

2018

AP[®]

CollegeBoard

AP English Language and Composition

Free-Response Questions

© 2018 The College Board. College Board, Advanced Placement Program, AP, AP Central, and the acorn logo are registered trademarks of the College Board. Visit the College Board on the Web: www.collegeboard.org.

AP Central is the official online home for the AP Program: apcentral.collegeboard.org.

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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours and 15 minutes

Question 1

Suggested reading and writing time—55 minutes.

It is suggested that you spend 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and 40 minutes writing your response.

Note: You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.

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

Eminent domain is the power governments have to acquire property from private owners for public use. The rationale behind eminent domain is that governments have greater legal authority over lands within their dominion than do private owners. Eminent domain has been instituted in one way or another throughout the world for hundreds of years.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize material from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial.

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the sources to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (U.S. Department of Justice)

Source B (Carney)

Source C (Somin)

Source D (Porter)

Source E (cartoon)

Source F (Narciso)

2018 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Source A

United States Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division. "History of the Federal Use of Eminent Domain." *The United States Department of Justice*, 15 May 2015, www.justice.gov/enrd/history-federal-use-eminent-domain.

The following is excerpted from an overview of eminent domain published on a federal Web site.

The federal government's power of eminent domain has long been used in the United States to acquire property for public use. Eminent domain "appertains to every independent government. It requires no constitutional recognition; it is an attribute of sovereignty." *Boom Co. v. Patterson*, 98 U.S. 403, 406 (1879). However, the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution stipulates: "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Thus, whenever the United States acquires a property through eminent domain, it has a constitutional responsibility to justly compensate the property owner for the fair market value of the property. . . .

The U.S. Supreme Court first examined federal eminent domain power in 1876 in *Kohl v. United States*. This case presented a landowner's challenge to the power of the United States to condemn land in Cincinnati, Ohio for use as a custom house and post office building. Justice William Strong called the authority of the federal government to appropriate property for public uses "essential to its independent existence and perpetuity." *Kohl v. United States*, 91 U.S. 367, 371 (1875).

The Supreme Court again acknowledged the existence of condemnation authority twenty years later in *United States v. Gettysburg Electric Railroad Company*. Congress wanted to acquire land to preserve the site of the Gettysburg Battlefield in Pennsylvania. The railroad company that owned some of the property in question contested this action. Ultimately, the Court opined that the federal government has the power to condemn property "whenever it is necessary or appropriate to use the land in the execution of any of the powers granted to it by the constitution." *United States v. Gettysburg Electric Ry.*, 160 U.S. 668, 679 (1896).

Eminent domain has been utilized traditionally to facilitate transportation, supply water, construct public buildings, and aid in defense readiness. Early federal cases condemned property for construction of public buildings . . . and aqueducts to provide cities with drinking water . . . for maintenance of navigable waters . . . and for the production of war materials. . . . The Land Acquisition Section and its earlier iterations represented the United States in these cases, thereby playing a central role in early United States infrastructure projects.

Condemnation cases like that against the Gettysburg Railroad Company exemplify another use for eminent domain: establishing parks and setting aside open space for future generations, preserving places of historic interest and remarkable natural beauty, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas. Some of the earliest federal government acquisitions for parkland were made at the end of the nineteenth century and remain among the most beloved and well-used of American parks. In Washington, D.C., Congress authorized the creation of a park along Rock Creek in 1890 for the enjoyment of the capitol city's residents and visitors. The Department of Justice became involved when a number of landowners from whom property was to be acquired disputed the constitutionality of the condemnation. In *Shoemaker v. United States*, 147 U.S. 282 (1893), the Supreme Court affirmed the actions of Congress.

Today, Rock Creek National Park, over a century old and more than twice the size of New York City's Central Park, remains a unique wilderness in the midst of an urban environment. This is merely one small example of the many federal parks, preserves, historic sites, and monuments to which the work of the Land Acquisition Section has contributed.

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

Source B

Carney, Timothy P. "Eminent Domain Often Leaves Broken Communities Behind."
Washington Examiner, 29 March 2014,
www.washingtonexaminer.com/eminent-domain-often-leaves-broken-communities-behind/article/2546500.

The following is an excerpt from an editorial published in a Washington, D.C., newspaper.

Weeds and rubble cover 90 acres along Long Island Sound. A room with cinder-block walls sits locked in an empty Brooklyn basement. And a gleaming industrial palace has failed to bring jobs to the banks of Ohio's Mahoning River.

These are monuments to failed central planning. Eminent domain, state and local subsidies, and federal-corporate partnerships have yielded these lifeless fruits, failing to deliver the rebirth, community benefits and jobs they promise—but succeeding in delivering profits to the companies that lobby for them.

The economic philosophy at work here isn't capitalism or socialism. It's *corporatism*: the belief that government and business should work together. You could describe corporatism as the view that profits provided by the market aren't sufficient motivation for business, so government must put some icing on top. From another perspective, corporatism is government's attempt to harness the profit motive for the goals of policymakers: let industry row the ship while politicians steer.

Often, the corporatist ship founders on the rocks of false promises.

Last decade, the New London Development Corporation—a quasi governmental body—crafted a plan for revitalizing the small Connecticut town. This plan involved a new Pfizer plant. The NLDC and local politicians sold the land to Pfizer for \$10, gave the company tax breaks and pledged \$26 million to clean up contamination and a local junkyard.

"Pfizer wants a nice place to operate," the *Hartford Courant* quoted executive David Burnett as saying in 2001. But Burnett wasn't just talking about the junkyard and the contamination. He was also talking about the area's middle-class homes. "We don't want to be surrounded by tenements."

So NLDC drove out the homeowners, using eminent domain. Homeowner Suzette Kelo sued, but in the end, the liberal majority on the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the developers and the politicians. The majority argued: "The city has carefully formulated a development plan that it believes will provide appreciable benefits to the community, including, but not limited to, new jobs and increased tax revenue."

The New York Times applauded the ruling: "New London's development plan may hurt a few small property owners, who will, in any case, be fully compensated. But many more residents are likely to benefit if the city can shore up its tax base and attract badly needed jobs."

In 2009, Pfizer, after its merger with Wyeth, abandoned its plant in New London. The condemned neighborhood is now, as Charlotte Allen put it in the *Weekly Standard*, a "vast, empty field—90 acres—that was entirely uninhabited and looked as though it had always been that way."

On the bright side, Pfizer got to sell the plant to General Dynamics for \$55 million.

Used by permission.

© 2018 The College Board.
Visit the College Board on the Web: www.collegeboard.org.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Source C

Somin, Ilya. "How Eminent Domain Abuse Harms the Poor." *Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity*, 26 May 2015, spotlightonpoverty.org/spotlight-exclusives/how-eminant-domain-abuse-harms-the-poor/.

The following is from a blog by a law professor, posted on the Web site of a nonpartisan initiative on economic hardship.

This June [June 2015] is the tenth anniversary of *Kelo v. City of New London*. The controversial Supreme Court decision held that it is permissible for the government to use eminent domain to take private property and transfer it to other private interests in order to promote "economic development." Not surprisingly, the ruling was opposed by libertarians and conservatives because it undermines property rights. But it has also met with strong criticism from many on the left, including Ralph Nader, the NAACP, and former president Bill Clinton.

This unusual cross-ideological coalition arose because takings that transfer property to private interests often tend to victimize the poor, racial minorities, and the politically weak. As Hilary Shelton of the NAACP put it in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, "allowing municipalities to pursue eminent domain for private economic development [has] . . . a disparate impact on African Americans and other minorities."

His point is backed by much painful historical experience. Since the 1940s, "blight," urban renewal, and economic development takings have forcibly displaced several million people in the United States, most of them poor and racial minorities. . . .

Most of the people displaced were left even worse off than they were before. The condemned property was often transferred to politically influential developers and business interests. While such condemnations are less common in recent years, blight takings still disproportionately occur in poor and minority neighborhoods, and still inflict great harm both on their victims and on the surrounding communities.

Unlike in the 1940s and 50s, overt racism is rarely a factor in modern takings, though some scholars contend that unconscious bias plays a role. In most cases, the poor and minorities suffer not because officials are hostile to them as such, but because these groups often lack the resources and political influence to resist effectively, especially when faced with more powerful interest groups on the other side.

Defenders of blight and economic development takings argue that they are a necessary tool for promoting economic growth in poor areas. But in reality, such condemnations often destroy far more economic value than they create. Developers and local governments have strong incentives to overstate the benefits of condemnation-driven projects, and ignore costs. By the time their true effects become evident years later, public attention has usually moved on to other issues. Voters rarely punish officials who authorize dubious takings. In the *Kelo* case itself, the condemned property remains empty a decade after the Supreme Court decision.

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

Cities that make aggressive use of eminent domain to promote private development projects often end up undermining their economies rather than enhancing them. The bankrupt city of Detroit is a striking case in point. For many years, Detroit made extensive use of takings for the benefit of politically connected business interests. In the notorious 1981 *Poletown* case, it forcibly displaced some 4,000 people and numerous businesses in order to transfer the property to General Motors for the construction of a new factory. That taking failed to provide anything close to the promised 6,000 new jobs. The destruction of numerous homes, businesses, and schools, and churches predictably damaged the local economy. Ultimately, eminent domain abuse was a significant contributor to the city's economic decline.

Aggressive use of eminent domain also damages the social fabric of poor communities because the displacement of residents, businesses, and churches undermines social ties.

Source: Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas and Action

Source D

Porter, Douglas R. *Eminent Domain: An Important Tool for Community Revitalization*. Urban Land Institute, 2007.

The following is a case study excerpted from a report by a nonprofit research and education organization specializing in land use and real estate development.

The Freetown neighborhood in Greenville was developed in the 1880s. . . . The neighborhood declined over the years: housing became little more than shacks, [and] cracked sidewalks and worn pavement were the norm. . . . Residents appealed to the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority for help.

Today, Freetown is a different place after undergoing a complete makeover that replaced decaying housing and junk-strewn lots with 80 affordable new homes and ten rehabilitated residences; neighborhood street, water, and sewer infrastructure also was upgraded. One of the most dramatic improvements is a new \$600,000 community center—equipped with a full-sized gymnasium, meeting rooms, and a kitchen—that replaced a small U.S. Army barracks building previously used as the neighborhood center.

The redevelopment authority accomplished all this beginning in 1998 by acquiring blighted properties in order to assemble buildable sites for new homes. Acquisitions included a 54-unit apartment complex that . . . was torn down and replaced by more than a dozen new single-family homes. Most new houses in Freetown have about 1,100 square feet of space and are valued at less than \$75,000.

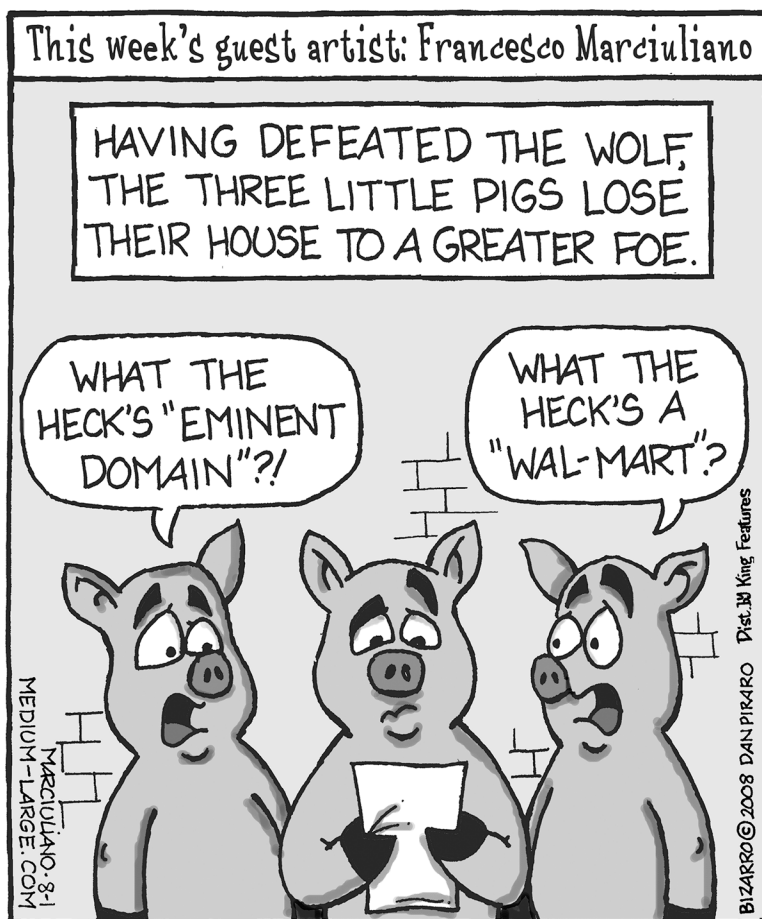
The authority used the power of eminent domain to acquire only two holdout properties and to clear title to abandoned and tax-delinquent properties. Relocation grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 helped residents make downpayments on new homes. Having completed a carefully phased redevelopment program in 2006, the authority successfully returned more than one-third of the displaced households to the Freetown community, which now numbers about 200 families.

Urban Land Institute

Source E

Marciuliano, Francesco. "Bizarro." Cartoon.
King Features Syndicate, 1 Aug. 2008,
bizarro.com/comics/august-1-2008/.

The following cartoon was published in a nationally syndicated comic strip.



BIZARRO © 2008 DAN PIRARO DISTRIBUTED BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

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

Source F

Narciso, Dean. "1 Mile Equals \$595,625, Jury Decides."
The Columbus Dispatch, 11 Oct. 2007,
www.dispatch.com/article/20070929/news/309299842.

The following article, about a situation in the town of Canal Winchester, Ohio, was published in a local newspaper.

When Canal Winchester offered Richard "Pete" Stebelton \$9,249 for a 1-mile strip of his property, Stebelton thought the payment was too low.

Boy, was it ever.

This month, a Franklin County Common Pleas jury decided the village should pay the farmer and used-car dealer \$595,625.

Canal Winchester wants the land to link a bike path between Rager Road and the village swimming pool. It used eminent domain to take a strip of Stebelton's 80-acre property and hired an appraiser who determined that the \$9,249 would be enough compensation.

"It wasn't fair at all," Stebelton, 75, remembers thinking.

Stebelton was the only one of eight property owners who didn't agree to sell his land to the village for the path. Instead, he went to court to challenge the village's valuation.

The jury decided Sept. 20 that the land the village wants, along the northern edge of his property, is worth \$37,000. But the jury also decided that by taking it, the village was closing off a back entrance to the property and damaging the value of the rest of Stebelton's land by \$558,625.

"I was thrilled. I would have to be," Stebelton said of the victory, adding that the trial "put me through one hell of a miserable week."

Stebelton lives in a home built in 1825. He grows hay and raises horses on the land he bought 21 years ago for \$300,000.

Canal Winchester's former mayor, Marshal Hall, offered Stebelton \$60,000 years ago. But Stebelton turned that down.

Hall was replaced by Mayor Jeff Miller four years ago. Stebelton was offered the \$9,249 as part of a deal in which the Ohio Department of Transportation [ODOT] agreed to finance 80 percent of construction costs for the \$1.57 million bike path project.

Now, the project might be on hold, Miller said.

"We're really at the mercy of ODOT," Miller said. "They're going to decide where we go with it."

ODOT spokesman Joel Hunt said the agency will work with the village to move the project forward, and seek alternative routes if necessary.

One option is to pay Stebelton the full jury award and move ahead. Another is to pay Stebelton the \$37,000 and work out an alternate path that doesn't diminish the value of Stebelton's land, said Gene Hollins, the village solicitor.

"I think the council and mayor are very well-meaning people trying to carry out what would be a very nice bike path, which we've invested a good deal of effort in," Hollins said.

The Columbus Dispatch

AP English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

Inside:

Free Response Question 1

- ☒ **Scoring Guideline**
- ☒ **Student Samples**
- ☒ **Scoring Commentary**

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

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 should be sought from the Table Leader. 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 15 minutes to read the sources and 40 minutes to 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 development, or impressive in their control of language.

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** defend, challenge, or qualify the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They develop their position by effectively synthesizing* at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations appropriately and convincingly support the student's position. 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** defend, challenge, or qualify the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They develop their position by adequately synthesizing at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations appropriately and sufficiently support the student's position. The language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 – Essays earning a score of 5 defend, challenge, or qualify the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They develop their position by synthesizing at least three sources, but the evidence and explanations used to support that position may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The student's argument is generally clear, and the sources generally develop the student's position, but the links between the sources and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1 (continued)

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** defend, challenge, or qualify the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They develop their position by synthesizing at least two sources, but that position may be inappropriately, insufficiently, or unconvincingly supported by the evidence and explanations used. The sources may dominate the student's attempts at development, the link between the argument and the sources may be weak, or the student may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify the sources. 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 defending, challenging, or qualifying the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the sources, or the evidence and explanations used 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 defending, challenging, or qualifying the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves. The student may misread the sources, fail to develop a position, or substitute a simpler task by merely summarizing or categorizing the sources or by merely 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, weak in their control of writing, or do not allude to or cite even one source.

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, synthesis means using sources to develop a position and citing them accurately.

Sample 1A

Since the beginning of American history, conflict has arisen over the idea of "eminent domain" or the ability of the government to take control of privately owned land. Based on constitutional advocacies and beliefs in personal freedoms, many Americans oppose the idea. Although eminent domain can sometimes be a cause for concern, it can be perfectly productive and beneficial when a utilitarian approach of supporting the most people is taken.

When laws allowing eminent domain are utilized unfairly, it can have extremely negative effects. If the government obtains land that is later used either for personal gain or obstruction of justice, it cannot be allowed. Sometimes the government can have good intentions, or at least persuade individuals to forfeit land with false good intentions. In reality, the implications of this land acquisition can have severe impacts. Timothy P. Carney explains in a piece for the Washington Examiner that in certain situations, eminent domain lacks "central planning," which can lead to the failure to deliver "the rebirth, community benefits, and jobs" originally intended and promised by the government. Instances like these defy all intentions of American democracy by denying basic freedoms and the principles of utilitarianism and majority rule that make American politics function. Another implication of eminent domain is explained by Ilya Somin from the Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity, who shows that the governmental appraisal of property can at times "victimize the poor, racial minorities, and the politically weak." Somin offers several examples to expand on this claim, showing scenarios of how structural racism has "forcibly displaced several million people," most of whom are poor and racial minorities. Even further, Somin explores that these people being displaced often lack the means necessary to fight back against strong government corporations or indifferent groups.

Despite the many problems eminent domain can cause, this law can also be used for good. Removing private property in certain areas to create space that benefits the majority rarely creates problems or situations in which a large number of people do not benefit. For example, the United States Department of Justice explains that this land can be confiscated to create parks and to set aside "open space for future generations," to preserve places of historical interest and remarkable natural beauty, and also to protect "environmentally sensitive areas." An example that springs to mind of eminent domain use that helped the general population took place in my hometown a few years ago. Multiple car accidents and injuries had taken place near an intersection, and it got to a point that driving there felt unsafe. The city then decided to destroy the intersection and replace it with a roundabout that would make a better way for people to be aware of other surroundings and avoid collisions. The city needed to encroach on private land in order to obtain the space necessary for a roundabout, but in the end, most citizens were happy with the results, and less injury took place in the long run. Eminent domain pursuits like this pave the way for a better future as well as a better quality of life for everyone. Thus, eminent domain use that yields results benefiting everyone creates a much more content society, formed on the basis of utilitarianism. Any land infraction that can support the greater good is both productive and beneficial.

Constitutionality often comes up in discussions like those over the use of eminent domain. Many Americans believe the Constitution must be followed no matter how problematic it may be for the people. Although the Constitution does specify that there should be no taking of private property, the Department of Justice also explains that the Fifth Amendment only provides for confiscating property with just compensation. This just compensation does indeed exist when eminent domain use benefits the majority. Any manner that benefits as many Americans as possible should be precedent enough to make an exception and provide for the greater good of society.

Looking back on history, numerous examples of violations of utilitarianism have surfaced because of eminent domain. It has been used to carry out racist, discriminatory, and unfair policies. However, if

the government works to only utilize eminent domain in situations that benefit the public as a whole, it can have a much more successful and beneficial impact on society.

Sample 1B

In theory, the government's use of eminent domain is beneficial to everyone in various ways. Enabling the government to take private property and transfer it to other private interests "to promote economic development," to establish "federal parks, preserves, historic sites, and monuments," and to build other infrastructure, eminent domain appears to be a vital tool in furthering and bettering people and their quality of life (Sources A and C). In practice, not only has the execution of eminent domain proven itself questionable, but eminent domain has also proved to be disappointing in its results and harmful to the individuals it directly displaces. Whether it's unfair compensation, failure to benefit the local economy, or even forcing people into worse positions than before, eminent domain has more often caused more harm than good overall.

A key to the use of eminent domain is the "just compensation" for taken private property (Source A). Yet, often those affected are not provided with such. As Source F details, Richard Stebelton was offered a mere \$9,249 for a strip of his property when a jury decided that the land was actually worth \$22,000. That's about a 300% increase from the offered value to the actual value (Source F).

In addition, eminent domain has been repeatedly used on the premise of "false promises" (Source B). For example, Pfizer had offered to build a plant in New London in the last decade. The process would drive out surrounding homeowners, as those in favor argued the results of the plant would provide appreciable benefits to the community "in terms of new jobs and tax revenue" (Source B). However, the plant was abandoned in 2009, meaning the homeowners had been driven out for nothing, their properties taken for nothing, and the project yielding absolutely nothing. Similarly, in the 1981 Poletown case, about 4,000 people and businesses were displaced for a new factory (Source C). The "6,000 promised jobs" did not come, numerous houses, businesses, and schools were destroyed, actually damaging the local economy (Source C). Such examples demonstrate that without absolute certainty, the promises made to justify eminent domain frequently fall short, and individuals suffer the consequences of actions they couldn't control. Under this system, eminent domain is unjustifiable.

Ultimately, the reality of eminent domain's impact on individuals and local economies is demoralizing and shows itself to be more unproductive than helpful.

Sample 1C

The United States government is no stranger to taking what does not belong to them. This is clearly seen throughout its history, even dating back to when it wasn't even the "United States of America." Before the U.S. government declared eminent domain and labeled it as the "[acquisition of] property for public use" (Source A), the US had done the same to Native Americans.

The seizing of land in the United States has now been labeled as something for the greater good, whether that be "establishing parks and setting aside open space for future generations, preserving places of historic interest.... protecting environmentally sensitive areas" (Source A), or "[delivering] rebirth, community benefits, and jobs" (Source B). Regardless of the circumstances, taking the land from people with promises of just compensation (Source A) is not fair or right. The treatment of eminent domain is precisely what people labeled wrong decades, even centuries ago, but it still stands, and even today its most prominent victims are "the poor, racial minorities, and the politically weak" (Source C). The government claims to stand on the side of the people and speaks as if they are the defenders, but it is clear that the side being fought for is that of the rich.

The forced removal of people from their homes has always been about money and still is today (Source B). Before the government found a way to justify the immoral and unfair theft, they did it for the same reasons: first with Native Americans being pushed out of their homelands and stuffed into reservations, then with African people being stolen from their homeland to become slaves, and now with U.S. citizens being bullied into forfeiting their homes to the government.

The use of this rule may have preserved lands, but it has also effectively destroyed communities and mistreated families. With the United States government working with corporations (Source B), they have "displaced several million people" (Source C) and robbed others (Source F). The use of eminent domain has left many people broken and lost, and with the US government only expanding this practice, the wronging will continue.

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

This year's synthesis question asked students to use material from the six provided sources and write a "well-developed essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies the notion that eminent domain is productive and beneficial." To achieve this task, students needed to read all the sources, drawing support from the information to write their essay.

To do well, students were expected to understand that they were, in essence, creating an argument using the supplied information, as well as knowledge that they already possessed. Students also needed to understand that, with sources arguing among one another, students did not have to accept each source as "correct," but rather, they needed to evaluate the provided information based on their own knowledge and perceptions of the world.

Responses were expected to integrate the information from the sources with the students' positions, not merely repeat the information. Therefore, students were expected to understand how to integrate the support for competing arguments into their own.

Sample: 1A

Score: 8

This essay presents an effectively qualified claim that eminent domain "can be perfectly productive and beneficial when a utilitarian approach of supporting the most people is taken." In the second paragraph, the student offers well-reasoned, effective discussions of source B (e.g., "Instances like these defy all intentions of American democracy by denying basic freedoms and the principles of utilitarianism and majority rule that make American politics function") and source C (e.g., "Overt racism and discrimination causes [*sic*] deep harms to society as a whole and eliminates [*sic*] the utilitarian approach of benefitting the most possible people ... destroy[ing] any resemblance of American democracy") that both further the idea of the central claim. The third paragraph provides a convincing example from the student's own experience that again illustrates the importance of the utilitarian approach. Additionally, the fourth paragraph presents a counterargument regarding the constitutionality of eminent domain and then offers an effective rebuttal. The student's control of language, although not flawless, is consistently demonstrated throughout the essay.

Sample: 1B

Score: 6

This essay adequately develops the claim that "eminent domain has caused more harm the [*sic*] good overall." The student uses sufficient sources to support their claim. In the second paragraph, the response presents an adequate discussion of "just compensation" that appropriately uses source F to support the student's claim (e.g., "If landowners aren't properly compensated, then the fundamental execution of eminent domain fails"). Moreover, the third paragraph provides an adequate explanation of "false promises" and uses sources B and D to sufficiently support the argument (e.g., "Such examples illustrate that without absolute certainty, the promises made to justify eminent domain frequently fall short, and individuals suffer the consequences of actions that they couldn't control"). There are lapses in diction and syntax, but the prose is generally clear.

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1C

Score: 4

This essay develops a claim that makes a comparison to Native American land seizure in an inadequately developed manner. The second paragraph is dominated by source material and provides insufficient explanation: e.g., “Regardless of the circumstances taking land from people with promises of just compensation (Soure [sic] A) is not fair or right.” The third paragraph provides an unconvincing explanation of a claim in source C (e.g., “The government claims to stand on the side of the people and speaks as if they are the defenders, but it is clear that the side being fought for is that of the rich”). Furthermore, the link between source B and the argument in the fourth paragraph is weak. The response’s overall inadequacy is demonstrated in the insufficient and oversimplified treatment of several sources in the last paragraph: e.g., “With the United States government working with corporations (Source B), they have ‘displaced several million people’ (Source C) and have attempted to rob others (Sourc [sic] F).”