

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2011 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 1

(Li-Young Lee's "A Story")

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and 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 Lee's use of literary devices to develop the complex relationship of the father and son. The essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide convincing readings of both the complex relationship and Lee's use of literary devices. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Textual references are apt and specific. Though they may not be error-free, these essays are perceptive in their analysis and demonstrate writing that is clear and sophisticated, and in the case of a score of 9, especially persuasive.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of Lee's use of literary devices to develop the complex relationship of the father and son. The essays are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the relationship and Lee's use of literary devices, and their analysis of the relationship of the father and son is less convincing. These essays demonstrate the student's ability to express ideas clearly, making references to the text, although they do not exhibit the same level of effective writing as the 9–8 responses. 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 Lee's use of literary devices to develop the relationship of the father and son but tend to be superficial in their analysis of the relationship. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their analysis of the relationship of the father and son or of Lee's use of literary devices may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These essays demonstrate some control of language, but the writing may be marred by surface errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 essays.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the poem. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant, or it may ignore the complexity of the relationship of the father and son or Lee's use of literary devices. Evidence from the poem may be slight or misconstrued, or the essays may rely on paraphrase only. The writing often demonstrates a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, accumulation of errors, or a focus that is unclear, inconsistent, or repetitive. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the student's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the poem. These essays may contain serious errors in grammar and mechanics. They may offer a complete misreading or be unacceptably brief. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the poem.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either left blank or are completely off topic.

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

Q 1

1A  
(1 of 4)

Li-Young Lee's poem entitled "A Story" poignantly depicts the complex relationship between a father and his son through the boy's ~~request~~ entreaties for a story. ~~Through~~ The speaker employs ~~both logical~~ emotional appeals as well as strategic literary devices to emphasize the ~~the~~ differing perspectives that exist between father and son. Through shifting points of view, purposeful structure, and ~~meaningful~~ meaningful diction, the speaker adds depth and emotion to the love shared by the two characters and illuminates a universal theme of present innocence and changing relationships over time.

Throughout "A Story", the speaker utilizes alternating points of view to accentuate the differences between the father and the son as well as the <sup>division</sup> ~~disparity~~ that exists within the father, who remains torn ~~is~~ in the middle of two realities. The son materializes as a five-year-old ~~boy~~ with "... a boy's supplication..." for a story. ~~From~~ From the boy's perspective, his father remains affectionately known as "... Baba...", a storyteller and source of entertainment; however, the man's desire to supply his son with amusement becomes



Q1

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

1A  
(2 of 4)

lost amid his immediate inability to "...come up with one." story. The image of "The man rub(bing) his chin, scratch(ing) his ear... soon he thinks, the boy / will give up on his father," evokes ~~fact~~ emotions of ~~some~~ lost opportunity and hopes unfulfilled, feelings the speaker utilizes to accentuate the contrast between the boy's ~~optimistic~~ ~~request~~ request and his father's response, a response that holds implications for their <sup>developing</sup> relationship.

Another significant element within "A Story" becomes the ~~juxtaposition~~ of purposeful juxtaposition of the man's immediate state and his ~~alternate~~ shifting, future point of view. While in a present sense ~~the~~ the man cannot recall a new story, "Already the man lives far ahead... sees / the day this boy will go." The man develops a troubling image of "...the boy packing his shirts... looking for his keys," and he subconsciously screams out, ~~demanding~~ ~~protesting~~ attempting to justify his silence and asking, "Am I a god that I should never disappoint?" ~~In reality,~~ such an inflammatory reaction to a plea for a story does not correlate with



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Q 1

practicality, but it does serve to portray the man's fear of one day losing his five-year-old to manhood, ~~regretting the loss~~ as he looks on, regretting one less story read, one less laugh solicited. The man's ~~father~~ view of the day his boy leaves involves pleas to tell his child one more story, and he laments, "~~the~~ Don't go! Hear the alligator story! The angel story.... You ~~is~~ laugh at the spider. Let me tell it!" This comparison of two ~~images~~ images of the man, the forgetful storyteller, and the ~~desperate~~ parent desperately in love with his son humanizes his character and allows ~~for~~ for an understanding of the relationship he shares with his son.

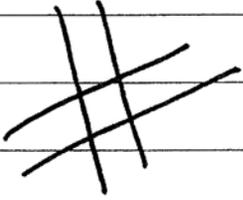
and selection of detail of Finally, the speaker's meaningful diction allows for the development of both characters as well as ~~an~~ the relationship they share. The boy's childlike "...Baba?" contrasts ~~sharply~~ sharply with ~~images~~ images of the same boy ~~is~~ "... packing his shirts... (and) looking for his tees..." while his father looks on, longing for the days when ~~his son~~ the name "Baba" = still defined



Q1

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HB role in HB son's life. As the speaker states, the ~~the~~ relationship between the man and HB son remains "... emotional... ~~the~~ (and) earthly..." rather than "... logical... (and) heavenly..." ~~the~~ Despite the father's trepidations about the future, the speaker succeeds in illustrating that both characters' emotions, from the "... boy's supplications..." to "... the father's love..." result in silence, and a silence based on trust, affection, and heartfelt love.



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Question 1 1B  
(1 of 3)

In the poem "A Story," the topic of coming of age is ~~been~~ heavily present. With this being present, the relationship between the father and the son instantly becomes complex. While the author never directly states the complexity of the relationship, it is clearly presented through techniques such as point of view and symbolic structure. From beginning to end, the reader is able to infer all of the issues that are present, along with the deep feelings, through the above techniques.

The story is told from a third person point of view, ~~which~~ automatically creating a scenario for the reader to evaluate, rather than having it told to them through first person. A very important aspect of the third person point of view is that it is omniscient and allows for the characters' thoughts, and even fears to be heard. The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father's fears of his little boy leaving come to life. For example, "Don't go! / Hear the alligator story! . . . Let me kill it!" primarily shows a scenario in which one day his son will no longer wish to hear stories and will be leaving his side. The fact that the father plays this scenario out in his head, makes it come to life for the reader and allows them to see how traumatizing this experience would be for the father. Through this simple action of writing the character's thoughts and dialogue, the writer reveals the deep love the father contains for his boy, but also



The nagging fear that one day he will ~~not~~ no longer have his little boy. "But the boy is packing his shirts, he is looking for keys." This is a typical description of when a child, now an adult, is preparing to adventure into adulthood and leave their parents' side. It is very apparent that the man fears this frightful scene with every fiber of his being because he knows he will not be wanted by his son any longer. At the moment, he has his son and his son wants, and even needs, him, and this means the world to the father. Unfortunately, though, he is failing to do the one thing his son yearns for him to do, tell him a story. As the boy sits in his lap and begs for a story, the man cannot help but sit with fear as thoughts and scenarios run through his head of his biggest fear becoming reality, the day his son leaves. The author's ability to share the father's thoughts and even create images from the future make this fear apparent to the reader and truly bring out the troubles that the father is having within his own mind.

As the reader can tell, the poem contains a very symbolic structure, starting with the present situation, then going into a future scenario of the boy leaving when he is grown up, and finally coming back to the present and reflecting upon what is happening now. As previously stated, the poem does contain a central theme of coming



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# 1 1B  
(3 of 3)

of age and reveals the father's fear of coping with this issue when the time comes. Fortunately the son is only five years old at the moment, but this does not keep the father from dwelling on the day in the future. At the moment, the father is unable to come up with a story to please his son. This simple action leads the father into fearful thoughts of the day his son leaves, and then he will finally contain stories to please him but he will not want them. This is clearly symbolic of the fact that he is already losing his son because he cannot please him momentarily. As the poem continues, it eventually works into its final stage of reflection where the equation ~~that~~ "a boy's supplications/ and a father's love add up to silence." is stated. Here, the narrator shares how while the boy is unpleased and unsatisfied, the father thinks of his love for his son and how he fears the day he will no longer have to worry about satisfying him. Overall, the man's love for the boy and his inability to tell him a satisfying story mix to create unending thoughts. The author does an excellent job of including the reader in these tormenting issues through his use of structure and point of view.

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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.

1 1C  
(1 of 2)

There are many ways in which the poet conveys the complex relationship between a father and his son. The poet does this by using many different literary techniques.

One literary technique the poet used is the order of events in which all this takes place. At the beginning of the poem, the little boy is begging his father to tell a new story to him, not the same one he always tells. Then, beginning in line 10, the father jumps ahead to when the boy is all grown up and about to leave home. Once again, beginning at line 19, the boy is little again wanting to hear a new story told by his father.

Another literary device the poet uses would be the difference in the points of view between the father and the son. The little boy simply wants to hear a new story from his father. His innocence



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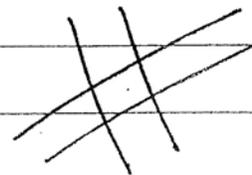
Write in the box the number of the question you are answer on this page as it is designated in the exam.

2c  
(2 of 2)

plays a big role in the guilt his father feels. The father is upset of the fact that "in a room full of in a world of stories, he can recall not one." (Line ~~6~~ 6-8) The father is afraid the little boy will give up on him, whereas the little boy is only worried about hearing another story.

The last literary device used throughout this poem would be the comparisons of thoughts going through the father's mind. Line 20-23 states, "It is an emotional rather than logical equation, an earthly rather than heavenly one, which posits that a boy's supplications and a father's love add up to silence." He is hurt emotionally that he has let the boy down.

"A Story" written by Li-Young Lee is a great poem in which the complex relationship between a father and son is revealed in a very interesting way.



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**2011 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 1**

**Overview**

This question asked students to read carefully the poem “A Story” by contemporary poet Li-Young Lee and to write a well-developed essay analyzing how the poet conveys the complex relationship of the father and the son through the use of literary devices such as point of view and structure.

With its emphasis on “the complex relationship,” the question was designed to lead students to consider the father’s mixed feelings about the present and future connections between himself and his son. The prompt asked students to consider how the poet creates multiple dimensions of meaning through the use of literary elements and to develop an interpretation of the poem through analysis of the connection between technique and meaning.

**Sample: 1A**

**Score: 9**

This persuasive essay offers an astute, on-target analysis of Li-Young Lee’s poem and its touching father–son relationship. A clear opening sets up the argument by observing that the poem’s speaker “employs emotional appeals as well as strategic literary devices to emphasize the differing perspectives that exist between father and son.” Developing topics announced in the introduction, the essay proceeds to show how the poem uses shifts in viewpoint to emphasize the “differences between the father and the son as well as the division that exists within the father, who remains torn in the middle of two realities.” With thoroughness and attention to the text, the essay stays focused as it moves into a discussion of “the purposeful juxtaposition of the man’s immediate state and his shifting, future point of view.” Here and elsewhere, there is no question that the student has read the poem critically, understands it thoroughly, and writes about it effectively. Near the end, the essay discusses the speaker’s “meaningful diction,” and explores the significance — not merely the presence — of the poem’s imagery and detail. The last sentence, which characterizes the complexity of the father’s emotions (“a silence based on trust, affection, and heartfelt love”), is a final example of the fine distinctions that clearly placed this essay at the top of the score range.

**Sample: 1B**

**Score: 6**

This essay presents a reasonable discussion of how Lee uses literary devices to convey a complex father–son relationship. After an introduction that promises to focus on “techniques [*sic*] such as point of view and symbolic structure,” a long paragraph on point of view follows. Here the essay mixes analysis and paraphrase, patiently dissecting the use of a point of view that “allows for the characters [*sic*] thoughts, and even fears to be heard.” Though evidence for assertions in this paragraph is sometimes oblique (“The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father’s fears of his little boy leaving come to life”), it generally attempts to come to terms with the situation described. The paragraph that follows repeats the pattern. There is little evidence for the idea that the scene’s shifting from present to future and back to the present is “symbolic,” and there is more repetition and retelling. The interpretation of the poem is thus limited, and when the essay comments in the conclusion that “[t]he author does an excellent [*sic*] job of including the reader in these tormenting issues,” we are inclined to agree without feeling wholly convinced. Still, the essay does sustain a reasonable analysis of the poem throughout, and it does so with clear writing and references to the text. These features earned it a score of 6.

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2011 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 1 (continued)**

**Sample: 1C**

**Score: 3**

This essay represents a less than adequate attempt to engage Lee’s sophisticated, layered poem. The hesitant opening sentences (“There are many ways in which the poet conveys the complex relationship. . . . The poet does this by using many different literary techniques”) provide an early indication of the essay’s critical limitations, and the second paragraph does little more than to establish “the order of events in which all this takes place.” The essay is further marred by weak control of language: “innocense [*sic*] plays a big role in the guilt his father feels” and “The father is upset of the fact” that he cannot recall a story. Although these are certainly defensible readings, in the absence of development they become the essay’s central ideas — and, as such, they are insufficient for what is meant to be a persuasive analysis. The second page introduces a final technique (“comparison of thoughts”) but does not analyze it, and it concludes with general statements. The essay’s lack of interpretive range and effective writing limited its score to a 3.