



## AP<sup>®</sup> English Language 2001 Sample Student Responses

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Question 2

DDDD,

Oliver digs deep into a world most only inhabit in their dreams, a world ~~where~~ in which everything comes alive, a world in which the sun is so bright, the grass so green, life so filled to the brim that the ~~only reasonable response~~ <sup>we are</sup> is an overwhelming <sup>long</sup> fear and excitement—at once one emotion.

Although she writes, "Is not this not also frightening?" The reader is unconvinced that she herself is frightened. She is the same woman who wrote gratuitously about the owl's "insatiable craving for the taste of brains."

The author's response to nature is strong and vivid. It is ~~at once~~ part of her every day life for "there is only one world" and <sup>at the same time</sup> a secret world—a secret garden, if you will, having nothing to do with her own "becalmed, intelligent, sunny life." Oliver wedded instinct with modern society's natural tendencies. She indulges in feeling "the stark, pure <sup>beauty of</sup> feeling of an owl ~~taken~~ She is so caught by the power ~~within~~ that she is overcome with "immobilizing happiness." It seems she too "would eat the whole world." She does let us peak into reality every so often and the reader is taken in and out of Oliver's unworldly as if following <sup>her</sup> in a dream that she wakes from momentarily and then falls back into.

→

## Question 2

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There is something too close about Oliver and her roses, her owl, something so sensual, that it at once creates an awkward, indulgent feeling. Like Iblis's relationship to his cat, Saha in Colette's The Cat, Oliver seems in love — in lust with the world and its "sweetness so palpable and excessive." Her experience in the garden, her feeling of being taken over so thoroughly by nature that she "dropt[ed] to the sand and [cannot] move" is like the climax of her experience with nature. The Erotic so permeates her <sup>writing</sup> relation to nature, that the whole passage can ~~very~~ almost be looked at as a sexual encounter. All the masculine savaging, insatiable hunger embodied in the owl and the roses consume the woman in a wonderful pleasure unmatched by ~~any mortal~~ any ~~mere~~ orgasm a mere mortal could produce in her. She is It is as if she has been impregnated by Zeus. It is as if she were Leda, only her Swan is an owl. ~~None the less~~ Her description of nature bears resemblance to Yates's poem, though it is much more subtle. It is original too, in that she describes the encounter from the woman's view.

Owls, ~~and~~ according to Mary Oliver, represent the terrible ~~aspects~~ aspects of nature. It is a nature that "eats" (23), devours in fact, and one that kills without remorse. And yet she acknowledges that nature also contains the beautiful flowered fields that "immobilize" (53) one with their loveliness and sweet smell. Nature contains both ~~the~~ awesome terror and awesome joy, and this is the contradiction that this passage addresses.

One of the most obvious techniques that Oliver uses is simple massing of details - nouns and adjectives piled and heaped on top of each other, clearly emphasizing Oliver's ~~point~~ point that nature is massive, for good or bad. The great horned owl kills eight separate kinds of animal (25-22), while the fields of poppies and lupines fill the air with an ~~at~~ abundance of sweet smells (45-48). The fact that ~~the~~ such ~~great~~ great destruction and beauty exist in nature furthers Oliver's theme.

At the same time, Oliver avoids concrete detail. She will enumerate effects of nature, but she will not, <sup>in general,</sup> describe precisely what an owl or flower looks like, except in terms of other natural things, such as moths (7) or sand dunes (44). Something that is massive and that can only be described in terms of itself takes on unique properties in the mind of one who considers it, and nature, in this story, does just that, becoming still more ~~or~~ grand.

In addition, Oliver ~~the~~ furthers her description of nature ~~the~~ through the use of repetition. She repeatedly uses "it" or "they" to begin sentences, which adds to the amassment of details described above. ~~Similarly~~ Similarly, she ~~is~~ undergoes



a series of very powerful effects when thinking about the fields of flowers ~~which~~ (48-49), and uses "I'm" to link them together. Each of these uses of language evoke images of nature as something that takes a powerful effect ~~on~~ much as a hammer does. ~~with~~

The imagery ~~in~~ in this piece adds the final touch to its effect. The great horned owl is characterized by images of night, twilight, and blackness, while the flowers are associated with "red and pink and white." It is true that other ~~the~~ colors appear in the descriptions of other owls, but those owls represent less extreme aspects of nature. The focus of the passage is on the extreme of terror and the extreme of beauty, and on the fact that the unimaginable intensity of both makes nature as a whole ~~the~~ "terrible" and "frightening" (54).

In short, nature is characterized ~~as~~ ~~with~~ as vast, and as powerful, and as ~~is~~ very two-sided, but always as mysterious. It is the contradictory and mysterious combination of the owl and the flower ~~in~~ in nature that, according to Oliver, makes it so magnificent, and causes her complex feelings.

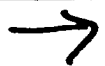
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LLL,

Oliver recognizes the overwhelming power and mystery of nature visible in this passage about the great horned owl. ~~the~~ This concept is carried over to the reader by the ~~effective~~ effective use of detail and syntax. Through these rhetorical techniques the amazing complexity of nature is portrayed as well as its overwhelming ~~influence~~ influence on humans.

The detail paints a picture of ~~the owl~~ the owl in nature with its "heavy, crisp, breathy snapping". The detail is what gives this passage so much of its ~~effectiveness~~ effectiveness. It portrays nature with all of its "sheer collicious glory of the death-bringer". ~~The owl~~ Nature's ~~power~~ power is evident, and ~~the~~ the human's ~~place~~ place in this great chain is diminished by "a sweetness so palpable and excessive, that, before it, I'm ~~start~~ struck". Nature is an unexplainable force that humans cannot control or predict as this passage ~~so~~ so effectively ~~depicts~~ depicts. This specific detail gives realism to the ~~the~~ passage and allows the reader to feel and see "the headless bodies" and the "white gleam of its feathers". Through this detail and imagery every aspect of nature is ~~shown~~ portrayed in its ~~own~~ reality and raw facts. The ~~owl's~~ "scream of the rabbit" compared to the "owl's arguing song" help to portray an image of the great complexity that is so characteristic of nature. Every detail adds to ~~the~~ Oliver's ~~general~~ acceptance of nature being a force inexplicable in its complexity and splendor. Death



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2 LLL2

is portrayed not as cruelty, but as "the mystery" a central theme.

"There is only one world", this short, simple sentence ~~is~~ is ~~emphasized~~ emphasized greatly <sup>by</sup> its location. It conveys Oliver's realization of the complexity and power that she does not understand, but feels around her. The syntax is varied throughout the passage corresponding with her own mixed feelings. "which wafts and hangs everywhere" these sentences are structured by her own train of thought and flow <sup>with</sup> ~~as~~ ~~the~~ her descriptions of nature. "They are the pure... They are swift", the parallel structure used throughout the passage draws emphasis to the various descriptions, such as the nature of the great horned owl. The rhetorical questions also are effective in depicting Oliver's uncertainty in the complexity of nature. "Is this not also frightening?" These questions force the reader to ~~reconsider~~ consider the situation of human beings in nature, a topic she is also struggling to understand. ~~The~~ The syntax effectively conveys the power and complexity of nature. It succeeds in ~~presenting~~ paralleling Oliver's feelings of doubt dealing with human's place in nature, as well as her own personal questions.

Nature as Oliver depicts it is too complex for a simple analysis or conclusion. Humans do not understand everything about nature, and cannot ~~control~~ control every aspect of nature. The mysterious →

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LL-3

quality is what is so amazing about it.  
Oliver ~~portr~~ portrays this mystery through  
her ~~exos~~ use of details and syntax to  
describe this image of nature.