Question 3
(Surroundings)

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 well-focused and persuasive analysis of how cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Using apt and specific textual support, these essays analyze how the character responds to, or is shaped by, his or her surroundings. Although they may not be error-free, these essays make a strong case for their interpretation and discuss the literary work with significant insight and understanding. 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 cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. They analyze how the character responds to, or is shaped by, her or his surroundings. Although these responses have insight and understanding, their analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, or less specific in supporting detail than that of the 9–8 essays. 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, but they tend to be superficial or thinly developed in analysis. They often rely on plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Although these responses display an attempt to discuss how a character is shaped by his or her surroundings and how these surroundings illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole, they may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the character or the influence of the surroundings, and support from the text may be too general. Although these essays demonstrate adequate control of language, they 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 how cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. The analysis may be partial, unsupported, or irrelevant, and the essays may reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the character’s relations to her or his surroundings. They may not develop an analysis of the significance of the surroundings for the work as a whole, or they may rely on plot summary alone. These essays may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors; they may lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

2–1 Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Remarks may be presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the text.

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Question 3 (continued)

0  These essays are completely off topic or inadequate; there may be some mark, or a drawing, or a brief reference to the task.

—  These essays are entirely blank.
In literature as in biology, the mantra of form and function heights over a reader's appreciation of a writer's choices and how they contribute to a work. In Tim O'Brien's collection of short stories, _The Things They Carried_, the narrative, the experience of readers, and the alternately Vietnam and modern day settings shape the author's worldview and reflect his own experience in the 1960s and 1970s war. The short stories within this work, "On the Rainy River" and "Speaking of Courage", set at the American - Canadian border and the a Vietnamese field of exorcism respectively, reestablish the overarching ambiguity, flux, and uncertainty that characterizes O'Brien's protagonist (himself) and reinforce the author's message about the relativity of truth.

In "On the Rainy River", a recently drafted, teenage O'Brien stands at both a literal and a moral crossroads, facing a physical division, the river between America and Canada, that represents a life - determining choice. Raised in a mainstream 20th century American world, O'Brien desires only to escape from the horrible sentence that is his military conscription to Vietnam. He flees to the border, entertaining
nation of a life as a fugitive, an illegal enigmatic, but
when he arrives at his decision point, his
internal conflict is matched by his external
setting. The river he faces swells in premon,
at once a confluence and a dispersion in
resolute, unpredictable mess of benefits to
some of its amphibian inhabitants and a fatal
debtiment to others, an ambiguous mixture that
mirrors O'Brien's confliction in that moment. The weather
dramatizes this decision to flee or remain, as the
rain pours down, obscuring the point at which he
could cross from one life to another. In the face of
such a physical and geographical manifestation of his
alternatives, O'Brien opts for what he then understood
to be the moral highroad, the life that could
make his parents proud. However, the rain and
carriage of the tides river a crucially foretold on
the even deeper ambiguity and loss of moral clarity
that characterized his experience in Vietnam.

In the later story, O'Brien recounts the story of
one of his companions, Norman Bowker, from Bowker's
own reminiscences—"Speaking of Courage" alternate
between retelling of one of Bowker's most unforgettable
Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

continued

moment in the war and Bower's reaction on that
moment in the present day. In Vietnam, Bower's and
O'Brien's crew set up camp in what they thought
was a safe location - adjacent to a Vietnamese
wasteland, a field of putrid exceptions. However, the illus-

continued

in the fashion of the war feels tense, he is overwhelmed by
muck and muck, and corrupting effects of the war, like the
waste, abounds in Vietnam the morally corrupting image
of his friend ships, wounded into the dusty to his death for
the group of Bower. The setting's audience perfectly reflects
Bower's mental state and the influence of the war. Grisly,

continued

as he
from bad literally allowances his bound to escape and
metaphorically struggle to maintain a grasp on the ay
real goodness in the war. The image of Bower, like
the horror of the war, reinforces the twisted grim and

continued

unmitigated brutality American soldiers faced in
Vietnam. The setting connotes "there are exceptions"
almost inhuman expectations of living (abandonment of
hygiene or basic camp requirements) and hopelessness,
both characteristic of Bower and descriptive of the war
at large. Narration of the Vietnamese feel is implied
Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

with the account of Bunker after the war, driving in a loop around a lake for hours, the challenge of transitioning from war to domestic life manifests itself in this juxtaposition of settings: a peaceful field v. a clean lake, a cleaned paved highway v. a twisting, foreign jungle, civilization v. savagery.

Finally, the alternation between geographical settings of mundane suburban life and homogeneous war brutality leads O'Brien to illustrate the nature of truth is relative. Just as Bunker experienced his moral and literal transition, so too did the reader. The factual truth is revealed in O'Brien's hesitation on the river and Bunker's loan in Vietnam. He thus demonstrates that stay-truth, a preservation of the spirit of what he engraved, sometimes trump facts in importance and priority, a key message of his work, The Things They Came.
3) It's often hard to place oneself in another's shoes; it's even harder to think about things as a newcomer when those things have been around you your whole life. In the novel *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, the monster is like a newborn baby with the mind of an adult; everything he sees he sees new. This loves him very poorly (figuratively) of his surroundings. Mary Shelley uses parts of setting like weather and the natural environment to shape the psychological or moral...
traits with the tone they give off and the events that happen involving them.

When the monster is first created, he is welcomed (or rather unwelcomed) to his world by not only an unloving creator but also storm and bad weather. Right from the beginning, he is given a negative tone to life. This quickly changes when he finds a forest filled with life and a family living to the fullest. The monster now sees life as positive and begins to learn all of the great things he can from it. When all of the plants die and animals go into hiding for winter, the monster sees winter death, and is again filled with misery, the weather's changing tones allude to the monster's changing feelings towards life and what the weather has to bring. When winter is over and spring begins again the monster now has the knowledge, knowledge of time and weather has filled him with almost more compassion and understanding. What the family does during the different seasons also shapes the monster as they look out for each other in bad weather and work hard during good. He learns what it means to act as family and understands what might be a foreshadow of love. The monster learns what he wants to be happy and grows into a rounder character with wants and needs similar to humans, because he watches the seasons and the family and grows in understanding. When he finally gains the courage to seek his maker, he is covered by nightfall and doesn't know how he ends up killing a family member of his.
Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

**Frankenstein.** He learned these loose morals by watching the family fall apart and by showing him (even though he helped them with firewood) and by accepting the world to work like the brute force of nature. The setting is also the bog and swamp-like areas of England alluding to the dark feelings the monster has towards people and his need for want to not be alone in the wild. This setting also contrasts to the beautiful lake shore of Geneva, where Frankenstein had a villa and used the villa to escape his problems involving the monster, who is more like the moors. Whenever the weather is raining the monster feels the power to strike against his creator and being left in the rain gave him his hatred towards people who escape it. Watching the animals die during bad weather and seeing humans escape also aid in him to want to be more human with a companion than an animal alone in the dark wilderness. The monster has an unbalanced physique and state and skewed morals, and they can only be blamed on his lack of a proper teacher and his being thrust forcefully into the horrible world of being under the power of the weather and seasons.

The Frankenstein monster had no parents or guardians to help him feed when he felt the first glimmers of hunger, he was alone in the wilderness and only knew what it and how people react to it could teach him. The inconsistency of the seasons...
led him to an incongruity in his psychological state and the brutality of the nature he was put in led him to British morals. Mary Shelley successfully captured the true feelings of being completely new to something and having to start with the basics and take in everything from your environment you see.
In the novel 1984 by George Orwell, the protagonist, Winston Smith, lives in a society dominated by the Party (the totalitarian regime in control of the area) and Big Brother (an ubiquitous and mysterious figure that is supposedly the head of the Party). The immense degree of control taken by the government, along with his thoughtless thoughtfulness, shape Winston into a paranoid and extremely pessimistic person. Winston's pessimism reflects Orwell's pessimistic attitude towards totalitarianism and the effectiveness of it.

Winston inhabits a society in which even the thoughts of its members are monitored. If anyone is suspected of defiance against the Party, even mindlessly, the government intervenes and eliminates the threat. This extreme degree of control by the government, coupled with the threat of torture or execution, leads Winston to drastically increase control over society in order to do that he most constantly monitor his mind and instincts. This suppression of ideas is always conflicting with Winston's thoughtfulness, as a result he must be even more careful to maintain alertness. Orwell uses this conflict to express his opinion that the idea that a government with too much influence over its constituents will eliminate individuality and intellect.

Winston's strongest character trait is his pessimism; it is constant throughout the novel. Winston's hopelessness in his surroundings, displays Orwell's idea that totalitarianism leaves no chance for change from within. Orwell was also bringing attention to his belief that totalitarian regimes should be challenged by other nations, in an attempt to preserve freedom and equality.
Question 3

Overview

Students were asked to select a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then they were prompted to analyze, in a well-organized essay, how surroundings affect the character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole.

This question intended to guide students to begin with an argument about how surroundings influence character; in the words quoted from Pauline Hopkins, “surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency.” Students were invited to focus on the way setting impacts, alters, or forms the character and highlights the meaning of the text. By asking how “surroundings shape psychological or moral traits,” the question directed students’ attention away from the way characters’ actions and events respond to surroundings, and instead to the connection between outer and inner worlds. By identifying “cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings,” the question intended to invite students to consider surroundings broadly in relation to a cultural milieu, a physical terrain or space, or a geographical or national territory. In asking students to analyze how surroundings illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole, the question directed them to broaden their analysis by relating the character’s response to her or his surroundings to the central themes and meanings of the text.

Sample: 3A
Score: 9

This thorough, sophisticated, and persuasive essay on Tim O’Brien’s The Things They Carried responds directly to the prompt by integrating surroundings (in this case, geographical settings) with the author’s world view. Focusing on two stories that relate distinct stages in the narrator’s involvement with the Vietnam War, the essay presents a wealth of relevant detail. The essay explains how the physical setting of the first story is formative (“the rain and confusion of the river actually foreshadow the even deeper ambiguity and loss of moral clarity”) and how the physical setting of the second, “[g]rotesque, murky, and corrupting,” leads to an imperative to escape, although there is no escape, as the essay makes clear (“after the war, driving in a loop around a lake for hours”). At each stage the essay confidently presents cogent literary analysis that goes well beyond summarizing, and the last paragraph logically concludes that, to O’Brien, “story-truth … sometimes trumps fact-truth” — an inspired insight into the worlds of war and of language.

Sample: 3B
Score: 6

This essay on Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein chooses a work that fits the prompt especially well, focusing on the effect of natural settings, in particular the effects of weather and seasons on the character that the essay refers to as “the monster.” The essay makes headway in the second paragraph with reasonable analysis and clever language (“he is welcomed [or rather unwelcomed]”). It sustains its theme, referring to scenes in the forest, England, and “the beautiful lake shores of Geneva.” More specificity about these settings is possible, but even without such detail — rewarding the essay for what it does well — the essay develops the conflict between the creator and monster and the importance of that conflict to the work as a whole, as evidenced by the identification of the monster’s wish “to be more human with a companion than an animal alone in the dark wilderness.” The handling of technique is uneven (“the tone they give off”; “a foreshadow of love”) and the language less controlled than that of essays scored a 7.
Sample: 3C
Score: 4

This essay on George Orwell’s 1984 offers only a partial analysis of the text, unsupported by detail. Drawing a connection between “[t]he immense degree of control taken by the government” — in other words, the novel’s political and psychological surroundings — and Winston’s paranoia and pessimism, the essay establishes a reasonable foundation. But the partial development and reliance on plot summary limit the essay’s range and persuasiveness. Winston’s relationship to his totalitarian surroundings allows Orwell “to express the idea that a government with too much influence over its constituents, will eliminate individuality [sic] and intellectualism” — a point well worth expansion through references to plot and character. While organized into three paragraphs, the discussion remains undeveloped and superficial, linking totalitarianism with pessimism in a way that feels formulaic. The essay nonetheless displays more control of the elements of composition than would typically be the case in an essay scored lower.