

2006 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

The passage below is an excerpt from Jennifer Price’s recent essay “The Plastic Pink Flamingo: A Natural History.” The essay examines the popularity of the plastic pink flamingo in the 1950s. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture.

Line When the pink flamingo splashed into the fifties
market, it staked two major claims to boldness. First,
it was a *flamingo*. Since the 1930s, vacationing
5 Americans had been flocking to Florida and returning
home with flamingo souvenirs. In the 1910s and
1920s, Miami Beach’s first grand hotel, the Flamingo,
had made the bird synonymous with wealth and
pizzazz. . . . [Later], developers built hundreds of
more modest hotels to cater to an eager middle class
10 served by new train lines—and in South Beach,
especially, architects employed the playful Art Deco
style, replete with bright pinks and flamingo motifs.

This was a little ironic, since Americans had
hunted flamingos to extinction in Florida in the late
15 1800s, for plumes and meat. But no matter. In the
1950s, the new interstates would draw working-class
tourists down, too. Back in New Jersey, the Union
Products flamingo inscribed one’s lawn emphatically
with Florida’s cachet of leisure and extravagance. The
20 bird acquired an extra fillip of boldness, too, from the
direction of Las Vegas—the flamboyant oasis of
instant riches that the gangster Benjamin “Bugsy”
Siegel had conjured from the desert in 1946 with his
Flamingo Hotel. Anyone who has seen Las Vegas
25 knows that a flamingo stands out in a desert even
more strikingly than on a lawn. In the 1950s,
namesake Flamingo motels, restaurants, and lounges
cropped up across the country like a line of semiotic
sprouts.

30 And the flamingo was *pink*—a second and
commensurate claim to boldness. The plastics
industries of the fifties favored flashy colors, which

Tom Wolfe called “the new electrochemical pastels of
the Florida littoral: tangerine, broiling magenta, livid
35 pink, incarnadine, fuchsia demure, Congo ruby,
methyl green.” The hues were forward-looking rather
than old-fashioned, just right for a generation, raised
in the Depression, that was ready to celebrate its new
affluence. And as Karal Ann Marling has written, the
40 “sassy pinks” were “the hottest color of the decade.”
Washing machines, cars, and kitchen counters
proliferated in passion pink, sunset pink, and
Bermuda pink. In 1956, right after he signed his first
recording contract, Elvis Presley bought a pink
45 Cadillac.

Why, after all, call the birds “pink flamingos”—as
if they could be blue or green? The plastic flamingo is
a hotter pink than a real flamingo, and even a real
flamingo is brighter than anything else around it.
50 There are five species, all of which feed in flocks on
algae and invertebrates in saline and alkaline lakes in
mostly warm habitats around the world. The people
who have lived near these places have always singled
out the flamingo as special. Early Christians
55 associated it with the red phoenix. In ancient Egypt, it
symbolized the sun god Ra. In Mexico and the
Caribbean, it remains a major motif in art, dance, and
literature. No wonder that the subtropical species
stood out so loudly when Americans in temperate
60 New England reproduced it, brightened it, and sent it
wading across an inland sea of grass.

The American Scholar, Spring 1999

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Question 2

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

The passage below is an excerpt from “On the Want of Money,” an essay written by nineteenth-century author William Hazlitt. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Hazlitt uses to develop his position about money.

Line Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the
world without money. To be in want of it, is to pass
through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live
5 out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it;
it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner,
or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion
consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your
acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things
disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to
10 say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and
neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to
circumstances, an exile in one’s own country; to
forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be
dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or
15 earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some
laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand
behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public
office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person
you would wish; or to go out to the East or West
20 Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return
home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer,
or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or
to read law and sit in court without a brief; or to be
deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing
25 Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore
yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of

the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes,
and most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the
exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of
30 mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with
envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite
with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the
background—or a gaol,* by the fickleness of taste
and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and
extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment
35 in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you
do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who
know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on
their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your
relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be
40 ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort
at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any
talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose,
and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most
so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look
45 about for a place to die in, and quit the world without
any one’s asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will
possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise
a monument at a considerable expense, and after a
lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your
50 misfortunes!

(1827)

*jail

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2006 SCORING GUIDELINES

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.

- 9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 essays and, in addition, are especially full or apt in their analysis or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 respond to the prompt **effectively**. They effectively analyze how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture. These essays may refer to the passage explicitly or implicitly. 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 6 essays but provide a more complete analysis or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 respond to the prompt **adequately**. They adequately analyze how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture. These essays may refer to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5 Essays earning a score of 5 analyze how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture but do so unevenly, inconsistently, or insufficiently. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt **inadequately**. They may offer little discussion of how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture, misrepresent her view, or analyze the passage incorrectly. The prose generally conveys the student'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 are less perceptive about how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture and/or less consistent in controlling the elements of writing.

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Question 1 (continued)

2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in analyzing how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture. These essays may misunderstand the prompt, offer vague generalizations, substitute simpler tasks such as summarizing the passage, or simply list strategies. 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 analysis, 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.