



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:  
2023 AP<sup>®</sup> Seminar Set 2  
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	73,334			
• Number of Readers	1,244			
• Score Distribution		Exam Score	N	%At
		5	8,352	11.39
		4	14,467	19.73
		3	39,535	53.91
		2	8,213	11.20
		1	2,767	3.77
• Global Mean	3.24			

The following comments on the 2023 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> Seminar were written by the Chief Reader, Alice Hearst, Professor of Government, Smith College, Northampton, MA. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

## Individual Research Report (IRR)

**Task:** Select a problem to research, read a variety of sources, and write a research report evaluating those materials

**Topic:** Individual contribution to a team project

**Max Points:** 30

**Mean Score:** 21.03

### ***What were the responses to this task expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed the student’s ability to:

- Investigate a particular approach or range of perspectives on a research topic selected by a student team.
- Conduct scholarly research relevant to the topic.
- Produce an evaluative report on the research conducted, analyzing the reasoning within the sources as well as the relevance and credibility of evidence used in those sources.

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge or skills were seen in the responses to this task?***

<i>Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrated Understanding:</i>
<i>Choice of Topic</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chose a topic too broad or too narrow to achieve research depth.</li> <li>• Failed to place the issue in context and explain why the issue mattered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chose a clearly defined and researchable topic.</li> <li>• Clearly described why and how the issue addressed was important, including a title that gave the reader an entrée into the topic.</li> </ul>
<i>Research and Evaluation of Evidence</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted superficial research, relying on general websites or general reference sources.</li> <li>• Excessively quoted information from sources without commentary, reflecting limited student understanding of the material.</li> <li>• Ignored the sources, substituting the student’s own opinion about the research topic, often repeating the general thesis or topic without elaboration or reducing a complex argument to an oversimplified generalization.</li> <li>• Evaluated evidence superficially without regard to source, treating all sources as equal in quality and relevance, or used outdated sources.</li> <li>• Failed to synthesize or organize research, often moving from one source to another without</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used a variety of credible, well-vetted sources, including peer-reviewed materials, selected current sources indicating an awareness of the scholarly discourse.</li> <li>• Demonstrated clear understanding of the arguments from each of the sources, allowing concise and insightful evaluation and commentary anchored in the source.</li> <li>• Maintained a focus on reporting on and about the materials evaluated in the report, articulating connections between sources.</li> <li>• Evaluated evidence purposively or explained with attributive tags to bolster credibility and relevance.</li> </ul>

<p>explanation; failed to explain why information was included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed to recognize the perspectives of each source, often simply summarizing each one.</li> <li>Used material from second-hand sources quoted in text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized and synthesized research results logically, explaining why the research was included.</li> <li>Explained the perspectives of each source, discussing how the sources were in conversation with one another.</li> <li>Tracked down second-hand information from sources to verify credibility and relevance.</li> </ul>
<i>Attribution/Bibliography</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequately attributed material overall or failed to signal a paraphrase.</li> <li>Neglected to link in-text citations to bibliography/works cited.</li> <li>Relied heavily on URLs as citations and/or confused the tool used to locate the source (e.g., EBSCO) with the source itself (e.g., JAMA); failed to make certain that all elements were contained in bibliography/works cited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriately attributed all sources referenced, making clear the type of source used.</li> <li>Made certain that in-text citations were listed in bibliography/works cited and vice versa, ensuring that all sources in the bibliography/works cited are the same as in-text citations.</li> <li>Correctly referenced original sources of materials; bibliography/works cited consistently contained all required elements.</li> </ul>
<i>Writing Mechanics</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tone of report informal OR overly technical, with the latter suggesting a lack of understanding on the student's part.</li> <li>Contained many errors of spelling, syntax, and grammar, making paper difficult to read.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilized an academic writing voice able to convey complex ideas.</li> <li>Proofread to correct errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar.</li> </ul>
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exceeded word count.</li> <li>Uploaded incorrect assignment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edited for word count.</li> <li>Checked to make sure correct assignment uploaded.</li> </ul>

**What could teachers do to improve student performance on the IRR?**

- Discuss different types of sources (books, articles, journalistic pieces) to help students understand what kinds of sources are important in a research project.
- Have students practice putting two sources in dialogue with each other in a written paragraph.
- Ask students to look at a reference page as a collection of authoritative voices on a topic.
- Ask students to include peer-reviewed academic sources—and engage the nuances of them (rather than “translate” them to general language as a journalist would).
- Teach students to evaluate sources used within the research they are reviewing.
- Practice reading academic sources and tracing a line of argument, and introduce academic conventions.

- Have students teach the findings of their IRR to each other before planning their team presentation.
- Remind students to use precise language throughout the report.
- Urge students to use citations from the moment they begin to write to ensure the correct linking of sources and in-text citations.
- Remind students to check for all elements that allow a reader to instantly discern the type of source and quality of sources being used.
- Remind students to check the in-text citations they have used against their reference page.
- Remind students to clearly signal paraphrased material (usually through attributive tags to begin and parentheticals to end).
- Remind students to review their Turnitin report as an opportunity to refine their paraphrasing and citation skills.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this task?***

- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model what high-scoring responses look like (and show common errors).
- Use the online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and demonstrate the requirements of the rubric.
- Use the AP Daily videos in AP Classroom (e.g., Performance Task 1 Videos 4, 5, and 6 to help with process; UAP videos for perspectives; ESE and SUE videos for finding and selecting relevant and credible evidence).

## Individual Written Argument

**Task:** Write a 2000-word, evidence-based argument

**Topic:** Research and Synthesis based on stimulus material

**Max Points:** 48

**Mean Score:** 29.21

### ***What were the responses to this task expected to demonstrate?***

This task assessed the student’s ability to:

- Review a set of stimulus materials and decide on a theme derived from at least **two** of the sources.
- Formulate a research question directly related to that theme.
- Conduct research and evaluate relevant, credible, and scholarly materials to answer the research question.
- Formulate a well-reasoned argument with a clear line of reasoning and a plausible conclusion.
- Evaluate and acknowledge counterarguments and different perspectives.
- Write a 2,000-word argument that is logically organized and supported by credible evidence.

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge or skills were seen in the responses to this task?***

<i>Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding:</i>
<i>Choice of Topic</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycled or repurposed papers written for other courses or assignments. These may be “practice tasks” completed earlier in the year that are accidentally uploaded.</li> <li>• Shoehorned in a reference to the stimulus—often via an out-of-context quote—where stimulus materials were clearly not the central focus of the paper. Sources like Aurelius’ <i>Meditations</i> were often used in this way.</li> <li>• Adopted a topic already presented in one of the stimulus sources that effectively turned the response into a summary/report instead of an argument.</li> <li>• Selected a topic from one stimulus source that is not covered or discussed in another source, which failed to highlight a theme that connects at least two sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a research question closely linked to the 2023 stimulus materials, allowing those documents to inspire genuine curiosity and demonstrating student engagement as well as the skill of synthesis.</li> <li>• Discovered themes that were clearly rooted in at least two texts in the stimulus packet, including topics outside of the overarching theme of “resilience.”</li> </ul>

*Use of Stimulus Materials*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Used stimulus materials from a previous year.</li><li>• Utilized stimulus materials as contrived jumping-off points, mentioning them only cursorily or in discussions that did not connect the materials to the argument. This was most commonly done by using an isolated proverb from the Marcus Aurelius Meditations or by making a comment about the posture or appearance of the personage in the “Migrant Mother” photo.</li><li>• Omitted any reference to stimulus materials.</li><li>• Used stimulus source for a definition or fact that could have been more easily obtained from other, more relevant sources.</li><li>• Misinterpreted or misrepresented the content or context of a stimulus source. For example, a line from Mandela’s reflections about standing up for oneself in the face of criticism is “just like how the artists at XYZ studio feel about their music.”</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chose an area of inquiry that was clearly thematically rooted in two or more documents in the stimulus packet, enabling more authentic use in the essay.</li><li>• Integrated details from the stimulus materials, being explicit about the relevance of that material to the question and the ensuing argument.</li><li>• Contextualized the stimulus document accurately.</li><li>• Used stimulus source to further their argument.</li><li>• Connected vital evidence from a stimulus document to credible evidence from other sources (comparing/contrasting perspectives).</li></ul> |
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*Development of Research Question/Context*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided broad research questions or theses that oversimplified perspectives, claims, or conclusions.</li><li>• Asked more than one question or broached multiple topics.</li><li>• Failed to situate the topic, problem, issue, or concern in a particular time or place (or other context that adds specificity). For example, “What can we do to solve global warming?” as opposed to “How effectively might EV technology contribute to reducing carbon dioxide emissions over the next ten years?”</li><li>• Failed to convey the urgency or impact of the question in relation to why the topic matters or who will be affected.</li><li>• Posed a question that is closed, irrelevant, or superfluous and did not invite debate, leading to a strawman fallacy, an invalid claim, or a spurious argument.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chose an area of inquiry, typically situated in time and place, which was narrow enough to explore and develop well-defined perspectives.</li><li>• Made the research question and/or thesis explicit, so the reader did not have to guess at the writer’s intention or position.</li><li>• Provided specific and relevant details (data, metrics, statistics) related to particular groups of people in defined spaces or with distinct backgrounds at a precise moment in time/history to convey why the research question matters.</li></ul> |
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### *Evaluation of Multiple Perspectives*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Failed to address/explore/refute opposing, competing, or alternative perspectives. Each example or reference repeats the same position or “piles on” another reason the topic matters.</li><li>Compared perspectives within broad generalities, merely highlighting agreement or disagreement (“so and so concurs;” “some people disagree”) without providing analysis.</li><li>Conflated lenses and stakeholders with perspectives, failing to root a perspective in an authoritative or critical source.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Explored a full spectrum of perspectives to reveal the complexity of an issue.</li><li>Elaborated on the connections between perspectives by evaluating distinct points of emphasis, implications, limitations, influences, potential biases, etc.</li><li>Revealed a clear understanding of the difference between a lens (a filter through which to consider an issue) and a perspective (a point of view conveyed via an argument).</li></ul> |
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### *Development of Line of Reasoning*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lacked the necessary components to establish an argument, such as a clear question or thesis, reasons, supporting evidence, consideration of counterargument(s), conclusion, etc.</li><li>Lacked a clear position or arrived at conclusions that merely summarized sources, failed to align with the research question, or presented evidence that did not support the position or the argument.</li><li>Developed a weak or flawed line of reasoning consisting of illogical connections between claims and/or ignored obvious and clear counterpoints to claims.</li><li>Obscured the line of reasoning through organizational missteps or poor formatting choices.</li><li>Failed to establish or recognize whether the topic/question required a solution or a conclusion at the end of the response.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revealed the links between supporting evidence and claims by providing clarifying and accurate commentary that engaged important details.</li><li>Articulated an educated and informed position, which featured a clear student voice to drive the paper.</li><li>Presented a clear line of reasoning, explaining links between claims and evidence, which could be easily tracked because the composition was well-organized.</li><li>Offered a plausible, intuitive, and well-supported solution (if a problem-solution paper) that acknowledges limitations, opposition, and implications.</li><li>Offered a plausible, intuitive, and well-reasoned conclusion (if a position paper).</li></ul> |
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### *Selection and Use of Evidence*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Selected evidence primarily from news organizations, popular magazines, blogs, online encyclopedic sources, or social media sites.</li><li>Treated all evidence as equal in relevance or credibility without presenting attributive</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Used a variety of well-vetted sources, including peer-reviewed journals and other academic sources.</li><li>Provided commentary to explain the relevance and credibility of a source through in-text</li></ul> |
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<p>commentary that might justify the authority of less reputable sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relied on a limited number of sources (often featuring one or two throughout the entirety of the paper) to support its position or to provide evidence.</li> <li>• Provided reputable and valid sources without demonstrating accurate or full understanding of them.</li> <li>• Introduced ideas or concepts from sources that are too shallow to be effective, suggesting the reader read little more than the abstract or the first paragraph.</li> </ul>	<p>attribution only when necessary (rather than with every use of evidence).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected secondary and tertiary sources for additional support of the most vital claims.</li> <li>• Used references and sources to establish perspectives.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Citation Conventions</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attributed source material in-text without an accompanying bibliographic entry and/or listed sources in bibliography not found in the text.</li> <li>• Applied inconsistent or inexact attributive phrasing or parenthetical citations that are misaligned with the bibliography/works cited, requiring the reader to search for the source (for example, using an article title in the response and beginning a bibliographic entry with author's name).</li> <li>• Provided citations with missing or inconsistent elements (examples could be utilizing only a URL or supplying the year of publication sporadically throughout the list of references).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensured that all sources, including stimulus sources, were accurately listed in the bibliography/works cited.</li> <li>• Consistently and accurately matched attributions or parenthetical citations in the body of the response to the bibliography/works cited.</li> <li>• Applied an academically accepted citation style consistently, including all essential elements.</li> <li>• Formatted both in-text citations and bibliography/works cited entries clearly.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Grammar and Style Conventions</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used a colloquial or casual tone featuring inconsistent point of view, contractions, slang, or abrupt stylistic changes.</li> <li>• Employed language, vocabulary, or composition so dense that the paper became incoherent (i.e., student avidly using a thesaurus that complicates the writing and communicates poorly).</li> <li>• Obscured ideas through limited or incorrect vocabulary and/or by making cumbersome syntactical decisions.</li> <li>• Included numerous, glaring grammatical errors such as comma splices, fragments, spelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained an academic and stylistically appropriate voice throughout the entire response.</li> <li>• Employed varied sentence structure, accurate syntax, and clear diction to convey clear messaging of ideas.</li> <li>• Provided a clearly organized composition with minimal grammatical errors that could stunt, inhibit, or limit understanding.</li> </ul>



errors/typos, incorrect punctuation, etc., such that the response is difficult to read without some guesswork on the part of the reader.	
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### ***How could teachers improve their student performance in the IWA?***

- Provide college-level reading assignments, studies, essays, papers, etc. to broaden students' horizons and to adequately prepare them for the reading they will do on their own as they prepare to write their response.
- Have regular conversations about relevant topics and cultural issues. Model how to consider perspectives and how to formulate cogent claims throughout the ensuing dialogue.
- Practice reading and annotating college-level texts, identifying the argument and the line of reasoning, evaluating the supporting evidence, and challenging/evaluating the solutions or verdicts offered.
- Talk explicitly and often about how to integrate stimulus materials and draw themes from two or more texts. Begin with acknowledging the obvious, low-hanging fruit and then push students to seek less-obvious connections. Evaluate these newer, more subtle ideas collectively to determine their accuracy or legitimacy.
- Highlight the importance of topical relevance. Require students to validate their idea—to convince others that it matters—by contextualizing sources, evidence, data, or information in order to frame their argument effectively.
- Practice writing commentary about sources; use the commentary to establish links between sources.
- Demonstrate the importance of a good research question (open, relevant, debatable, researchable, etc.) and how to use that question to drive their argument in the form of a strong thesis statement that serves as an anchor throughout the response.
- Remind students how this task differs from the IRR completed earlier. The IRR uses research to report on, explain, and offer information about a topic; the IWA uses research to contextualize a topic, defend a position, support an argument, illuminate a perspective, etc.
- Use various strategies such as peer review or oral defense questioning to help students make certain that they are sustaining an argument and using evidence to support that argument; peer review can also be used to ensure that students have adopted an academic voice.
- Explore academic integrity and professional ethics as it relates to plagiarism.
- As a matter of academic integrity, remind students that they cannot repurpose papers from other classes, even if the writing is their own. Point out that such papers are typically easy to spot since the concepts or topics within the stimulus materials are specifically selected to highlight a central theme chosen by the development committee.
- Remind students to double-check that their upload to the Digital Portfolio is the correct file in the correct place. Also, teachers should check to ensure students are submitting legitimate responses and not practice tasks from earlier in the year/semester.

### ***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the skills required in the IWA?***

- Work through student samples on AP Central to model what high-scoring responses look like (and try reverse outlining these).
- Use resources on the teacher community site that offer different strategies and materials proven to engage students as well as introduce them to the stimulus materials.

- Use the online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and demonstrate the requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily videos in AP Classroom (e.g., Performance Task 2 videos 1 through 14, UAP videos for perspectives, ESE and SUE videos for finding and selecting relevant and credible evidence, ESA videos for building arguments).

## End-of-Course Exam, Part A

**Task:** Respond to three short-answer prompts.

**Topic:** Evaluate a short text, identifying the argument, line of reasoning, and effectiveness of evidence.

**Max Points:** 15

**Mean Score:** 10.38

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This task asked students to read and understand an argument, identify the line of reasoning, and evaluate the credibility and relevance of the evidence advanced by the author in support of that argument.

### ***How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The table below shows how students scored this year on each question in Part A of the End-of-Course Exam:

EOC Exam Part A Mean scores	2023
Q1 (3 pts max)	2.09
Q2 (6 pts max)	4.26
Q3 (6 pts max)	4.07

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge or skills were seen in the responses to this question?***

<i>Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding:</i>
<i>Identifying Argument</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified only part of an argument rather than all of its components (e.g., “Microfiber pollution is a large issue”).</li> <li>• Identified the main argument in vague or overgeneralized terms (e.g., “Fabrics cause pollution and consumers and companies can help with innovation and sustainability”).</li> <li>• Confused claims with the main argument.</li> <li>• Misstated the main idea directly (e.g., “All fabrics cause pollution to the environment”).</li> <li>• Utilized the title or heading in lieu of articulating the main argument (e.g., “The author’s argument is that “Your polyester sweater is destroying the Environment”).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translated the author’s argument into the student’s own words.</li> <li>• Identified all main components of the argument: 1) Microfibers are significantly contributing to pollution 2) Fashion companies should implement more sustainable practices such as textile recycling, reducing production, or creating sustainable fabrics 3) Consumers also bear responsibility and should try to buy less or used/thrift, wash clothes less frequently, or recycle old clothes.</li> <li>• Incorporated details critical to the argument (e.g., “Because synthetic microfibers are increasing water pollution, fashion companies should implement more sustainable practices, and</li> </ul>

	<p>consumers should buy used, when possible, wash clothes less frequently, and recycle.”).</p>
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*Explaining Line of Reasoning*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misidentified claims, often confusing support for the claim (evidence) with the claim itself (e.g., evidence from The Guardian: “13.3 quadrillion microfibers were released into the California environment in 2019”) or summarized argument without understanding claims.</li> <li>• Asserted that claims were linked without explanation or attempted to link claims using illogical or circular reasoning.</li> <li>• Linked claims to personal opinions not contained in author’s argument.</li> <li>• Failed to note how counterclaims were addressed by author.</li> <li>• Focused entirely on connecting claims to evidence rather than to other claims or to the main argument.</li> <li>• Used the term line of reasoning in a way that showed misunderstanding of the concept.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurately identified specific claims.</li> <li>• Contextualized and explained connections between the claims, used to build an argument.</li> <li>• Linked claims to overall argument.</li> <li>• Often organized by paragraphs, grouped according to central points of argument.</li> <li>• Identified counterarguments presented by author (e.g., “[The author] introduces a counterargument that while eco-friendly gear is being tested by retailers, it still creates pollution and more benefits come from recycling and reducing production.”).</li> <li>• Reflected a solid understanding of how the author constructed the argument and why it was important.</li> <li>• Explained the author’s line of reasoning (e.g., “The author transitions from the responsibility of the fashion industry to the responsibility of the consumer. By doing so, she presents an additional perspective and provides readers with a call to action to engage in sustainable clothing practices.”).</li> </ul>
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*Evaluating Evidence*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referenced evidence without evaluating whether that evidence supported a particular claim.</li> <li>• Evaluated the credibility of sources without evaluating the actual evidence.</li> <li>• Conflated claims with evidence.</li> <li>• Focused only on credentials of the source or professional affiliations.</li> <li>• Merely asserted evidence as credible or relevant without explaining how the evidence supported or failed to support the claims (“Some sources were credible based on the experts quoted, but other pieces of evidence did not have a source.”).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified with particularity the evidence used to support a claim.</li> <li>• Explained both the credibility and relevance of specific pieces of evidence (e.g., “She begins with a statistic from a previous report from The Guardian that states that quadrillions of microfibers entered California environments in 2019 alone because of this issue. This is a credible source because it is from The Guardian, but it lacks an author. It is also relevant, as it provides background information as to why fashion is an environmental issue.”).</li> <li>• Assessed how the evidence strongly or weakly supported a claim.</li> <li>• Linked evaluation of the evidence back to the author’s overall argument.</li> </ul>
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**What advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on Part A of the Exam?**

- Remind students that each prompt asks for distinct information. Train students not to overlap these components in their answers:
  - Question 1 should only contain the main ideas of the article. Have students think about the author’s intentions for writing the article.
  - Question 2 is about the author’s choices in the organization of the article. Students should address why the author begins with a specific claim and how the organization of those claims leads the reader through the argument. Students should not evaluate the evidence that supports those claims in their responses to this question.
  - Question 3 requires an evaluation of the quality of the evidence. Students need to practice evaluating at least two separate pieces of evidence for this row. They need to offer a discussion about both the source AND specific evidence from those sources.
- Discussions on credibility should focus on the sources. Specifically, how or why does the source of information influence the weight it has in whether or not the reader might accept or reject the author’s argument?
- Students need to offer a justification for how or why specific information from that source advances or does not advance the author’s argument. In order to score high on this row, students need to provide more than a statement indicating that a source is relevant or that a source supports a claim. Students must evaluate why or how specific information does or does not support the overall argument.
- Quoting evidence is a highly effective strategy for identifying specific evidence.
- Scaffold the construction of an argument, diagramming the main argument, claims, sub-claims, and evidence.
- Introduce students to the general rules of argumentative writing, encouraging them to understand how authors appeal to readers.
- Help students translate an author’s argument into their own words in order to confirm understanding of the argument.

- Remind students that complex arguments often have multiple components and that they are not always expressly stated at the outset.
- Practice looking at both claims and counterclaims, reminding them that a good argument will typically acknowledge and try to refute, counterarguments.
- Remind students to be explicit when explaining how specific pieces of evidence connect to a main argument.
- Explain the difference between pieces of evidence and sources and practice having students evaluate them both in tandem with one another.
- Remind students that credibility of evidence must be assessed both in terms of its source (beyond “John Doe teaches at X University”) and the way specific information from those sources supports the author’s argument.
- Practice evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific pieces of evidence.
- Remind students to write or print legibly so that readers can keep the substance of the student’s response in the forefront.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare for the skills being assessed in Part A?***

- Practice with prompts from earlier years (available on AP Central and in AP Classroom Question Bank).
- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model high-scoring responses.
- Use the optional online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and exemplify the requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily Video in AP Classroom “End-of-Course Exam Video 1”.

## End-of-Course Exam, Part B

**Task:** Read four short stimulus pieces, identifying a theme, and develop an argument, drawing support from at least two of those four sources.

**Topic:** Synthesis Essay

**Max Points:** 24

**Mean Score:** 17.35

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This question assessed students' ability to:

- Read the sources critically, understanding the different perspective of each source.
- Identify a theme or issue connecting the provided sources.
- Use the theme as an impetus for writing a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-crafted argument presenting the student's perspective.
- Incorporate two or more of the sources to support the newly developed argument.
- Build the argument with a series of logical claims.
- Link claims to supporting evidence.
- Cite sources, identifying them either by author or by letters assigned in the prompt.
- Complete the task within a 90-minute time period.

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge or skills were seen in the responses to this question?***

<i>Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrated Understanding:</i>
<i>Creating and Supporting an Argument: Rubric Rows 1 and 2</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failed to state a clear position/thesis statement/argument, or asked a question as a thesis, which was not answered. (R1) For example, a response asked, "Are we ever truly alone?" and never arrived at a clear answer to that question.</li> <li>• Stated a thematic connection without offering a perspective or argument of their own. (R1) These responses frequently begin or end with a general overview, such as, "In these four sources they mentioned many aspects of community and solitude."</li> <li>• Selected a topic tangentially related to a theme from the sources but had their own agenda (IWA, IRR, or a paper written for another course) and forced the provided sources to support strained arguments largely unconnected to those sources. (R1) For</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified a broad thematic connection, such as social networking, to contextualize the student's perspective and then swiftly transitioned to a more focused argument that supported an original or insightful perspective. (R1)</li> <li>• Offered an argument that synthesized the perspectives of two or more sources. (R1)</li> <li>• Allowed the source materials to inspire an original idea in the time allotted. For example, a response was inspired by sources A and D to make the argument that adults often find it difficult to make new friendships once they are no longer in school. (R1)</li> <li>• Crafted a thoughtful, arguable thesis. For example, many argued for solutions that would expand the quality of social networks in our day-to-day lives, such as improved internet</li> </ul>

<p>example, a response tried to cherry-pick and use a short, very general quotation from Source B (“Friends matter”) and, without commentary, drop it into a larger argument about representational government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulated a thesis but failed to build an argument moving from claim to claim. (R2)</li> <li>• Began each body paragraph, “Source X says.” Sometimes responses worked inductively to make an argument, but more often than not, students went on to summarize the source. (R2)</li> <li>• Failed to provide commentary on the evidence, leaving the reader to make assumptions about its validity and relevance. (R2)</li> <li>• Failed to link evidence to specific claims in the argument. (R2)</li> </ul>	<p>connectivity for rural areas; collegiate outreach to minority or first-generation students; promoting privacy as a component of mental health; navigating professional decisions in the post-pandemic era, etc. (R1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized the response in an effective manner to support the line of reasoning. (R2)</li> <li>• Employed transitions to guide the reader from claim to claim in the line of reasoning. Readers knew exactly what the student was attempting to argue. (R2)</li> <li>• Interpreted evidence by exploring implications, limitations, and/or counterarguments. (R2)</li> <li>• Reminded the readers about the central claim throughout the response, linking different pieces of evidence to the overarching argument. (R2)</li> </ul>
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*Using Sources: Rubric Row 3*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated a superficial reading of the provided sources: “The four sources I have read have different issues in them but mainly I see life experiences.”</li> <li>• Used the argument from only one source in the packet: while isolation can be peaceful, human interaction is important.</li> <li>• Forced the provided sources to support strained arguments largely unconnected to those sources.</li> <li>• Forced all four provided sources into their arguments. For example, a response that started with a reasonable argument about the relationship between mental health and social media using sources B, C, and D tried unsuccessfully to incorporate commentary on source A.</li> <li>• Misread or misinterpreted the provided sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many students misunderstood the “social networks” discussed in Source B as interchangeable with social media.</li> <li>▪ Many students misrepresented the Pew Research data in Source C to infer why</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated a careful reading of the sources, recognizing them as distinct voices in a complicated discussion.</li> <li>• Were deliberate in choosing sources and specific segments of text that supported their arguments.</li> <li>• Strategically selected and synthesized perspectives and information from the sources to support a compelling argument. This synthesis could take place within paragraphs or in the argument as a whole: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students compared Sources A and D to explore the concept of solitude through the accounts of John Donne and Mauro Morandi. Donne, in Source D, declares, “no man is an island,” arguing that all people are bound together by their shared mortality. Source A, on the other hand, tells the story of Morandi, who fled to a small island to live alone, only to re-discover in his old age the value of connection through the modern technology of social media.</li> <li>▪ Students could also pair Sources B and C to show that although face-to-face networks can be valuable tools in supporting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p>people wanted to improve their Internet connections (e.g., The Pew Research data shows that people wanted better Internet service to connect to social media.).</p>	<p>minority and working-class college students, the pandemic revealed long-standing wealth inequalities, such as the “digital divide” that stratifies Americans by race and income.</p>
<p><b><i>Applying Conventions</i></b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had not been edited or revised.</li> <li>• Paid little attention to word choice.</li> <li>• Used source material without quotation marks, introductions, or parenthetical citations. Frequently “dropped” quotations from the source material without integrating material into the student’s own writing.</li> <li>• Were illegible.</li> <li>• Had substantial grammar issues that impeded readability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used grammar and syntax that enhanced the argument.</li> <li>• Wrote in an academic style, choosing words carefully to elevate the response.</li> <li>• Skillfully attributed, cited, or embedded source material. Many students incorporated source material with meaningful discussions of the author, time, place, or genre.</li> <li>• Were legible.</li> </ul>

***What advice would you offer to teachers to help their students improve their skills on this task?***

Consider explicitly teaching the task directions for EOC Exam, Part B.

The directions begin by asking students to “read carefully..., focusing on a theme.” Some students are seeing this first task as part of their written response; they write one, two, sometimes three paragraphs exploring the theme.

If the tasks for this prompt were numbered, this would simply be task number 1: Read and think. Ask students to annotate the sources during this phase of the assessment. The student should not begin writing in the test booklet until this step is complete. In other words, responses should begin with the student’s argument, **not** an extended discussion of theme, such as, “*A common theme among the sources is X. Source A was about ... which connects to the theme by ... and Source B was about ... which connects to the theme by ...*” The sources should not act as the student’s voice.

Once students have “spoken” with all of the sources, they are prepared to take their own position. They are ready for task number 2: Plan and outline. They should do this to be prepared to “Write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue.”

Now that students have an argument in mind, they should carefully choose at least two of the provided sources as support. Those sources must be relevant and actually support the claim(s) being made. (Students also grapple with this concept in EOC, Part A. Students struggle to determine

whether evidence is relevant or not.) Students can reverse this process as well; for example, they may begin the process by finding two arguments from sources that speak to one another. Students can then build their own argument in order to join that conversation. Caution students that a response that summarizes arguments made in two sources and then concludes with a line or two presenting their personal perspective will not score well.

Only once students have an outline of their claims and supporting evidence should they do task number 3: Write a well-reasoned argument.

It is important to help students understand that the best responses move beyond a claim made by one of the sources, such as, “Friendships in college are important to physical and mental wellness.” Many responses identified a topic, such as community, which was discussed by more than one source. The most successful responses went a step further to establish an argument that connected the sources but occurred in none of them. For example, some students discussed the importance of a larger community taking care of its less represented parts. For example, a response discussed how student leadership at their school needs to be restructured to represent the perspectives and needs of the entire student body. They used Source D to frame the idea that all parts of the community exist and cannot be ignored, and used Source B to discuss the advantages that social connections have for students. They presented the argument that problems cannot be addressed by running away from them (Source A).

### **Other suggestions:**

- Provide students ample opportunities in class to practice entering into conversations that synthesize multiple arguments—different numbers of sources, different contexts, different genres, or different time periods. Teachers could begin with small student groups made up of members who have differing opinions on a subject. Then consider moving on to synthesize arguments from various texts.
- Practice writing commentary. Teach students to see commentary as an action: Interpret. It is not a passive process. It is not a summary. Students should address implications, limitations, and/or objections.
- Though students must read all four sources, please ask them to be discerning when choosing source material to support their own arguments.
- Teach students how to identify the genre of a source and the conventions of that genre. Students should be taught not to directly compare sources when they follow different conventions and expectations. When used as sources for students’ own arguments, works of fiction should not be used the same as academic research or news articles.
- Help students discern the difference between the author of a source and a source cited by the author. Students need to properly attribute the sources cited within any given source.
- Teach students to use paragraphs with first line indentions and transitional words or phrases. Use professional writers who write argumentatively as models.
- Encourage students to proofread their work.
- Encourage students to write legibly. It is unfortunate when poor penmanship obscures a student’s argument.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare for the skills being assessed in Part B?***

- Practice with prompts from earlier years (available on AP Central and in AP Classroom Question Bank).
- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model high-scoring responses.
- Use the online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and exemplify the requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily Video in AP Classroom “End-of-Course Exam Video 2”.