ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following speech from Shakespeare’s play *Henry VIII*, Cardinal Wolsey considers his sudden downfall from his position as advisor to the king. Spokesmen for the king have just left Wolsey alone on stage. Read the speech carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Shakespeare uses elements such as allusion, figurative language, and tone to convey Wolsey’s complex response to his dismissal from court.

So farewell—to the little good you bear me.
Farewell? a long farewell to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes, to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls as I do. I have ventur’d,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,1
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!
I feel my heart new open’d. O how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes’ favors!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,2
Never to hope again.

1 air-filled sacs
2 Satan, the fallen angel
There was a cold November wind blowing through 116th Street. It rattled the tops of garbage cans, sucked window shades out through the top of opened windows; and it drove most of the people off the street in the block between Seventh and Eighth Avenues except for a few hurried pedestrians who bent double in an effort to offer the least possible exposed surface to its violent assault.

It found every scrap of paper along the street—theater throwaways, announcements of dances and lodge meetings, the heavy waxed paper that loaves of bread had been wrapped in, the thinner waxed paper that had enclosed sandwiches, old envelopes, newspapers. Fingering its way along the curb, the wind set the bits of paper to dancing high in the air, so that a barrage of paper swirled into the faces of the people on the street. It even took time to rush into doorways and areaways and find chicken bones and pork-chop bones and pushed them along the curb.

It did everything it could to discourage the people walking along the street. It found all the dirt and dust and grime on the sidewalk and lifted it up so that the dirt got into their noses, making it difficult to breathe; the dust got into their eyes and blinded them; and the grit stung their skins. It wrapped newspaper around their feet entangling them until the people cursed deep in their throats, stamped their feet, kicked at the paper. The wind blew it back again and again until they were forced to stoop and dislodge the paper with their hands. And then the wind grabbed their hats, pried their scarves from around their necks, stuck its fingers inside their coat collars, blew their coats away from their bodies.

The wind lifted Lutie Johnson’s hair away from the back of her neck so that she felt suddenly naked and bald, for her hair had been resting softly and warmly against her skin. She shivered as the cold fingers of the wind touched the back of her neck, explored the sides of her head. It even blew her eyelashes away from her eyes so that her eyeballs were bathed in a rush of coldness and she had to blink in order to read the words on the sign swaying back and forth over her head.

Each time she thought she had the sign in focus, the wind pushed it away from her so that she wasn’t certain whether it said three rooms or two rooms. If it was three, why, she would go in and ask to see it, but if it said two—why, there wasn’t any point. Even with the wind twisting the sign away from her, she could see that it had been there for a long time because its original coat of white paint was streaked with rust where years of rain and snow had finally eaten the paint off down to the metal and the metal had slowly rusted, making a dark red stain like blood.

It was three rooms. The wind held it still for an instant in front of her and then swooped it away until it was standing at an impossible angle on the rod that suspended it from the building. She read it rapidly.

Three rooms, steam heat, parquet floors, respectable tenants. Reasonable.
Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning.

Select a novel or play and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

You may choose a work from the list below or another novel or play of comparable literary merit.

As I Lay Dying
The Awakening
Beloved
Bleak House
Cat’s Eye
The Cherry Orchard
The Color Purple
Crime and Punishment
The Crossing
The Crucible
A Doll House
Equus
A Farewell to Arms
Fences
The Glass Menagerie
The Golden Bowl
The Grapes of Wrath
The Hairy Ape
Heart of Darkness
Invisible Man
Jude the Obscure
The Kite Runner
Lady Windermere’s Fan
Macbeth
Madame Bovary
The Memory Keeper’s Daughter
Moby-Dick
The Namesake
Nineteen Eighty-four
Our Town
The Plague
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
A Prayer for Owen Meany
A Raisin in the Sun
Reservation Blues
Snow
A Streetcar Named Desire
Things Fall Apart
Waiting for Godot
Wise Blood
The Women of Brewster Place

STOP

END OF EXAM