

SECTION C – Writing: Analytical Essay (20%) (Suggested Time: 60 minutes)

Responses are scored using the English 3201 Analytical Essay Scoring Scale.

- 36. Based on your reading of the excerpt from Lawrence Hill’s The Book of Negroes, write a formal essay where you analyze the development of Meena’s conflict. In your analysis, you may consider such literary elements as imagery, dialogue and setting.**

**The Book of Negroes, by Lawrence Hill
– an excerpt**

CONTEXT:

In 1787 Meena was brought to America by slave traders. She escaped to the black community of Birchtown, Nova Scotia. She tried to locate her husband, Chekura, who went ahead of her. When riots broke out, Meena entrusted the Witherspoons, a white family, to care for her daughter, May. During this violence, May was stolen by the Witherspoons and taken to America. Meena is now processing this loss.

Paragraph #	
1	Jason was waiting for me at the edge of town. He had no food, but he did have a cut on his face. There was no work in town for him and no place to stay. Nobody but disbanded soldiers with guns ready, fists clenched, boots for kicking. Jason asked where my daughter was. I couldn’t answer. He didn’t ask again.
2	We trudged through the mud back to Birchtown. The woods were eerily silent, and free of marauding men.
3	“I have lost my daughter,” I whispered finally. “My last child.”
4	“Never say last,” Jason said. “Don’t say that, Missus Dee.”
5	“She was my last, Jason, and I am saying it because it is true. Don’t look for me to keep you alive again when we set foot in Birchtown. Because I am in the mood for dying.”

6	<p>Jason slipped the load off my shoulder and hoisted up my sack of peas and rice. I didn't even think to protest, and I don't know where the next thirty minutes went, except to disappear into a fog of despair. When we arrived we saw that more homes had been destroyed in Birchtown, but at least the white raiders were gone. Daddy Moses was sitting outside my cabin on a fallen log, waiting for me. Jason raised the old man up and we went back to my shack. Miraculously, it was still standing. The shack had more strength than I did.</p>
7	<p>For the next few weeks I was in such agony that I could barely speak. I tolerated Jason and Daddy Moses staying in my shack until they had their own place built, but I couldn't think of teaching the Birchtown children, or catching any babies, or working again for Theo McArdle, or doing anything at all. I feared that if I expressed my feelings, so much pain would erupt from within that I'd lash out and kill somebody. I had no money to pay for a trip to Boston, and when I finally asked Mr. McArdle or any other whites in town about going there, they insisted that I could be arrested – and possibly enslaved – if I showed up in that city with no money and no person to stand up for me.</p>
8	<p>“We don't know that they stayed in Boston,” McArdle said. “They could have gone to Philadelphia, New York or Savannah. They could have gone to Jamaica, Barbados, St. Dominigue or England.”</p>
9	<p>With McArdle's help, I placed newspaper advertisements in Boston, Philadelphia and New York, offering a small reward for information about the whereabouts of the Witherspoons, formerly of Shelburne, Nova Scotia. I asked every white person who would speak to me in town, but not one of them had any details about what had become of the Witherspoons. I even wrote to Sam Fraunces, in Mount Vernon, Virginia. After six months, I got a friendly letter back, but Sam Fraunces hadn't been able to find out anything, either.</p>
10	<p>My children were like phantom limbs, lost but still attached to me, gone but still painful. I stopped cooking, working and eating. For the first time in my life, I had no desire to read. I even stopped thinking about Chekura. Perhaps</p>

	<p>Daddy Moses was right. If Chekura had meant to come back, he would have returned long ago.</p>
11	<p>Daddy Moses asked if I was ready to let Jesus into my heart. I told him that I had had a faith when I was a young girl, that I had had to give it up, and that I wasn't thirsting for another God in my life. He took my hands and turned to me as if he could see deep into my eyes. "But you are good, Meena. So many people love you." Perhaps that was true, but I couldn't see it and couldn't feel it. All I knew was that the people I had loved more than anything else in life had been torn from me.</p>
12	<p>I started attending Daddy Moses's services again. I can't say that they changed a great deal. People were kind, bringing me food, sitting to eat with me when they noticed that I would never eat alone, bringing by fresh lumber and branches and nails, when they could, to help fix up my little place. Jason and Daddy Moses dropped in on me every day. When they set up a class for me, I resumed teaching, and even though I didn't really feel it, I tried to act like I loved the children I was showing how to read.</p>
13	<p>Eventually, Theo McArdle persuaded me to come back to work for him, and I tried to be interested in the copy I wrote. When I was alone, I read whatever books McArdle could get for me. He found me a map of Africa, but in the interior there were only sketches of hills, lions, elephants and monkeys.</p>
14	<p>About a year after I lost May, I got a little lamp and a gallon of whale oil in exchange for catching a white woman's baby in Shelburne. It was the first baby I had caught since losing my own. The pain of my losses never really went away. The limbs had been severed, and they would forever after be missing. But I kept going. Somehow, I just kept going.</p>