

**AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**  
**2006 SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 3**

The score should reflect a judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

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- 9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 essays and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

**8 Effective**

Essays earning a score of 8 respond to the prompt **effectively**, taking a position on the value of public statements of opinion and developing the position with appropriate and convincing evidence. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

- 7** Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but provide a more complete argument or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

**6 Adequate**

Essays earning a score of 6 respond to the prompt **adequately**, taking a position on the value of public statements of opinion and developing the position with appropriate evidence. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 take a position on the value of public statements of opinion and support the position with evidence. These essays may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited arguments and/or evidence. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

**4 Inadequate**

Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt **inadequately**. They may have difficulty taking a position on the value of public statements of opinion. The evidence used may be insufficient. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

- 3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in taking a position on the value of public statements of opinion and supporting the position with appropriate evidence. The essays may show less control of writing.

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**Question 3 (continued)**

**2 Little Success**

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in taking a position on the value of public statements of opinion and supporting the position with appropriate evidence. These essays may misunderstand the prompt or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate evidence. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.

- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their argument, or weak in their control of language.
- 0** Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.
- Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

The media today dominates and pervades through all aspects of society. It is a massive bulk of information ~~that~~ whose value is hard to ascertain. Ranging from silly comedy movies to the serious diplomacy of Washington, such opinions can ~~both~~ mislead the public ~~and~~ but can also inform the public that they are being misled. Overall, are the biased viewpoints spouted off by bigots, uninformed citizens, and crafty politicians create a more worthwhile ~~and~~ society? In addition, can democracy grow without the reasonable theories, comforting views, and educational materials also expounded by the same media sources? Freedom of speech in media is a confounding paradox to which there is no clear consensus.

On one hand, media is a bane to existence. Television skews society, presenting perfect "barbie" doll actors, disasters that always resolves into happy endings, and enough drama in one day to ~~save~~ <sup>fill</sup> up four lifetimes. Our immunity to violence and tendency to be unmoved by death comes directly from overstimulation <sup>caused by</sup> of the television ~~set~~ <sup>box</sup> and radio set. ~~For example,~~ news for example, here is a sample of everyday broadcasts: "Twelve soldiers died in Iraq today as a result of yet another suicide bombing attack. Meanwhile, new statistics have shown the Florida is the most popular vacation spot with the most affordable price. Many are flocking to the beach for sun, fun, and amazingly high waves." Illogical <sup>insertion</sup> ~~of~~ of such <sup>opinions</sup> ~~statements~~ can numb the mind. Repeated showings of CSI, Law and Order, and other criminal investigations give viewers ~~the~~ false satisfaction that every criminal will be ~~eventually~~ caught and all crimes go unpunished. Society gives in to the escapism rampant throughout media sources.

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## ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

Similarly, web blogs, <sup>named by ordinary citizens,</sup> ~~and newspapers~~ <sup>are,</sup> increasingly slanting the truth and overexaggeration the importance of minor occurrences. While news about celebrity Tom Cruise's new baby runs amok on front pages, debate on global warming and Alaskan wildlife preservation is scanty. The 8 trillion dollar deficit is unheeded yet the <sup>name of a</sup> new game console <sup>and the proliferation of rumors</sup> tops public interest charts. It is the lack of truth that has caused Newsweek to ~~misprint~~ print misleading rumors on Guantanamo Bay and Time Magazine to mistakenly ast Valorie Plame. Lewd and offensive material abounds on the internet and citizens <sup>express</sup> ~~show~~ more interest in the President's private life and exercising habits than in his domestic policy. All of this, and more is a direct result of the abundance of public statements in the media.

However, throughout history, it has been shown that public statements are also irreplaceable in the search for truth. Would Senator McCarthy lose power if there were not televised hearings of the army trials, in which one victim asked clearly, "have you no sense of decency?" It is a question asked often ~~to~~ the writer's of disreputable blogs, money-seeking television producers, and glory-seeking columnists. But it is the sheer fact that society is allowed to ask this question that shows the importance of a system of freedemocracy. The very corruption and immaturity that is shown is public statements will never be eliminated if ~~things~~ ~~are~~ ~~to~~ existence is not made public. Problems would never be revealed in a communist society in which opinions are suppressed and corruption is allowed to fester.

It is important to keep in mind that



ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

no matter how much "trash" is found in media sources, there are always one or two ~~the~~ opinions worthy to be heeded. Expressions of all and any types of opinion help create a more democratic society. ~~It is important to~~

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

Today's world is saturated with media, and today's media is saturated with the varying and numerous opinions of people both trustworthy and random, both moderate and radical. Some of these statements of opinion are held fast, but many more are either mocked or completely disregarded. Every person has the right to express their beliefs, but perhaps not every person is worth listening to. An important part of forming one's own opinion is listening to and considering the opinions of others; the trick is knowing who to trust.

Rush Limbaugh is an example of a very opinionated person; he says whatever he feels without hesitation, and he has every right to do so. Limbaugh is quite conservative, so naturally not everyone that listens to his radio program agrees with him, but his opinions are certainly to be valued and considered alongside any others. The value of any person's opinion is its ability to open people's eyes to ideas they had not yet considered.

Actor Tom Cruise has come under much scrutiny lately for his staunchly held Scientologist beliefs. Religion should be respected as much as opinion, but expression becomes a problem when anyone, especially someone as culturally

## ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

influential as Cruise, attempts to push his beliefs upon his listeners. On the Today Show, Cruise railed against any and all prescription drugs and ~~unwittingly~~ claimed to know for a fact that depression is not real. He is clearly wrong, as research has shown, but he technically had every right to voice his opinion. Clearly, what is socially accepted as appropriate and what is really allowed sometimes differ greatly. Cruise may have gotten to express his opinion, but as a result people will find him less and less reliable in the future.

Walter Cronkite, although not as contemporary as Limbaugh or Cruise, was someone whose opinions were greatly respected. His career as a national news anchor exposed him to many controversial issues, but he rarely expressed his opinions to his viewers. He broke from this policy very little, but the most notable instance followed the Tet offensive of the Vietnam War. Cronkite visited the troops and reported when he came back home what he really thought: that this war was deeper, more dangerous, and further from an end than anyone had imagined. Cronkite's viewers, and most of America, listened to him. This respect and trust shown to Cronkite proves that those who speak the least are heard the

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loudest. The opinions of those who rarely share are valued the most because they are obviously well thought out and personal, not just spur-of-the-moment musings or repetitions of other peoples' views.

Every person has the legal right to publicly state their beliefs, and every person certainly deserves to be heard, but it is the responsibility of the listener to incorporate other beliefs into their own and to not lose sight of their beliefs in a media saturated world. And although every opinion is to be respected, the ones that are to be valued are those held by the level headed, the passionate, ~~and~~ the knowledgable, and the reputable.

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

Wherever one goes in ~~the world~~<sup>the world</sup>, someone will have an opinion ~~that~~<sup>that</sup> he/she feels the need to share with the public. People usually hear the speaker. Some will listen, and others will not. Some will agree, others will not. The true ~~question~~<sup>question</sup> is whether or not the public opinions of that person <sup>are</sup> really worthwhile. Do they matter?

Take ~~the~~ the United States, where the people enjoy the freedoms of speech and press. There is always something going on where someone - a political figure, an entertainer, or even an ordinary person - voices his/her opinions to the world. This is especially apparent during an election or other major process. The United States recently had a presidential election, and the competition was fierce. People spoke the truth, and people spoke lies. The media was mostly for John Kerry, along with most of Hollywood. George W. Bush had the support of some of the media and almost all of the Military. People from both sides voiced their opinions, and Bush won.

The United States is engaged in a war on Terror. Many people spoke against it, and many people spoke for it. ~~One~~ One of the most controversial issues was whether or not to invade Iraq. ~~Some of the arguments~~ The huge ~~question~~ question was if Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons. ~~The~~ The military invaded, and even though we did not get weapons of mass destruction, we got Hussein.

So, to answer the question about whether or not public opinions matter, I would really have to say no. An overwhelming amount ~~has been said that~~ of negative opinions were shared regarding Bush and the war. They were said by very famous people, too. Look, though, at the outcome. Bush is the president and the people are free in Iraq. I think people want honesty at their cores. Good always prevails, no matter how bleak

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ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

things may seem. No matter what people may see or hear around them, they will always follow what's in their hearts.

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**2006 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3**

**Overview**

This question called for students to write a clear, cogent, and compelling argument. Students were directed to develop a position on the value of public statements of opinion. The question prompted students to consider such sources as talk radio, television shows, popular magazines, and Web blogs. It also suggested that they think about the roles played by ordinary citizens, political figures, and entertainers, among those who express their opinions publicly on a wide range of topics. Are these opinions worthwhile? Does the expression of such opinions foster democratic values?

**Sample: 3A**  
**Score: 8**

The opening paragraph of this essay establishes a context for the discussion and a thesis that qualifies rather than simplifies, setting up a structure in which the student initially decries the media and then extols the media for allowing truth to be heard. The second paragraph attacks both news and entertainment programs: “Television skews society, presenting perfect ‘barbie’ doll actors, disasters that always resolves [*sic*] into happy endings, and enough drama in one day to fill up four lifetimes.” In the next paragraph, the student cites examples of how the media, by giving people a voice, have helped to preserve democracy. Although some flaws in diction occur early on, the essay becomes more sure-handed as it develops. The especially appropriate evidence and the fullness of discussion made this essay an 8.

**Sample: 3B**  
**Score: 6**

An adequate response, this essay asserts that knowing whom to trust is the key in this media-saturated world. The essay’s three evidence paragraphs present examples of trustworthy and perhaps not-so-trustworthy people, including Rush Limbaugh, Tom Cruise, and retired CBS anchor Walter Cronkite. The conclusion warns listeners to be discerning and to value those who bring knowledge and passion to the discussion. The writing, like the evidence, is adequate. The score for this essay is 6.

**Sample: 3C**  
**Score: 4**

The essay opens with simplistic assertions and a question rather than a thesis, with the answer to that question—the student’s statement of opinion—appearing at the end. Using the examples of the 2004 election and the war in Iraq, the student asserts that “negative opinions” (anti-Bush, anti-war) do not matter because “good always prevails.” The essay’s evidence is insufficient, and the writing suggests immature control, with simple syntax and limited diction—supporting 4 as the appropriate score.