

**2011 AP® ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**  
**FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)**

**Question 2**

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

The following passage is the opening of the novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) by the Cree novelist and playwright Tomson Highway. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Highway uses literary devices to dramatize Okimasis' experience.

- “Mush!” the hunter cried into the wind. Through the rising vapour of a northern Manitoba February, so crisp, so dry, the snow creaked underfoot, the caribou hunter Abraham Okimasis drove his sled and team of eight grey huskies through the orange-rose-tinted dusk. His left hand gripping handlebar of sled, his right snapping moose-hide whip above his head, Abraham Okimasis was urging his huskies forward.
- 5 “Mush!” he cried, “mush.” The desperation in his voice, like a man about to sob, surprised him. Abraham Okimasis could see, or thought he could, the finish line a mile away. He could also see other mushers, three, maybe four. Which meant forty more behind him. But what did these forty matter? What mattered was that, so close to the end, he was not leading. What mattered was that he was not going to win the race.
- 10 And he was so tired, his dogs beyond tired, so tired they would have collapsed if he was to relent. “Mush!” the sole word left that could feed them, dogs and master both, with the will to travel on. Three days. One hundred and fifty miles of low-treed tundra, ice-covered lakes, all blanketed with at least two feet of snow—fifty miles per day—a hundred and fifty miles of freezing temperatures and freezing winds. And the finish line mere yards ahead.
- 15 The shafts of vapour rising from the dogs’ panting mouths, the curls of mist emerging from their undulating backs, made them look like insubstantial wisps of air. “Mush!” the hunter cried to his lead dog. “Tiger-Tiger, mush.”
- He had sworn to his dear wife, Mariesis Okimasis, on pain of separation and divorce, unthinkable for a Roman Catholic in the year of our Lord 1951, that he would win the world championship just for her: the silver cup, that holy chalice was to be his twenty-first-anniversary gift to her. With these thoughts racing through his fevered mind,
- 20 Abraham Okimasis edged past musher number 54—Jean-Baptiste Ducharme of Cranberry Portage. Still not good enough. Half a mile to the finish line—he could see the banner now, a silvery white with bold black lettering, though he couldn’t make out the words.
- Mushers numbers 32 and 17, so close, so far: Douglas Ballantyne of Moosoogoot, Saskatchewan, at least
- 25 twenty yards ahead, and Jackson Butler of Flin Flon, Manitoba, another ten ahead of that.

**AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**  
**2011 SCORING GUIDELINES (Form B)**

**Question 2**

(Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*)

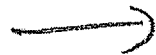
The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole — its content, style, and mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a persuasive analysis of how Highway uses literary techniques to dramatize Okimasis' experience. They may consider such literary elements as diction, syntax, point of view, and selection of detail. They sustain their arguments through apt and specific textual references. Although these essays may not be error-free, their perceptive analysis is apparent in writing that is clear, precise, 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 how Highway uses literary techniques to dramatize Okimasis' experience. They provide a sustained, competent reading of the passage, supported by textual references. Although these essays may not be error-free and may be less perceptive or less convincing than 9–8 essays, they present ideas with clarity and control. Essays scored a 7 present better developed analysis and more consistent command of 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 they tend to be superficial or undeveloped in their treatment of how Highway uses literary techniques to dramatize Okimasis' experience. Although exhibiting some analysis of the passage, implicit or explicit, the discussion may be slight, and support from the text may be thin or tend toward paraphrase. These essays demonstrate adequate control of language, but the writing 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 treatment of how Highway uses literary techniques to dramatize Okimasis' experience. Often relying on summary or paraphrase, they may misread the passage or fail to articulate a convincing basis for understanding the experience. The writing may demonstrate a lack of control over the conventions of composition: inadequate development of ideas, an accumulation of errors, or an argument 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 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 do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays are either blank or are completely off topic.

~~Tomson Highway's passage from Kiss of the~~  
~~Far Queen uses ~~powerful~~ language so strongly, it~~

The sensations and words in Tomson Highway's  
Kiss of the Far Queen take the reader to the  
cold, intense action of Abraham Okimaris. Highway  
uses fantastic imagery of all senses and compounds  
it with intense mood and tone to create an  
atmosphere filled with the tension felt by Okimaris  
in the last leg of his race. ~~the~~ Okimaris' experience  
is dramatized through the effective use of vivid imagery,  
~~and~~ ~~passionate~~ <sup>intense</sup> diction, metaphors and tone.

The imagery used in Okimaris' experience is  
quick, cutting sensations <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ easily transport the  
reader into the environment of the story. The tactile  
imagery of how "the snow creaked underfoot" amid  
the air that is "so crisp, so dry." The description  
allows the reader to imagine the harsh conditions,  
the sounds heard and experienced by the ~~hunter~~  
hunter. The exhaustion of the dogs with "shafts of  
vapour rising from the ~~dogs~~ <sup>dogs'</sup> panting mounds" ~~which~~ makes  
their incessant movement, their condition all the  
more palpable. Metaphors add ~~the~~ drama to the  
unfolding scene. ~~As to the dogs, the dogs are~~  
~~the dogs~~ The dogs are made to "look like insubstantial  
wisps of air" with all of the vapour rising off of their



back and out of their mouths. The desperation of  
their driver is escalated when he shouts "Mush!"  
the sole word left that could feed them." His  
words of desperation and determination are linked  
to the food that nourishes him; the only thing that  
keeps them alive. This reinforces the importance of the  
race, the desperate desire for the Okumasis' ~~desire~~ to  
win, <sup>and</sup> the proximity of the <sup>live</sup> finish ~~line~~ which approaches.  
The need to win is even equated to religion - his fever  
and drive to win the "silver cup, the holy chalice"  
that he worships, only pushing him harder. This  
'chalice' that he's chasing serves to ~~compare~~ compare  
his devotion to winning the race to the ~~for~~ faithful  
devotion of religious worshippers.

Diction and tone add to the overall impact  
of the unfolding drama, heightening the emotions of  
Okumasis and lending to the tension of the scene. The  
diction used by Highway emphasizes ~~the~~ the action  
of the scene, with Okumasis "gripping" and "snapping"  
the reins of his dogs. The tension held in his grip and  
the anxiety expressed by his snapping accurately convey  
Okumasis' feelings ~~in~~ through words. His mindset is depicted  
as "fevered" as the <sup>personal</sup> stakes of the race are revealed  
for Okumasis. The intensity of the race finish is  
envisioned ~~through the way~~ by the way Okumasis



"edged" beyond another marker, implying the far-  
from-straightforward envisioned result of the race for  
Olimaris, and the amount of energy demanded by  
his team only to culminate in barely advancing. The  
tone is kept tense through repetition of phrases, exaggerative  
the effect of emotions and conditions. Olimaris "was so  
tired, his dogs beyond tired, so tired they would  
have collapsed if he were to relent." The repetition  
of 'tired' drives in the point of the team being utterly  
exhausted during his final run. The conditions of  
the <sup>race consisted of a</sup> ~~hundred and fifty miles~~ ~~consisted of~~  
"hundred and fifty miles of freezing temperatures  
and freezing winds." The tension is kept till the  
concluding sentence, as the finish line gets closer and  
closer, "so close, so far."

Through imagery, metaphors, diction and tone,  
~~the~~ Highway heightens the drama and intensity of  
the race for Olimaris to the finish line. The drama  
is made palpable through vivid images ~~bring~~ bringing  
the reader into the story and leading the  
reader to become more invested in the outcome  
of the story.

