

AP[®] ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

2015 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

(Derek Walcott, "XIV")

The score should reflect the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. **Reward the students 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 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. 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 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 student'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 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 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 they 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 essays demonstrate some control of language, but they 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 it 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 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 student'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 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.

There is always an intense adventure in exploring the unknown—it is mysterious, foreign^{and} immense. Derek Walcott, for example, in his poem "XIV" provides a compelling account of a boy's adventure to visit an elderly female storyteller in the Caribbean. Although the poem is about hearing these parables from this wise woman, the significance of the experience lies in how the speaker approaches the adventure—going to the storyteller and actually listening—and how it brings him closer to his brother, the "indivisible twin," and to nature as well.

On his trek to originally locate this woman's abode, the speaker relies on heavy plant imagery to set the lush scene. He details plants like "dasheen leaves," "yam vines," "moss," and "mimosa." Part of the deeper meaning of this boy's adventure is the thrill of independence and danger; he is one among the plants, avoiding the "threat" of personified sunlight. He revels in the jungle, frankly, by pointing out how the dusty road on which he travels resembles an "old snail" ^{through a simile} and remarking that the path has a "black twist" like an animal. Walcott also cleverly employs slant rhymes to create a lyrical rhythm for the poem; while this metric style alludes to the "folk stories" the old woman



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1A
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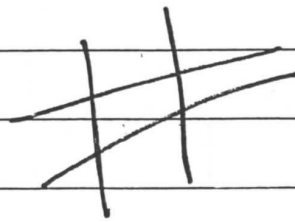
tells, the rhymes are not particularly strict, lending itself to the open, adventurous quality of the poem. Examples of this include ("skin"/"begin"; "path, aftermath"/"tins, origins" "voice/boys" etc.)

Adventure is also life in childhood when one is not burdened by responsibility. There is a sharp delineation between "childhood" and "childhood's aftermath" ^{in the poem.} Adulthood is characterized by the absence of childhood, thereby alerting the reader that the explorative tendencies of a child, somewhat lost to adults, are crucial. The speaker recalls this experience with apt detail, and describes the woman's story as ethereal, almost—she tells the story as a song, to the "sound of the pipe." The cultural references in the poem to native Caribbean names and plants such as "dasheen," "Ti-Mane," and "sidone" not only play into the oratory culture of the Caribbean, but also to the vital importance of this memory—this sense of recklessness, adventure and ^{independence} ~~independence~~. The speaker is excited to bathe in the woman's lone "lambright" instead of sharing the "sunlight" with others. His adventure ~~man~~ is one catered to all the senses; although the woman is telling a story (involving hearing, obviously, and sight), the speaker notices "fragrant origins"



that implicate snow as well. The speaker uses adventure, then, to finally connect with his brother ~~or close friend~~, because they and they alone share in this experience together, "joined in one shadow."

Thus, Walcott provides a mesmerizing depiction of a young boy's adventure visiting a woman. The speaker reminisces ~~to~~ ^{about} his cultural roots, the beautiful nature, and his eventual connection with his sibling. This is the significance of Walcott's poem: remembering ~~adventure~~ ^{adventure}, love, and independence as a harbinger of a connection to both family and nature.



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Derek Walcott relives his childhood experience of visiting an elderly woman storyteller with his brother in the jungles of the ~~terrible~~ Caribbean. in his poem "XIV" Walcott uses extreme detail and poetic devices to intensify the reader's experience and convey how special this experience was to him and his brother. This experience was clearly significant to the pair as Walcott sets a magical portrait that best describes the wonders and amazement of young boys as they emerge themselves in the journey to the storyteller's house and the stories themselves. Walcott uses ~~the~~ devices such as diction, naturalistic imagery, personification, and metaphor to portray the significance of this magical experience to himself and his brother.

Walcott's diction is key in setting a tone of awe and amazement, as he kicks off the poem with descriptive language. He begins with writing "with the frenzy of a cold snake shedding its skin, / the speckled road, scored with ruts, smelling of mold" (lines 1-2). The alliteration of the s consonant gives the reader the shivers as if they themselves are embarking on such a journey. The diction →

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helps to create this imagery as smells and touch senses (such as the speckled road and bumpy ruts) are mentioned. Walcott's attention to detail demonstrates his attachment to the area where "the folk stories begin" (line 4). It is as though the thickness of the trees marks the beginning of his place apart, where he can immerse himself in the magic of the stories.

Walcott continues this imagery as the sun sets and he arrives to the storyteller's house. Walcott writes that "the shutters closing like the eyelids of that mimosa" (line 8). This ^{the simile} suggests a separation in mood between the day and night. While to some the night is for rest, it is a time of excitement for Walcott as he gets to hear the stories. The imagery and repetition of the light of the lamps that guides the pair to the house juxtaposes the night surrounding them. While children are normally scared of the dark because of their innocence, it is almost inviting for Walcott, making this a memorable childhood experience for him.

Walcott's use of metaphor and personification

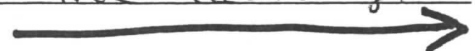
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emphasize the importance of this experience to the children. Because of their natural innocence, they glorify the journey and the storyteller's adventures.

This magic sticks with Walcott as he recalls that "In the gully of her voice, shadows stood up and walked, her voice travels my shelves. / She was the lamplight in the stare of two mesmerized boys / still joined in one shadow, indivisible twins" (lines 18-21). This personification of the shadows demonstrates how the stories came alive to Walcott and his brother and him were completely immersed in the world's they described. The experience was so magical to the pair that they are now "indivisible" which is the most significant aspect of the journey: the inseparable bond that came as a result.

Walcott's use of poetry devices such as sensory diction, naturalistic imagery, personification, and metaphor all work together to convey the experience of the storyteller and the lasting



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~~helps to create his imagery as smells and touch senses (such as the speckled road and bumpy ruts).~~ effects it had on Walcott's memory and his relationship with his brother. These devices immerse the reader in Walcott's recollection. It is almost as if Walcott himself takes on the role of the magnificent story teller to ^{leave} ~~gives~~ the reader with the memory of a magical experience.

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Derek Walcott's XIV poem describes the experience of visiting a storyteller woman as a child. Walcott's use of several poetic devices portray a memorable and mysterious experience, one that ~~has~~ ^{has remained} significant to him throughout his life.

One of the more immediately apparent is the use of sensory explanations. Smells of mossy walls, the visuals of lamplight exposing the ribs of the houses, the sounds of water sloshing inside the kerosene lamps, all depict a mass of unique sensory experiences. Combined together they portray a very unique experience most would remember. This emphasizes its significance by the fact that he can remember vividly these events and details, thus it must have been an amazing experience.

Another less obvious but more significant aspect of the poem is the personification of the location of the experience. Walcott goes far beyond simply describing the village. Each aspect of the village suggest they are less walking into a village and more into a person themselves. The slanters are like eyelids, the road the back ribs glowing with light, and finally the woman herself. The woman's ^{physical} characteristics are left ~~intention out~~ intentionally. Instead, she moves around the room, as if passing through her own shadow, or as if she is the shadow. Her voice is magnificent like a gully ~~yet~~, and her appearance is magnificent, yet she remains almost unseen. Walcott seems to say that the event was as



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significant as exploring into someone else's social. The gravity and significance of this idea convey the significance of this experience to him.

David Wolcott's *IV* delves into his experience with a storyteller. The allusions to experiencing someone's soul and the sensory vivid depiction suggest this must have been truly a significant life experience.

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Question 1

Overview

This question asked students to carefully read the poem “XIV” by 20th-century Caribbean writer Derek Walcott and to write a well-developed essay discussing the speaker’s recollection of visiting an elderly woman storyteller and analyzing how Walcott employs poetic devices to convey the significance of the experience.

This question is not unlike previous free-response poetry questions in that it focuses the students’ attention on devices as vehicles for conveying meaning. This year students were invited to identify and expound upon the relationship between devices and meaning in a contemporary poem written by a poet from an English-speaking country that represents a culture unfamiliar to many students, but that includes some universal experiences of childhood that students could identify with in their discussion of the speaker’s recollection. The speaker’s recollection of the journey toward enlightenment and inspiration was not lost on most students, nor was the speaker’s assessment of the importance of that experience years hence. The abundant and varied imagery, the air of wonderment, and the palpable awe, along with the careful rendering of the memory of the storyteller and recognition of the importance of her tales to the speaker’s later life, seemed to make this poem and the accompanying exam question accessible to students.

Sample: 1A

Score: 9

This persuasive and well-written essay makes a strong argument that “the significance of the experience lies in how the speaker approaches the adventure” and that going to the storyteller “brings him closer to his brother, the ‘indivisible twin,’ and to nature as well.” The essay uses textual detail fluidly; it persuasively argues that the vegetation itself (dasheen leaves, yam vines, moss, and mimosa) and the boy’s identification with it contribute to the “thrill of independence and danger” that is “part of the deeper meaning of this boy’s adventure.” The essay later builds on this point: “[t]he cultural references in the poem to native Caribbean names and plants such as ‘dasheen,’ ‘Ti-Marie,’ and ‘Sidone’ not only play into the oratory culture of the Caribbean, but also to the vital importance of this memory — this sense of recklessness, adventure, and independence.” The boy, it suggests, “revels” in the freedom offered by the forest. This essay is insightful in its discussion of “a sharp delineation between ‘childhood’ and ‘childhood’s aftermath,’” and it argues that “the explorative tendencies of a child, somewhat lost to adults, are crucial” to this distinction. Adulthood, it argues, “is characterized by the absence of childhood.” Another insightful use of detail in this essay is its distinction between “‘sunlight’” that one shares with others and the woman’s lone “‘lamplight’” which, the essay suggests, points to something more personal and mystical and to the array of sensory detail that makes up the vivid recollection of this memory from childhood. The use of apt, varied vocabulary and the consistent control of language help to convey the strong argument of this 9 essay clearly and convincingly.

Sample: 1B

Score: 6

This essay makes the reasonable claim that the journey into the “jungles of the Caribbean” is “special” to the speaker and his brother; it evidences this claim through textual evidence, repeatedly asserting that the experience proved “magical,” but does not offer more developed insights into what, specifically, the magical experience means to the speaker. Likewise, when the essay draws attention to the powerful opening image of “‘an old snake shedding its skin,’” it misses its symbolic power and engages instead in a misdirected discussion of alliteration: “the s consonant gives the reader the shivers as if they themselves are embarking on such a journey.” Elsewhere, the essay identifies the latent potential of the night: “‘the shutters closing like the eyelids of that mimosa’ . . . suggests a separation in mood between the day and night. While to some the night is for rest, it is a time of excitement for Walcott as he gets to hear the stories.” But even here, the essay does not fully explore why the stories generate excitement and falls into an overgeneralized statement:

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Question 1 (continued)

“[w]hile children are normally scared of the dark because of their innocence, it is almost inviting for Walcott.” Similarly, the essay’s commentary on the personification of Sidone’s voice does not elaborate on the speaker’s experience beyond saying that “the stories came alive to Walcott” and that this magical experience resulted in an “inseperable [*sic*] bond” between him and his brother. While the language of this essay is clear, it does contain some surface errors. Because the essay’s reasonable argument is not fully evidenced or developed, the essay earned a score of 6.

Sample: 1C

Score: 3

The introduction to this essay contains a plausible claim written in language that shows an acceptable level of control: “Walcotts [*sic*] use of several poetic devices portray [*sic*] a memorable and mysterious experience, one that has remained significant to him throughout his life.” But other features of the essay are not as strong. The essay consists almost entirely of summary, stringing together a series of details and literary devices, and fails in its attempt to analyze what these details might say about the significance of the experience for the speaker, e.g., “Smells of mossy walls, the visuals of lamplight exposing the ribs of the houses, the sounds of water sloshing inside the kerosene lamps, all depict a mass of unique sensory experiences. . . . This emphasizes it’s [*sic*] significance by the fact that he can remember vividly these events and details, thus it must have been an amazing experience.” While it recognizes the power of the woman’s voice, the essay misreads when it asserts that the storyteller “moves around the room, as if passing through her own shadow, or as if she is the shadow.” Inaccuracy of this kind is exacerbated by several ungrammatical sentences, poor organization, and the inadequate development of ideas so that the promise of the opening claim is never fully realized. This essay thus earned a score of 3.