
AP English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 3

General Directions: This scoring guide is designed so that the same performance expectations are applied to all student responses. It will be useful for most of the essays, but if it seems inappropriate for a specific paper, assistance from the Table Leader should be sought. The Table Leader should always be shown booklets that seem to have no response or that contain responses that seem unrelated to the question. A score of 0 or — should not be assigned without this consultation.

The essay’s score should reflect an evaluation 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 according to standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. The essay should be evaluated as a draft, and students should be rewarded for what they do well. The evaluation should focus on the evidence and explanations that the student uses to support the response; students should not be penalized for taking a particular perspective.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay’s overall quality. In no case should a score higher than a 2 be given to a paper with errors in grammar and mechanics that persistently interfere with understanding of meaning.

9 – Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for the score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in their development, or particularly impressive in their control of language.

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations appropriately and convincingly support the student’s position, and the argument* is especially coherent and well developed. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

7 – Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for the score of 6 but provide a more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style.

6 – Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations appropriately and sufficiently support the student’s position, and the argument is coherent and adequately developed. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 – Essays earning a score of 5 develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations used to support that position may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student’s ideas.

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Question 3 (continued)

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations used may inappropriately, insufficiently, or unconvincingly support the student’s position. The argument may have lapses in coherence or be inadequately developed. The prose generally conveys the student’s ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

3 – Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in developing a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The essays may show less maturity in their control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in developing a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The student may misunderstand the prompt or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated or inaccurate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of coherence and control.

1 – Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation and argument, weak in their control of language, or especially lacking in coherence.

0 Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.

— Indicates an entirely blank response.

* For the purposes of scoring, argument means asserting a claim justified by evidence and/or reasoning.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3 3A
(1 of 4)

The unknown is a concept of crippling anxiety of many. There is fear in the unfamiliar, the possibility of failure, of danger, of embarrassment. In a contrasting way, author Anne Morrow Lindbergh describes the "disappointments and surprises" of the unfamiliar, the failures and the unexpected moments that are "the most fulfilling. In this sense, she is absolutely ~~was~~ correct. The exploration of the unknown has led to unprecedented scientific development, cultural development, and personal development alike.

The principles of science are synonymous with exploration of the unknown. President John F. Kennedy is famously quoted as saying that the US would land on the moon "not because it is easy, but because it is hard." In the face of public uncertainty, Kennedy set out to explore one of the biggest unknowns of modern humanity: outer space. Obviously, the moon landing was successful, and the subsequent technological development benefitted all aspects of society. Billions were allocated in research funding, and as a result, humanity expanded its sphere of knowledge greatly. Yet, this is not a recent phenomenon. One of the most famous scientists in history, Galileo Galilei, chose to explore and challenge commonly held truth. He was ridiculed for claiming that the Earth revolved around the Sun, yet it was his desire to enter into the unfamiliar that led to the scientific advances by the US under Kennedy so many centuries later. Scientists throughout history - Kepler, Brahe, Boyle, Tyson,



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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3A
(2 of 4)

Hawking, Charles, Gauss, and more - made their names by engaging with the unknown, and humanity will forever be indebted to them for their tenacity.

Yet, this trend is not limited to the realm of science. Theorists of music know of the many "eras" of music, from medieval to classical to romantic. The most notable example of an exploration into the unknown is found in the baroque period, under the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach is one of the few composers who can claim to have created his own era of music, and he did this by exploring the possibilities of a chamber orchestra. He, by exploring new territory in music, changed the face of string and orchestral music, employing elements of figure and countermelody that can be found frequently in subsequent eras and even in the pop music of today. Like scientists, musicians are known for being barrier-breakers. Listening to a performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's 12th String Quartet (written in the 20th century, which is considered "modern" by musicians) will demonstrate how musicians are continuing to explore the limitless possibilities of sound. By breaking the constraints of cultural norms and exploring the unknown, composers have brought lasting cultural development to fruition.

Finally, an exploration of the unfamiliar is a powerful tool of personal development, in addition to the scientific and cultural benefits. This is best demonstrated by the



Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3 3A
(3 of 4)

life and legacy of Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau famously spent a period of his life living in seclusion on the banks of Walden Pond in the northern United States. Like Bach and Shostakovich, Thoreau helped to establish a new genre in his craft. Thoreau, along with others like Ralph Waldo Emerson, created the transcendentalist movement, now studied by millions of scholars and students across the world. While his exploration of new ideas in literature is certainly notable, it is the content of his writing that is most important in the context of the theme of the unknown. Thoreau wrote Walden to summarize his thoughts and experiences throughout the time he spent on the pond of the same name. Reading Walden gives a clear impression of ~~the~~ Thoreau as a dynamic character, one who develops and alters himself thanks to the knowledge he obtains. It is clear, ~~after the~~ that after his experience on the pond, Thoreau has changed for the better: he is more introspective; he has come to realizations about the world. Thus, Thoreau's decision to leave society and live in the unfamiliar wilderness led to his ~~own~~ own personal improvement in a ^{grand} way.

When Lindbergh writes of the unknown being "enriching," she severely understates the true benefits of exploration. The Unknown is more than "enriching." It is a ~~clear~~ demonstration of true humanity, a reflection of a true desire to understand



3A
(4 of 4)

3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

the world, and a crucial point of living in a changing world. The unknown has allowed the human race to develop, improve, and augment itself scientifically, culturally, and personally, and for those causes, it is clearly incredibly valuable.

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Question 3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3B
(1 of 3)

Many children hesitate to swim in natural bodies of water, compared to an artificial swimming pool. Artificial swimming pools have a ~~flat~~ flat bottom surface that is easy to see. Lakes, ponds, and oceans ^{have} many more interesting features, that are more difficult to identify. ~~Children~~ Society has a very difficult time trying new / unknown things. Lindbergh ~~the~~ correctly identifies ~~the~~ ^{exploring} the human hesitation to exploring the unknown alongside the results of the unknown.

Lindbergh ~~correctly~~ ^{correlates} effectively ~~uses~~ the term "unknown" ~~with~~ with new things or things humans are ~~in~~ not aware of. ~~What~~ ~~she~~ ~~then~~ ~~states~~ that humans tend to stay away from ~~the~~ things that are unknown. Children cannot see the bottom of a lake or sea due to the ~~the~~ lack of transparency within the water. Because ~~they~~ ~~cannot~~ ~~see~~ ~~the~~ ~~bottom~~ it is difficult to see the bottom surface, people develop natural fears. This is also true for many common parables. In the story of Jonah, an evangelist disobeyed God's orders

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3B
3 (2 of 3)

to preach at a specific city. This was due to the fact that Jonah feared the people of said city because he had never been there before. As a result, Jonah began traveling to a city he did have recent experience with, and suffered consequences. This fear for the unknown causes ~~people~~ people to stay away from unknown things.

Lindblagh is also correct when it comes to the ~~past~~ ~~experiences~~ of the unknown. This is due to the surprise of discovering what the unknown actually is. Natural bodies of water are home to many plants, animals, natural formations, and other unusual features. If hesitant children developed the courage to explore under the surface, they would discover new fish species and other interesting phenomena. ~~That~~ Trying new foods can bring about a change in the way a person thinks about food and other cultures. Exploring the unknown provides opportunities for surprise and enlightenment.

Things that are unknown ~~that~~ also come with a sense of fear, alongside opportunities
→

3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3B
(3 of 3)

for ~~intelligence~~ enlightenment. The definition of progress in any society is trying a new/unknown strategy for success and determining whether it ~~works~~ should be used or avoided. A society will make progress when they find a strategy that works and continue to use it. Thus, choosing the unknown is a necessity.

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

3. 3C
(1 of 2)

~~When we are born into this world we are naturally adventurous. Even before we can walk, we crawl around looking for new things to feel, and also new things to bite or taste. But around 10 years old we start developing preferences, and begin to fear the "unknown."~~

When we are born into this world we are naturally adventurous. Even before we can walk, we crawl around looking for new things to feel, and also new things to bite or taste. But around 10 years old we start developing preferences, and begin to fear the "unknown."

When you think of the unknown, many will think deep space or deep in the ocean, but the unknown can be something as simple as a new food. The unknown, simply put, can be anything you don't know. Using the example of food, we are quick to get something we always get, but very hesitant to try something new. One explanation is that it is our survival instinct. We only trust that the food we know will taste good, and we have no trust for the new food, only skepticism.

Some people in society are naturally adventurous. They seem to be getting rare but without them we would not have walked



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on the moon or ~~the moon~~ broke the speed of sound. For the few courageous ones, the unknown is a ~~an~~ fascinating place, and they will keep looking for the unknown until they perish.

I believe that exploring the unknown is essential to be a well-cultured and intelligent individual. To be intelligent you must want to learn about the ~~the~~ unknown and understand it. ~~you believe the~~ A man who stops wanting learn new things is a fool. I believe to gain knowledge, you need to keep pursuing "your" unknown.

When we are born, everything is the unknown and we want to know it. But as we get older, we get lazier and stop pursuing the unknown. I believe the most intelligent man on earth, is the one that never stops pursuing ~~the~~ unknown.

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AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

The argument prompt asked that students read a quote from Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s *Gift from the Sea* and write an essay in which they develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. Therefore, the students were expected to demonstrate some understanding of what the unknown might be.

Students were then expected to take a position on Lindbergh’s statement and to support that claim with discussion of ways in which the unknown has or does not have value.

Sample: 3A

Score: 9

This essay is especially sophisticated in its argument and particularly impressive in its control of language. The response employs overwhelmingly convincing evidence, calling on the likes of JFK, Galileo, as well as a list of ground-breaking scientists at the end of the second paragraph. The seamless transitions from the scientific to the musical (Bach and Shostakovich) and ultimately to the literary (Thoreau) are offered with appropriate and convincing explanations and extensive development (e.g., “Bach ... created his own era of music ... by exploring the possibilities of a chamber orchestra. He, by exploring new territory in music, changed the face of string and orchestral music, employing elements of fugue and counter melody”). This essay presents an ideal example of a five-paragraph essay done more than effectively, as evidenced in the last line: “The unknown has allowed the human race to develop, improve, and augment itself scientifically, culturally, and personally, and for those causes, it is clearly incredibly valuable.”

Sample: 3B

Score: 5

This essay attempts to use the concept of children preferring swimming in a pool as opposed to in a natural body of water as a metaphor for the fear of exploring the unknown. The student speaks of “human hesitation” to explore the depths of lakes and oceans that “harbur [sic] ... interesting features, that are more difficult to identify.” Carrying this metaphor forward, the response notes that “humans tend to stay away from things that are unknown” due to fear. It builds on this evidence by offering the Biblical story of Jonah and drawing on his fear, but the evidence used is uneven and limited (e.g., “As a result, Jonah began traveling to a city he did have recent experience with, and suffered consequences”). In another instance of discussing fear, the essay alludes to “[t]rying new foods” but does not develop that thought beyond one sentence. Overall, the limited nature of the response resulted in it earning a score of 5.

Sample: 3C

Score: 3

This essay struggles to take a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The response discusses humans being born “naturally adventurous” but later becoming fearful of the unknown. The student references trying new foods, walking on the moon, and breaking the speed of sound, but the development of this evidence and the examples provided are inadequate and insufficient (e.g., “Using the example of food, we are quick to get something we always get, but very hesitant to try something new” and “A man who stops wanting learn new things is a fool”). There is simply very little explanation given. Ultimately, this essay demonstrates less success in developing a position and less maturity in the control of writing than an essay scored a 4.