

**2005 AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION  
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

**Question 3**

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

In “The Singer Solution to World Poverty,” an article that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, Peter Singer, a professor of bioethics, calls attention to the urgent need for food and medicine in many parts of the world. Singer argues that prosperous people should donate to overseas aid organizations such as UNICEF or Oxfam America all money not needed for the basic requirements of life. “The formula is simple: whatever money you’re spending on luxuries, not necessities, should be given away.”

Write an essay in which you evaluate the pros and cons of Singer’s argument. Use appropriate evidence as you examine each side, and indicate which position you find more persuasive.

**END OF EXAM**

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Question 3

The score should reflect a judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

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**9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for essays that are scored an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their explanation and argument or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

**8      Effective**

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** evaluate the pros and cons of Singer's argument and clearly indicate which position the writer finds more persuasive. The evidence used is appropriate and convincing. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

**7** Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of essays that are scored a 6 but provide a more complete explanation and argument or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

**6      Adequate**

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** evaluate the pros and cons of Singer's argument and indicate which position the writer finds more persuasive. The evidence used is appropriate. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

**5** Essays earning a score of 5 evaluate the pros and cons of Singer's argument and indicate which position the writer finds more persuasive. These essays may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited evaluations of the pros and cons of Singer's argument and/or the writer's views on which position he or she finds more persuasive. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas.

**4      Inadequate**

Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt **inadequately**. They may have difficulty evaluating the pros and cons of Singer's argument and/or indicating which position the writer finds more persuasive. The evidence used may be insufficient. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

**3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in evaluating the pros and cons of Singer's argument and/or indicating which position the writer finds more persuasive. The essays may show less control of writing.

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Question 3 (continued)

**2 Little Success**

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in evaluating the pros and cons of Singer's argument and/or indicating which position the writer finds more persuasive. These essays may misunderstand the prompt; fail to evaluate the pros and cons of Singer's argument and/or indicate which position the writer finds more persuasive; or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate evidence. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.

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

**0** Essays earning a zero (0) are on-topic responses that receive no credit, such as those that merely repeat the prompt.

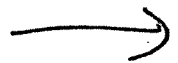
— Essays earning a dash (—) are blank responses or responses that are completely off topic.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

To give or not to give? That is the universal question which Peter Singer, a professor of bioethics, has addressed in his piece, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty", published in the New York Times Magazine. Singer says, "The formula is simple: whatever money you're spending on luxuries, not necessities, should be given away." Singer's argument rests on a delicate balance of human morals, natural impulses and decisions, not all of which are plausible or realistic to declare in this day and age; Singer's ~~the~~ "solution", though idealistic and noble, is conclusively not bounded closely enough to the world of realism to be a viable choice in the fight against world poverty.

The pros of Singer's ~~the~~ theory, although few, are powerful and immediately obvious to all who view his argument. Yes, human nature is generous, it feels good to give and no one should be selfish. It even satisfies an innate sense of justice, fairness and equality - those who have more should give to those who have less. This method would tame the human sin of selfishness and thus even satisfies religious ideology - "help thy neighbor" no matter which way you look at it, Singer's argument is an undeniably noble undertaking which expands on human generosity and optimistically glorifies human nature. There is nothing morally wrong in what he is suggesting, and it would ~~at~~ even please some to act as martyrs and saints, masochistic in their own self-deprivation. Overall, its benefits suggest a rosy future for the human race.

However, while the supporters of Singer's method have righteousness, justice and logical reasoning on their side, those who oppose Singer may draw on the resources of realism,



historical evidence, and their own brand of logical reasoning to support their own argument. In a practical sense, we must look at the consequences of this action and where they would fall — the first road block lies in the murky division between luxury and necessity. How necessary is toilet paper? We need to eat and drink and breathe to keep our bodies alive, but we can still exist without toilet paper, can we not? Yet our noses and a sense of modesty would not appreciate a human race, sans toilet paper. Yet even when this sense of modesty has been abandoned, the effects still linger — what are toilet paper workers to do? If no one buys toilet paper, workers in those factories will be laid off and as a result, lack funds to feed themselves and their families, exacerbating the issue of human poverty. And what of the money given to those charities — in many cases, not 100% of that goes ~~to~~ directly to feeding and clothing the impoverished of the world.

When directly observed, "Singer's solution" is not only a naive plan to undertake what millennia of human history has not helped, but also a misinterpretation of what causes human poverty and what can help to ease it. During World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt initiated government deficit spending, and the increase of production and jobs helped America out of the Great Depression. History is behind the critics of "Singer's solution", and realism also backs them up. The truth is that money spent on luxuries (or what some may call necessities) do more good than harm. They go towards assisting people ~~as~~; money spent on perfume goes to specialized workers who work at menial jobs for their

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ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

money, but money spent on what Singer may call "necessities", like clothing, goes towards large corporations which ~~exploit~~ exploit workers in sweatshops to mass-produce T-shirts. In the end, "Singer's Solution" is not only not a viable ~~solution~~ answer but a plan in which the efforts outweigh the benefits. (misconstrued)

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

In the article "The Singer Solution to World Poverty", Singer states that "prosperous people should donate to overseas aid organizations... all money not needed for the basic requirements of life." According to Singer, "whatever money you are spending on luxuries, not necessities, should be given away." This argument has many pros and cons, though not all are ~~as~~ equally persuasive.

Singer's argument has ~~many~~ numerous pros. It is important to aid those who are suffering due to hunger and poverty. <sup>These people</sup> are just <sup>as</sup> deserving of a good, healthy, ~~and~~ prosperous life as ~~though~~ <sup>ones</sup> those who are already prosperous. Therefore, to give up <sup>one's</sup> luxuries so that ~~other~~ less fortunate human beings can actually acquire necessities is a ~~very~~ ~~just~~ ~~idea~~ fair and simple request. Humans don't need luxuries such as frivolous electronics and excessive clothes and accessories. However, humans do need food, shelter, and other basic amenities. The fact that so many people have both necessities and ~~more~~ luxuries while others have neither is <sup>a</sup> shocking ~~a~~ reality that needs to be changed.

However, Singer's plan to end world hunger has many fundamental flaws. ~~In~~ In our ~~more~~ materialistic society, many people care more about their own happiness and security than ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> of others. Many Americans, unless forced, would be reluctant to give up luxuries and ~~instead~~ give all ~~that~~ money ~~to~~ ~~aid~~ ~~organizations~~ previously allocated to ~~such~~ frivolous

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## ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

expenditures <sup>instead</sup> to aid organizations. It is a presumptuous notion to assume that Americans will indeed follow Singer's advice. The plight of their fellow human beings will weigh gravely ~~on~~ on the minds of Americans for only a short time after reading ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> article. Soon after, they will be again caught up in their own materialistic and short-sighted world, presumably forgetting any resolutions they made to give up their luxuries. ~~Unfortunately this is the more realistic way of looking at Americans response to Singer's plan.~~

~~On the~~ Unfortunately, the cons of Singer's plan outweigh the pros. Realistically Americans will not embrace his proposition with open arms or ~~arms and~~ wallets. In theory, Singer's plan is simple and effective. In practice, it falls short of truly capturing the nation's attention and persuading Americans to forego their luxuries in order to ~~to~~ give ~~to~~ unfortunate people the food and medicine they so desperately need.

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 3 HERE.

In this article, Singer argues that ~~poor~~ prosperous people should give all money not used on necessities to charity. This bold argument will either persuade or disinterest someone fully. There are many pros and cons of Singer's argument.

First, there are many pros to this argument. One pro of this argument is that there are generous prosperous people who would be willing to give money not used to charity. By writing this Singer can persuade the generous prosperous to donate and they will aid these organizations. When this happens people will be helped and these organizations will be aided. Another pro is that people who don't spend much on luxuries or non necessities will be persuaded to give. The people who don't have much more money than they need will donate the little extra they do have to organizations. This ~~new~~ argument touches these people as well. These are <sup>the pros and</sup> the people that are positively affected by this argument.

There are also cons that come from Singer's argument. First, by telling people to give all non necessity money he disinterests a lot of people who are

## ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 3

found of some luxuries but also give some money to charity. ~~as a result~~ He makes them think that they have to give all money not necessary and not just some and this will not positively affect the charities. Also, the luxurious prosperous people who might have been interested in aiding some organizations are now no longer because they are fond of their luxuries and don't agree with Singer's opinion. By arguing so strongly and asking people to give all, Singer has lost the money of more people instead of gained. These are the cons of this argument.

Overall, I find the pro position more persuasive because people sympathize with the organizations and feel they need to help no matter how much Singer says to give. These pros and cons are used to persuade people to donate to organizations.

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Question 3

**Overview**

This question combined analysis and argument. It provided students with an enthymeme—an argument in brief—from “The Singer Solution to World Poverty.” Peter Singer, a bioethicist, maintains that prosperous people should donate to overseas organizations such as UNICEF or Oxfam America all money not needed for the basic requirements of life. Students were asked to write an essay in which they evaluated the pros and cons of Singer’s argument, supported their evaluation of each side with appropriate evidence, and indicated which side they found more persuasive. The task called upon students to flesh out the structure of Singer’s argument, especially its underlying assumptions or warrants. Additionally, the question required students to produce clear, correct, analytic, and argumentative prose.

**Sample: 3A**

**Score: 8**

This essay responds effectively to the prompt. It provides a full, well-reasoned evaluation of the pros and cons of Singer’s proposal. The essay’s opening paragraph sets in motion a well-articulated, insightful distinction between the compelling moral and pragmatic arguments the essay will bring to bear on Singer’s proposal when it notes that “Singer’s argument rests on a delicate balance of human morals, natural impulses and decisions, not all of which are plausible or realistic.” The essay then proceeds to give due weight to the moral and ethical arguments in favor of Singer’s proposal in a well-developed second paragraph. The essay’s control of language is evident in sentences such as, “Yes, human nature is generous, it feels good to give and no one should be selfish. It even satisfies an innate sense of justice, fairness and equality—those who have more should give to those who have less.” The third paragraph begins with a well-constructed transitional sentence that announces the counterargument with clarity and finesse: “However, while the supporters of Singer’s method have righteousness, justice and logical reasoning on their side, those who oppose Singer may draw on the resources of realism, historical evidence, and their own brand of logical reasoning to support their own argument.” Thus the essay convinces its reader of its balanced, reasoned approach to the issue. The third paragraph then proceeds to develop a full, clear economic argument grounded in realism and human self-interestedness. Particularly compelling is the essay’s questioning of the definitions of and distinctions between “luxury and necessity.” The final paragraph expands on this argument based in realism to place Singer’s proposal in a larger historical context to conclude that “History is behind the critics of ‘Singer’s solution,’ and realism also backs them up.” Thus the essay provides a very well-controlled, well-balanced, well-informed, and well-argued refutation of Singer’s proposal that warrants the high score given it.

**Sample: 3B**

**Score: 6**

This essay responds adequately to the prompt. It presents a balanced discussion of the pros and cons of Singer’s proposal in clear, organized prose. The essay’s second paragraph provides a solid argument based on the moral need “to aid those who are suffering due to hunger and poverty.” It distinguishes between people who “have both necessities and luxuries” and others who “have neither” to argue that this “is a shocking reality that needs to be changed.” The third paragraph counters with its own clearly

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Question 3 (continued)

expressed argument that "It is a presumptuous notion to assume that Americans will indeed follow Singer's advice." This argument, based on the realistic observation that concerns about "The plight of their fellow human beings will weigh gravely on the minds of Americans for only a short time" before becoming "again caught up in their own materialistic and short-sighted world," forms the basis for the essay's conclusion that "in practice [Singer's plan] falls short of ... persuading Americans to forego [*sic*] their luxuries in order to give unfortunate people the food and medicine they so desperately need." Thus the essay presents a clearly written, adequate argument that ultimately refutes Singer's proposal.

**Sample: 3C**

**Score: 4**

Despite its length, this essay does not adequately respond to the prompt. The essay divides its response into seemingly balanced treatments of the pros and cons of Singer's proposal, devoting a full paragraph to each position. However, the essay relies mainly on assertions and assumptions without providing sufficient evidence to back them up. The language of the essay is particularly unsophisticated and unconvincing, as evidenced by the opening sentence of the third paragraph: "Their [*sic*] are also cons that come from Singer's argument." The essay's concluding statement is especially vague and potentially contradictory: "These pros and cons are used to persuade people to donate to organizations." The essay is essentially a series of undeveloped and unsupported general assertions.

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**

**SECTION II**

**Total time—2 hours**

**Question 1**

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

The passage below is from “Training for Statesmanship” (1953), an article written by George F. Kennan, one of the principal architects of United States foreign policy during the period following the end of the Second World War. Read the passage carefully and select what you believe is Kennan’s most compelling observation. Then write an essay in which you consider the extent to which that observation holds true for the United States or for any other country. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

In our country, the element of power is peculiarly diffused. It is not concentrated, as it is in other countries, in what we might call the “pure form” of a national uniformed police establishment functioning as the vehicle of a central political will. Power with us does exist to some extent in courts of law and in police establishments, but it also exists in many other American institutions. It exists in our economic system, though not nearly to the degree the Marxists claim. Sometimes, unfortunately, it exists in irregular forces—in underworld groups, criminal gangs, or informal associations of a vigilante nature—capable of terrorizing their fellow citizens in one degree or another. Above all, it exists in the delicate

15 compulsions of our social life, the force of community opinion within our country—in the respect we have for the good opinion of our neighbors. For reasons highly complex, we Americans place upon ourselves quite extraordinary obligations of conformity to the group in utterance and behavior, and this feature of our national life seems to be growing rather than declining. All these things can bring us to put restraints upon ourselves which in other parts of the world would be imposed upon people only by the straightforward exercise of the central police authority.

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**Question 1**

The score should reflect a judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

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**9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for essays that are scored an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their explanation and argument or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

**8      **Effective****

Essays earning a score of 8 respond to the prompt **effectively**. They identify what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, effectively argue the extent to which that observation holds true, and support the argument with appropriate evidence. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

**7** Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of essays that are scored a 6 but provide a more complete explanation and argument or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

**6      **Adequate****

Essays earning a score of 6 respond to the prompt **adequately**. They identify what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, adequately argue the extent to which that observation holds true, and support the argument with appropriate evidence. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

**5** Essays earning a score of 5 identify what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, argue the extent to which that observation holds true, and support the argument with appropriate evidence. These essays may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited explanations, arguments, and/or evidence. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas.

**4      **Inadequate****

Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt **inadequately**. They may have difficulty identifying what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation or arguing the extent to which that observation holds true, and the evidence used may be insufficient. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

**3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in identifying what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, arguing the extent to which that observation holds true, and supporting the argument with appropriate evidence. The essays may show less control of writing.

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Question 1 (continued)

**2 Little Success**

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in identifying what the writer believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, arguing the extent to which that observation holds true, and supporting the argument with appropriate evidence. These essays may misunderstand the prompt; fail to identify Kennan's most compelling observation, argue the extent to which that observation holds true, and support the argument with appropriate evidence; or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation, arguments, and/or evidence. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.

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

**0** Essays earning a zero (0) are on-topic responses that receive no credit, such as those that merely repeat the prompt.

— Essays earning a dash (—) are blank responses or responses that are completely off topic.

ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 1

Institutions want. They ~~throw~~ throw themselves into an extremely stressful situation of balancing academics, extracurricular activities, and the community all at once. Once they have accomplished this task, they fill out the same generic application over and over to ~~the~~ prospective schools, hoping to get an acceptance letter in the mail. That's the process that the American educational system has molded the American children to participate in. ~~The~~ The social American educational system is a model of conformity within a society.

Politics is another definite area where conformity is witnessed in the American lifestyle. The whole concept of voting breaks down to conforming with one side or the other. ~~That~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~case~~, ~~to~~ Even when registering to vote, Americans are prompted to pick a party to affiliate or conform. ~~When~~ When voting for the office of president, Americans don't elect a man. They vote for the ideas that they have conformed themselves to, and the ideas to which they identify. The American political system relies heavily on group conformity.

Within America society, media is a driving force in conformity. In fashion magazines such as ~~the~~ ~~cosmopolitan~~ Cosmopolitan, women are constantly being flooded with the generic image of the beautiful and sexy woman. As the pages are turned the same idea of the gorgeous woman is being ~~is~~ thrown in women's faces. Within the same magazines, there ~~is~~ are conformity

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ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 1

issues for men as well. For all the gorgeous women, there is often a handsome athletic man beside her. This pressure to conform ~~and~~ ~~is~~ ~~also~~ ~~seen~~ ~~as~~ ~~well~~ ~~on~~ ~~TV~~. Many times ~~in~~ American TV, people are pushed to have the "Leave It to Beaver" perfect family. However, the wholesome idea is not always possible. American media stresses group conformity.

~~George F. Kennan~~ George F. Kennan was correct in this passage, and even though Americans have a lawful right to express themselves the oppress their own rights and conform. America has become a breeding ground for conformity through education, politics, and media.

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 1 HERE.

Unlike other countries, the United States has its power largely distributed among many different groups. This holds true not only within the government, where power is distributed among three separate branches, but also in the country as a whole. Many groups ~~have~~ ~~power~~ who are unassociated with the government hold power, removing the need for a central police authority. Since our founding fathers established this democracy based on the concept of giving power to the people, it seems appropriated that power is so widespread. Factors which ~~affect~~ <sup>minimize</sup> the need for a central authority include morality and conformity of the individual, self-policing done by other citizens, and the use of voting to give Americans a sense of power.

In increasing numbers, people conform to the obligations of society. This is based upon two main factors. The first of these two factors is American's desire to conform, seen distinctively in youths and teens, but also existent in adults. Next of these factors is American's feeling of morality. Citizens believe they must follow certain moral codes, removing the need for a police authority to dictate what should and should not be done. Instead, morality steps in and keeps people in line without the use of force.

Power remains with the people based on American's desires to help others when a problem occurs or report when something is wrong. This form of self-policing, done by citizens upon other citizens, gives them definite power. Whether it be merely

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## ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 1

reporting a spill in a grocery store or giving the police tips on a crime, it keeps power within the people as a whole. Other countries whose citizens have less feeling of responsibility, need officials to perform these tasks.

While voting gives citizens power, its effects lie far deeper. It is voting which gives Americans the deeply rooted belief that they have power and control over their country. Voting leads to protests, campaigns, and special interest groups. Since voting helps people to believe that they have control over the progress of America, it also leads them to the previously mentioned practices in morality and self policing. Citizen voting is the central unit of our country and keeps all other factors together, including power distributions.

Though some countries find all of the power in one central authority, America is much different.

Due to citizen's morality, self-policing, and voting, power is very widely distributed. The founding father's structure of our country as well as American's sense of national pride and political obligation helps to keep America as a democratic and free nation.

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BEGIN YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 1 HERE.

The element of power is one of the most dominant and controlling things in the world. Power can survive on many different levels: from politics to social life. According to George F. Kennan, one of the principal architects of US foreign policy after WWII, the element of power exists in many different places of everyday life for Americans.

Great quantities of power can be seen in areas outside of politics in the United States. According to Kennan, power rests in the hands of "informal associations of a vigilante nature" (12). On September 11, 2001, a small group of terrorists had the power to create panic throughout the United States by flying planes into the World Trade Center and the head of US government, the Pentagon. A small group of people have the ability to do major destruction if they have the desire to. Power also lies in the hands of "criminal gangs" (11), who are known for mass shootings in the United States. Kennan also infers that power rests in our "social life" (15), as well as in the hands of ordinary people. US citizens, who have "extraordinary obligations" (19) to improve upon the country, also have the power to make great changes. It is because of

ADDITIONAL PAGE FOR ANSWERING QUESTION 1

the citizens that the "national life seems to be growing" (21). A major source of power in the US also lies with "central politics" (5). The US gives an abundant amount of power to our political leaders, including the President. The political leaders hold the power to make necessary changes to benefit the US; including decisions about war, foreign issues, and domestic issues. The element of power exists in a wide range of people in the US.

According to George F. Kennan, power does not exist in a "pure form" (3) in the US, but is rather "diffused" (2) throughout a wide range of areas including political and social aspects of life.

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**Question 1**

**Overview**

This was an argument question. It asked students to read an excerpt of an article, "Training for Statesmanship," written in 1953 by George Kennan, one of the architects of American foreign policy at the time. In the excerpt, Kennan offers several observations about the relations among power, control, and conformity in the United States. The question directed students to select the observation Kennan makes that they found most compelling and to write an essay arguing the extent to which that observation holds true in the United States or any other country. The question called upon students to demonstrate their abilities to comprehend nonfiction prose; to focus on a single, salient observation among the many in the passage; to state and develop with appropriate evidence a position on the viability and relevance of the observation they focused upon; and to write clear, correct, mature prose.

**Sample: 1A**  
**Score: 8**

This essay effectively responds to the prompt. In its opening paragraph it clearly identifies what the student believes to be Kennan's most compelling observation, that "Americans place extraordinary obligations of group conformity upon themselves," then announces its thesis that "This conformity can be seen in three basic areas of American life." The student's argument takes the form of a five-paragraph essay, with the central three paragraphs focusing on three distinct areas of American life: the school system, politics, and the media. But the fullness of the argument and the facility of the language keep this essay from being overly formulaic. The essay's second paragraph develops an effective analysis of the ways in which the educational system causes children to "feel the obligations to dress certain ways" and thus generates support for "companies such as American Eagle and Abercrombie and Fitch," as well as pressures children to act in "certain ways" with regard to "sex, drugs, and alcohol." The recognition that the ways of responding to these influences varies "Depending on which group they conform with" adds a layer of sophistication to the essay's argument that contributes to raising it above the midrange of scores. The student's ability later in the same paragraph to connect these commonplace examples to the molding influence of the college application process, in which "the well-rounded student" must combine "good grades, a handful of extracurriculars [*sic*], and some community service," adds yet another layer of sophistication to the argument. The essay draws particularly insightful conclusions in arguing that the process of filling out "the same generic application over and over" has "molded the American children" and thus has turned the "American educational system" into "a model of conformity within a society." In the third paragraph, the essay gives a less developed but nonetheless insightful example of how, in the American political system and the process of registering to vote, "Americans are prompted to pick a party to affiliate or conform [*sic*]." Despite the slight grammatical flaw of the sentence, the insight is original and appropriate. In the fourth paragraph, the essay develops another apt example by arguing that "media is a driving force in conformity." Its uses specific, appropriate examples to make its relevant points: first, that magazines like *Cosmopolitan* not only flood female readers "with the generic image of the beautiful and sexy woman," but create "conformity issues for men as well," and second, that television shows like "Leave It to Beaver" have "pushed" the image of the perfect family. The essay gives final shape to its argument with its conclusion that "America has become a breeding ground for conformity through education politics, and media."

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Question 1 (continued)

**Sample: 1B**

**Score: 6**

This essay adequately responds to the prompt. Without mentioning Kennan directly, the essay identifies as its subject Kennan's claim that in the United States power is peculiarly diffused. The first paragraph summarizes the points to be addressed: power is spread out "not only within the government, where power is distributed among three separate branches, but also in the country as a whole." The essay points out that the need for a "central authority" is minimized by the "morality and conformity of the individual, self-policing done by other citizens, and the use of voting to give Americans a sense of power." These ideas are taken up in the second, third, and fourth paragraphs. The democratic principles of the founding fathers ("giving power to the people," establishing the right to vote) are used at the beginning and end to link parts of the essay. The fourth paragraph, a consideration of the significance of voting for American citizens, ends with the claim that "Citizen voting is the central unit of our country and keeps all the other factors together, including power distributions." The final paragraph is a brief summary of the argument of the essay. The writing is not distinguished, but it is clear. The essay effectively uses transitional words ("Unlike," "Since," "The first," "Next," "While") to develop ideas and show relationships. The essay is organized, but it is not as sophisticated or as fully developed as essays receiving higher scores.

**Sample: 1C**

**Score: 4**

This essay responds inadequately to the prompt. It has difficulty in identifying a compelling observation from Kennan's passage, offering instead the general comment that "According to George F. Kennan ... the element of power exists in many different places of everyday life for Americans." The essay then has difficulty developing a clear argument with appropriate evidence. For example, its second paragraph incorrectly identifies the "small group of terrorists" who "had the power to create panic ... by flying planes into the World Trade Center" with Kennan's reference to "'informal associations of a vigilante nature'" inside the United States. Much of the rest of the second paragraph merely quotes or summarizes Kennan. Then, in its statement that "the US gives an abundant [*sic*] amount of power to our political leaders, including the President," the essay flatly contradicts Kennan's argument. Finally, the essay exhibits lack of precision and an immature control of language in its diction and its sentence structure, with phrases like "Great quantities of power," "abundant [*sic*] amount of power," and "the element of power exists in a wide range of people in the US."