

ENGLISH LITERATURE QUESTION 1

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

The following poem is by Rachel M. Harper. Read the poem carefully. Then, considering such elements as imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the relationship between music and the speaker’s complex memories of her family.

The Myth of Music for my father

line	If music can be passed on like brown eyes or a strong left hook, this melody		is 2,000 miles away, deciding if she wants to come home, I will have forgotten
	is my inheritance, lineage traced	30	this moment, the security of her footsteps, the warmth of a radiator on my back, and you present in the sound of typing
5	through a title track, displayed on an album cover that you pin to the wall as art, oral history taught		your own accompaniment, multiphonics disguised as chords in a distant room, speakers set on high to fill the whole house with your spirit, your call as a declaration of love.
	on a record player, the lessons sealed into the grooves like fact.	35	
10	This is the only myth I know. I sit on the hardwood floors of a damp November, my brother dealing cards	40	
15	from an incomplete deck, and I don’t realize that this moment is the definition of family, collective memory cut in rough-textured tones,		But the music will remain. The timeless notes of jazz too personal to play out loud, stay locked in the rhythm of my childhood, memories fading like the words of a lullaby, come to life in a saxophone’s blow. They lie when they say music is universal—this is my song, the notes like fingerprints as delicate as breath. I will not share this air with anyone but you.
20	the voice of a horn so familiar I don’t know I’m listening, Don’t know I’m singing, a child’s improvisation of Giant Steps or Impressions: ¹	45	
25	songs without lyrics can still be sung.	50	
	In six months, when my mother		

1. *Giant Steps* is a jazz album (1960) by John Coltrane. *Impressions* (1963) is another album by Coltrane.

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