



AP[®] English Language & Composition 2003 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

CC—9

Many of the essays earning a 9 obtain this score because of their impressive control of language, and this sample is an excellent example of a compelling response that draws much of its power from its lively use of language. The essay grapples quite successfully with the complexity of the issue, and after its rather startling opening paragraph, it spends considerable time admitting that entertainment can lead to ruin before moving on to posit a convincing argument that the more usual by-product of entertainment is escape and, occasionally, heightened awareness and enlightenment. In the service of this rather sophisticated approach, the student marshals several convincing pieces of evidence that range from *Jackass* to *Saving Private Ryan* to Michelangelo. While the student seems to have a moment of confusion about the date when movies actually became a means of entertainment for the masses, this small factual error in no way undercuts the excellence of this student's response. When the student returns to the image of semi-automatic weapons in the essay's concluding paragraph, he or she has presented the reader with a convincing, engaging, and thoughtful essay that clearly establishes and supports the student's own argument. The student's ability to link this image with that of the opening paragraph and, then, to use both as a means of delivering a powerful conclusion is impressive.

MMM—8

This essay meets the criteria for an 8. Overall, the essay successfully establishes and supports the student's position, and her writing demonstrates an ability to control most elements of effective writing, despite her unsuccessful attempt to spell "Huckleberry." The student acknowledges the complexity of the claim through her discussion of the word "capacity" and her recognition that society's capacity/ability to ruin society does not necessarily mean the ruination of society. By carefully presenting a variety of examples and evidence from *The Full Monty*, *Psycho*, *A Beautiful Life*, and *Huckleberry Finn*, the student offers convincing evidence to support her position: movies, plays, and books can actually open our eyes to reality and aid our understanding of the world in a positive way. The student carefully explains how and why her examples support her position and does not assume that her audience will see these connections without her guidance. Her use of humor, hyperbole, and colorful description heightens the overall effect of her argument and gives the essay a lively voice. While the essay does follow to some extent the ubiquitous five-paragraph format, its content and style clearly transcend the formula.

EE—6

This response is a good example of essays earning a 6 on this question. The student acknowledges the complexity of the topic by suggesting that the issue is too complex to be answered by a simple either-or approach and by avoiding the creation of an artificial binary. While the writer could certainly have benefited from using more precise examples by naming specific educational television shows, by extolling the benefits of particular music that he or she enjoys as a means of escaping stress, or by identifying what participatory sport he or she should be enjoying with friends, the generic examples suffice to establish the essay's position that entertainment can have both positive and negative effects. Being more specific about the kind of inappropriate material that one finds on the internet would have strengthened the essay, as would explaining what specific characters may cause young adults to question their own worth, but the essay, with its clear prose and focus, is an adequate response.

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Question 2

NN—9

This essay offers a particularly effective analysis of Green's methods by referring directly and indirectly to the text and explaining the function of specific methods with insight and depth. The analysis is full and apt by virtue of the student's careful explanation of how Green's methods are especially appropriate for both his audience and the occasion. The student provides context to help the reader understand why these methods would be necessary and also looks at the ways in which Green's speech enlists the aid of his audience while fully acknowledging why that audience might feel as though it had nothing to gain by joining forces with white soldiers. The student's explanation of Green's use of pronouns is impressive and supports his claim that Green's successful use of concession and accommodation (though the student does not use this specialized language to make his claim) are key to the effectiveness of Green's speech. The student's prose demonstrates an ability to use language well in the service of analysis, and the essay contains great variety in syntax and language.

X—7

Typical of many 6's in terms of its level of analysis, this essay rises to the score of 7 because of its mature prose style. Beginning its analysis with a Dickens' quotation that seems particularly apt for the discussion that will ensue, the essay follows Green's speech in a chronological order as the student encounters Green's methods as he or she reads through the passage. While this structure gives the essay a sense of the student's act of discovery, it is not particularly effective as a means of consolidating and grouping Green's methods. The student refers directly to the text, and his or her explanation of specific methods is helpful in explaining how appropriate Green's choices are for his audience. The student clearly identifies specific appeals, but the discussion of these appeals is little more than adequate in its explanation of why these appeals are suitable for Green's audience. The student's prose, however, is more than adequate, often allowing the student's observations and essay to garner additional force and effectiveness.

OO—5

As is the case with many essays earning the score of 5, this essay vacillates between adequate and inadequate analysis. The essay is inconsistent and uneven in its explanation of Green's methods, as it seems to shift back and forth between analysis and summary. Relying upon a chronological approach and structure, the essay rarely explains Green's methods with any connection to his purpose or audience. The prose of the essay is adequate for expressing the student's ideas, but its ideas are neither insightful nor clearly focused upon the demands of the prompt.

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Question 3

DD—9

This essay is particularly effective because of its full and perceptive comparison and contrast. The writer refers directly to the text and offers specific details from the passages to support the essay's insightful analysis of how the authors describe the birds and convey their effect upon the writer as observer. The student makes much of the contrast between Dillard's imagery and Audubon's numbers, carefully explaining how these two differences inform the writers' presentation of both subject matter and effect. The essay carefully connects the difference in description with the difference in response, pointing out that Dillard's response is more emotional and poetic while Audubon's is more scientific. By connecting Audubon's geometry and numbers to the sciences and Dillard's weaving metaphors with the arts, the essay offers a focused, full, and well-argued analysis that fully responds to the prompt. The student is able to marshal an argument about the relationship between the two texts that seems both plausible and insightful.

H—8

This student also offers an effective comparison and contrast essay that focuses upon what he or she sees as the differences between the two passage; she views one as the description of a realist or scholar and the other as that of a romantic or spiritual writer. In the process of substantiating this claim, the writer offers explicit evidence from the texts and skillfully incorporates it into his or her essay. But the student's essay is neither as full nor as skillfully written as the preceding essay. Because essay H has less fluency and syntactical variety, its overall effect is not as impressive as that of essay DD. Even though the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the major differences in Audubon and Dillard's descriptive methods and offers plausible explanations of how he or she reached the conclusion that Audubon's response is scholarly and Dillard's romantic, the student is not able to persuade the reader that his or her response is especially perceptive.

EE—6

This student also concludes that Audubon's response is more scientific/professorial and Dillard's more artful/imaginative, but the student offers little insight into how he or she came to this conclusion. The essay's explanation of these differences is merely adequate. The student provides a minimum of textual support for his or her claims and seems to assume that the reader will accept the essay's observations and claims without requiring much support or explanation. While the essay does acknowledge the effect of Dillard's use of personification, the student fails to provide a full description of how this technique works.