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AP[®] English Language and Composition

Scoring Guidelines

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Synthesis Essay**6 points**

Since the early 2000s, the United States government and a number of corporations have sponsored initiatives to improve education in the STEM disciplines: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The emphasis on STEM subjects in elementary, secondary, and higher education reflects concerns that United States students are less proficient in these areas than are students in other countries. Additionally, there is a belief that mastery in STEM fields is now essential in order to join a highly technical and specialized workforce. However, not everyone is convinced that a STEM-focused curriculum is necessary and/or effective.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the value, if any, of initiatives to improve STEM education and increase the number of students interested in the STEM disciplines.

Source A (Ossola)
Source B (graph)
Source C (editors)
Source D (survey)
Source E (Fitzgerald)
Source F (May)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no defensible thesis. • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. • There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only restate the prompt. • Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. • Equivocate or summarize others’ arguments but not the student’s (e.g., some people say it’s good, some people say it’s bad). • State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 		Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the prompt by developing a position on the value, if any, of initiatives to improve STEM education and increase the number of students interested in the STEM disciplines, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating there are pros/cons.
Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Some people think that STEM classes should be taught in schools today, but others think that it’s not necessary or effective.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but do not take a position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“STEM education has increased in the United States as more and more corporations are hiring students who have mastery of STEM subjects.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but state an obvious fact as a claim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Concerned that American students are lagging behind internationally in STEM disciplines, U.S. schools are starting to put more emphasis on STEM education.”</i> 		Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The United States should place more emphasis on STEM initiatives so that American students can keep up with international competition for jobs.”</i> • <i>“While an education in STEM disciplines is important, students should still take classes in the humanities, arts, and social sciences to be more well-rounded in their education and be more prepared for life after school.”</i> • <i>“STEM education is an overrated trend that will not last. In fact, many employers look for qualities and skills that are not only taught in STEM classes.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. • For a thesis to be defensible, the sources 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. • 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. • 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. 		

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

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where . . .</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time . . .</i>”). • Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”). • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument. 		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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions across the sources. 2. Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or arguments conveyed in the sources) by situating it within a broader context. 3. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument throughout the response. 4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		

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>Row A</p> <p>Thesis</p> <p>(0–1 points)</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no defensible thesis. • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. • There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	<p>1 point</p> <p>Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only restate the prompt. • Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes. • Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Restate the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sonia Sotomayor, who was an appeals-court judge at the time, delivered a speech in 2001 at UC Berkeley.”</i> <p>Make a claim but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <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> <p>Repeat provided information from the passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sonia Sotomayor conveys her message about being a Latina, and particularly a ‘Newyorkrican,’ in her speech at Berkeley University.”</i> 		<p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sotomayor uses personal anecdotes and memories to convey her message about her identity as a ‘Newyorkrican’ Latina.”</i> • <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> • <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>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. • 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. • 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. • 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. 		

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

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>”). • Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”). • Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text. • Oversimplify complexities in the text. • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance their analysis. 		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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation). 2. Explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions. 3. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		

Argument Essay

6 points

Colin Powell, a four-star general and former United States secretary of state, wrote in his 1995 autobiography: “[W]e do not have the luxury of collecting information indefinitely. At some point, before we can have every possible fact in hand, we have to decide. The key is not to make quick decisions, but to make timely decisions.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Powell’s claim about making decisions is valid.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row A Thesis (0–1 points)</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>For any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no defensible thesis. • The intended thesis only restates the prompt. • The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. • There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	<p>1 point</p> <p>Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only restate the prompt. • Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. • State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Powell’s claim about making decisions is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.
<p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Do not take a position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Life is full of decisions, and everyone must make decisions at one time or another.”</i> <p>Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Before making a decision, it is best to weigh all the pros and cons and examine all the factors that go into that decision.”</i> 		<p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“As Secretary Powell argues, the key to making decisions is not to make them quickly, but to make them at the right time.”</i> • <i>“While it is best to have all the relevant information in hand before making a decision, at some point or another, waiting too long to make the decision can be as bad as making it too quickly.”</i> • <i>“It’s easy enough to say that making timely decisions is important. The difficult part—as Hamlet well knows—is trying to figure out exactly <u>when</u> to make that critical decision.”</i>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. • The thesis may be anywhere within the response. • 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. • 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. 		

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

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where . . .</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time . . .</i>”). • Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”). • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument. 	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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions. 2. Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or an argument related to the prompt) by situating it within a broader context. 3. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument. 4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
Additional Notes: 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.		