

Mock Reading: Question 1 - Poetry 2015

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following poem by Caribbean writer Derek Walcott, the speaker recalls a childhood experience of visiting an elderly woman storyteller. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, discuss the speaker's recollection and analyze how Walcott uses poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience.

XIV

With the frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin,
the speckled road, scored with ruts, smelling of mold,
twisted on itself and reentered the forest
Line where the dasheen¹ leaves thicken and folk stories begin.
5 Sunset would threaten us as we climbed closer
to her house up the asphalt hill road, whose yam vines
wrangled over gutters with the dark reek of moss,
the shutters closing like the eyelids of that mimosa²
called Ti-Marie; then—lucent as paper lanterns,
10 lamplight glowed through the ribs, house after house—
there was her own lamp at the black twist of the path.
There's childhood, and there's childhood's aftermath.
She began to remember at the minute of the fireflies,
to the sound of pipe water banging in kerosene tins,
15 stories she told to my brother and myself.
Her leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean.
The luck that was ours, those fragrant origins!
Her head was magnificent, Sidone. In the gully of her voice
shadows stood up and walked, her voice travels my shelves.
20 She was the lamplight in the stare of two mesmerized boys
still joined in one shadow, indivisible twins.

¹ dasheen: tropical plant with large leaves

² mimosa: tropical plant whose leaves close or droop when touched or shaken

"XIV" from MIDSUMMER by Derek Walcott. Copyright © 1984 by Derek Walcott.
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AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION 2015 SCORING GUIDELINES

Form O

Question 1: Derek Walcott, "XIV"

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult your table leader. The score that you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the writers for what they do well.** The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a three (3).

9-8 These essays offer a persuasive discussion of the speaker's recollection and a persuasive analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience. The writers of these essays offer a range of interpretations; they provide a convincing discussion of the recollection and a convincing analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience. They demonstrate consistent and effective control over the elements of composition in language appropriate to the analysis of poetry. Their 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 nine (9) essay, especially persuasive.

7-6 These essays offer a reasonable discussion of the speaker's recollection and a reasonable analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience. They are less thorough or less precise in their discussion of the recollection and Walcott's use of poetic devices. Their analysis of the relationship among the recollection, the devices, and the significance of the experience is less convincing. These essays demonstrate the writer'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 papers. Essays scored a seven (7) present better developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a six (6).

5 These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible discussion of the speaker's recollection and a plausible analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience, but tend to be superficial in their discussion and analysis. They often rely on paraphrase, which may contain some analysis, implicit or explicit. Their discussion of the speaker's recollection or the analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices may be vague, formulaic, or minimally supported by references to the text. There may be minor misinterpretations of the poem. These writers demonstrate some control of language, but their essays 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 may ignore the speaker's recollection or the analysis of Walcott's use of poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience. 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 three (3) may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.

2-1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the writer'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 one (1) contain little coherent discussion of the poem.

0 These essays give a response that is 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.

Version 1.0

2015 Lit Ques 1 Student Sample Essays Derek Walcott's "XIV"

Sample A

The author in "XIV" uses a variety of techniques in the poem. Most noticeably was the diction and word choice used throughout the poem. The poem has a very good use of imagery that catches the reader's attention. Line 5 through line 6 gives an example of Imagery. "Sunset would threaten us as we climbed closer to her house up the asphalt hill road. The author describes the sunset being blinding as they climb up the hill. The author even described the road they traveled on as they continue their journey

91 words

Sample B

In the poem "XIV" by Derek Walcott he talks about a childhood experience of an elderly women telling him a story. He uses imagery to put the reader in the story. He does by giving extensive detail and painting a picture. He says "lucent as paper lanterns, lamplight glowed through the ribs", also "yam vine wrangled over gutters with the dark reek of moss."

Walcott also uses similies to give the reader a better feel for the recollecting childhood memory. He says "The shutters closing like eyelids of that mimosa". He also uses personification by saying "smelling of mold". Walcott uses one more literary device, he uses metaphors like "Her leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean". "Her voice travels my shelves", and "She was the lamplight in the stare of two mesmerized boys still joined in one shadow, indivisible twins".

141 words

Sample C

In the poem "XIV" by Derek Walcott, he descriptively recalls his experience of his encounter with an elderly woman storyteller. This experience must have been significant to the point where he remembers exactly what occurred. The speaker's recollection is vivid and includes a lot imagery to depict what happened with his experience with the story teller. The significance of the experience is the fact that until his encounter with the storyteller, he didn't really take in the beauty of nature and the caribbean. This encounter opened his eyes to all of his surroundings and nature.

In this poem, Walcott doesn't use rhyming but it flows pretty nicely throughout the reading. I think this poem is written in free verse. This childhood experience must have been dramatic and outstanding for him to remembering details like this. Just like the

elderly storyteller, he makes a pretty good one too. In a way, the storyteller influenced Walcott to tell his story.

The way Walcott writes this poem alludes to the exact experience. It is almost as if it was happening now rather than the past. Walcott describes it vividly almost as if you were there when this experience occurred. The significance of the experience is that he finally appreciate his surroundings and the beauty of nature. This experience probably resembles home whenever he thinks of it. This experience will always be a part of him.

231 words

Sample D

Caribbean writer Derek Walcott wrote "XIV" to simply express the emotions derived from a past time memory of visiting an elderly woman storyteller. This poem immediately exemplifies the potent moments of such an experience that even the reader becomes drawn in. Together, both the reader and writer are able to develop such an image of childhood due to Walcott's presence of imagery, poetic devices, and influential organization.

The imagery of this poem is as vivid as "an old snake shedding its skin" (line 1). The descriptions themselves paint a mental picture as seen when "the dasheen leaves thicken and folk stories begin" (line 4). The "lamplight glowed through the ribs" even allows for such imagination to interpret. His use of such descriptive words makes it only easier to become a part of the experience. His words put you in a place at a certain time such as "the minute of the fireflies, to the sound of the pipe water banging in kerosene tins" (lines 13-14). However, these examples of imagery would not be complete without poetic devices.

Walcott effectively uses several examples of poetic devices to portray an even greater sense of childhood. Immediately, line 2 phrases alliteration in the terms of "speckled ..., scored ..., and smelling" to emphasize the passage taken to the storyteller's world. On top of that, personification is prevalent just as it would be in a childhood story. In the beginning, "the sunset would threaten us (line 5) while at the end "her voice shadows stood up and walked" (line 18-19). Then to add more, both a simile, "shutters closing like eyelids of that mimosa" (line 8) and a metaphor, "she was the lamplight in the stare of the mesmerized boys" (line 20) give the reader a complete comparison of both the storyteller's home and herself. Due to the immense amount of description and poetic devices the speaker allows for the reader to join the journey.

On the other hand, this journey wouldn't be visible to read if it were not for the way Walcott structured and organized his poetry. The initial part of the poem expresses the descriptive nature of the journey or path taken to reach the storyteller. The lines 9 and 10 place a hyphen "-" to stress a pause or even importance of that specific part. On a side note, they could easily be interpreted as the random pauses that children tend to give to observe the surroundings of an unfamiliar area. Then to follow, line 13 is where the storyteller herself comes to light as her own words and image were described in just the right context.

Together as a whole, Walcott successfully combines his usage of imagery, poetic devices, and organization to construct a piece of literature that fully engrosses the reader. The speaker and reader are able to take a journey through their childhood to all the surroundings of familiarity and imagination we tend to leave behind calculato.

489 words

Sample E

Childhood is a time of innocence and wonder, so to many, childhood memories are mystical. Such is the case in Derek Walcott's poem "XIV," in which the speaker recalls a childhood visit to the home of an elderly storyteller. Through his use of vivid imagery and personification, Walcott conveys the significance of the speaker's visit to the old woman's home.

The speaker in Walcott's poem recalls an evening in his childhood when he and his brother climbed a hill to visit an old storytelling woman. The two boys climbed the hill at dusk, just as the sun was setting and people were closing their shutters for the night. When the boys reached the storyteller's house, she began telling them stories when the fireflies appeared. The woman's wisdom and skill at storytelling mesmerized the two boys, and her stories seemed to come alive.

The visit to the old storyteller's house clearly made an important impression on the speaker. to indicate the importance of the experience, Walcott uses vivid imagery to describe the scene in close detail. for example, the poem begins by saying "with the frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin, the speckled road, scored with ruts, smelling of mold ...". This vivid description of the road allows the readers to form a clear mental image of the boys' journey to the storyteller's house, and the attention to each detail indicates the importance of the visit. It is such an important trip that it warrants attention to the road upon which the boys traveled. Furthermore, the road is described as old, and compared to an old snake shedding its skin. This adds a sense of ancientness,, wisdom and closeness to nature, all of which contribute to a sort of mysticism and awe in the mood of the poem.

Furthermore, Walcott uses personification to show the elderly woman's skill at storytelling. The speaker says, "In the gully of her voice shadows stood up and walked." The storyteller's skill was such that when she told stories, she brought them to life so well that even the inanimate shadows seemed to come alive.

In Derek Walcott's poem "XIV," the speaker's visit to the home of an old storytelling woman left an impression on him. Through the use of vivid imagery, Walcott conveys both the importance of the visit and a sense of the ancient wisdom possessed by the old woman. Furthermore, through his use of personification, Walcott conveys the old storyteller's wisdom and skill through the life she brings to her stories. It is no surprise then that this is a vivid and important childhood memory to the speaker as he experienced the mysticism of ancient things, nature, and wisdom.

448 words

Sample F

Stories have an odd power over humans. they have the power to fascinate, intrigue, terrify, and even bore. But even more so, Storytellers hold a great deal of power. In his Poem, "XIV", writer Derek Walcott recalls a creepy, mysterious, and yet fascinating encounter with a storyteller, conveying that she held a great deal of power in her ability to manipulate a story. Walcott uses dark imagery, metaphors for power, and an admiring tone to communicate the storyteller's power.

Walcott portrays the encounter with the storyteller in a very creepy and mysterious way. In the first sentence he refers to the road as moving "with the frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin" and as "smelling of mold," to create a dark image. Furthermore, he refers to the "dark reek of moss" on the road. These creepy images and descriptions of putrid scents suggest there is something sinister about the encounter with the storyteller and with the story teller herself. This sinister quality adds to the aura of power that the storyteller seems to hold. Additionally, the storyteller lives at the end of "the black twist of [a] path," which is yet another creepy image that communicates that there is something dark about the storyteller, and conveys that she holds some sort of power. The creepiness of the encounter serves to exemplify the storyteller as a mystical, and powerful person who should not be taken lightly.

Walcott also makes use of metaphor to showcase the storyteller's power. For example, he says that, "[the storyteller's] leaves were the libraries of the Carribean, "which communicates how she metaphorically holds the literary collection of the entire Carribean. Next, Walcott mentions how "shadows stood up and walked" when she told stories. This conveys her supposed ability to control something that no human can, which serves as a metaphor for the power she holds. Last, the storyteller is described as the "lamplight in the stare of" the speaker and his brother. While this metaphor is a departure from the dark and sinister, it still shows the power of the storyteller by illustrating the hypnotic ability she has when she tells a story. The metaphors in this poem give a context to how powerful a storyteller can be.

Throughout the poem, there is a tone of admiration for the storyteller that shows that she is revered by those who come in contact with her. For example, the speaker proclaims "the luck that was ours" at his meeting with the storyteller. The speaker feels grateful to have had the opportunity to meet with the storyteller, conveying her importance and the speaker's own admiration for her. Furthermore, the speaker compliments the storyteller by saying "her head was magnificent." The speaker is impressed with the storyteller and praises her. This tone of admiration and respect furthers the notion that she is revered and powerful.

The combination of imagery, metaphor and tone portray the encounter with the storyteller as a mix of mystery, sinistry, and intrigue. Through this encounter, the speaker

learns the power that stories and storytellers hold, and that they can be both inspiring and malevolent.

519 words

Sample G

In “childhood’s aftermath,” writer Derek Walcott reflects upon an experience of his youth in which he and his brother ventured in to the dark unknown and experience the power of storytelling. With sensory image evoking darkness unknown territories, and mystery, Walcott sets up a sense of adventure. The storyteller serves as a source of enlightenment in the dark, her stories illuminating the minds of the young boys who listen.

The first eleven lines of the poem narrate the boys’ journey to the storyteller’s house. The path “twists on itself” and vines “wrangle over gutter.” The hanging leaves are thick and the path is riddled with odors of mold and moss. With the setting sun in the background, the imagery of the environment lends a sense of mystery and even foreboding to the poem. The choice of the word “frenzy” to describe the road furthers the feeling of danger.

When the boys find themselves at the storyteller’s home, the tone of adventure and fascination remains, but the imagery shifts to suggest light and comfort. The boys are led to her house in the “black twist of the path” by the light of her lamp. The old woman begins telling stories as the fireflies alight. In these images, light functions to give a sense of guidance, illumination, and safety in the dark. The sound imagery also lends a feeling of security: the “sound of pipe water banging in kerosene tins” is a distinct noise found in a human home, a stark contrast to the mysterious, jungle-like road that leads to the house.

The happenings in the storyteller’s house provide a sense of the mystical as well as the comfortable. The literal illumination leads the boys to a safe place, but the storytelling provides a mental illumination that seems to transcend the physical space. The speaker recalls that “shadows stood up and walked” when the old woman spoke, that she herself became the lamplight, that in this hypnotic experience he and his brother were joined in one “indivisible” shadow. The hyperbolic statement that the storyteller held “the libraries of the Carribean” furthers the idea that the experience transcends the space that the three people inhabit.

In Derek Walcott’s “XIV,” the narrative is dictated by imagery and sensory detail. The twisting roads, the unpleasant smells, and setting sun create a mood of foreboding and mystery. Images of light and sounds of home serve to create a sense of comfort as the boys arrive at the storyteller’s house. The end of the poem finds the boys venturing into the fascinating unknown once more, within the woman’s house, illuminated and captivated by the stories she tells. The significance of the experience is felt by readers because of the sense of adventure and journey.

457 words

Sample H

In Derek Walcott's poem, "XIV" the speaker recalls a childhood experience he endured which revolved around him and his brother visiting a local storyteller. In the poem, nature is a motif, and the recurrence of this idea helps to explain the speaker's mental and spiritual journey. Due to the tone of the passage, it is clear that the speaker remembers his childhood experiences with the storyteller fondly, and still believes she is magical to this day.

The speaker uses setting to help paint a picture for the reader of what it was like to grow up in an seemingly suburban or rural environment, that is by no means well-kept, or overly modern. The environment is personified in the first 3 lines of the poem as the speaker depicts the road as having the qualities of "The frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin,/the speckled road, scored with nuts, smelling of mold,/twisted on itself and reentered the forest" (1-3). The diction of "frenzy," "speckled," "huts," and "mold" vividly describe the road, which is not nicely paved, but instead flawed and uneven. The road, although weaving into in out of the forest, is contrasted to the nature. The forest is depicted as being voluptuous and luscious, where "the dasheen leaves thicken" (line 3). The force of nature is highlighted by the speaker's apparent appreciation for it as it is the place where "folk stories begin" (3), but also because it is more powerful than humans and society; nature is full of the unknown, just like the storyteller's stories themselves.

As the speaker continues to describe his journey, he notes that the "yam vines/wrangled over gutters with the dark reek of moss" (6-7). Again, nature is depicted as a force that weaves its way into our lives and overtakes things. The speaker even uses a simile to depict the "closing" of the "shutters" like "the eyelids of that mimosa" (8). It is interesting that the speaker dedicates so much time to his journey to the storyteller with her "own lamp at the black twist of the path" (11), as this is just the buildup to the actual stories that had such a large impact on his life.

Before the speaker begins to relay the story he almost gives a disclaimer: "There's childhood, and there's childhood's aftermath" (12). This statement stands on its own line, and is the only sentence in the poem's entirety that does not have enjambment. This is Walcott's deliberate way of warning the speaker that his appreciation for the stories, although always there, matured as he aged; the way in which he interpreted them as a child differed from his understandings later in life. The speaker then goes into a description of the setting which has "fireflies" and "kerosene tins" (13,14). The use of the word fireflies following the warning about childhood reinforces the idea that at the time the speaker noticed fireflies (which are usually associated with children, as most are fascinated by them), and the lamp that the speaker used as a signal earlier in the poem to find the storyteller at the end of the "black twist of the path" (11). The lamp, for the speaker, is

associated with safety as he was able to safely find the storyteller and escape the scary, dark forest.

The speaker only dedicates the last 4 lines of the poem to the actual explaining of the power of the storyteller's words. This does not come as a surprise as children are often very perceptive of their environments (if they are meaningful and have something interesting about them--hence, the forest/nature itself clearly had a large impact on the speaker's life). The speaker uses a metaphor to describe the speaker, as he compares her to a plant in line 16 ("Her leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean"). The speaker's admiration extends as he describes how the storyteller is able to rise above the shadows and produce life and light, her words so powerful that "shadows stood up and walked" (19). The idea of light, first from the "lamplight glowed through the ribs, house after house" (10), [that] to the kerosene tines, the light of the fireflies, finally becomes so powerful as the speaker states that the storyteller was the "lamplight" (20), shining above all.

714 words

Sample I

In his poem "XIV," Derek Walcott paints a vivid picture of a young boy travelling to listen to a storyteller, and suggests the profound impact that the experience has on the boy's life as he grows up. Through the use of detailed descriptions, mood, and figurative language, Walcott explains the mystical, awe-inspiring nature of the scene. Through further metaphors and descriptions, he hints at the speaker's continued memorization and memory of the experience.

The first half of the poem describes the journey that the speaker and his brother took to get to the storyteller's house. Walcott effectively sets the mood of the setting, even in the first sentence: "With the frenzy of an old snake shedding its skin, / the speckled road, scored with ruts, smelling of mold, / twisted on itself and reentered the forest / where the dasheen leaves thicken and folk stories begin" (1-4). The comparison of the winding road to a snake gives the reader a sense of the wild feeling of the place and its natural mysticism. It also conveys hidden danger, which is reinforced in the line, "Sunset would threaten us as we climber closer" (5). The personification of sunset adds to the mysterious and sometimes threatening tone. The setting is a natural one, potentially dangerous for the two young boys, but this only adds to the weight of the experience for the speaker and its depth in his memory.

In the second half of the poem, the speaker describes the actual experience of listening to the woman, Sidone, tell her stories. Walcott writes, "Her leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean" (16), utilizing the metaphor to explain the extent of her stories and their power for the boys. Based on this statement, it can be presumed that the boys had little to no access to actual libraries, and therefore listening to Sidone was a form of gaining knowledge as well as a mode of enjoyment. The full weight of the experience is suggested in the final two lines of the poem: "She was the lamplight in the stare of two mesmerized

boys / still joined in one shadow, indivisible twins” (20-21). The storyteller is compared to lamplight, to an illuminating spot of light and knowledge in the darkness, and the boys together are rapt listeners, further joined together by their shared wonder.

Additionally, throughout the poem, the speaker suggests the profound impact that the experience has had on his memories and the way in which it still affects him today: “...lucent as paper lanterns, / lamplight glowed through the ribs, house after house -- / there was her own lamp at the black twist of the path. / There’s childhood, and there’s childhood’s aftermath” (9-12). The speaker compares the lit houses with closed shutters to childhood, a warm but unknowing time; however, he compares the storyteller’s house to the aftermath of childhood. Not only does this strengthen the idea that the stories heard there continued to impact him after childhood, but the description of the “black twist” also adds an almost sinister tone, a mention of the unknown. Towards the end of the piece he also says, “In the gully of her voice / shadows stood up and walked, her voice travels my shelves” (18-19). This statement suggests that in the books he now reads, he hears echoes of her voice and her stories, which impacted him so deeply as a child and will never leave his memory.

Walcott utilizes extremely detailed depictions of the speaker’s childhood life and his journey to listen to the storyteller to provide readers with a sense of the awe and wonder the speaker felt as a child and to explain how it has continued to affect him and follow him throughout his life.

625 words

Sample A	1
Sample B	2
Sample C	3
Sample D	4
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Sample G	7
Sample H	8
Sample I	9

AP® SUMMER INSTITUTE SCORING NOTES 2015 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

Question 1

Sample Identifier: I

Score: 9

- offers a sophisticated and persuasive analysis of the poem in substantive, elegant, clear sentences
- directly addresses the prompt and maintains this focus throughout the essay; establishes from the outset that the boy's journey to "listen to a storyteller . . . suggests the profound impact that the experience has on the boy's life as he grows up"; couches this insight in appropriately provisional language until the claim is amply argued through textual evidence
- refers to poetic devices and effects (description, mood, figurative language, metaphor, contrast) and analyzes how they contribute to meaning (e.g., "[t]he storyteller is compared to lamplight, to an illuminating spot of light and knowledge in the darkness, and the boys together are rapt listeners, further joined together by their shared wonder")
- analyzes each poetic device and effect purposefully; perceptive in identifying a powerful metaphor "[Sidone's] leaves were the libraries of the Caribbean" and persuasively discusses an analogical link between the storyteller's stories and knowledge more broadly
- uses the structure of the poem purposefully to delineate two separate phases of the speaker's experience (the journey to the storyteller; listening to her stories) and uses this observation to analyze their significance
- moves easily between implicit and explicit textual references and reaches perceptive conclusions about why the setting and journey to the storyteller are significant for the speaker: comparing "the winding road to a snake gives the reader a sense of the wild feeling of the place and its natural mysticism. . . . [it] conveys hidden danger . . . reinforced in the line, 'Sunset would threaten us as we climbed closer' . . . The setting is a natural one, potentially dangerous for the two young boys, but this only adds to the weight of the experience for the speaker and its depth in his memory"
- understands the importance of the experience temporally and developmentally for the speaker and uses this understanding to write a brief but effective conclusion stating the speaker's experience has "continued to affect him and follow him throughout his life"

Sample Identifier: H

Score: 8

- unlike the 9 essay, which sets a clear direction from the outset, this essay begins unevenly with a lengthy description of setting
- despite the uneven start, the essay ultimately achieves a clear and persuasive analysis of the poem and details the importance of the experience to the speaker
- the focus on setting and the identification of nature as the origin of folk stories yields the insight that nature "is more powerful than humans and society; nature is full of the unknown, just like the storyteller's stories"; the two ideas are linked in the conclusion, which implies that both the fireflies and the storyteller are sources of light
- while the analysis of poetic elements (imagery, personification, word choice, structure) is not as well developed or as well composed as in the 9 essay, this 8 essay does note the shift signaled by line 12 ("There's childhood, and there's childhood's aftermath" . . . [which] stands on its own line, and is the only sentence in the poem's entirety that does not have enjambment"), observing that "this is just the buildup to the actual stories that had such a large impact on his life"
- this essay offers a more thorough analysis of the poem than the 7 essay; it contains both implicit and explicit references to the poem and shows a better command of the conventions of composition than the 7 essay

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Sample Identifier: G

Score: 7

- this essay offers a reasonable claim that the “storyteller serves as a source of enlightenment in the dark, her stories illuminating the minds of the young boys who listen” but focuses more on the account than on its lasting significance for the speaker
- the essay refers to several poetic devices in the poem, notably, figures and contrast: “[i]n these images, light functions to give a sense of guidance, illumination, and safety in the dark. The sound imagery also lends a feeling of security” and the noise offers a “stark contrast to the mysterious, jungle-like road that leads to the house,” but the initial claim is not thoroughly developed or evidenced through these references; while the essay is insightful, it does not explicitly explain the connections among these devices or how they signify what the essay claims
- the significance of the experience for the speaker is broached intelligently (“The end of the poem finds the boys venturing into the fascinating unknown once more . . . illuminated and captivated by the stories she tells”) but this too is not developed enough to be entirely convincing
- while the essay offers many good insights, its structure is driven by the structure of the poem: it deals with the “first eleven lines of the poem” in the first body paragraph, shifts to “[w]hen the boys find themselves at the storyteller’s home” in the second body paragraph and thence to “[t]he happenings in the storyteller’s house”; while this is a sound method, it yields a more compartmentalized analysis than the 8 and 9 essays

Sample Identifier: F

Score: 6

- offers the claim that the storyteller “held a great deal of power in her ability to manipulate a story” and that the speaker learns the power of storytelling through his encounter with her; this claim, while reasonable, is not developed beyond a general assertion of the power of storytelling
- the language of the essay is generally clear; diction is repetitive (e.g., “creepy”) and sometimes inaccurate (e.g., “sinistry”), but, in the main, this does not interfere with the communication of ideas
- the essay engages in a discussion of poetic devices, notably, imagery and detail (“‘dark reek of moss’” and the “‘black twist’” of the path) but comments on these in a cursory and colloquial way to conclude little more than that these references depict the speaker’s experience of the episode as “creepy”
- less nuanced analysis, fewer purposeful references to the poem and less facility with language than the 7 essay
- distinguishable from the 5 essay by a more developed analysis of the significance of storytelling, clearer language and more engagement with of the text

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Sample Identifier: E

Score: 5

- this paper offers the plausible claim that "[t]hrough . . . vivid imagery and personification, Walcott conveys the significance of the speaker's visit to the old woman's home," but it does not specify in what way the visit is important
- formulaic and repetitive; it does not fully engage the question of the effect of the experience on the speaker and focuses more on the storyteller: "The woman's wisdom and skill at storytelling mesmerized the two boys, and her stories seemed to come alive," and "[t]he storyteller's skill was such that when she told stories, she brought them to life so well that even the inanimate shadows seemed to come alive"
- while the writing is competent, there is little depth to flesh out the identification of poetic devices and thin textual support for the essay's primary claim
- superficial analysis and paraphrase dominate this essay, and it is not as well conceived as the essays in the 7-6 range

Sample Identifier: D

Score: 4

- this essay is fairly typical of essays at this score level in that it makes a simple claim—that the poem offers the "potent" moments of an experience so that "both the reader and writer are able to develop. . . an image of childhood"—but offers only limited evidence and partial analysis in support of this claim
- presents little evidence to explain why and how the experience recounted is important to the speaker
- recognizes poetic devices (imagery, personification, alliteration, simile) but the essay offers little analysis of these devices and makes very limited purposeful reference to the poem
- the writing is unsophisticated and the content is unconvincing and underdeveloped and relies on overgeneralization and cliché: "as a whole, Walcott successfully [sic] combines his usage of [several literary devices] to construct a piece of literature that fully engrosses the reader"
- observations made about the poem are sometimes unconvincing: "both lines 9 and 10 place a hyphen '—' to stress a pause or even importance of that specific part. . . [this] could easily [sic] be interpreted as the random pauses that children tend to give to observe the surroundings of an unfamiliar area"
- the essay does not contain as plausible a claim as the essay scored 5, and speculates where the 5 essay evidences, but it is more developed than the 3 essay and exhibits rudimentary organization

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Sample Identifier: C

Score: 3

- this essay makes the claim that the "encounter with the storyteller. . . . opened his eyes to all of his surroundings and nature"
- while this essay elsewhere mentions the effect of the storyteller on the speaker ("In a way, the storyteller influenced Walcott to tell his story") and discerns the immediacy created by the vivid descriptions in the poem, neither of these points is developed
- the essay offers scant analysis of the significance of the episode to the speaker and virtually no textual evidence
- the language of this essay is typical of essays scored a 3: sentences are ungainly and simplistic and they sometimes make purposeless statements about what is *not* in the poem, e.g., "In this poem, Walcott doesn't use rhyming but it flows pretty nicely throughout the reading"
- despite the fact that the essay relies on paraphrase, demonstrates a limited grasp of the conventions of written discourse and resorts to listing devices rather than analyzing how they generate meaning, this essay is more attentive to the prompt and shows a greater understanding of the poem than the essay scored 2

Sample Identifier: B

Score: 2

- briefly mentions a number of poetic devices (metaphor, simile, personification) and offers ostensibly supporting quotations, but does not go much further than identifying them; chooses irrelevant evidence and fails to analyze the poem; compounds the weaknesses of the essays in the 4-3 range of the scoring guide
- exhibits only the most generalized understanding of one function of imagery in the claim: "He uses imagery to put the reader in the story. He does [sic] by giving extensive detail and painting a picture"; the essay does not explain how this device contributes to conveying the significance of the experience for the speaker
- uses syntax and grammar poorly and shows little understanding of the structure and conventions of the essay form
- offers thin paraphrase in an unacceptably brief response, using language that is virtually incoherent

Sample Identifier: A

Score: 1

- this scant response presents little discussion of the poem
- attempts to respond to the prompt by listing diction and word choice as techniques employed by the poet; also asserts (without evidence) that the poem uses imagery in a way that "catches the reader's attention"
- lacks clarity and organization