

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.)

Read carefully the following poem by Marilyn Nelson Waniek. Then write an essay analyzing how Waniek employs literary techniques to develop the complex meanings that the speaker attributes to The Century Quilt. You may wish to consider such elements as structure, imagery, and tone.

The Century Quilt

for Sarah Mary Taylor, Quilter

<p>Line 5 10 15 20</p>	<p>My sister and I were in love with Meema’s Indian blanket. We fell asleep under army green issued to Daddy by Supply. When Meema came to live with us she brought her medicines, her cane, and the blanket I found on my sister’s bed the last time I visited her. I remembered how I’d planned to inherit that blanket, how we used to wrap ourselves at play in its folds and be chieftains and princesses.</p> <p>Now I’ve found a quilt<sup>1</sup> I’d like to die under; Six Van Dyke brown squares, two white ones, and one square the yellowbrown of Mama’s cheeks. Each square holds a sweet gum leaf whose fingers I imagine would caress me into the silence.</p> <p>I think I’d have good dreams for a hundred years under this quilt, as Meema must have, under her blanket, dreamed she was a girl again in Kentucky</p>	<p>25 30 35 40 45</p>	<p>among her yellow sisters, their grandfather’s white family nodding at them when they met. When their father came home from his store they cranked up the pianola and all of the beautiful sisters giggled and danced. She must have dreamed about Mama when the dancing was over: a lanky girl trailing after her father through his Oklahoma field. Perhaps under this quilt I’d dream of myself, of my childhood of miracles, of my father’s burnt umber<sup>2</sup> pride, my mother’s ochre<sup>3</sup> gentleness. Within the dream of myself perhaps I’d meet my son or my other child, as yet unconceived. I’d call it The Century Quilt, after its pattern of leaves.</p>
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from *Mama’s Promises* by Marilyn Nelson Waniek.  
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<sup>1</sup> A quilt is a type of bedcovering often made by stitching together varied pieces of fabric.

<sup>2</sup> Burnt umber is a shade of brown.

<sup>3</sup> Ochre refers to a shade of yellow.