Question 1

Sample Identifier: E
Score: 9

- Clearly identifies Oliver's central theme in opening paragraph ("...the invaluable nature of sentiment and the endurance of family.")
- Second paragraph begins slowly ("...Oliver's use of language is very literal..."), but the essay soon gains momentum ("...what it means to make the wise decision...between what is practical and what is abstractly and subtly meaningful.")
- Notes the nuances in the women speaking slowly while they are discussing "something that is not yet happening."
- Deftly analyzes the shifts within the poem
- Has a number of apt references to the text
- Has a number of sophisticated sentences ("The love and toil of generations past...is profoundly human and emotional.")
- A consistently persuasive analysis throughout the essay

Sample Identifier: F
Score: 8

- Consistent and effective control over language and ideas throughout the essay
- Makes an interesting case for the different levels of relationship presented in the poem: the relationship between the two women, the family and the tree, and the tree as a "thread."
- A number of moments of insight ("...the tree transcends pragmatism..."; "...a critical part of the family, holding them together in an unrelenting world.")
- Analyzes symbols and metaphors effectively
- Develops own metaphors to support analysis (the tree as an "unruly resident")
- Writing is confident and follows through on the direction established in the opening paragraph

Sample Identifier: B
Score: 7

- Loose opening, but second paragraph shows more development than a 6
- First sentence is a fragment, but this is a stylistic choice and not an indication of the student's ability
- Effective use of quotes throughout the essay in support of argument
- Focuses on the relationship between the women; perhaps a bit speculative at times ("Most likely a widow..."; "...she also has the desire to be a good role model...") but not problematic to the entire analysis
- Analyzes the structure of the poem ("Line 15 holds a clear shift...")
- Well organized without being formulaic
- A clear sense of the generations and the tree's role as the connective element of the generations ("...the black walnut tree metaphorically connects the three generations...")
- Some unevenness in composition, but the analysis is still reasonable and clear

Sample Identifier: H
Score: 6

- Opening begins in a promising manner with a reasonable thesis
- Second paragraph uses extensive quotes, at times leaving the text to speak for itself while at other times providing explicit analysis ("...it [the tree] symbolizes the pride of heritage...")
- Reasonable analysis throughout, with several moments of insight ("...an intricate relationship between an old "Black Walnut Tree" to "two women" both rooted deep in the earth and past...")
- Competent writing, but not necessarily sophisticated, and even choppy at times (..."the imagery of 'two women' trying to lessen the weight of debt while knowing any profits are hard to find.")
- Too often direct quotations stand in place of analysis; the quotes are well- chosen, but the student sometimes to explicitly analyze the selected text
- Could be more effectively organized

Sample Identifier: C
Score: 5

- Addresses both parts of prompt, although reduces it to a simple debate that is resolved by the nature of the tree as symbol
- Plausible reading of the poem ("...the speaker and her mother relay...rationalizations for removing the tree," but the "...family heritage which is tied in the trees [*sic*] roots is much more important...")
- Touches on some specific points but then moves on without much development, leading to a superficial analysis
- Focuses primarily on one literary device, symbolism, and does not offer much analysis of any other device
- Writing is clear, but unsophisticated

Sample Identifier: G
Score: 4

- Starts off promising with some insight, but does not fully address the elements raised in the thesis ("...emphasis and imagery...")
- Second paragraph focuses on the issues related to the mortgage, which appears to be what the student meant by emphasis ("Money, and most specifically mortgage, is talked about often.")
- Generally competent writing, though not sophisticated ("They are strapped for cash..."; "The night after discussing to be rid of the tree...")
- More organization would improve the essay
- Needs work on poetic devices as the essay focuses almost exclusively on money
- Quotes are included, but mostly in the service of paraphrase
- Ineffective conclusion

Sample Identifier: M
Score: 3

- Recognition of the literary devices personification and imagery, but does not convincingly discuss the effect of those devices ("Oliver uses personification...to help the readers imagine the bond the family shares..."; "Oliver uses imagery to help the readers imagine the relationship with the tree.")
- Inept writing ("...family debates on..."; "The author added this imagery..."; "...this quote is stated because the family needs the money...")
- This essay tries to deal with the poem more than a 2 does, but falls short in analysis
- Repetition of the idea that the tree represents "the" (singular) father
- Mentions the "effect," "mood," or "tone," but doesn't specify what any of them are

Sample Identifier: I
Score: 2

- Simplistic and brief summary of the poem
- Awkward, immature writing, with several errors ("The tree has been on this land for so long."; "As the women thinks [sic] about it..."; "The nusance [sic] of the tree
- Lacks any real development of ideas beyond the basic point that the tree is more valuable than financial gain
- Needs to expand on the "blood" and "nusance" [sic] symbols in order to raise to the level of 3

Sample Identifier: D
Score: 1

- Unacceptably brief
- Confuses *speculation* of the tree possibly falling down with *certainty* ("It also [is] about to fall down in the next storm.")
- Second and third paragraphs are merely summaries using embedded text