

1999

The College Board

Advanced Placement Examination

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II Total

Time—2 hours

Question 1 (Suggested time—40 minutes. This

question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Lead the following poem carefully, paying particular attention to the physical intensity of the language. Then Write a well-organized essay in which you explain how the poet conveys not just a literal description of picking Blackberries but a deeper understanding of the whole experience. You may wish to include analysis of such Elements as diction, imagery, metaphor, rhyme, rhythm, and form.

Blackberry-Picking

Late August, given heavy rain and sun  
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.  
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot *Line*  
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot. (5) You ate  
that first one and its flesh was sweet  
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it  
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for  
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger  
Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam pots (10) Where  
briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.  
Round hayfields, cornfields and potato drills'  
We trekked and picked until the cans were full,  
Until the tinkling bottom had been covered  
With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned  
(15) Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered  
With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.<sup>2</sup>

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.<sup>3</sup> But when  
the bath was filled we found a fur, A rat-grey fungus,  
glutting on our cache. (20) The juice was stinking  
too. Once off the bush  
The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.  
I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair  
That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.  
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

—Seamus Heaney

"Blackberry-Picking" from, SELECTED POEMS  
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<sup>i</sup> Planted rows  
<sup>2</sup> Bluebeard is a character in a fairy tale who murders his wives.  
<sup>3</sup> Bam

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