



AP[®] English Language 1999 Sample Student Responses

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#1 page 1

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Though both authors write about the Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia, their ~~method~~ differing methods of presenting the landscape result in wildly different characterization.

The two authors ~~use~~ employ descriptive detail and vibrant imagery to convey their impressions of the Okefenokee, but sentence structure is the most illuminating rhetorical device. It indicates the practical, educational intent of the first writer, and the engaging, entertaining intent of the second writer.

The first passage reads as an encyclopedia, detailed and ~~precise~~ precise, but with no emotionally charged words. The author details the geography - "It is a 'shallow, saucer-shaped depression approximately 25 mi wide and 40 mi long' - and ~~distri~~ distinctive features - the 'low, sandy ridges, wet grassy savannas, and small islands (called hummocks)'. While not emotional, the passage is full of details: ~~the~~ the 'exotic flowers, among them floating hearts, lilies, and rare orchids' and the 'giant tupelo and bald cypress trees festooned with Spanish moss.' The strong point in the passage, however, is his description of the geography that enclose the Swamp. Besides stating its size, the author indicates its location - '50 mi inland from the Atlantic coast' - and the landforms that bound it - 'the low, sandy Trail Ridge, which prevents drainage into the Atlantic' and the Suwannee and St. Mary's rivers which drain it. The first author presents the swamp as a landform, which has certain characteristics (Spanish moss, alligators, meandering channel of open water), but also as a part of a larger geography. ~~It is a place~~. The author feels the Okefenokee Swamp is just a place, another location to be described in an encyclopedia.



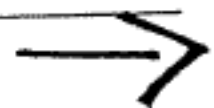
The second ~~central~~ passage is ~~in~~ opposition to the first passage in almost every way. The ~~emotional~~ author ~~&~~ conveys her ~~emotional~~ attitude about Okefenokee in ~~an~~ entertaining, emotional prose. ~~She~~ Her engaging details make her description of the swamp fly off the page. ~~She does not~~ The swamp is not noisy; it is "caterwauling" and "screeching" and "reverberating" like some hellish zoo. "Dead matter does not just rot; things fester here, things cook down, decompose, deliquesce." ~~The~~ ^{Her writing brings} images of rotting matter disintegrating into a pool of goo ~~to~~ mind. This author does not see the Okefenokee Swamp as a part of another ecosystem; it is its own ecosystem. The Suwannee and St. Mary's rivers do not link the swamp and the Atlantic; instead, they are ~~the~~ "born" in the swamp ~~the~~ ~~product~~ ~~and~~ ~~not~~ ~~that~~ and seem ~~the~~ solely dependent on the swamp for their existence. In fact, they ^{rivers} would not exist if they were not going to some place, to the Atlantic. She describes the ~~grittiness~~ grunginess and ~~smelliness~~ smelliness of the swamp through vivid details. Instead of calmly commenting that the swamp is a harbour of all types of ~~mosquit~~ insects, she writes... of the "430,000 acres of stinging, biting, and boring insects, ~~of~~ ... the seething, galaxies of gnats and deerflies and no-see-ums, the ticks, ~~mites~~ ~~and~~ mites, hookworms and paramecia that exist only to compound the misery of life." The image makes your skin crawl. By describing the life within the swamp, she brings the swamp to life ~~at~~ as well.

Sentence structure is the ~~final~~ indicator of the writer's ~~purpose~~ purpose. The first passage has short, clipped, exact sentences. Similarly, the author's intention is to characterize Okfenokoe Swamp by placing it exactly ~~in~~ with respect to other land features. ~~The first~~ While the first author gives the impression the swamp is this distant, calm, but watery land feature, the second author ~~has~~ implies none of that. The second author ~~uses~~ employs long, winding sentences crammed with details of smells and sights. ~~The swamp becomes a life alive that~~ In the second author's hands, the swamp becomes alive, a squirming, dripping, oozing, stinging mass filled with a spectrum of ~~some~~ wildlife. While the ~~second~~ ^{first} author educates ~~us~~ us about the Okfenokoe, the ~~second~~ ^{first} entertains us with its grossness and its unusualness.

The two passages given describe the Okfenotsee Swamp in very different lights. Although they are in some ways similar, the styles of the authors of these paragraphs are very different. The first The passages differ in diction, syntax, imagery, and tone.

First of all, passage I is written in a very plain manner. Only the words necessary to describe subjects are used and the diction is very plain. Passage two chooses a diction that is very ornate and frivolous. It seems as though the author is spitting out every word that he or she thinks of to describe a subject. An example of the contrast of the dictions is shown in in the description of the rivers that branch out of the swamp. Passage I clearly states that the swamp is drained by two rivers and gives their names, however, passage II talks of the "birth to two rivers" and how they "fan~~na~~ out over 430,000 leaf-choked acres". Passage II is much more detailed.

Secondly, there are very different styles of syntax that are chosen. The main distinction between the two passages is the sentence structure. Passage II uses many more compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences than passage I. Sentence length is considerably longer in passage II as well. The numerous adjectives used to describe the subjects are what add, most of all, to the sentence length. There is some parallel structure seen in the first passage, however, there is so much more in passage II (as seen in lines 13-16 "The swamp... of fish").



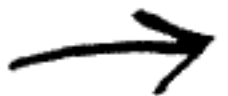
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Word choice and position all lead to the imagery of the passages. Passage I, because of its lack of adjectives, does not leave one with very much imagery. However, the adjectives that it does use give the reader a very good idea of what this place ~~looks~~ looks like. "Low, sandy ridges, wet grassy savannas, small islands..." all give the reader a very precise idea of what it looks like. Passage II uses words that are much more aloof and let the mind render its own ideas of this place. Sentences such as "things fester here, things cook down, decompose, deliquesce" give the reader a mysterious view of an almost mythological place. The view of the scene is more abstract, yet oddly more ~~precise~~ envisioned because of the numerous descriptive words.

Lastly, the tones of these two passages are entirely different. Passage I is written very ~~precisely~~ factually and almost didactically. It looks like an excerpt from a travel guide or school book. It makes the reader feel informed and educated about the place, yet it stirs no emotion. ~~By~~ ~~start~~ Starting the distances ("Lying about 50 mi" "25 mi wide and 40 mi long") only adds to the precision and actuality of the passage. Passage II is entirely distinct. It provokes emotions about this place and makes the reader feel as though he or she will be going on a journey to some mysterious place ~~where~~ that very little is known about. This passage seems as though it should come out of an adventure novel or an



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Indiana Jones script. It is filled with mystery, excitement, and the unknown.

In conclusion, these two points of view of the very same place are completely different. Passage one is direct and to the point. It seems like it is meant for learning. Passage II is imaginative and creative. It ~~both~~ uses many descriptive words to portray a very vivid, yet abstract scene.