

**2001 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**  
**FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

**Question 3**

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

Carefully read the following passage by Susan Sontag. Then write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify Sontag's claim that photography limits our understanding of the world. Use appropriate evidence to develop your argument.

Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from *not* accepting the world as it looks. All possibility of understanding is rooted in the ability to say no. Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph. Of course, photographs fill in blanks in our mental pictures of the present and the past: for example, Jacob Riis's images of New York squalor in the 1880's are sharply instructive to those unaware that urban poverty in late-nineteenth-century America was really that Dickensian. Nevertheless, the camera's rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses. As Brecht points out, a photograph of the Krupp works\* reveals virtually nothing about that organization. In contrast to the amorous relation, which is based on how something looks, understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand.

The limit of photographic knowledge of the world is that, while it can goad conscience, it can, finally, never be ethical or political knowledge. The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist. It will be a knowledge at bargain prices—a semblance of knowledge, a semblance of wisdom. . . . The very muteness of what is, hypothetically, comprehensible in photographs is what constitutes their attraction and provocativeness. The omnipresence of photographs has an incalculable effect on our ethical sensibility. By furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is. Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution.

—*On Photography*, 1977

\* Krupp: a German weapons manufacturing firm that was instrumental in the Nazi rearmament effort of the 1930's.

**END OF EXAMINATION**

# 2001 AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION SCORING GUIDELINES

## Question 3

At the AP Reading, faculty consultants were given the following **General Directions**:

- This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read. If it seems inappropriate for a specific essay, 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.
- Your score should reflect your judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write. Therefore, the essay is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards that are appropriate for out-of-class writing assignments. Instead, evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain that you reward students for what they do well.
- All essays, even those scored 8 and 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. These lapses should enter into your holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case should you score an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics higher than a 2.

- 9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 papers and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.
- 8 Essays earning a score of 8 successfully establish and support their position on whether photography limits our understanding of the world, using appropriate evidence. Their prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not flawless.
- 7 Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but are distinguished by more complete or more purposeful argumentation or by a more mature prose style.
- 6 Essays earning a score of 6 adequately establish and support their position on whether photography limits our understanding of the world. Their arguments are generally sound and provide sufficient evidence, but they are less developed or less cogent than essays earning higher scores. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.
- 5 Essays earning a score of 5 establish and support their position on whether photography limits our understanding of the world, but their arguments may be inconsistent or unevenly developed. While the writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, it usually conveys ideas adequately.
- 4 Essays earning a score of 4 respond to the prompt inadequately. They may have difficulty establishing a position on whether photography limits our understanding of the world, may use unconvincing evidence, or may be insufficiently developed. 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 the score of 4 but are less successful in developing their position or less consistent in controlling the elements of writing.

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**Question 3 (cont'd.)**

- 2** Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in developing their position. These essays may fail to present an argument, substitute a simpler task such as summary, or respond with unrelated ideas or inappropriate evidence. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.
- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their argument, or weak in their control of writing.
- 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.