

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row A Thesis (0-1 points)</p>	<p>0 points For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no defensible thesis. • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. • There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	<p>1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation of the poem.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only restate the prompt. • Make a generalized comment about the poem that doesn't respond to the prompt. • Describe the poem or features of the poem rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a defensible interpretation of the speaker's complex encounter with the saxophone player.
<p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Restate the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"The poet employs various literary techniques to convey the speaker's encounter with a saxophone player."</i> • <i>"In the poem 'The Man with the Saxophone,' the speaker has a complex encounter with a man playing the saxophone on the street."</i> <p>Do not relate to the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Early morning is a magical time when anything can happen."</i> <p>Describe the poem or features of the poem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Over the course of the poem, the speaker describes walking through the city until he finds the saxophonist. Then, instead of just listening to him play, the speaker pulls out his own saxophone and plays with him."</i> 		<p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Provide a defensible interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Ai employs literary techniques like varying line lengths and specific diction to convey the speaker's encounter with the saxophone player as one of joyful union with a stranger."</i> • <i>"The poet's decision to set the speaker's encounter with the saxophonist on the empty streets of New York City at five in the morning lends a feeling of otherworldliness and magic to their connection."</i> • <i>"In 'The Man with the Saxophone,' Ai presents a speaker who is on a quest, searching through the deserted streets of a city. When the speaker comes upon the saxophone player, we see him as the speaker sees him—as an almost supernatural being bringing music to the city."</i>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. • For a thesis to be defensible, the poem must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. • The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn't do so to earn the thesis point. • A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
<p>Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0-4 points)</p>	<p>0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.</p>	<p>1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.</p>	<p>2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.</p>	<p>3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one literary element or technique in the poem contributes to its meaning.</p>	<p>4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple literary elements or techniques in the poem contribute to its meaning.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes					
<p>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. • May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to focus on summary or description of a poem rather than specific details or techniques. • Mention literary elements, devices, or techniques with little or no explanation. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. • May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. • May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. • Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem to build an interpretation. • Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. • Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	<p>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. • Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the poem to build an interpretation. • Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. • Explain how the writer’s use of multiple literary techniques contributes to the student’s interpretation of the poem. 	
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. • To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same literary element or technique if each instance further contributes to the meaning of the poem. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row C Sophistication (0-1 points)</p>	<p>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex literary argument.</p>
	<p>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</p>	
	<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to contextualize their interpretation, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>Human experiences always include...</i>” OR “<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). • Only hint at or suggest other possible interpretations (“<i>While another reader may see...</i>” OR “<i>Though the poem could be said to...</i>”). • Make a single statement about how an interpretation of the poem comments on something thematic without consistently maintaining that thematic interpretation. • Oversimplify complexities in the poem. • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the student’s argument. 	<p>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate a sophistication of thought or develop a complex literary argument by doing any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and exploring complexities or tensions within the poem. 2. Illuminating the student’s interpretation by situating it within a broader context. 3. Accounting for alternative interpretations of the poem. 4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 		

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Joy is often found in the presence of others, particularly in unexpected places, as evidenced by Ai's "The Man with the Saxophone." Through the use of colloquial diction, first person narration, and vivid descriptions, ~~coupled with complex~~ Ai conveys the instantaneous transition from bleakness and desolation to comfort and release that comes about as a result of the man playing the saxophone. Illuminating the inherent need not only for appreciation of the little things, but of humans for one another, "The Man with the Saxophone" demonstrates the affect of external events on internal emotions.

Inotably, the speaker's experience is characterized as 'empty' (2), indicative, as a descriptor of the side walk, that the narrator himself feels empty. The only thing notable about the surroundings to the speaker is the 'steam/pouring from the manhole covers' (3,4), which is the only thing exciting about the man's life, so much so that the inanimate steam 'seems alive' (5). The speaker 'ambles' from window to window, 'sometimes stopping to stare, sometimes not' (6). The diction here, as incredibly passive and basic as it may be, serves to ruminiate the reader further ~~regards~~ the man's utter ~~ambivalence~~ ambivalence with regard to his surroundings. Even the things that this man once considered beautiful are now incredibly

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mediocre to him as a result of his apparent disinterest in largely everything, as evidenced by the observation that 'last weeks snow is brittle now, and unrecognizable as the soft, white hair that bearded the face of the city' (7, 8, 9).

The city, here, through the description seems to be fading into a bleak underwhelming state, just as the man is - demonstrating a mirroring sort of effect. While the man continues to walk down the street, he notes that his 'mind [is] empty' (12), however, when he notes that this is a feat long revered by the 'Buddhists' (13), he does not seem impressed with himself, as he is unimpressed with the landscape.

The man's feelings immediately shift upon sight of the saxophone player from bleak mediocrity to freedom and joyfulness. The diction used to bring about the initial appearance of the saxophone player is initially somewhat boring, as he is simply described as 'the man with the saxophone' (28), nothing more, nothing less. However, the detailed description of the player's 'fingerless gloves caked with grime' and 'the layers of clothes welded to his skin' (29, 31) are the first instance in which the speaker's point of view does not appear utterly uninterested, disdainful, or repulsed by the description he gives. As such,

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the man ~~is the first~~ with the saxophone is the first instance of something that has truly touched the speaker's heart. In the same way that the matter-of-fact, ~~is~~ colloquial diction had served to display the man's disinterest for his general surroundings previously, the simple way of describing the man with the saxophone, rather than with the disgust at his appearance that likely would have been the reaction of the majority showed the genuine appreciation for the man on the speaker's behalf. Furthermore, while the desolate town's description was cold and unfeeling, the presence of the saxophone man was quite the opposite, as shown when 'he steps backwards / to let me know I'm welcome' (34, 35). The comparative differences between the things that the narrator notices ~~is~~ about both the town and the saxophone player don't stop there, though. The silence of the streets were brutal, however he stands in silence with the saxophone player for a few minutes, and feels that the silence is 'so complete' (36), demonstrating the effect of a person on another, even in silence - showcasing that it is not even inherently the actions of others that spark one's joy, but rather the mere presence.

The action of the man playing the saxophone, though, is certainly the icing on the speaker's formerly

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barren cake, though. Working in tangent with the saxophone player, demonstrating more than simply a passing moment, but a ~~lot~~ much deeper bond, when the ~~sax~~ player 'puts the sax to his lips' (39), the speaker 'suck[s] up the air from [his] diaphragm' (41) in tangent with the player, showing the power of connection to make two strangers act as one. Then, after 'waiting for the notes to come' (43), the speaker hears them played and 'for that one moment... [was] the unencumbered bird of [his] imagination' (46). The descriptive metaphorical usage of the bird serves to show how constrained the man had been feeling previously, and how in the moment of these notes, just as the notes danced through the air, so too did his spirit, as a bird, once again deeply connecting him in that moment to the saxophone player. The rejuvenation of the man's soul and spirit, evidenced by the 'black flower[s] / opening... into the unforgiving new day' (49-51) shows through detailed description of the peace the man has found through the saxophone man's presence, as well as the release from his mundane existence that the music allowed him to feel for that fleeting moment, displaying the power of people ^{and things} to change one another in an instant.

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Question 1 - Poetry Analysis

Sample Identifier: A

Score: 1-4-1

A. Thesis (0-1 points): 1

- This well-written and persuasive essay insightfully analyzes how Ai conveys the complexity of the speaker’s encounter with the saxophone player in New York City.
- The introductory paragraph establishes the importance of “Joy . . . found in the presence of others” and presents the defensible interpretation, “Illuminating the inherent need not only for appreciation of the little things, but of humans for one another, ‘The Man with the Saxophone’ demonstrates the affect [sic] of external events on internal emotions.” This thesis earns the point in Row A.

B. Evidence and Commentary (0-4 points): 4

- The writer supports this complex argument through a careful and thoughtful examination of multiple literary techniques such as diction, detailed description, point of view, and metaphors found in the poem. For example, the essay closely examines the effect of the word “empty,” characterizes the language of the beginning of the poem as “passive and basic,” and goes on to argue that the language illustrates “the man’s utter ambivalence [sic] with regard to his surroundings.” The essay connects the speaker to the city through the observation that “the narrator himself feels empty.” Later, the writer focuses on the metaphor describing the city snow as “unrecognizable as the soft, white hair / that bearded the face of the city.” The commentary that follows, “The city, here, through the description seems to be fading into a bleak underwhelming state, just as the man is,” continues the construction of the line of reasoning and further explores the complexity of the speaker’s encounter with the saxophone player.
- In its examination of the saxophone player in the third paragraph, the essay notes the specific details that describe the musician and then connects the speaker’s point of view to those details: “the first instance in which the speakers [sic] point of view does not appear utterly uninterested, disdainful, or repelled by the description he gives.” In that same paragraph, the essay connects the “silence of the streets” to the “silence with the saxophone player,” as he and the narrator stand apart, again building the line of reasoning. In the fourth paragraph, another claim of the essay focuses on the metaphor of the bird, and the writer notes the transformation in the speaker’s feeling of being “constrained” to having “danced through the air.”
- The essay clearly and powerfully explains how these literary devices and techniques contribute to the meaning of the poem. Each point relates back to the focus on the “power of people and things to change one another in an instant.” The line of reasoning is composed of three supporting claims, each with effective evidence.

C. Sophistication (0-1 points): 1

- This essay earns the sophistication point in Row C through its identification and exploration of the complexities in the poem and by employing a consistently vivid and persuasive style

throughout the response. A sentence such as “The descriptive metaphorical image of the bird serves to show how constrained the man had been feeling previously, and how in the moment of these notes, just as the notes danced through the air, so did his spirit, as a bird, once again deeply connecting him in that moment to the saxophone player” is just one example of the sophistication in style as well as a complex interpretation of the passage.

Sample Identifier: B

Score: 1-4-0

A. Thesis (0-1 points): 1

- This well-organized essay examines how Ai’s use of literary techniques conveys the complexity of the speaker’s brief encounter with the saxophone player.
- This thesis earns the point in Row A through the presentation of its defensible interpretation in its opening sentence: “A single, seemingly meaningless interaction can completely alter one’s mode [sic] and cause a shift in their perspective, just as the man’s encounter with the man with the saxophone did for him.”

B. Evidence and Commentary (0-4 points): 4

- The evidence offered in the response focuses largely on the imagery, tone, and diction of the poem. The essay examines the significance of the portrayal of the “sidewalks empty” and “steam pouring from manhole covers,” and the tone shift that occurs once the speaker encounters the man with the saxophone, noting “contrasting phrases such as ‘silence so complete’ and ‘heartland of pure noise.’”
- The essay offers perceptive commentary that connects the evidence to the essay’s line of reasoning. In paragraph 2, the writer argues that the poet’s descriptions of the steam and sidewalks “show that the speaker is not acting with intention, and that he has no ambition.” In the same paragraph, the writer relates this lack of ambition to the line in the poem that suggests the speaker “had it all and lost it.” This uniform consideration of the evidence and clear focus on the details from the poem construct the line of reasoning and support the interpretation.
- The line of reasoning examines the speaker’s shift in feelings of “saddness [sic] and dreariness” as a “pessimist” to a tone that is conveyed through “beautiful, welcoming, and transending [sic] imagery and descriptions.” The claims presented in paragraphs 2 and 3 are supported with evidence and commentary that clearly explain the complexity of the speaker’s encounter with the man with the saxophone.

C. Sophistication (0-1 points): 0

- While the essay attempts to situate its interpretation within a broader context in the final paragraph of the essay, it does so largely by offering sweeping generalizations: “The feeling described in the first half of the poem is a universal human experience.” Therefore, the essay does not earn the sophistication point in Row C.