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## PRACTICE EXAM – ENGLISH

### Australia

Australia is many things to many people, infinite in variety and splendour, beautiful, harsh, and uncompromising. It is a patient land, vast, full of contrasts, and totally unpredictable. Australia is unique in being the smallest, most sparsely populated continent and the world's largest island. Its massive size, location, and landforms govern the climate, which varies to extremes. While nearly 40 percent of the land mass lies north of the Tropic of Capricorn, its south eastern portion has extensive, non-permanent snowfields. The vegetation is varied and spectacular.

Water is the key to Australia's character, with flood and drought between them laying down the terms that mean destruction or survival. Over one-third of the country's seven and a half million square kilometres receives about 250 mm of rain each year, while the eastern coast receives substantial rainfall which varies from area to area. Towards the arid center, the rainfall diminishes dramatically.

In many areas the annual rainfall is erratic. Some places experience their whole supply in one downfall. In other regions the rain is predictable and regular, but drought invariably occurs at some stage. With no water to promote new growth, the bare countryside takes on a parched, tragic aspect.

As a transporter, water is the medium for constant change. With it, the country prospers; without enough over a regular growing season, the result is drought and desert.

226 words

(used for Associate Exam, 2001)