

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

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.

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

3

In literature as in biology, the mantra of form fits function ^{- applies and} heightens ~~is~~ ^{is} 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 reading, and the alternately Vietnam and modern day settings ~~reflect~~ shape the author's world view and reflect his ^{own} ~~message~~ 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 excursions respectively, establish the overarching ambiguity, ~~flux~~ constant flux, and uncertainty that characterize ^{the experience of} O'Brien's protagonist (himself) and reinforce the author's message about the relativity of truth.

In "On the Rainy River", a recently drafted, teenaged O'Brien stands at both a literal and a moral crossroads, facing a physical division, ~~at~~ 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 assignment to Vietnam. ~~As~~ He flees to the border, entertaining the



3

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notion of a life as a fugitive, an illegal emigrant, but when he arrives at his ~~last~~ decision point, his internal confusion is matched by his external setting. The river he faces swirls in ^{torrents} ~~torrents~~, at once a confluence and a dispersion, an inscutable, unpredictable mess of benefits to some of its amphibian inhabitants and a fatal detriment to others, an ambiguous mixture that mirrors O'Brien's confusion at that moment. The weather dramatizes his 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 would make his parents proud. However, the rain and confusion of the ~~river~~ river actually foreshadow the even deeper ambiguity and loss of moral clarity ~~that~~ that ^{later} characterize 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" alternates between retelling of one of Bowker's ~~his~~ most unforgettable

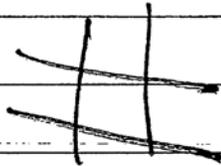


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with ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{the} the account of Bowker after the war, driving in a loop ~~one~~ around a lake for hours. The challenge of transitioning from war to domestic life manifests itself in this juxtaposition of settings: a feces field v. a clean lake, a clear, paved highway v. a twisty, foreign jungle, civilization v. savagery.

new \rightarrow Finally, the attenuation between geographical settings of mundane suburban life and homily war brutality ^{and the rainy river setting} leads O'Brien to illustrate ^{that} the nature of truth is relative. Just as ~~his experience~~ ^{his} moral and liberal ~~setting~~ surroundings grew murky and ambiguous, O'Brien lost hold of the factual truth in retelling his hesitation on the river and Bowker's loss in Vietnam. He thus demonstrates that story-truth, a preservation of the spirit of what he ^{recounts} ~~describes~~ sometimes ^{trumps} ~~trumps~~ fact-truth in importance and priority, a key message of his work, the things they carried.

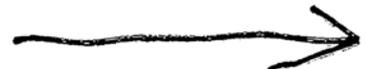


3B
(1 of 4)

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

question 2 at the top
question 3 at the bottom

3) It's often hard to place oneself in a nother's shoes; ~~It's~~ 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 ~~ad~~ mind of an adult; every thing he sees he sees new. This leaves him ~~very perced~~ ^{in the hands} (figuratively) of his surroundings. Mary Shelley uses ~~parts~~ ^{elements} of setting like weather and ^{the} natural environment to shape the psychosological or moral



Question
3 continued

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traits ^{of the monster} 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 this 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 what death is 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 a family and understands what might be a foreshadow of love. The monster learns what he wants to be happy and grows into a rounded character with wants and needs similar to humans, because he watched the seasons and the family and grew in understanding. When he finally gains the courage to seek his maker, he is covered by night fall and ^{almost} in a panic ends up killing a family member of his



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question
3 continued

creator ~~the~~ Frankenstein. He learned these loose morals by watching the family fall apart and ~~the~~ shun 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~~ ^{driving his} want to not be alone in the ~~the~~ wild. This setting also contrasts to the beautiful lake shores 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 toward people who escape it. ~~Watching~~ Watching the animals die during bad weather and seeing humans escape ~~also aids in~~ ^{the} ~~drives him~~ to ~~what~~ he want to be more human with a companion than an animal alone in the dark wilderness. The monster has an unbalanced psychological 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 ~~glimpse~~ glimpses 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



3 continued

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led him to an inconsistency in his psychological state and the brutality of the nature he was put in led him ~~to~~ to brutish 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.



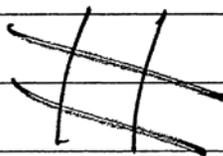
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3

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 ~~the~~ Big Brother (an ubiquitous and mysterious figure, that is supposedly the head of the Party). The immense degree of control taken by the government, ~~and~~ the along with his ~~thoughtful~~ thoughtful nature, shape Winston into a paranoid and extremely pessimistic person. Winston's pessimism reflects Orwell's pessimistic attitude towards totalitarianism ~~and the attractiveness of it~~.

Winston inhabits a society in which, even the thoughts of its members are monitored. If ~~any~~ anyone is ~~is~~ suspected of defiance against the Party, even minutely, the government ~~is~~ intervenes and eliminates the threat. This ~~is~~ extreme degree of control by the government, coupled with the threat of torture or execution, leads Winston ~~into~~ to ~~increase~~ ^{drastically} increase control over himself; in order to do that he must constantly monitor his most instinctive urges. This suppression of ideas is always conflicting with Winston's thoughtfulness, as a result he must be even more careful. ~~His endless alertness and~~ 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 intellectualism.

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 ~~bringing~~ bringing attention to ~~the~~ his belief, that totalitarian regimes should be challenged by other nations, ~~in an~~ in an effort to preserve freedom ~~and equality~~.



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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.

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Question 3 (continued)

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.