

AP English Language and Composition
Question 1: Synthesis
Scoring Commentaries on 2020 Rubrics
(Applied to 2019 Student Responses)

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LL	1	4	1
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L	1	3	0
D	1	3	0
E	1	2	0
G	1	1	0
HH	0	2	0
H	0	1	0

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Sample LL
6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a clear thesis that responds to the prompt and takes a position on the factors that individuals/agencies “ought to ponder.” The thesis in this instance is set apart from the rest of the essay as its own paragraph. The response identifies economics and comfort/quality of life as “the two most important considerations.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it provides evidence from at least three sources and develops commentary that is consistent and cohesive throughout. A line of reasoning develops that focuses on the positive economic aspects of windfarms while acknowledging that individuals/agencies must also consider “the effects on human happiness and satisfaction.” The second paragraph provides a supporting claim focused on economic considerations and integrates appropriate details from Source F to provide cost analysis. Paragraph two also examines “human costs” as part of the economic analysis and connects wind power to local economies. The citation from Source D about McCamey, Texas is highly sophisticated, focusing on how windfarm development can stop “economic insecurity” and the “diminished quality of life” that face many small towns. In both cases, the response explicitly and thoughtfully links to the larger argument that an individual or agency “cannot ignore the economic effects” of creating windfarms. The third paragraph is similarly well-structured and focuses on how individuals/agencies must consider wind farms “placement and size” to support “human happiness and well-being.” The response cites Source A and C to offer a clear concession that wind turbines “occupy huge parcels of land” and potentially cause “sleeplessness.” The response challenges these complaints and weighs them against the values associated with renewable energy sources, helping to further solidify the line of reasoning that “minimizing human annoyance” is key to creating support for windfarms.

Row C: 1/1

This response earned a point for Row C because it demonstrates a nuanced understanding of argumentation. The response employs refutation successfully by examining information from Source A and C, which points to the negative aesthetic and physical impacts of wind farms. The response acknowledges these points, but in weighing them against economic considerations, concludes that these factors aren’t as significant as others. This response makes several good rhetorical choices—from the directness of the thesis to the structure of the essay—making the writing clear and accessible. This response contains some strong stylistic moves (i.e. Chinese proverb reference) that show the writer’s control of, and fluency with, language.

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Sample A

6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a clear thesis on the factors that should be considered with wind farms and then identifies those factors: “Agencies looking to establish wind farms should consider the geographic location of their potential wind farm and its vicinity to resident communities, in order to avoid stirring up more controversy in society’s debate on how to settle an increasingly demanding appetite for energy.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it includes evidence from at least three sources that is clearly related to a line of reasoning. Each body paragraph supports a line of reasoning that is explicitly stated in the conclusion: “While there are many problems associated with wind energy, ultimately it is a legitimate and possible solution to one of the biggest climate catastrophes facing planet Earth.” Evidence is carefully and thoughtfully integrated throughout the response and commentary exists cohesively between source citation. The supporting argument in paragraph two focuses on considering geographical locations of wind farms to ensure they are appropriate. The response draws on information from Sources A and B to argue that if the terrain is not ideal, wind energy won’t reach its potential. The commentary is insightful and focused as it explicitly points out that without such considerations “agencies building large-scale wind farms become more open and vulnerable to criticism which can stifle the overall progression of clean energy resources.” The response also acknowledges the need to consider the impact wind farms have on local animals implying that it is important to identify an “appropriate location” for this type of endeavor. The writer’s voice and ideas are not supplanted by source materials. The commentary connects to the response’s argument that public image and perception is an important factor to consider, such as in paragraph three: “Like the harsh, glaring, white design of the wind turbines themselves, agencies must find a way to control their image by being selective in the places where farms are established.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because it demonstrates sophistication of thought in several different areas. First, the response explores the complexities across the sources and puts them into conversation with one another. An example of this conversation exists in the third body paragraph, when the response cites Source C to argue that agencies must consider “impaired” sleep within communities close to wind turbines. The response then turns to Source E to argue that sleep is not the only consideration but that, “local residents concerns for wind turbines extends to their style as well.” This extension of ideas suggests an understanding that source can build upon one another to craft a more meaningful argument. Finally, the response employs a style that is persuasive throughout: “After all, what is the point in trying to save the planet if the process inflicts too much harm?”

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Sample TT
5/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it establishes a thesis in the last sentence of the first paragraph that defines the primary “factors for power companies to consider when building wind farms” and identifies these as “environmental boon, aesthetic, and economic factors.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it employs at least three sources to fulfill the organizational plan established in the thesis. The response has a line of reasoning that is most clearly relayed in the final paragraph where the student argues, “By balancing economics, efficiency, and aesthetics, power companies can create a solution which balances human impact with environmental preservation.” In paragraph two, the student uses appropriate information from sources and comments on the source to connect them back to the thesis as we see in this passage: “According to Source F, wind power retains 1,164% of the energy put into the system--meaning that it increases the energy converted from fuel (wind) to electricity 10 times! No other method of electricity production is even half that efficient.” The response explains the information provided in the source and shows how it fulfills the promise of the paragraph, in this case environmental benefits. Paragraph three shows similar analysis by the writer: “Although, as renewable power goes, wind is incredibly cheap, it is still significantly more expensive than fossil fuels.” The commentary helps to group the evidence and supports the larger line of reasoning. This line of reasoning is explicit in the following from paragraph four: “One thing for power companies to consider is working with turbine manufacturing to make the machines less aesthetically impactful, so as to garner greater public support.”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. The response is not especially sophisticated in content or form but rather tends toward generalizations and statements that are not effective. In paragraph one, the response claims that little is being done to address environmental concerns and that “it is merely a matter of time before coal and gas plants are no longer in operation.” The response consistently overstates its position by using sentences that tend toward equivocation: “As with most things, wind power has no easy answer. It is the responsibility of the companies building them to weigh the benefits and consequences.” In both cases, the response misses the opportunity to present a more specific and balanced argument about what individuals and companies should consider and prioritize.

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Sample II

5/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a defensible thesis related to the factors that should be considered in establishing a wind farm. This thesis takes a positive stance on wind energy, which is not the task of the prompt; however, in explaining the position, the response notes the factors that should be considered: in this case, economic and environmental benefits that outweigh the cost of their threat to natural landscapes and the environment. In doing so, the response creates a defensible thesis.

Row B: 3/4

This response earned three points for Row B because it establishes a line of reasoning that considers several reasonable factors that should be considered prior to the construction of wind farms. The response ultimately assigns comparative value to them in order to reach the conclusion that the benefits of wind energy outweigh the costs. To support this reasoning, the response integrates evidence from a three or more of the sources. Even though the commentary is limited, the thesis is well-supported by the source material. The second paragraph addresses the claim that the windmills are unattractive and unnatural by suggesting that some might see them as a way to “enhance the natural landscape rather than detracting from it.” The response uses Source D to suggest wind farms aren’t nearly as bad as other power sources for the environment or animals. The response did not earn all four points for Row B because while there is some commentary in the body paragraphs, it relies on sources with minimal framing or contextualization. Paragraph three, for example, has one sentence of commentary at the end of a long paragraph that uses many sources. While the argument that “wind energy helps to revitalize stagnant economies with an efficient and reliable source of both energy and income” is thoughtful, it stops short of fully analyzing why such a consideration is of importance for local economies. Similarly, paragraph four and five rely heavily on source material and leave little room for deeper analysis. This response could have been improved if the writer had more consistently and fully explained the sources or made connections and comments that tied back into the larger argument.

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because it employs a vivid and persuasive style throughout. The student frames the argument thoughtfully in the introduction by explicitly arguing that “we are beginning to feel the repercussions of our blatant disregard for the environment during our endless quest for economic and material gain.” Persuasive and vivid language is also apparent in the conclusion: “By embracing wind energy, we can be sure that humanity will be blown towards a brighter future and better tomorrow.” This clever use of language plays on the topic of prompt and recognizes the need to engage the audience in considering the “economic and environmental benefits” for wind farm development.

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Sample L

4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a defensible thesis on noise, landscape, and cost, all important factors to consider when developing “commercial-grade wind farms.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points for Row B. Each paragraph identifies a supporting claim first cited in the thesis that include “noise,” “alter[ing] the landscape,” and “cost and efficiency.” These categories establish a line of reasoning. This response draws on and cites materials from Sources C, E, and F that are appropriate to support the claims, but it only partially develops those citations. The response provides some analysis such as requiring that a company “consider conducting research” about the impact of windfarms on individuals. However, such commentary often appears at the end of body paragraphs instead of cohesively throughout the integration of evidence and stops short of providing the depth of analysis necessary for a higher score.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. This response is organized in a simple and straightforward manner. The response overly relies on source material. While the student nods to a counterargument in the second paragraph, “that wind turbines are harmless (Source C),” this response does not actually formulate or respond to a counterargument in a way that adds to the content or form of the paper. The mere statement of a counterargument is not enough to merit a sophistication point.

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Sample D

4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a defensible thesis that responds to the prompt. While incorrect grammatically, this thesis lists three factors to consider: “environmental advantages, economics, and health issues.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points for Row B because it cites three or more sources and develops the three points listed in the thesis sentence within the body paragraphs. In doing so, the response establishes a line of reasoning that focuses on the benefits of wind farms while also acknowledging some potential “drawbacks.” Each of the body paragraphs cites at least two sources that are appropriate for the claims being made in the corresponding paragraph. While the response includes some commentary, it is decidedly limited and sometimes fails to support key claims fully. For example, in paragraph three: “Wind farms are an economic advantage in more ways than one.” The response connects the evidence from sources back to the thesis, but it adds little insight or substance in the commentary. The response ends by urging agencies to consider the drawbacks in addition to the benefits of wind farming, which connects to the purpose of the prompt.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. While organized, the response is not especially vivid or nuanced. Statements such as, “Wind turbines combine efficiency with cleanliness for the environment” and “Wind farms are an economic advantage in more ways than one” are clear examples of how the response does not demonstrate sophistication of thought.

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Sample E

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a defensible thesis that responds to the prompt. While incorrect grammatically, this thesis presents a defensible position: “Some factors you should consider before converting to that source of energy is, wind power is clean and renewable, their appearance, and the cost it will be.” Even without parallel structure in the list, the presence of a thesis is clear.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because it does not establish a clear line of reasoning. Instead, the body paragraphs operate independently from one another. Each of the body paragraphs relies heavily on cited sources A, B, and F to make points about the environment, appearance, and cost. The response is difficult to follow and often merely restates or oversimplifies the evidence of the source material. The following example from the second body paragraph highlights the limited commentary that exists: “The wind isn’t manufactured in a factory then released into the air, it is natural.” While this response makes some moves to establish paragraphs to support the thesis, most of the content is delivered through the source material without substantive commentary. The fourth paragraph equivocates on the cost of wind energy: “the cost of the turbines can be good and bad.”

Row C: 0/1

This response did not earn a point for Row C because it uses simplistic language, which borders on undermining meaning. It does not demonstrate sophistication of ideas, structure, style, or language.

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Sample G

2/6 Points (A1 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it presents a thesis that responds to the prompt: “As for the development of the windmill there are many important factors that an individual or agency should consider when deciding whether to establish a wind farm. These most important factors include, wind fluctuation, effects the environment.” While incorrect grammatically, this two-sentence thesis identifies factors individuals or agencies should consider before establishing a wind farm: wind fluctuation and environmental effects.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B because it is limited in its analysis and provides evidence from only two sources. Description of the sources in both body paragraphs substitutes for the writer’s ideas and there is almost no existing commentary within the response. What commentary does exist, such as the following example from paragraph two, is occasionally incoherent: “And Because of this factor that which develops and unreliable resource wind power is the lowest electricity generation in the United States.”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. The ideas in this response are not complicated, and the language lacks precision. It is minimalistic in its development and over relies on quoted material for content.

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Sample HH

2/6 Points (A0 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row A. While it makes an argument about the topic of wind energy, it does not offer an argument about anything that agencies or individuals should consider in relation to wind farming. While there is an overarching argument, “Wind turbines tend to have many harmful affects, and do more harm than good,” it does not earn the point because it does not respond to the task of the prompt.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B. While the body paragraphs cite sources B, E, and C, the sources are used as a substitute for the writer’s ideas. The response only includes simplistic and redundant commentary about the sources that connects it back to the topic as is seen in paragraph four: “As you can see, these turbines cause health problems to the people around them.” This is simplistic analysis. Even so, there is some semblance of paragraph development and transitions in paragraph four: “Not only can the wind turbines cause harm to animals, but it can also cause harm to humans.” The one sentence conclusion is another example of the response making moves that resemble an essay but without much substance or development.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point in Row C because it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought.

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Sample H

1/6 Points (A0 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row A because the introduction begins with an equivocation—“The use of wind turbines for power has many benefits and also many potential disadvantages” and ends with a weak statement: “All of these things should be considered when establishing a wind farm.” This response does not define any of the alleged strengths or weaknesses, nor does it establish any sense of how these factors need to be weighed in order to stage an argument.

Row B: 1/4

This response earned one point for Row B. Each of the body paragraphs in this response uses a single source, which demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of paragraph development. In each instance, the paragraph begins by summarizing or paraphrasing a source, but there is little to no commentary or explanation about how the sources would support the thesis. The commentary provided is especially simplistic and contradictory, as in the following example: “The noise doesn’t just affect people right next to the turbines. Since the turbines are so tall, the noise affect people anywhere near them.”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point in Row C because it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought.