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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition

## Rhetorical Analysis Prompt - Obama

On August 29, 2009, then President Barack Obama delivered a eulogy at the funeral of Senator Ted Kennedy in Boston, Massachusetts. Kennedy served in the United States Senate from 1962 until his death. Obama served with him in the Senate from 2005 until Obama was elected president in 2008. The following is an excerpt from Obama's speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Obama makes to achieve his purpose of praising and memorializing Kennedy.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Today we say goodbye to the youngest child of Rose and Joseph Kennedy. The world will long remember their son Edward as the heir to a weighty legacy; a champion for those who had none; the soul of the Democratic Party; and the lion of the U.S. Senate—a man whose name graces nearly one thousand laws, and who penned more than three hundred himself.

But those of us who loved him, and ache with his passing, know Ted Kennedy by the other titles he held: Father. Brother. Husband. Uncle Teddy, or as he was often known to his younger nieces and nephews, “The Grand Fromage,” or “The Big Cheese.” I, like so many others in the city where he worked for nearly half a century, knew him as a colleague, a mentor, and above all, a friend.

Ted Kennedy was the baby of the family who became its patriarch; the restless dreamer who became its rock. He was the sunny, joyful child, who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing, but learned quickly how to brush it off. When they tossed him off a boat because he didn't know what a jib was, six-year-old Teddy got back in and learned to sail. When a photographer asked the newly-elected Bobby<sup>1</sup> to step back at a press conference because he was casting a shadow on his younger brother, Teddy quipped, “It'll be the same in Washington.”

This spirit of resilience and good humor would see Ted Kennedy through more pain and tragedy than most of us will ever know. He lost two siblings by the age of sixteen. He saw two more taken violently from the country that loved them.<sup>2</sup> He said goodbye to his beloved sister, Eunice, in the final days of his own life. He narrowly survived a plane crash, watched two children struggle with cancer, buried three nephews, and experienced personal failings and setbacks in the most public way possible.

It is a string of events that would have broken a lesser man. And it would have been easy for Teddy to let himself become bitter and hardened; to surrender to self-pity and regret; to retreat from public life and live out his years in peaceful quiet. No one would have blamed him for that.

But that was not Ted Kennedy. As he told us, “. . . [I]ndividual faults and frailties are no excuse to give in—and no exemption from the common obligation to give of ourselves.” Indeed, Ted was the “Happy Warrior” that the poet William Wordsworth spoke of when he wrote:

*As tempted more; more able to endure,  
As more exposed to suffering and distress;  
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.*

Through his own suffering, Ted Kennedy became more alive to the plight and suffering of others—the sick child who could not see a doctor; the young soldier sent to battle without armor; the citizen denied her rights because of what she looks like or who she loves or where she comes from. The landmark laws that he championed—the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, immigration reform, children's health care, the Family and Medical Leave Act—all have a running

thread. Ted Kennedy's life's work was not to champion those with wealth or power or special connections. It was to give a voice to those who were not heard; to add a rung to the ladder of opportunity; to make real the dream of our founding. He was given the gift of time that his brothers were not, and he used that gift to touch as many lives and right as many wrongs as the years would allow.

We can still hear his voice bellowing through the Senate chamber, face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature, in support of health care or workers' rights or civil rights. And yet, while his causes became deeply personal, his disagreements never did. While he was seen by his fiercest critics as a partisan lightning rod, that is not the prism through which Ted Kennedy saw the world, nor was it the prism through which his colleagues saw him. He was a product of an age when the joy and nobility of politics prevented differences of party and philosophy from becoming barriers to cooperation and mutual respect—a time when adversaries still saw each other as patriots.

<sup>1</sup> American politician Robert F. Kennedy, older brother of Ted Kennedy

<sup>2</sup> John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, both assassinated in the 1960s

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## Scoring Guidelines

### Rhetorical Analysis - Obama

## Rhetorical Analysis

**6 points**

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- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
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# AP English Language and Composition 2020 Scoring Guidelines

Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row A</b> <b>Thesis</b> <b>(0-1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<b>1 point</b> Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>	
	<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes.</li> <li>Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense.</li> </ul>	<b>Responses that earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to the prompt rather than restate or rephrase the prompt <u>and</u> clearly articulate a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices Obama makes to achieve his purpose of praising and memorializing Kennedy.</li> </ul>
	<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <b>Restate the prompt</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Barrack Obama eulogizes his former colleague Senator Ted Kennedy to praise him.”</li> </ul> <b>Make a claim but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Obama’s eulogy for Teddy Kennedy shows that Kennedy had faced many challenges but still gave back to the world through politics.”</li> </ul> <b>Repeat provided information from the passage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Obama memorializes Ted Kennedy by calling him a ‘patriot.’”</li> </ul>	<b>Examples that earn this point:</b> <b>Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“In his 2009 eulogy, President Obama uses vivid diction to recount the impressive life of Ted Kennedy. This diction creates a contrast between the hardships Kennedy faced and his soaring success as a politician, which aids Obama in achieving his desire to memorialize the late Senator.”</li> <li>“By using pathos, brief anecdotes and imagery, Obama was able to convey the sense that Kennedy was a strong, genuine human being who only wanted to leave a positive impact on others.”</li> <li>“By contrasting anecdotes from young Ted Kennedy’s life with well-known examples of his work as a champion of human rights, Obama reveals that Kennedy deserves to be considered a patriot.”</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.</li> </ul>		

# AP English Language and Composition 2020 Scoring Guidelines

Scoring Criteria					
<b>Row B</b> <b>Evidence</b> <b>AND</b> <b>Commentary</b> <b>(0-4 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	<b>1 point</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides evidence that is mostly general.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student's argument.	<b>2 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides some specific, relevant evidence.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student's argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	<b>3 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  Explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer's argument, purpose, or message.	<b>4 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  Explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer's argument, purpose, or message.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are incoherent or do not address the prompt.</li> <li>May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tend to focus on summary or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques.</li> <li>Mention rhetorical choices with little or no explanation.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities.</li> <li>May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument.</li> <li>May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim.</li> <li>Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument.</li> <li>Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims.</li> <li>Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument.</li> <li>Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.</li> <li>Explain how the writer's use of rhetorical choices contributes to the student's interpretation of the passage.</li> </ul>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.</li> <li>To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same rhetorical choice if each instance further contributes to the argument, purpose, or message of the passage.</li> </ul>				

# AP English Language and Composition 2020 Scoring Guidelines

	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row C</b> <b>Sophistication</b> <b>(0-1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempt to contextualize the text, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (<i>"In a world where..."</i> OR <i>"Since the beginning of time..."</i>).</li> <li>Only hint at or suggest other arguments (<i>"While some may argue that..."</i> OR <i>"Some people say..."</i>).</li> <li>Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text.</li> <li>Oversimplify complexities in the text.</li> <li>Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the analysis.</li> </ul>	<b>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer's rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation).</li> <li>Explaining a purpose or function of the passage's complexities or tensions.</li> <li>Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</li> </ul>	



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# **AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition**

Sample Student Responses - Packet 3

Rhetorical Analysis Question - Obama

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Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

**Sample A**

[1] It is not an uncommon thing for eulogies to be delivered at funerals. The point in mind is to immortalize in language the person who has passed for their most admirable qualities, and remember them for the things they achieved in life. In some cases it is done more effectively than in others, as can be seen in Obama's eulogy in 2009, which he delivered to remember the loss of Ted Kennedy. With appeals to both pathos and logos, the application of anecdote, and a respectful, admiring tone, Obama's intended purpose in his eulogy for Kennedy is clear; he paints the late Ted Kennedy in a respectable, memorable light, which those attending the funeral would forever remember the late Senator by.

[2] Perhaps the most frequently applied and effective device employed by Obama in his speech is the use of personal anecdotes from the late Senator's life. In one striking tale about Kennedy, Obama says that "Ted Kennedy was the baby of the family who became its patriarch... he was the sunny, joyful child, who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing, but quickly learned to brush it off." This familial dynamic described in the quote is one that most people can relate to on some level, as most families have a member who is an underdog in the social pecking order. Obama describes Kennedy's rise to respect within his family and in life as a whole, painting him as a human being, not an untouchable political figure.

[3] That ability to relate to Kennedy on such a personal level enhanced the effects of Obama's appeal to pathos, which is used frequently throughout the entirety of the speech. "[Kennedy] lost two siblings by the age of sixteen. He saw two more taken violently from the country that loved them... and experienced personal failings and setbacks in the most public way possible. It is a string of events that would have broken a lesser man." If there is one thing that allows an audience to empathize with a person in a situation such as this, it is the mention of tragedy. It is the one thing that all human beings can understand to some degree, and in this situation serves to show just how human Kennedy was. Obama later mentions that this suffering only increased Kennedy's drive to do good, which is an admirable trait.

[4] Obama also appeals to ethos, or credibility, by mentioning Kennedy's long list of successes, which juxtaposed the personal losses and failures experienced by the same man. Obama mentions Kennedy's role in the creation of law, stating that Kennedy's name "graces nearly one thousand laws, and who penned more than three hundred himself." A man with the power to shape the law itself is a respectable position. On top of this, Obama at the time was also a Senator, which gives his opinion a certain level of credibility.

[5] The tone throughout the entire speech is no doubt one of admiration, which can be seen through Obama's word choice. Of the things Obama described him as, some described the tone particularly well; "the 'Happy Warrior'", a "restless dreamer", and a "voice to those left unheard" are a select few phrases used to describe Kennedy which paint him a truly great man,

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Sample Student Responses

who achieved many things in his life. Based on Obama's description of him throughout the speech, he is a truly admirable man.

[6] It was Obama's appeal to ethos and pathos, use of anecdote and admiring tone which immortalized the memory of Kennedy as a man worthy of respect.

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Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

**Sample B**

[1] In August of 2009, President Barack Obama gave the eulogy of Senator Ted Kennedy to those attending the funeral. In the Eulogy, Obama pays tribute to both the hardships and accomplishments Kennedy faced and made in his lifetime. While bringing emotion and pride to his audience, Obama uses the rhetorical modes of causal analysis, description, and exemplification to best emphasize Kennedy's life.

[2] Throughout the eulogy, Barack Obama uses causal analysis to explain how the hardships in Kennedy's life built him into the man he was. The first place this is seen is when Obama reminisces of a story from Ted's childhood. Obama uses the device of anecdote when he tells the audience of how when Ted was thrown off of a boat at age six, and instead of getting upset, he climbed back on the boat and learned how to sail. His brothers constantly teased him in many instances such as this. Because of it, Kennedy was able to toughen himself up to those around him. This story of Kennedy's childhood not only provides the audience with a joyful story to brighten the usually melancholy mood at most funerals, but also points out the determined nature in Ted's character. Obama also uses cause- and- effect to build on Kennedy's character when he mentions the many tragedies Ted went through. Obama tells the audience how Kennedy faced the loss of multiple siblings starting when he was very young. But Obama explains that these losses did not hinder Kennedy's greatness, and instead helped him become a more aware and selfless person. This cause- and- effect relationship between tragedy and Kennedy's character appeals to the audience's emotions, by leading them to recognize the sadness Ted felt, as well as inducing pride towards Kennedy's ability to push through it all. Obama's use of causal analysis develops Ted's character and evokes many emotions within his audience that lead them to memorialize Ted for who he was.

[3] Within the eulogy, Obama uses description to continue building on the strength and resilience Kennedy had. Towards the beginning of the eulogy, Obama describes Kennedy as a child, saying, "He was the sunny, joyful child, who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing but learned quickly how to brush it off". This description shows the audience how Kennedy's persistent personality began at a young age. Obama also uses description when talking about Kennedy as an adult. He describes Kennedy's voice in the Senate as a "force of nature" which effectively conveys a prideful mood towards the audience. The audience hears this description and is led to remember how they heard Kennedy within the Senate chamber and feels the power behind his voice. Obama uses both the description from Kennedy's childhood and his adulthood to provide separate times where Kennedy established his confidence in order to cause the audience at the funeral to praise and memorialize Ted and his character.

[4] The final rhetorical mode used by Barack Obama within the eulogy is exemplification. One of the main ideas within the eulogy is how Kennedy was able to push past obstacles that the

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Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

average man would not be able to face. Obama provides many examples of these obstacles, from witnessing death within his family to surviving horrific events like a plane crash. These examples provoke pride within the audience. Those attending the funeral are able to recognize that the things that Kennedy went through were more traumatic than they themselves would likely be able to handle. This means that Kennedy was a stronger man than most and should be recognized as extraordinary for it. Obama also uses exemplification by listing the many laws Kennedy was able to pass that helped a massive amount of people. Despite the trauma Kennedy faced, he was able to help many others from feeling the same. This appeals to the audience's sense of pride once again, in that they are grateful for all that Kennedy did within his life to help as many people as he could. By providing examples of both traumatic obstacles and the accomplishments Kennedy made despite them, Barack Obama is able to memorialize the late Senator and cause the audience to feel pride and gratitude towards his character.

[5] Barack Obama uses exemplification, description, and causal analysis to invoke pride within his audience and memorialize Ted Kennedy. The use of exemplification recognized exactly what Kennedy faced as well as the many ways he helped others within his life. The descriptions provided gave detailed accounts of Kennedy at two distant points of his life that showed who he was. The use of causal analysis explains to the audience how Kennedy became who he was. All of the rhetorical modes were able to recognize how great Kennedy was as both an individual and a Senator.

AP English Language and Composition  
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

**Sample C**

[1] Entering a global financial crisis and an age of national divide, forty-fourth U.S. president Barack Obama stood as a figure that was either praised or condemned by bipartisan politicians. Through some of the backlash he received through media outlets and a lot of American people, it is no surprise that he was deeply affected by a likewise public figure such as Ted Kennedy, and he communicated this dejection to an audience of American people and interpersonal relationships. In the eulogy delivered at Kennedy's funeral, President Barack Obama employs a bittersweet tone and imagery in order to completely memorialize and praise a public individual he stood by and looked up to.

[2] Obama's tone directly signifies both celebration and deepened sadness in a way that presents Kennedy as a true hero by purposefully stating his hardships not only as a public figure, but as a person. These adversities are then directly counteracting in stating how he rose above them to show his legacy as a figure to the American people. For example, Obama speaks about his losses he accrued in his family, how he had to lose two brothers "from the country that loved them." The speaker purposefully makes this distinction to communicate to his audience the heroicness of Kennedy, as he had to see those in his life taken away from the country that he fought for. In order to prove that Kennedy stood high amidst this harsh reality, Obama directly quotes Kennedy himself, stating that these mentally tolling adversities were "no excuse to give in," directly proving the character of the man he commends. This setup is directly enacted in order to make the audience, American people amongst politicians and relatives to the passed, feel as though there was no doubt that Kennedy was a true warrior. Through listing hardships and portraying how he rose above, the audience has no other choice other than to see how Kennedy's passing was on to be remembered and grieved, and his life to be celebrated. Without communicating both the bitterness of his life and the sweetness of how the figure remained a fighter in the politics of America, there would be no reason for memorialization. However, because of Obama's tone, the reality of Kennedy's eulogy remained that he was an impactful figure that deserved every shred of praise and respect throughout all of American thought.

[3] Furthermore, imagery is utilized in order to directly signify the true valiance of Kennedy. This strategy is conveyed through the comparison of Kennedy through concepts all Americans valued, regardless of political standing. Obama notes that Kennedy's passion is exhibited through a man "face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature." This picture is specifically painted in order to show the passion Kennedy had towards civil rights. He specifically portrayed this aspect of Kennedy's standing in order to exemplify a thought every critic or politically divided person could get behind, a choice which makes the audience directly feel the impact that he had on America in a positive and honorable way. With this portrayal of Kennedy, the message of his influence is not lost within the audience, as they are now presented with a vision that perceives Kennedy as a valourous figure. This imagery directly influences the

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Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

audience to mourn a great soul's passing, and therefore Kennedy's funeral is represented in pride and memory.

[4] These purposeful choices of bittersweet tone and imagery directly influence the entire audience to mourn and celebrate the loss of Ted Kennedy, no matter their political alignment. Obama successfully encapsulates his audiences through his choices, and brings a divided nation together for a second in order to commemorate and memorialize a truly dedicated and great politician, friend, and American soul.

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Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)  
Sample Student Responses

**Sample D**

[1] In his eulogy speech at the funeral of Senator Ted Kennedy in 2009, President Barack Obama asserts that Kennedy was a great man who persevered through life's most difficult challenges to make the country a better place for everyone. Obama utilizes descriptive imagery and anecdotes from Kennedy's personal life in order to praise and memorialize the image of the senator. Obama utilizes a glorifying tone in order to immortalize the memory of Kennedy not only in the funeral attendees, but also the American people.

[2] Obama begins his speech by repeatedly naming nouns that describe Kennedy's role in the world in which he lived, and the impact he had on it. Using familial connotations such as "child," "son," and "Father" he is able to build a sense of emotional loss within the audience by associating the senator with lost family- a deep emotional connection unbound by the physical walls of death. His loss is not only a loss to the government, but a loss to their personal lives.

[3] Obama then utilizes tragic personal anecdotes and details from Kennedy's life and childhood in order to emphasize the senator's strength and resilience despite the turmoil of his life. The "pain and tragedy" of his life "would have broken a lesser man," however Kennedy did the opposite and "became more alive to the plight and suffering of others"-- particularly those who were less fortunate and suffering. Obama's virtuous diction glorifies Kennedy's ability to persevere in the face of adversity. Obama highlights Kennedy's mental strength despite seemingly insurmountable odds in order to illustrate how his personal tragedies led him to become a champion of the common people, not a champion of those in wealth and power. Through this emphasis, Obama praises Kennedy's values and achievements in order to create a sense of deep loss for the saintly senator that causes the audience to feel as if they owe it to him to immortalize his memory and legacy.

[4] Obama concludes the eulogy by describing Kennedy as a product of a time when politics was more than personally rooted arguments, but rather a time of respect and cooperation between all members of government. His idealization of Kennedy's image and work persuades the audience that it is their moral duty to uphold his legacy and image for years to come.



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Sample Student Responses

**Sample E**

[1] Ted Kennedy was the youngest child of Rose and Joseph Kennedy. Ted Kennedy also served in the Senate and advocated for the rights of many Americans and Immigrants. He was a great man who simply advocated for the people and wanted everyone to have equal rights. Following Ted Kennedy's death the acting president Obama gave a speech in honor of the Kennedy's with a goal of praising them and memorializing them. Throughout the speech President Obama told the many challenges of Ted Kennedy and memorable moments that won't be forgotten throughout his life in order to praise him and honor his legacy.

[2] Throughout the speech President Obama told Ted Kennedy's Challenges in life to honor his legacy. One example of this from the speech is, " This Spirit of resilience and good humor would see Ted Kennedy through more pain and tragedy than most of us will ever know..." ( Obama paragraph 4). This quote from his speech refers to Kennedy's many losses in his family and throughout his life these include his siblings and nephews. Kennedy uses this rhetoric to show people that even though Kennedy faced many challenges in life he still carried on and stayed strong turning him into the person he became. An example of this is, " Through his own suffering, Ted Kennedy became more alive to the plight and suffering of others" (Obama paragraph 6). This rhetoric also supports the previous quote and statement as he refers to Kennedy's pain and suffering at an early age attributing to the kind and giving person he became. This also led Kennedy to pass landmark cases in the senate such as Civil Rights ACT, Disabilities ACT, and Immigration Reform.

[3] Throughout Obama's speech he told memorable moments about his life and how he will not be forgotten in order to honor his legacy. The quote, " When a photographer asked the newly-elected Bobby to step back at a press conference because he was casting a shadow on his younger brother, Teddy quipped, " It'll be the same in Washington"(Obama Paragraph 3). The president said this to show Ted Kennedy's humor throughout his life and the smiles he would have put on many people. Kennedy also left a major imprint in life and will be forgotten, Obama said that in the following quote. " We can still hear his voice bellowing through the Senate chamber, face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature, in support of health care or workers' rights or civil rights" (Paragraph 8). Obama used this rhetoric in this quote to show Kennedy's dedication to his work and that he left a major impact on America that will never be forgotten.

[4] In conclusion Ted Kennedy was an amazing American that strove to help others throughout society using his senate position. Obama used his rhetoric throughout his speech so show this, and to show the many great things he did in fact do for citizens. Obama also used his rhetoric in order to emphasize the tragedies that occurred throughout Kennedy's life and how he overcame those challenges in order to greatly benefit the people. Kennedy also had many

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memorable moments that can't be forgotten which Obama spoke of in his speech. Obama using his rhetoric in these ways overall was able to convey to the audience that Ted Kennedy was a great man that strived to help others and overcame his challenges in life.

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**Sample F**

[1] In the eulogy speech given to senator Ted Kennedy in Boston Massachusetts, President Barack Obama uses antimetabole, pathos and other rhetorical devices to convey how he felt about the loss of Ted Kennedy. These rhetorical devices really help Obama deliver his speech to the people. Barack Obama is a very successful speaker because of how he can pull an audience in, and this eulogy is a very good speech showing how he uses his devices.

[2] Barack Obama was the perfect man to give this speech since he is since he is such a good speaker. He was a friend of Ted Kennedy, so there were many pieces of pathos used in his speech. In the second paragraph, "But those...a friend", he uses pathos to connect with the audience by saying what his nieces used to call him. In the end of the paragraph, he then concludes that part of his speech by explaining that Ted Kennedy was a friend to everyone who met him. This rhetorical device was a great one to use at a eulogy. In the end of the excerpt, he uses pathos again by saying that everyone had a mutual respect for Kennedy and was a great man.

[3] Throughout this whole speech, Barack Obama gave many rhetorical devices to explain how saddened he was over the death of Ted Kennedy, but one of the main devices he used was Antimetabole. In the middle of this excerpt, Obama used a William Wordsworth to show how great of a man Kennedy was even though he went through many lows in his life. This really pulled the speech together and was a great rhetorical device in Obama's speech.

[4] In conclusion, Barack Obama used very good rhetorical devices in this eulogy. He was the perfect man for this speech and delivered it with great diction and syntax.

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Sample Student Responses

**Sample G**

[1] President Barack Obama used many rhetorical choices in the eulogy he gave about Ted Kennedy. Obama made this speech very passionately which helped get many of his stories about Kennedy across to the audience. Obama used pathos, metaphors, and similes throughout the speech

[2] In the first paragraph of the speech, Obama used a plethora of sentences that referred to pathos because of how emotional they were. In the second paragraph, Obama said “ Uncle Teddy, or as he was often known to his younger nieces and nephews, “The Grand Fromage,” or “The Big Cheese.” This sentence is a metaphor because it uses the word “as” to compare who Kennedy was to his family.

[3] Obama also used similes in this eulogy about Kennedy. One simile he used was “ I, like so many others in the city...” . In this sentence Obama used a simile to compare how everyone was feeling at the time of losing Ted Kennedy. Obama's eulogy to Kennedy was very easy to understand because of the way Obama used all these rhetorical strategies.

[4] Overall, Obama’s eulogy to Ted Kennedy was very thought out and given very well. It showed a plethora of emotion and used the right amount of rhetorical devices to make it very comparable for other people.

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# **AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition**

Scoring Commentaries - Packet 3

Rhetorical Analysis Question - Obama

**AP English Language and Composition**  
**Rhetorical Analysis Question (2020)**  
**2020 Scoring Commentaries**

**Index of Scores for Samples**

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A	1	4	1
B	1	4	0
C	1	3	1
D	1	3	0
E	1	2	0
F	1	1	0
G	0	1	0

**AP English Language and Composition**  
**Rhetorical Analysis Question (2020)**  
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**Sample A**

**Score: 6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row A because it effectively articulates a defensible thesis in the last sentence of the first paragraph: “With appeals to both pathos and logos, the application of anecdote, and a respectful, admiring tone, Obama’s intended purpose in his eulogy for Kennedy is clear; he paints the late Ted Kennedy in a respectable, memorable light, which those attending the funeral would forever remember the Senator by.”

**Row B: 4/4**

The response earned four points for its specific use of evidence, consistent use of commentary, and explanation of multiple rhetorical choices. The response begins with an analysis of Obama’s “use of personal anecdotes from the late Senator’s life.” After providing a specific text reference, commentary explains why using a “familial dynamic” would be persuasive to the audience hearing the eulogy. The paragraph finishes by observing, “Obama describes Kennedy’s rise to respect within his family and in life as a whole, painting him as a human being, not an untouchable political figure.” This effectively transitions into the third paragraph—“That ability to relate to Kennedy on such a personal level enhanced the effects of Obama’s appeal to pathos”—establishing a line of reasoning between the rhetorical choices, the response explains. After providing evidence and commentary about tragedy in Kennedy’s life and how that would cause “an audience to empathize with a person in a situation such as this,” the paragraph finishes with the explanation, “Obama later mentions that this suffering only increased Kennedy’s drive to do good,” which will form the basis of the response’s fourth paragraph, which outlines some of Kennedy’s successes, establishing him as a “man with the power to shape the law itself.” The fifth paragraph addresses the tone of the eulogy with the same consistency demonstrated in previous paragraphs, meaning this response consistently touched on a wide array of rhetorical choices, linked together in support of the larger thesis about Obama’s purpose.

**Row C: 1/1**

The response earned one point through explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices given the rhetorical situation, in this case, appealing to the audience’s understanding of family dynamics and interpersonal relationships. The former is seen in the second paragraph’s assertion that “[t]his familial dynamic described in the quote is one that most people can relate to on some level, as most families have a member who is an underdog in the social pecking order.” The latter is in the third paragraph: “If there is one thing that allows an audience to empathize with a person in a situation such as this, it is the mention of tragedy.”

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**Sample B**

**Score: 5/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C0)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point in Row A because it articulates a defensible thesis in the last sentence of the first paragraph: “While bringing emotion and pride to his audience, Obama uses the rhetorical modes of causal analysis, description, and exemplification to best emphasize Kennedy’s life.”

**Row B: 4/4**

The response earned four points for Row B because it integrates evidence from throughout the passage to support the analysis. The response provides well-developed commentary that explicitly establishes a line of reasoning about Obama’s purpose to pay “tribute to both the hardships and accomplishments Kennedy faced and made in his lifetime.” Within this line of reasoning, the response offers multiple supporting claims. In the second paragraph, specific details about Kennedy’s childhood are incorporated into the response: “Obama...tells the audience of how when Ted was thrown off of a boat at age six,” and, “His brothers constantly teased him in many instances such as this.” The response then contains commentary explaining how the evidence supports a line of reasoning: “This story of Kennedy’s childhood not only provides the audience with a joyful story to brighten the usually melancholy mood at most funerals, but also points out the determined nature of Ted’s character.” In the same paragraph, additional evidence about “the many tragedies Ted went through” is paraphrased. Once again, commentary connects this evidence to the line of reasoning explaining how the “relationship between tragedy and Kennedy’s character appeals to the audience’s emotions, by leading them to recognize the sadness Ted felt, as well as inducing pride towards Kennedy’s ability to push through it all.” The response continues this pattern, with the third paragraph claiming, “Obama uses description to continue building on the strength and resilience Kennedy had.” In this paragraph, specific textual evidence is used with the incorporation of direct quotations once again followed by cogent analysis: “This description shows the audience how Kennedy’s persistent personality began at a young age.” In the fourth paragraph, the response returns to its line of reasoning, providing evidence and commentary to support the idea that “[o]ne of the main ideas within the eulogy is how Kennedy was able to push past obstacles that the average man would not be able to face.” The response continues its pattern of providing evidence and commentary to explain why Obama would include these examples in a eulogy.

**Row C: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for this row because it did not demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical choices given the rhetorical situation. While it does understand the context of a eulogy, it does not provide insight into the specific context of this eulogy in a sophisticated manner. The response moves dutifully through the larger rhetorical choices Obama makes, but it does not explore complexities or tensions that are more evident in the final third of the eulogy. While the prose is clear and appropriate, the style is not consistently vivid and persuasive.



**AP English Language and Composition**  
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**Sample C**

**Score: 5/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C1)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row A because it articulates a defensible thesis in the last sentence of the first paragraph: “In the eulogy delivered at Kennedy’s funeral, President Barack Obama employs a bittersweet tone and imagery in order to completely memorialize and praise a public individual he stood by and looked up to.”

**Row B: 3/4**

The response earned three points for Row B because it includes textual references relevant to the thesis and explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. The second paragraph provides evidence of Kennedy’s “hardships not only as a public figure, but as a person” and his ability to rise above these hardships. Commentary then advances a line of reasoning, observing that the “speaker purposefully makes this distinction to communicate to his audience the heroicness of Kennedy.” After additional specific evidence, more commentary explains the content is included “in order to make the audience, American people amongst politicians and relatives to the passed, feel as though there was no doubt that Kennedy was a true warrior” and that “the audience has no choice other than to see how Kennedy’s passing was on to be remembered and grieved, and his life celebrated.” A claim about how “imagery is utilized” begins the third paragraph. After providing specific evidence about “Kennedy’s passion...towards civil rights,” commentary explains that Obama “specifically portrayed this aspect of Kennedy’s standing in order to exemplify a thought every critic or politically divided person could get behind, a choice which makes the audience directly feel the impact that he had on America in a positive and honorable way.”

**Row C: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row C for its consistent explanation of the significance of Obama’s rhetorical situation. The response begins with an understanding of politics of the time, acknowledging that “Obama stood as a figure that was either praised or condemned by bipartisan politicians,” and points out that Obama “was deeply affected by a likewise public figure such as Ted Kennedy.” This recognition continues at the end of the second paragraph, where the response explains, “because of Obama’s tone, the reality of Kennedy’s eulogy remained that he...deserved every shred of praise and respect throughout all of American thought.” The commentary is more explicit in the third paragraph, acknowledging openly “every critic or politically divided person.” The response concludes by asserting, “These purposeful choices of bittersweet tone and imagery directly influence the entire audience to mourn and celebrate the loss of Ted Kennedy, no matter their political alignment.”

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**Sample D**

**Score: 4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row A because it articulates a defensible thesis in the last two sentences of the first paragraph: “Obama utilizes descriptive imagery and anecdotes from Kennedy’s personal life in order to praise and memorialize the image of the senator. Obama utilizes a glorifying tone in order to immortalize the memory of Kennedy not only in the funeral attendees, but also the American people.”

**Row B: 3/4**

The response earned three points for Row B because it includes textual references relevant to the thesis and explains (with varying degrees of depth) how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. In the second paragraph, the response identifies the importance of certain nouns Obama uses, specifically those with “familial connotation such as ‘child,’ ‘son,’ and ‘Father.’” The commentary then explains that this rhetorical choice “is able to build a sense of emotional loss within the audience by associating the senator with lost family.” In the third paragraph, the response presents the claim that “Obama then utilizes tragic personal anecdotes and details from Kennedy’s life and childhood in order to emphasize the senator’s strength and resilience despite the turmoil of his life.” Specific evidence is provided as the response combines direct quotes and paraphrase to summarize Obama’s choices. The commentary begins building by explaining, “Obama’s virtuous diction glorifies Kennedy’s ability to persevere in the face of adversity.” The line of reasoning is developed in the next sentence as the response asserts that the evidence is included “in order to illustrate how his personal tragedies led [Kennedy] to become a champion of the common people.” This more thorough analysis is completed in the final sentence of the paragraph: “Through this emphasis, Obama praises Kennedy’s values and achievements in order to create a sense of deep loss for the saintly senator that causes the audience to feel as if they owe it to him to immortalize his memory and legacy.”

**Row C: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for Row C. While understanding the context of a eulogy, the response does not consistently provide a sophisticated understanding of this specific rhetorical situation. The response does not address the complexities or tensions in the passage, instead focusing on a narrower range of rhetorical choices: Neither Kennedy’s humor nor the complex portrayal of the passionate speaker who respected his opponents is addressed. The style is appropriate to the task but is not consistently vivid and persuasive.

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**Sample E**

**Score: 3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row A for this idea-driven thesis in the last two sentences of the first paragraph: “Following Ted Kennedy’s death the acting president Obama...told the many challenges of Ted Kennedy and memorable moments that won’t be forgotten throughout his life in order to praise him and honor his legacy.”

**Row B: 2/4**

The response earned two points for Row B because it includes some specific relevant evidence and explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument; however, there is no line of reasoning established. Instead, the paragraphs in this response do not connect to one another and do not develop deep and meaningful argumentation. In the second paragraph, the response does provide evidence of the rhetorical choice to include “Ted Kennedy’s Challenges in his life to honor his legacy,” followed by specific textual evidence from the passage. However, the explanation is simplistic and repetitive: “This quote from his speech refers to Kennedy’s many losses in his family and throughout his life these include his siblings and nephews. [Obama] uses this rhetoric to show people that even though Kennedy faced many challenges in life he still carried on and stayed strong turning him into the person he became.” There is not an explicit connection back to the thesis and how this content would “praise him and honor his legacy.” The second paragraph continues by providing additional specific evidence about Kennedy’s suffering, and the commentary does go beyond mere summary: “This rhetoric also supports the previous quote and statement as he refers to Kennedy’s pain and suffering at an early age attributing to the kind and giving person he became.” However, the connection back to the thesis is not strong enough to establish a line of reasoning throughout the response. The paragraph finishes with new evidence introduced, but no commentary provided. The third paragraph of the response continues similarly, with specific evidence quoting Obama’s anecdote, but the commentary is simplistic: “The president said this to show Ted Kennedy’s humor throughout his life and the smiles he would have put on many people.” These moments of commentary do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.

**Row C: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no demonstration of sophistication of thought or complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. Individual choices are briefly examined, but the relationships among different choices throughout the text are not. The response does recognize a tension in the passage when incorporating the description of a fiery Ted Kennedy in the Senate chamber in its third paragraph, but the analysis does not attempt to analyze the juxtaposition with this description and the remainder of the passage’s final paragraph. While the prose of the passage is generally clear, it does not demonstrate a consistently vivid or persuasive style.

**AP English Language and Composition**  
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**Sample F**

**Score: 2/6 Points (A1 – B1 – C0)**

**Row A: 1/1**

The response earned one point for Row A, with the first sentence establishing a defensible position that “President Barack Obama uses antimetabole, pathos and other rhetorical devices to convey how he felt about the loss of Ted Kennedy.”

**Row B: 1/4**

The response earned one point for Row B. In the second paragraph, the response claims that “there were many pieces of pathos used in his speech.” The evidence that follows is mostly general and describes the eulogy instead of providing commentary. The response does attempt commentary by observing, “[Obama] uses pathos to connect with the audience by saying what his nieces used to call him.” However, this again describes a textual moment without establishing *how* this evidence connects to the thesis that this eulogy will convey to the audience how Obama “felt about the loss of Ted Kennedy.” This pattern repeats in the third paragraph, with the response claiming that “one of the main devices [Obama] used was Antimetabole.” More specific evidence is provided when referencing “William Wordsworth to show how great of a man Kennedy was even though he went through many lows in life.” The response then provides the generalized observation, “This really pulled the speech together and was a great rhetorical device in Obama’s speech,” instead of explaining how this evidence supports the argument in the thesis.

**Row C: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for Row C because the provided commentary does not connect the rhetorical choices to the rhetorical situation of this specific eulogy. The response does not examine the relationships among the different choices and does not address complexities or tensions in the text. While the language does convey the response’s ideas, inaccuracies such as “Obama used a William Wordsworth to show how great of a man Kennedy was” keep the response from demonstrating a consistently vivid and persuasive style.

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**Sample G**

**Score: 1/6 Points (A0 – B1 – C0)**

**Row A: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for Row A. The response lists rhetorical choices (“Obama used pathos, metaphors, and similes throughout the speech”) but makes no claim about their inclusion towards Obama’s purpose in delivering this eulogy.

**Row B: 1/4**

The response earned one point for Row B because it describes rhetorical choices rather than offering any discussion of the effects of these choices in the speech. In the second paragraph, the response claims that “Obama used a plethora of sentences that referred to pathos because of how emotional they were,” then provides textual evidence to support the claim. However, the commentary that “[t]his sentence is a metaphor because it uses the word ‘as’ to compare who Kennedy was to his family” describes a sentence-level structure without connecting back to how the nicknames make an emotional impact on the audience. The third paragraph has a similar structure, identifying what the student believes is a simile, but with commentary that describes what is happening as opposed to why it should persuade the audience: “In this sentence Obama used a simile to compare how everyone was feeling at the time of losing Ted Kennedy.” The final sentence of the third paragraph attempts analysis, but it is too generic to offer insight into the specific choices that Obama makes.

**Row C: 0/1**

The response did not earn a point for Row C because, though there are attempts to contextualize the text, such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations, such as “used the right amount of rhetorical devices.” The response does mention individual rhetorical choices but does not examine the relationships among the different choices. The response also oversimplifies complexities in the text, such as the overly broad assertion that Obama “used a plethora of emotion.”