

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

(Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus*)

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 persuasive analysis of Viramontes's development of Estrella's character through literary elements. The essays make a strong case for their interpretation of Estrella's character and its development in the passage. They consider literary devices such as selection of detail, figurative language, and tone, and they engage the text through apt and specific references. Although these essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear and effectively organized. 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 Viramontes's development of Estrella's character through literary elements. They provide a sustained, competent reading of the passage, with attention to devices such as selection of detail, figurative language, and tone. Although these essays may not be error-free and are less perceptive or less convincing than 9–8 essays, they present ideas with clarity and control, and refer to the text for support. 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 of the passage but tend to be superficial or thin in their discussion of Viramontes's development of Estrella's character through literary elements. Although the essays contain some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the discussion of how literary devices contribute to the portrayal of character may be slight, and support from the passage may tend toward summary or paraphrase. These essays demonstrate adequate control of language but may be marred by surface errors. They 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 passage. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant; the responses may ignore the development of Estrella's character or the use of literary elements to develop the character. These essays may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. They may persistently misread the passage or be unacceptably brief. They may contain pervasive errors that interfere with understanding. Although some attempt has been made to respond to the prompt, the ideas are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the passage. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the passage.
- 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.

2

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

Within Viramontes' novel Under the Feet of Jesus, Estrella's determined and resilient character comes as a result of prior experiences, and Viramontes reveals this through the use of selective detail, figurative language, and tone.

Initially, a question is posed, signifying to the reader that Estrella thirsts for knowledge and yearns for the discovery of knowing as much as possible. The scene starts in media res with Estrella's curiosity over tools in Perfecto's tool box. Using words such as "jumbled," "funny-shaped," and "foreign," the tone ~~includes one~~ is one of confusion. This further reveals itself by the description of tools as little more than "things," a rather simplistic word normally conveying a sense of ignorance. In many ways, this ignorance ~~can be said to be the~~ may very well possibly be the cause of Estrella's "rage." Her lack of knowledge makes it such that she becomes overwhelmed by her own confusion, and this confusion expresses itself as rage.

Selective additional detail serves to further characterize Estrella as resilient - the narrator's additional story from Estrella's childhood gives one more insight, and this further develops Estrella's character. The action verb - "hate" - marks a strong tone, one highly charged with passion and emotion. This tone remains one of accusation when the text bluntly states that Estrella's teachers "never [gave] her the information [Estrella] wanted." At this point, Estrella is characterized as one who, while perhaps slightly ignorant, thirsts to know more, and ~~wants~~ is filled with intellectual curiosity. The additional



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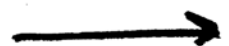
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detail given - the ironic "good luck" teachers wished her after the harvest season - further indicates Estrella's background as deprived of ~~it~~ what she deems valuable, which is knowledge.

Figurative language adds more insight to Estrella's passionate, resilient character. For example, Estrella's comparison of her teacher's face ~~with~~ to a "crumpled Kleenex" demonstrates Estrella's judgemental and blunt personality. Yet the cause of such a cruel comparison is later revealed in the next sentence. The humiliating experience of ~~being asked~~ ~~why~~ having her own ~~hygiene~~ hygiene managed strengthens Estrella. While the experience did hurt Estrella on the inside, the context to her character of strength and defiance ~~becomes~~ reveals itself.

When the mysterious Perfecto Flores enters Estrella's life, Estrella's character continues developing itself further. For instance, her thirst for knowledge ~~and~~ finally is satisfied when Perfecto begins teaching her how to use his tools. These snippets of seemingly insignificant details give more context, and as Estrella sees the value after knowing the use of tools, she becomes driven to literacy. This experience - a rather minor detail in her life - combines itself with previous life events ~~that~~ to reveal the resilience and determination central to Estrella's desire for literacy.

Selective details provide the groundwork to establish necessary context of Estrella's life. Figurative language enhances such details and provide the emotion and passion to develop Estrella's character. Finally, tone and dialogue in the passage reveals Estrella's character.



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itself to the reader, leading to Estrella's depiction ~~through~~ ^{through} depiction of Estrella as a strong, determined woman made resilient through unpleasant prior experiences.

Finally, the historical period of the work must be considered. The work, written in 1995, is one of post-Civil Rights Era literature. However, it includes a feminist critique of sorts, as noted by the selection of a protagonist to be an underprivileged woman. The scene seeks to empower the character, and so the context of the work itself also allows one to read Estrella's characterization as that of female empowerment and resilience. Yet more importantly, it is specifically the detail, figurative language, and overall tone of the scene that provides the evidence for Estrella's development as a strong, determined, and resilient female character.

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Frustration is one of the easiest emotions to fall victim to, and one of the most difficult to overcome. In her novel, Under the Feet of Jesus, Helena María Viramontes develops the character of Estrella, an angrily frustrated girl who becomes calmly understanding, through an ecphrasis and details.

Viramontes uses ~~an ecphrasis~~ an ecphrasis to show that Estrella is angry and frustrated. The entire ~~third~~ third paragraph (lines 12-29) ~~is~~ is a break from the present time, and tells the story of Estrella's schooling experience. During her time in classes, Estrella asks about letters, and the alphabet, but her questions are ignored and instead she is given grooming ~~or~~ instructions (Viramontes). This ~~is shown specifically~~ goes to create a character who is angry and frustrated. This characterization is best shown ~~when~~ when Viramontes states, "Estrella hated when things were kept from her. The teachers in the schools did the same, ~~never~~ never giving her the information she wanted." (Viramontes). The background provided in the ecphrasis, and the blatant statement of the author initially characterize Estrella as an angrily frustrated girl.

Throughout the passage, Estrella's character develops and becomes calm and understanding, the author demonstrates this through specific details. Viramontes says that while going through the tools with perfect, Estrella "felt the coolness of iron and power of function." The additional detail which the author chose to add in is the "coolness." Cool is a term with a connotation ~~of~~ of calm and serenity. By using this specific detail the author slows the passage down and displays the calm which ~~is~~ ^{begins} to overtake Estrella. The author also shows the development



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2

of Estrella through the very last line, "That was when she began to read." The detail of Estrella beginning to read is the antithesis of her frustration which was caused largely by her inability to read and the teachers who failed to help her. Viramontes uses these two details to show the change that ~~was made~~ ~~through~~ Estrella's character has gone through.

The author uses an epiphany as well as details to show the development of Estrella's character from an angrily frustrated girl to one who is calmly understanding.

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From the very beginning of the passage, the reader ~~is~~^{was} introduced to a little girl named Estrella. It ~~is~~^{was} evident that she has recently moved to a ~~word~~ country that ~~is~~^{was} completely different to the country that she ~~is~~ used to know. This little girl ~~is~~^{formed} an obsession with learning new information in order to ease the assimilation. Estrella ~~is~~^{was} introduced to a new form of writing the alphabet, which is script. She ~~is~~^{was} unable to decipher the purpose of the script letters and soon begins to feel angry and hopeless. ~~After~~, she often asked her teachers what the letters were, but they were too preoccupied with Estrella's physical appearance since it was not customary to appear that way. The author used the literary element of detail many times throughout the passage. Estrella was regarded as an impoverished migrant ~~child~~ by her teachers, particularly Mrs. Horn. ~~The~~ Estrella's face was dirty, her fingers were deplorable, and her head was inspected for lice. The author's detail in this passage was very descriptive and



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2

well written. The tone that the author used allowed the reader to assume that she was mildly concerned, and sympathetic towards Estrella, by incorporating ~~a~~ much of what the little girl experienced in ~~the~~ this passage. The author ^{also} used a lot of figurative language, especially when she correlated the tools and script letters. When Estrella realized the resemblances between the objects and font, she was finally able to comprehend what script letters were and their purpose. By the end of the passage, Estrella no longer ~~feels~~ ^{felt} angry or hopeless because she solved her biggest ~~a~~ dilemma. Estrella was now able to read.

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AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
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Question 2

Overview

Students were asked to carefully read a passage from *Under the Feet of Jesus*, by Helena María Viramontes, and to write a well-organized essay analyzing the development of Estrella’s character. The prompt invited students to consider such devices as selection of detail, figurative language, and tone.

This question intended to assess students’ abilities to read closely, with attention to language and detail, in order to consider the connections between Estrella’s growing competence with the tools in Perfecto’s tool chest and the words that she begins to recognize as tools of another, important sort. At the same time, the question intended to assess students’ abilities to write an effective essay, one with a governing central idea about the development of Estrella’s character, organized into coherent units of analysis and supported with appropriate evidence from the passage.

Sample: 2A
Score: 8

This essay offers a persuasive analysis and a careful close reading of the ways Estrella develops into a “determined and resilient character” during the course of the passage. The brief introduction establishes the literary elements to be mined for support: selective detail, figurative language, and tone. Next comes consideration of sentence structure (“a question is posed”) and narrative structure (“The scene starts in media res”). In developing an analysis that captures the scope and depth of Estrella’s growth, the essay exploits apt, specific references to Estrella’s first encounters with the red toolbox, her experiences in school, and Perfecto’s role in her life, patiently citing particular words to show how the tone reflects the main character’s confusion. Within each section, the essay offers and explains insights into how Estrella’s character develops until, in the fifth paragraph, Estrella is “driven to literacy.” The conclusion shows an ability to situate an argument within the big picture, though further development is possible. Overall, the essay is clear and controlled; transitions between paragraphs are clear and logical. The essay’s effective organization and thoughtful analysis earned it a score of 8.

Sample: 2B
Score: 5

This essay provides an example of a plausible interpretation — that Estrella is “an angrily frustrated girl who becomes calmly understanding.” Although this thesis is developed to some extent, support tends to be thin and superficial. The term “ecphrasis [*sic*]” is misapplied here, but the bigger issue is that the essay fails to convincingly show how the device contributes to the character’s development; identification or classification of a literary device without consideration of how that device functions in context is not sufficient for the task of literary analysis. The comments in the third paragraph about the tools’ “coolness” are valid and supported with evidence, but the last paragraph adds little if anything. A closer look at the rich details in the passage might have moved this essay into the top half of the scoring range, but without deeper analysis it earned a score of 5.

**AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
2012 SCORING COMMENTARY**

Question 2 (continued)

Sample: 2C

Score: 3

Relying heavily on plot summary, this essay attempts in a single paragraph to show how Viramontes develops character through detail, tone, and figurative language, the three literary devices suggested by the prompt. However, the analysis is inadequate and unevenly controlled — a listing of terms without substantive discussion. The analysis is fragmentary and unconvincing, and the organization of the argument is hard to follow; there are disjointed observations from the passage, repetitive ideas, and a lack of focus. Finally, the discussion features several questionable readings (the discussion of “script”; the assertion that “the tone that the author used allowed the reader to assume that she was mildly concerned”). A consideration of the richness of the passage is missing, without which the essay earned a score of 3.