

2018 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

Suggested time—40 minutes.

(This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

In 1997, then United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gave the commencement speech to the graduating class of Mount Holyoke College, a women's college in Massachusetts. Read the following excerpt from her speech carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience.

As individuals, each of us must choose whether to live our lives narrowly, selfishly and complacently, or to act with courage and faith.

Line 5 As a nation, America must choose whether to turn inward and betray the lessons of history, or to seize the opportunity before us to shape history. Today, under the leadership of President Clinton, America is making the right choice.

10 The Berlin Wall is now a memory. We could be satisfied with that. Instead, we are enlarging and adapting NATO¹ and striving to create a future for Europe in which every democracy—including Russia—is our partner and every partner is a builder of peace.

15 Largely because of U.S. leadership, nuclear weapons no longer target our homes. We could relax. Instead, we are working to reduce nuclear arsenals further, eliminate chemical weapons, end the child-maiming scourge of land mines and ratify a treaty that would ban nuclear explosions forever.

20 The fighting in Bosnia has stopped. We could turn our backs now and risk renewed war. Instead, we are renewing our commitment, and insisting that the parties meet theirs, to implement the Dayton Accords.² And we are backing the War Crimes Tribunal, because we believe that those responsible for ethnic cleansing should be held accountable and those who consider rape just another tactic of war should answer for their crimes.

30 We have built a growing world economy in which those with modern skills and available capital have done very well. We could stop there. Instead, we are pursuing a broader prosperity, in which those

35 entrapped by poverty and discrimination are empowered to share, and in which every democracy on every continent will be included.

In our lifetimes, we have seen enormous advances in the status of women. We could now lower our voices and—as some suggest—sit sedately down. 40 Instead, women everywhere—whether bumping against a glass ceiling or rising from a dirt floor—are standing up, spreading the word that we are ready to claim our rightful place as full citizens and full participants in every society on Earth.

45 Mount Holyoke is the home, to borrow Wendy Wasserstein's phrase, of "uncommon women." But we know that there are uncommon women in all corners of the globe.

50 In recent years, I have met in Sarajevo with women weighted down by personal grief reaching out across ethnic lines to rebuild their shattered society.

In Burundi, I have seen women taking the lead in efforts to avoid the fate of neighboring Rwanda, where violence left three-quarters of the population female, and one-half of the women widows.

55 In Guatemala, I have talked to women striving to ensure that their new peace endures and is accompanied by justice and an end to discrimination and abuse.

60 And in Burma, I have met with a remarkable woman named Aung San Suu Kyi, who risks her life every day to keep alive the hope for democracy in her country.

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These women have in common a determination to
65 chart their own path, and by so doing, to alter for the
better the course of their country or community.

Each has suffered blows, but each has proceeded
with courage. Each has persevered.

As you go along your own road in life, you will, if
70 you aim high enough, also meet resistance, for as
Robert Kennedy once said, “if there’s nobody in your
way, it’s because you’re not going anywhere.” But no
matter how tough the opposition may seem, have
courage still—and persevere.

75 There is no doubt, if you aim high enough, that you
will be confronted by those who say that your efforts
to change the world or improve the lot of those
around you do not mean much in the grand scheme
of things. But no matter how impotent you may
80 sometimes feel, have courage still—and persevere.

It is certain, if you aim high enough, that you will
find your strongest beliefs ridiculed and challenged;
principles that you cherish may be derisively
dismissed by those claiming to be more practical or
85 realistic than you. But no matter how weary you may
become in persuading others to see the value in what
you value, have courage still—and persevere.

Inevitably, if you aim high enough, you will
be buffeted by demands of family, friends and
90 employment that will conspire to distract you from
your course. But no matter how difficult it may be to
meet the commitments you have made, have courage
still—and persevere.

It has been said that all work that is worth anything
95 is done in faith.

This morning, in these beautiful surroundings,
at this celebration of warm memory and high
expectation, I summon you in the name of this
historic college and of all who have passed through its
100 halls, to embrace the faith that your courage and your
perseverance will make a difference; and that every
life enriched by your giving, every friend touched by
your affection, every soul inspired by your passion
and every barrier to justice brought down by your
105 determination, will ennoble your own life, inspire
others, serve your country, and explode outward the
boundaries of what is achievable on this earth.

¹ military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty of
April 4, 1949

² peace agreement ending the war in Bosnia, signed in 1995

AP English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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Free Response Question 2

- ☒ **Scoring Guideline**
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2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

General Directions: This scoring guide is designed so that the same performance expectations are applied to all student responses. It will be useful for most of the essays, but if it seems inappropriate for a specific essay, assistance from the Table Leader should be sought. The Table Leader should always be shown booklets that seem to have no response or that contain responses that seem unrelated to the question. A score of 0 or — should not be assigned without this consultation.

The essay's score should reflect an evaluation 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 according to standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. The essay should be evaluated as a draft, and students should be rewarded for what they do well. The evaluation should focus on the evidence and explanations that the student uses to support the response; students should not be penalized for taking a particular perspective.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case should a score higher than a 2 be given to an essay with errors in grammar and mechanics that persistently interfere with understanding of meaning.

9 – Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for the score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in their development, or impressive in their control of language.

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** analyze* the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and convincing, referring to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

7 – Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for the score of 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style.

6 – Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** analyze the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and sufficient, referring 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 the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. The evidence and explanations used to develop their analysis may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

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Question 2 (continued)

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** analyze the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. These essays may misunderstand the passage, misrepresent the choices Albright makes, or analyze these choices insufficiently. The evidence and explanations used to develop their analysis may be inappropriate, insufficient, or unconvincing. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

3 – Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in analyzing the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the passage or Albright's choices, or the evidence and explanations used to develop their analysis may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in analyzing the choices Albright makes to convey her message to the audience. The student may misunderstand the prompt, misread the passage, fail to analyze the choices Albright makes, or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated or inaccurate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control.

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

0 Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.

— Indicates an entirely blank response.

* For the purposes of scoring, analysis means explaining the rhetorical choices an author makes in an attempt to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

Sample 2A

In her commencement speech to the graduating class of Mount Holyoke College, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asserted that women must expand their horizons beyond the chains of societal norms to change and impact the world mainly by relying on powerful and profound phrases.

Albright masterfully employs anaphoras to emphasize and reinforce her overarching message. Describing the hardships women in history endured, Albright states, "Each has suffered blows, but each has proceeded with courage. Each has persevered" (Albright 67-68). The repetition of "each has" at the beginning of each phrase serves to emphasize the universal experience of adversities and obstacles. Albright uses the momentum generated by those monosyllabic words to allow her audience to pause and reflect on "suffered... but [ultimately] persevered". This line essentially encapsulates Albright's main message that despite all obstacles methodically placed by the world, women have time and time again overcome them in order to realize their aspirations for change. Moreover, Albright continues this message by repeating "if you aim high enough" in lines 75, 81, and 88. Similar to the common adage "aim for the stars", Albright seeks to broaden the horizon for her audience - to dare they venture and embrace the unknown. Albright clearly understands that progress and concrete results become reality only when aspirations and desires are met with an equal magnitude of ferocity and determination. By wielding anaphora as a beacon to motivate women in the crusade to challenge the world, Albright effectively conveys her motivation for her message.

In conjunction with her use of striking anaphoras, Albright also employs bold diction to further her message. In describing the current standings, Albright reveals, "Some suggest we sit sedately down. Instead, we, every woman - whether bumping against a glass ceiling or rising from the dirt floor - spread the word that we are ready to claim our rightful place as full citizens" (Albright lines 39-44). Albright claims that women defy the societal expectation of being "sedate" merely to their own feelings and desires. Rather than lying around helpless and incapable, Albright invokes words that convey mobility such as "bumping" and "rising". Like the ocean's waves, the modern woman surges forward in great strides, "claiming" and forging paths high, waiting for the critical moment to engulf and wash away the shackles that once bound her. In addition, Albright continues her use of such diction in her final paragraph where she asserts, "Every barrier to justice brought down by your determination will ennoble your own life" (Albright lines 103-105). Instead of marinating in the "sedate" state, Albright urges her audience to "ennoble" their lives - that to invite change, they must rid themselves of the damsel-in-distress mentality. She argues that by donning a knight's armor of determination, women can, in order to manifest a more equitable world, take direct actions for widespread change themselves. By using such language, Albright strives to instill determination and harden the resolute minds of her audience, projecting that any hardships Albright boldly shapes her speech comprised of anaphoras and bold diction, will inspire and initiate a new generation of women to "erase and extend the boundaries of what is achievable on this level" (Albright lines 18-19).

Sample 2B

In 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gave a well-written, motivational speech to a women's college in Massachusetts. Albright was able to successfully employ different rhetorical devices, each of which helped her convey her message to the audience. Throughout the essay, the most effective devices employed were parallel structure, allusions, and metaphors.

Throughout the essay, the use of parallel structure creates a sense of unity and pride in the audience. For example, "We could be satisfied with that... we could relax... we could turn our backs now and risk renewed war... we could stop there..." (Albright). The use of "we could" at the beginning of these sentences shows the United States could stop what they are doing and let whatever happens happen, but instead are continuing to lead the world toward peace and equality.

The author employs the use of allusions to give examples of places around the world that are changing partly due to the influence and leadership of the United States. "The fighting in Bosnia has stopped. In Burundi, I have seen women taking the lead in efforts to avoid the fate of neighboring Rwanda... In Guatemala... And in Burma" (Albright). The use of these allusions shows the audience the global-scale effects the United States' efforts are having. The allusions also motivate the audience to continue to seek peace, prosperity, and equality around the world.

The author incorporates a few significant metaphors into her speech, which have significant effects. "... and expand outward the boundaries of what is achievable on this earth" (Albright). This metaphor draws a comparison between the audience's actions and the boundaries of what is thought achievable on this Earth. This motivates the audience to take on global problems head-on and to not be intimidated by what others consider possible. The metaphor shows the reader that even the smallest actions can bring about large amounts of change.

This speech, which was given to a women's college in Massachusetts, successfully employs the use of metaphors, parallel structure, and allusions to motivate the audience, push them towards greatness, and show how the smallest of actions can change the world.

Sample 2C

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright gets straight to the point through her candid and assertive tone. In her initial jab at war, she claims that under the power of President Clinton there were some remarkable outcomes. These special outcomes relate mostly to nuclear warfare, as in the quote, "Nuclear weapons no longer target our homes." This means that Clinton was at the forefront of ending nuclear war threats. They also express how they are constantly working, which makes her guidance feel imperative, as expressed through the quote, "Stay and work. Instead, we are working to reduce nuclear arsenals." This is meant to make the audience feel as if they should trust Clinton and his Secretary because they know what they are doing.

Soon, the speaker switches to the subject of women through the quote, "In our lifetime, we have seen enormous advances in the status of women." This is directed towards women to make them feel as if they have achieved so much. This encourages them to show that if they "aim high," they will be supported by family and friends.

This motivational diction empowers women to keep progressing.

Perhaps the U.S. may not be perfect, but as portrayed by the Secretary of State, they are progressing and doing better under the influence of Bill Clinton, which includes America and women.

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2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 2

Overview

This year’s rhetorical analysis question asked students to identify and evaluate the rhetorical choices made in a commencement address, specifically a speech by Madeleine Albright to the graduating class of 1997 at Mount Holyoke College. As in past years, this year’s prompt asked students to consider the rhetorical situation a speaker faces and analyze the choices that the speaker makes in order to elicit appropriate or desirable responses from an audience.

Also as in past years, the prompt provided students with key historical information and context. For students who may not have known anything about this history or context, the prompt supplied specifics regarding the audience (“Mount Holyoke College, a women’s college in Massachusetts”) and date (1997) and noted the speaker’s leadership position at the time (“then United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright”). This year’s task differed from previous iterations in that it was significantly lengthier; however, its language was very accessible to students.

Within their responses to this rhetorical analysis question, students were expected to explain the choices Albright made in her particular situation for her particular audience and how these choices work. To understand these choices and how they work, a student must first consider the rhetor’s relationship to the audience, as well as how this relationship necessitates both what this specific rhetor should include in — and exclude from — the speech to this specific audience. Additionally, a student must consider how the rhetor arranges the speech for the particular audience in the specific circumstances of the speech. While elements of style certainly merit consideration, they are not the first ingredient on which rhetors focus when developing strategies to persuade audiences: Style is the third canon of rhetoric, not the first or even the second.

In other words, to do well, students needed to understand the purpose of Albright’s speech, what the relationship must have been between Albright and her audience, what the audience’s attitude toward Albright’s message might have been, and how Albright’s specific rhetorical choices worked to make the audience more responsive to her purpose.

Sample: 2A

Score: 8

The opening paragraph of this essay effectively introduces the rhetorical situation, although it is not flawless (note the unfinished last sentence of the paragraph). The body paragraphs develop the analysis with substantial evidence and explanations, which effectively link Albright’s choices (anaphora and “bold diction”) to the speech’s intended message. The second paragraph, for example, explains how particular phrases in Albright’s speech encapsulate her “main message that despite all obstacles meticulously placed by the world, courageous women have time and time again overcome them in order to realize their own aspirations for change.” The third paragraph likewise effectively explains the speech’s deployment of a wide range of “bold diction” and skillfully weaves short quotations into the student’s own sentences. The last two sentences of the third paragraph, although not separated by a paragraph break, function as an effective conclusion, aptly summarizing the initial explanation from the first paragraph (e.g., “Albright hopes her speech comprised of powerful anaphoras and bold diction will inspire and motivate a new generation of women”). The essay is not flawless; a more complete opening paragraph and some more clearly defined paragraph breaks would help. However, it effectively analyzes the choices Albright makes to convey her message and does so with prose that controls a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

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Question 2 (continued)

Sample: 2B

Score: 5

This essay shows a grasp of the rhetorical situation and offers a mostly adequate explanation of it. However, it needs more — and clearer — analysis; e.g., the limited analysis of “metaphors” in the fourth paragraph offers little beyond the obvious point that exploding “outward the boundaries” is a metaphor that somehow applies to “the audience’s actions.” The essay also misrepresents at least one of Albright’s strategies as an essay scored a 4 might do: i.e., in the third paragraph, Albright’s references to Bosnia, Burundi, et al., are not “allusions.” The prose generally conveys the student’s ideas but does not rise to the clarity of that in an essay scored a 6. In sum, the essay contains characteristics of both the “Inadequate” essay and the “Adequate” essay; the resulting unevenness and inconsistency are one of the hallmarks of essays scored a 5.

Sample: 2C

Score: 2

This essay misunderstands the prompt and misreads the passage, substituting a simpler task (i.e., a discussion of U.S. successes “under the power of President Clinton”). It also provides scant analysis of Albright’s choices, doing little more than listing examples from the speech (nuclear war, advances by women, etc.). The prose is simplistic and vague, and it demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing (e.g., “This enriches them to show that if they ‘aim high’ be supported by family and friends” and “This motive [sic] diction empowers women to keep progressing”). As a whole, the essay demonstrates little success in analyzing the choices Albright makes to convey her message.