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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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## Rhetorical Analysis

6 points

Born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents, Sonia Sotomayor was appointed a United States Supreme Court Justice in 2009, becoming the first Latina justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. She delivered the speech “A Latina Judge’s Voice” at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law in 2001 when she was an appeals-court judge. The following passage is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Sotomayor makes to convey her message about her identity.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p><b>Row A</b></p> <p><b>Thesis</b></p> <p><b>(0–1 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b></p> <p>For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1 point</b></p> <p>Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<p><b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>• Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes.</li> <li>• Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Responses that earn this point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt <u>and</u> clearly articulate a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices Sotomayor makes to convey her message about her identity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b></p> <p><b>Restate the prompt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Sonia Sotomayor, who was an appeals-court judge at the time, delivered a speech in 2001 at UC Berkeley.”</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Make a claim but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“In her speech to the Berkeley School of Law in 2001, Sonia Sotomayor claims that her parents taught her how to love her own identity as a Latina.”</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Repeat provided information from the passage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Sonia Sotomayor conveys her message about being a Latina, and particularly a ‘Newyorkrican,’ in her speech at Berkeley University.”</i></li> </ul>		<p><b>Examples that earn this point:</b></p> <p><b>Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Sotomayor uses personal anecdotes and memories to convey her message about her identity as a ‘Newyorkrican’ Latina.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“In her 2001 speech, Sonia Sotomayor uses evocative diction, comparison and contrast, and colorful imagery to convey for her audience what it means for her to be a Latina-American.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“Sonia Sotomayor navigates a difficult discussion about racial and ethnic identity by taking her own personal experiences as a Latina and situating them within the larger issue of the tension between ‘the melting pot and the salad bowl’ that was being debated in the country at the time of her speech.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>• For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>• The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>• A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.</li> </ul>		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
<p><b>Row B</b></p> <p><b>Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b></p> <p>Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.</p>	<p><b>1 point</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides evidence that is mostly general.</p> <p>AND</p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides some specific, relevant evidence.</p> <p>AND</p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.</p>	<p><b>3 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>					
<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are incoherent or do not address the prompt.</li> <li>• May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tend to focus on summary or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques.</li> <li>• Mention rhetorical choices with little or no explanation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities.</li> <li>• May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument.</li> <li>• May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim.</li> <li>• Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>• Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument.</li> <li>• Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims.</li> <li>• Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>• Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument.</li> <li>• Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.</li> <li>• Explain how the writer’s use of rhetorical choices contributes to the student’s interpretation of the passage.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.</li> <li>• To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same rhetorical choice if each instance further contributes to the argument, purpose, or message of the passage.</li> </ul>					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row C</b> <b>Sophistication</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to contextualize the text, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where . . .</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time . . .</i>”).</li> <li>• Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”).</li> <li>• Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text.</li> <li>• Oversimplify complexities in the text.</li> <li>• Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance their analysis.</li> </ul>		<b>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation).</li> <li>2. Explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions.</li> <li>3. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</li> </ul>		

- Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

In an age of globalization ~~and increased~~, some countries, such as the United States, experience high immigration rates and as a result high cultural diversity. Sonia Sotomayor is a product of America's diversity and is the daughter of Puerto Ricans who moved to New York City. However in light of debates between a homogeneous vs. heterogeneous society in regards to cultural identities, Sotomayor argues that these identities ~~don't~~ <sup>aren't</sup> and shouldn't be black and white by sharing her narratives and experiences with this conflict.

Sonia Sotomayor ~~create~~ blends the idea of what it means to be American ~~with~~ with what it means to ~~her~~ be Latina. She starts off by dropping she is a "New York Rican", someone who was "born and bred ~~as~~ New Yorker of Puerto Rican-born parents". By starting with this hybrid word, Sotomayor already fabricates this identity of belonging to more than one cultural group. She ~~continues~~ continues this dual identity narrative as she ~~sp let~~ speaks about the foods the family enjoys, froms rice and beans to pig intestines and feet. ~~This~~ She ~~paints~~ paints the pictures of "the sound of merengue at all of [her] family parties and the heartwrenching Spanish love songs that [they] enjoy". She argues that even when living in one of the biggest cities in the United States, somewhere that could be called the epitome of all things American, she still managed to retain her cultural identity as a Latina and live both lives together

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Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



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rather than just choosing one proving her claim that cultural identity has many layers.

She continues this point by highlighting that even in the category of "Latino", there are many differences. She debunks the assumption that all Latinos speak Spanish by introducing that her brother doesn't ~~spe~~ know the language and that doesn't make him any less Latino.

~~Even~~ She <sup>arguing</sup> gives another example of misconception, that all Latino communities share the same food ~~and~~.

She Sotomayor disproves this by saying "I only learned about tacos in college from my Mexican-American roommate".

She By sharing her insight as someone who is Puerto-Rican, falling under the umbrella of Latino, reinforces that there isn't a single experience or quality that make a person a single cultural identity.

Finally, she argues that the desire for clear cut lines when it comes to cultural identity often stems from a lack of <sup>understanding different cultural properties</sup> ~~or improper education~~. She provides the definition of Latinos as "those peoples and cultures that populated or colonized by Spain who maintained or adopted Spanish or Spanish Creole as their language of communication".

and explains that this text book definition couldn't begin to compass what it is like to really be Latino. ~~All of All of these~~

She <sup>maintains</sup> ~~implies~~ that there are so many factors that contribute to cultural identity, not just common languages of foods, that drawing distinct separations between

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**Question 1**

**Question 2**

**Question 3**

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them simply cannot be done.



**Important:** Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

While the United States is home to much diversity, it also frequently overshadows these different cultures in the name of equality.

Sonia Sotomayor's 2001 speech ~~at~~<sup>at</sup> the University of California, Berkeley highlights her experiences and the cultural significance of her life as a Latina woman.

Sotomayor opens her speech by developing her position as a New Yorker, a Puerto Rican, and a woman. This serves to establish her position in giving this speech, and provides a basis for her experiences with culture in America to build off of.

Secondly, Sotomayor provides vivid, eloquent descriptions of meals, music, and games shared with her friends and family. This allows for the audience to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences within cultures. It also paints a colorful description of the cultural experiences in Sotomayor's life to lead into her explanation of the importance of these independent cultural identities.

Lastly, Sotomayor chooses to detail her academic life, and explains how while other cultures can observe and gain ~~and~~ understanding of other cultures, you can never gain a

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Question 1



Question 2



Question 3



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

full understanding. This point serves to highlight the importance of keeping strong cultural and ethnic identities in America. While the original idea of the "melting pot" was representative of America at the time, America now is better served with the "salad bowl" representation. This example demonstrates all of the different cultural and ethnic identities in America coinciding together, but remaining fundamentally separate.

Sonia Sotomayor's take on the intermingling of cultures in America provides a perfect example of independent cultures coinciding together by taking the audience through her personal cultural experiences right along with her.

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Sonia Sotomayor uses rhetorical choices of using her life experiences, and the culture that she grew up with to convey her message about her identity as a Latina. She believes everything she loves makes her the Latina that she is. Sotomayor states, "The Latina side of my identity was forged and closely nurtured by my family through our shared experiences and traditions." She believes all the fostered love and her experiences with others is are a culmination of the things that made her what she is. She believes every part of her culture that she loves is a part of who she is a Latina. Sotomayor states, "It doesn't provide an adequate explanation of why individuals like us, many of whom are born in this ~~country~~ completely different American culture still identify so strongly with those communities in which our parents were born and raised." Sotomayor thinks it's simply that because you're born in a culture that you identify ~~to~~ with your families culture, but that the experiences and choices you make are what ultimately makes you, you. Sotomayor also states, "I became a Latina by the way I love and the way I live my life." In conclusion it's one's experiences and the bonds they make that define who they are in their culture. In Sotomayor's case what makes her a Latina,

## Question 2

**Note:** Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

### Overview

Students responding to this question were expected to read an excerpt from a 2001 speech delivered by Sonia Sotomayor at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law when she was an appeals court judge and then write an essay that analyzed the rhetorical choices Sotomayor made to convey her message about her identity. Students were expected to respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices; select and use evidence to support their line of reasoning; explain how the evidence supports their line of reasoning; demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation; and use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating their argument.

As per the Course and Exam Description (RHS-1.A, STL-1, CLE-1, REO-1), students were expected to be able to read and understand the rhetorical situation and address the strategic choices related to that rhetorical situation, explain how the writer/speaker’s rhetorical choices contributed to the purpose of the address, identify and describe their claims, and analyze and select the appropriate evidence to support their claims.

### Sample: 2A

**Score: 1-4-1**

#### **Thesis (0–1) points: 1**

The response earned the thesis point for the final sentence of the first paragraph, which analyzes the speaker’s rhetorical choices: “However in light of debates between a homogenous vs. heterogeneous society in regards to cultural identities, Sotomayor argues that these identities aren’t and shouldn’t be black and white by sharing her narratives and experiences with this conflict.”

#### **Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4**

The response uniformly supports its claims with specific evidence, focusing on well-chosen, direct quotes that are precisely relevant to the overall claim regarding the complex, layered nature of identity, such as the use of Sotomayor’s description, in paragraph 2, of being a “born and bred New Yorker of Puerto Rican-born parents” and the use of the academic description of what being a Latina means. The evidence is explained consistently and clearly throughout, and the underlying assumptions in the speech are made explicit in analyses such as “even when living in one of the biggest cities in the United States, somewhere that could be called the epitome of all things American, she still managed to retain her cultural identity” in paragraph 2 and “She debunks the assumption that all Latinos speak spanish” in paragraph 3. The line of reasoning is made clear in a variety of ways, both within paragraphs (“She continues this dual identity narrative” and “she gives another example of misconception”) and between paragraphs (“She continues this point”). The final paragraph again makes the central argument clear, reiterating the same line of reasoning in the argument that “She maintains that there are so many factors that contribute to cultural identity ... that drawing distinct seperations between them just cannot be done.”

## Question 2 (continued)

### **Sophistication (0–1 points): 1**

The response consistently displays a sophisticated understanding of the significance or relevance of the passage’s complexities and tensions. In every paragraph, the response clearly ties the specific evidence to the tension that exists within Sotomayor’s complex identity. The response further situates the rhetorical situation in a sophisticated way by addressing Sotomayor’s understanding of “assumption[s]” and “misconception[s].” The response does show a strong control of language, but it does not employ a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive, and thus the response earned the Row C point for its nuanced understanding rather than its style.

### **Sample: 2B**

**Score: 1-3-0**

### **Thesis (0-1) points: 1**

The response earned the thesis point at the end of the first paragraph with an idea-driven thesis that analyzes the speaker’s choices: “Sonia Sotomayor’s 2001 speech at the University of California, Berkely highlights her experiences and the cultural significance of her life as a Latina woman.”

### **Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 3**

The response uniformly offers evidence to support all claims, in the form of specific references, such as Sotomayor’s “vivid, eloquent descriptions of meals, music, and games” in paragraph 3 and her choice to “detail her academic life” in paragraph 4. There is a line of reasoning about the diversity of culture in the United States, as the response moves through multiple ways that the speaker conveys this message. The commentary offers explanations that focus on specific details of the passage and go beyond summary and paraphrase, but they remain somewhat abstract and less full compared to the detailed, specific explanations typically seen in responses that earn a 4 in row B. For example, the explanation that “while other cultures can observe and gain an understanding of other cultures, you can never gain a full understanding. This point serves to highlight the importance of keeping strong cultural and ethnic identities in America” (paragraph 4) does not effectively integrate evidence into the analysis. The ongoing discussion in this paragraph about the “melting pot” and the “salad bowl” continues to develop the line of reasoning, but the lack of integration of specific evidence is characteristic of a response that would earn a 3 in row B.

### **Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

The response does not address the passage’s complexities or tensions. Although there is an understanding that cultural identity is important, there is no discussion of the potential tensions regarding identity that might be addressed, as in responses that did earn this point. The response focuses on specific elements of the text without addressing the nuance of the situation and thus does not display sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. While the response demonstrates an adequate control of language, the style is neither vivid nor persuasive.

## Question 2 (continued)

**Sample: 2C**

**Score: 1-1-0**

**Thesis (0-1) points: 1**

The response opens with a defensible thesis that analyzes the speaker’s choices: “Sonia Sotomayor uses the rhetorical choices of using her life experiences, and the culture that she grew up with to convey her message about her identity as a Latina.”

**Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 1**

The response contains some direct, specific quotes, but there is little explanation of how they connect to the argument. Attempts at commentary instead substitute paraphrase and summary with repeated phrases such as “She believes” and “[she] thinks.” The response does not explain how the evidence supports the argument (e.g., “Sotomayor thinks it’s simply that because you’re born in a culture that you identify with your families culture”).

**Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

The response remains primarily at the level of summary and thus does not explore the complexities or tensions of the speech. While recognizing the message that Sotomayor is focused on identity, the response simply reduces this concept to “one’s experiences and the bonds they make that define who they are in their culture” without a nuanced understanding of the rhetorical choices Sotomayor uses in this exploration. The weak control of language contributes to a style that is neither vivid nor persuasive.