

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

Q 1

1A  
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Li-Young Lee's poem entitled "A Story" poignantly depicts the complex relationship between a father and his son through the boy's ~~begs~~ entreaties for a story. ~~Through~~ The speaker employs ~~both types~~ emotional appeals as well as strategic literary devices to emphasize the ~~the~~ differing perspectives that exist between father and son. Through shifting points of view, purposeful structure, and ~~the~~ meaningful diction, the speaker adds depth and emotion to the love shared by the two characters and illuminates a universal theme of present innocence and changing relationships over time.

Throughout "A Story", the speaker utilizes alternating points of view to accentuate the differences between the father and the son as well as the <sup>division</sup> ~~disparity~~ that exists within the father, who remains torn ~~is~~ in the middle of two realities. The son materializes as a five-year-old ~~boy~~ with "... a boy's supplication..." for a story. ~~From~~ From the boy's perspective, his father remains affectionately known as "... Baba...", a storyteller and source of entertainment; however, the man's desire to supply his son with amusement becomes



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lost amid his immediate inability to "... come up with one." story. The image of "The man rub(bing) his chin, scratch(ing) his ear... soon he thinks, the boy / will give up on his father," evokes ~~the~~ emotions of ~~some~~ lost opportunity and hopes unfulfilled, feelings the speaker utilizes to accentuate the contrast between the boy's <sup>optimistic</sup> ~~request~~ request and his father's response, a response that holds implications for their <sup>developing</sup> ~~relationship~~ relationship.

Another significant element within "A Story" becomes the ~~juxtaposition~~ purposeful juxtaposition of the man's immediate state and his ~~alternate~~ shifting, future point of view. While in a present sense ~~the~~ the man cannot recall a new story, "Already the man lives far ahead... sees / the day this boy will go." = The man develops a troubling image of "... the boy packing his shirts... looking for his keys," and he subconsciously screams out, ~~demanding~~ ~~protesting~~ attempting to justify his silence and asking, "Am I a god that I should never disappoint?" = ~~In reality,~~ such an inflammatory reaction to a plea for a story does not correlate with



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practicality, but it does serve to portray the man's fear of one day losing his five-year-old to manhood, ~~regretting the loss~~ as he looks on, regretting one less story read, one less laugh solicited. The man's ~~view~~ view of the day his boy leaves involves pleas to tell his child one more story, and he laments, "~~the~~ Don't go! Hear the alligator story! The angel story.... You ~~to~~ laugh at the spider. Let me tell it!" This comparison of two ~~images~~ images of the man, the forgetful storyteller, and the ~~desperate~~ parent desperately in love with his son humanizes his character and allows ~~for~~ for an understanding of the relationship he shares with his son.

and selection of detail of Finally, the speaker's meaningful diction allows for the development of both characters as well as ~~an~~ the relationship they share. The boy's childlike "Baba?" contrasts ~~at~~ sharply with ~~his~~ images of the same boy ~~is~~ "... packing his shirts ... (and) looking for his toes..." while his father looks on, longing for the days when ~~his son~~ the name "Baba" = still defined

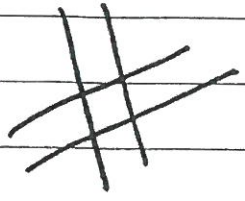




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HB role in HB son's life. As the speaker states, the ~~the~~ relationship between the man and HB son remains "... emotional... ~~the~~ (and) earthly..." rather than "... logical... (and) heavenly..." ~~the~~ Despite the father's trepidations about the future, the speaker succeeds in illustrating that both characters' emotions, from the "... boy's supplications..." to "... the father's love..." result in silence, and a silence based on trust, affection, and heartfelt love.



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In the poem "A Story," the topic of coming of age is ~~been~~ heavily present. With this being present, the relationship between the father and the son instantly becomes complex. While the author never directly states the complexity of the relationship, it is clearly presented through techniques such as point of view and symbolic structure. From beginning to end, the reader is able to infer all of the issues that are present, along with the deep feelings, through the above techniques.

The story is told from a third person point of view, ~~which~~ automatically creating a scenario for the reader to evaluate, rather than having it told to them through first person. A very important aspect of the third person point of view is that it is omniscient and allows for the characters' thoughts, and even fears to be heard. The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father's fears of his little boy leaving come to life. For example, "Don't go! / Hear the alligator story! . . . Let me tell it!" Primarily shows a scenario in which one day his son will no longer wish to hear stories and will be leaving his side. The fact that the father plays this scenario out in his head, makes it come to life for the reader and allows them to see how traumatizing this experience would be for the father. Through this simple action of writing the character's thoughts and dialogue, the writer reveals the deep love the father contains for his boy, but also



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The nagging fear that one day he will ~~not~~ no longer have his little boy. "But the boy is packing his shirts, / he is looking for keys." This is a typical description of when a child, now an adult, is preparing to adventure into adulthood and leave their parents' side. It is very apparent that the man fears this frightful scene with every fiber of his being because he knows he will not be wanted by his son any longer. At the moment, he has his son and his son wants, and even needs, him, and this means the world to the father. Unfortunately, though, he is failing to do the one thing his son yearns for him to do, tell him a story. As the boy sits in his lap and begs for a story, the man cannot help but sit with fear as thoughts and scenarios run through his head of his biggest fear becoming reality, the day his son leaves. The author's ability to share the father's thoughts and even create images from the future make this fear apparent to the reader and truly bring out the troubles that the father is having within his own mind.

As the reader can tell, the poem contains a very symbolic structure, starting with the present situation, then going into a future scenario of the boy leaving when he is grown up, and finally coming back to the present and reflecting upon what is happening now. As previously stated, the poem does contain a central theme of coming



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of age and reveals the father's fear of coping with this issue when the time comes. Fortunately the son is only five years old at the moment, but this does not keep the father from dwelling on the day in the future. At the moment, the father is unable to come up with a story to please his son. This simple action leads the father into fearful thoughts of the day his son leaves, and then he will finally contain stories to please him but he will not want them. This is clearly symbolic of the fact that he is already losing his son because he cannot please him momentarily. As the poem continues, it eventually works into its final stage of reflection where the equation that "a boy's supplications/ and a father's love add up to silence." is stated. Here, the narrator shares how while the boy is unpleased and unsatisfied, the father thinks of his love for his son and how he fears the day he will no longer have to worry about satisfying him. Overall, the man's love for the boy and his inability to tell him a satisfying story mix to create wrenching thoughts. The author does an excellent job of including the reader in these tormenting issues through his use of structure and point of view.

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# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2011 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 1

#### Overview

This question asked students to read carefully the poem “A Story” by contemporary poet Li-Young Lee and to write a well-developed essay analyzing how the poet conveys the complex relationship of the father and the son through the use of literary devices such as point of view and structure.

With its emphasis on “the complex relationship,” the question was designed to lead students to consider the father’s mixed feelings about the present and future connections between himself and his son. The prompt asked students to consider how the poet creates multiple dimensions of meaning through the use of literary elements and to develop an interpretation of the poem through analysis of the connection between technique and meaning.

#### Sample: 1A

**Score: 9**

This persuasive essay offers an astute, on-target analysis of Li-Young Lee’s poem and its touching father–son relationship. A clear opening sets up the argument by observing that the poem’s speaker “employs emotional appeals as well as strategic literary devices to emphasize the differing perspectives that exist between father and son.” Developing topics announced in the introduction, the essay proceeds to show how the poem uses shifts in viewpoint to emphasize the “differences between the father and the son as well as the division that exists within the father, who remains torn in the middle of two realities.” With thoroughness and attention to the text, the essay stays focused as it moves into a discussion of “the purposeful juxtaposition of the man’s immediate state and his shifting, future point of view.” Here and elsewhere, there is no question that the student has read the poem critically, understands it thoroughly, and writes about it effectively. Near the end, the essay discusses the speaker’s “meaningful diction,” and explores the significance — not merely the presence — of the poem’s imagery and detail. The last sentence, which characterizes the complexity of the father’s emotions (“a silence based on trust, affection, and heartfelt love”), is a final example of the fine distinctions that clearly placed this essay at the top of the score range.

#### Sample: 1B

**Score: 6**

This essay presents a reasonable discussion of how Lee uses literary devices to convey a complex father–son relationship. After an introduction that promises to focus on “techniques [*sic*] such as point of view and symbolic structure,” a long paragraph on point of view follows. Here the essay mixes analysis and paraphrase, patiently dissecting the use of a point of view that “allows for the characters [*sic*] thoughts, and even fears to be heard.” Though evidence for assertions in this paragraph is sometimes oblique (“The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father’s fears of his little boy leaving come to life”), it generally attempts to come to terms with the situation described. The paragraph that follows repeats the pattern. There is little evidence for the idea that the scene’s shifting from present to future and back to the present is “symbolic,” and there is more repetition and retelling. The interpretation of the poem is thus limited, and when the essay comments in the conclusion that “[t]he author does an excellent [*sic*] job of including the reader in these tormenting issues,” we are inclined to agree without feeling wholly convinced. Still, the essay does sustain a reasonable analysis of the poem throughout, and it does so with clear writing and references to the text. These features earned it a score of 6.