

**2004 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

Question 2

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

Contemporary life is marked by controversy. Choose a controversial local, national, or global issue with which you are familiar. Then, using appropriate evidence, write an essay that carefully considers the opposing positions on this controversy and proposes a solution or compromise.

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Question 3

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

Read carefully the following passage from the introduction to *Days of Obligation* by Richard Rodriguez. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Rodriguez uses contrasts between Mexico and California to explore and convey his conflicting feelings.

For the last several years, I have told friends that I was writing a book about California and Mexico. That was not saying enough. I've been writing a book about comedy and tragedy. In my mind, in my life,
Line 5 Mexico plays the tragic part; California plays the role of America's wild child.

Or was I writing a book about competing theologies?

Josiah Royce, another Californian, another writer,
10 became a famous Harvard professor. Royce wrote about California with disappointment from the distance of New England. Royce believed that some epic opportunity had been given California—the chance to reconcile the culture of the Catholic south and the Protestant north. California had the chance to heal the sixteenth-century tear of Europe. But the opportunity was lost. The Catholic—the Mexican—impulse was pushed back, vanquished by comedy; a Protestant conquest.
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20 I use the word “comedy” here as the Greeks used it, with utmost seriousness, to suggest a world where youth is not a fruitless metaphor; where it is possible to start anew; where it is possible to escape the rivalries of the Capulets and the McCoys; where 25 young women can disprove the adages of grandmothers.

The comedy of California was constructed on a Protestant faith in individualism. Whereas Mexico knew tragedy.

30 My Mexican father, as his father before him, believed that old men know more than young men; that life will break your heart; that death finally is the vantage point from which a life must be seen.

I think now that Mexico has been the happier place
35 for being a country of tragedy. Tragic cultures serve up better food than optimistic cultures; tragic cultures have sweeter children, more opulent funerals. In tragic cultures, one does not bear the solitary burden of optimism. California is such a sad place, really—a state where children run away from parents, a state of pale beer, and young old women, and divorced
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husbands living alone in condos. But at a time when Californians are driven to despair by the relentless optimism of their state, I can only marvel at the comic achievement of the place, California's defiance of history, the defiance of ancestors.

Something hopeful was created in California through the century of its Protestant settlement. People believed that in California they could begin
45 new lives. New generations of immigrants continue to arrive in California, not a few of them from Mexico, hoping to cash in on comedy.

It is still possible in California to change your name, change your sex, get a divorce, become a
50 movie star. My Mexican parents live in a California house with four telephones, three televisions, and several empty bedrooms.

How could California ever reconcile comedy and tragedy? How could there not have been a divorce
55 between Mexico and California in the nineteenth century?

The youth of my life was defined by Protestant optimism. Now that I am middle-aged, I incline more toward the Mexican point of view, though some part
60 of me continues to resist the cynical conclusions of Mexico.

Which leaves me with at least a literary problem to start with: How shall I present the argument between comedy and tragedy, this tension that describes my
70 life? Shall I start with the boy's chapter, then move toward more “mature” tragic conclusions? But that would underplay the boy's wisdom. The middle-aged man would simply lord over the matter.

No, I will present this life in reverse. After all, the
75 journey my parents took from Mexico to America was a journey from an ancient culture to a youthful one—backward in time. In their path I similarly move, if only to honor their passage to California, and because I believe the best resolution to the debate between
80 comedy and tragedy is irresolution, since both sides can claim wisdom.

(1992)

END OF EXAMINATION

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION 2004 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

General Directions: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the papers you read. If it seems inappropriate for a specific paper, ask your Table Leader for assistance. Always show your Table Leader books that seem to have no response or that contain responses that seem unrelated to the question. Do not assign a score of 0 or – without this consultation.

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

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

9 Papers earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 papers and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their explanation and argument or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

8 Papers earning a score of 8 effectively characterize opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and clearly propose a solution or compromise. 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 Papers earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 papers, but provide a more complete explanation and argument or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

6 Papers earning a score of 6 adequately characterize opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and propose a solution or compromise. The evidence used is appropriate. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 Papers earning a score of 5 characterize opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and propose a solution or compromise. These papers may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited explanations of the issue, the opposing positions, and/or the solution or compromise. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas.

4 Papers earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt inadequately. They may have difficulty characterizing opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and/or proposing a solution. The evidence used may be insufficient. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

3 Papers earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4, but demonstrate less success in characterizing the opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and/or proposing a solution and less control of writing.

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Question 2 (cont'd.)

2 Papers earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in characterizing opposing positions on a local, national, or global issue and/or proposing a solution. These papers may misunderstand the prompt; fail to characterize opposing positions, and/or propose a solution or compromise; 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 Papers 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 Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.

— Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.