogue in the passage, Desai allows the reader to easily characterize the American family and, thus, contrast it with Aron. At the beginning of the text, when Aron is trying to decline going to the beach, Mrs. Patton's dialogue serves as a blatant establishment of her role in the plot. As a host, she assumes her nature to entertain, a task she sees as essential to Aron's comfort. Ironically, however, Aron's discomfort is expanded exponentially by repeated refusal ("No, no, no... oh no!") to accept Aron's excuses, later in the text, texts when Aron hears Mrs. Patton singing the lyrics to "Summertime" the words also serve to paint out many words in Anita Desai's text. By belting what "the living is easy-ee...", Mrs. Patton is established as a character established whose opinion allows her to maintain bliss. Despite falsely perceived Aron's obvious discomfort, the American beat, his desire as a hypnotic, polite gesture because he wishes not to disturb them. Ironically, the living for Aron is not easy at all. Indeed, in the final paragraph, he shows to the audience his true emotions regarding the situation.
Throughout most of the text, the point of view is third person limited. The author merely comments on the situation, allowing the audience to draw conclusions or infer the deeper themes of the text. However, in the concluding paragraphs, the point of view becomes third person omniscient, giving the reader a more in-depth view of Ann's thought process. In line 40, the author uses a rhetorical question as a technique that reflects Anns thoughts on the issue. Because he is "sensitive" and his hands are "upset and damp," the audience concludes that Ann is becoming increasingly unsettled. Indeed, the following rhetorical question actually allows the reader to preempt the outcome and the following sentences respond nearly exactly.

Although the passage begins as a straightforward account of a surrounding event, the author uses several rhetorical strategies to quickly transform the text. Throughout the development of her argument, Deedee is able to show how this interaction increases levels of Ann's unease. As a feeling that culminates in a heightened sense of dread, the author also uses speech to characterize the American family, whom Ann hates. As a foil to Ann, and to express irony, she shifts perception at the conclusion of the passage. Furthermore, the author also creates an unease and leaves the reader to gain deeper insight into the character's mind.
Desai utilizes strong characterization and a very singular point of view to effectively characterize Arun's experience in America with his host family. Arun's well-developed character Arun's internal monologue displays his awkwardness as a guest of the Pattons but then very skillfully shifts to a singular reverie of disgust for the whole experience. This is fostered by sharp but sparse dialogue that serves to heighten the differences between Arun and the Pattons. In addition, Arun's experiences are further enhanced in the reader's mind because of the imagery used to express his revulsion towards the wilderness and its 'creeping curtain of insidious green.'

Arun's internal monologue and his reaction to what goes on in the world around him lend credence to the overall believability and impact of his experiences in America. From the opening lines of the excerpt we can infer that he has been apprehensive about going out with the Pattons for a long time; with this point of view in the background as a skeletal structure for the innermost workings of...
of his psyche, we build sympathy for him. Contrasted with his neglected demeanour is the delightfully decadent Mrs Patton who sardonically sings "summertime... when the living is eeh-gee-...". She cannot seem to bottom any other point of view than her own, and she is characterized as an object of derision throughout the rest of the trip to the beach. Her confident swagger is directly in contrast with measured of Arm to step out into the unknown.

He criticizes nature as hostile and shriveling—"they shrill and shrill... a bird shrills... an ugly jarring note that does not vary." and dangerous with distant, stirring with insidious life, and lures with poison berries. In short he is afraid of the wilderness and much rather would be an familiar town around people. However his excuses have long since faded to get through to the obstinate Mrs Patton, and he must be accommodating for her and carry her loaded whether he wants to or not.

All of this intense characterization of Arm and his foil that is his environment serves to emphasize the uniqueness of his
Experience and how tempered it is by others and his natural environment.
In the passage taken from *Fasting, Feasting*, by Anita Desai, the young boy Arun is confused by his host family's actions. He is taken from the town and brought to a country-like setting for the sake of leisure. Desai uses speech and point of view to characterize Arun's experience.

The author's use of a third-person omniscient narrator lets the reader know that Arun's disapproval of the beach and his confusion. The author uses tone. The author's description of Arun from lines 93-96 ("Arun... damp") shows the reader that Arun is nervous about going to this location. The following lines show Arun's best to show Arun's confusion. The reader is in Arun's mind and learns that he prefers the city. He does not understand why Americans would choose to go to an isolated place. He feels safe in the city being surrounded by people, and very insecure in the woods - the grasses stinging with inaudious lice, and bushes with poisonous berries. "He does not find the nature beautiful, but thinks that the land is "shriek[ing]" and describes it as an "ugly, pinning more that does not vary." In this thoughts lead the work even ends with him "nearly tripping upon a root." All of these thoughts show the reader Arun's disapproval of the wilderness, and preference of the city. His experience can be regarded as a negative one.

The other device used in the passage is speech. Desai's choice of words also support the motion that Arun is not pleased with being in the wilderness. The passage begins with Arun trying to find
Excuses to not accompany them to the beach. This shows that
Arun was forced to go. When they arrive at the beach, Arun is
silent. His lack of speech shows his disinterest. The
author uses the author of speech and point of view to show that
Arun does not enjoy the wilderness and believes his
experience to be a negative one. He prefers the city, to the more country-
like setting. The his "Indian" life has clashed with the American
idea of leisure.

#
Overview

Students were asked to read carefully an accessible excerpt from Anita Desai’s novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) and then, in a well-organized essay, to analyze how Desai uses such literary devices as speech and point of view to characterize the experience of an Indian exchange student, Arun. In the excerpt, Arun joins members of his American host family for an afternoon at the beach. The intent of this question was to assess students’ abilities to read closely and to interpret the author’s use of literary devices to create a complex and nuanced representation of Arun’s experience. To respond to the question successfully, students needed to connect detail to larger meaning and to show how particular devices combine to characterize Arun’s experience.

Sample: 2A
Score: 8

This essay is an excellent analysis, providing insight after insight, including one on the irony of the passage. The student sees the passage as, at first, “lighthearted,” but then argues that “the author uses several rhetorical strategies to quickly transform the text.” For example, the student notes how Desai employs “repetition of the word ‘insidious’ and its use as a contrast to the buildings in the town . . . to highlight Arun’s deeper emotion of disgust” with the situation he has been forced to participate in. The analysis of imagery and point of view is particularly skillful, demonstrating the student’s appreciation for Desai’s craft—how she shows at first Arun’s increasing “unease” and then ultimately reveals “a more heightened sense of disdain.” The discussion occasionally falters with vocabulary (Mrs. Patton’s “oblivion”) and relies on generalizations where some details would have helped, but overall it analyzes the passage with great understanding.

Sample: 2B
Score: 6

This upper-half essay begins effectively, with a very well-developed opening paragraph, but its discussion tends to weaken at the end because it does not support all its claims with textual evidence. It is insightful in its remarks about the change in tone and point of view, as Arun shifts from a position of awkwardness to a “singular overtone of disgust for the whole experience.” It correctly asserts that Arun “has been apprehensive about going out with the Pattons for a long time.” Likewise, this essay demonstrates a clear understanding of the “delightfully decadent Mrs. Patton who . . . cannot seem to fathom any other point of view than her own.”

Sample: 2C
Score: 4

This lower-half essay makes a series of comments about Arun’s experience but cannot develop these observations into an adequate analysis of the passage. Although it responds to the prompt and provides quotations to support its assertions, there is really little analysis of what Desai has done with language to construct Arun’s experience. The student quite insistently repeats the fact that Arun does not like the beach and prefers the town but does almost nothing with the rest of the passage and the interactions between Arun, Mrs. Patton, and her daughter. The writing is clean and easy to understand, but the interpretation of Arun’s experience is fairly superficial and unsophisticated.