

2013 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

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

For centuries, prominent thinkers have pondered the relationship between ownership and the development of self (identity), ultimately asking the question, “What does it mean to own something?”

Plato argues that owning objects is detrimental to a person’s character. Aristotle claims that ownership of tangible goods helps to develop moral character. Twentieth-century philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre proposes that ownership extends beyond objects to include intangible things as well. In Sartre’s view, becoming proficient in some skill and knowing something thoroughly means that we “own” it.

Think about the differing views of ownership. Then write an essay in which you explain your position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.

STOP

END OF EXAM

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Question 3

The score should reflect the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the paper, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the paper as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

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

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

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** develop a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing, and the argument is especially coherent and well developed. 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 a more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style.

6 – Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** develop a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient, and the argument is coherent and adequately developed. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 develop a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The evidence or explanations used may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** develop a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or unconvincing. The argument may have lapses in coherence or be inadequately developed. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

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Question 3 (continued)

- 3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in developing a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in developing a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. These essays may misunderstand the prompt, or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of coherence and control.

- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation and argument, weak in their control of language, or especially lacking in coherence.
- 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.

Sample 3A

I believe that the term "ownership" applies to both tangible and intangible things. It's possible to own both a physical object, such as a watch, and something that exists only in our minds, such as a concept or an idea. The verb "to own" doesn't just mean to possess something; it means that we understand something, that we have made it a part of ourselves.

Here's an example: I own Voltaire's "Candide." I own a physical copy of his work, in the original French. However, through reading it, I also own the story of Candide, because I know it, and I understand Pangloss's theory that everything happens for the best, because I've chosen to remember it. I don't have the right to sell "Candide" or to claim credit for writing it because I don't own it in the way we legally define ownership. I own it because I've added the experience and memory of reading it to my personal concept of myself and my story.

While I own my idea of ownership, I don't own the original idea that we own what we learn, what we know, and what we remember. This concept is traditionally a Jewish one, and while I haven't taken all Jewish traditional teachings to heart, I have held on to this one. The idea behind it stems from a history of persecution and is the reason why Jewish culture values knowledge and learning so highly. When you are unsure of your safety and security, and that of what you physically own, you remember that what you own in your mind, as a part of yourself, your values, your knowledge, can never be taken from you while you still remember them. They're part of your identity, your sense of self, and that can't be taken from you unless you choose to let it go.

For me, this concept of owning what I know, and of owning my sense of myself is attractive because it gives me a feeling of permanence, and of something I can use as an anchor. I've been taught to question what I think and what I believe, but I also do this by virtue of my age. My experiences, my memories, my set of values - I own all of them. They're me. They give me something to come back to when I'm not sure what I think, or what I believe. They're my reference, my anchor. When I begin college this summer and truly have the freedom to figure out my life and my beliefs, I will still have this set of ideas, anchoring me. It's a comforting thought. And that's my basis for believing you can own an idea.

Another example is my concept of ownership itself, as it relates to the intangible.

Sample 3B

Ownership and sense of self are intertwined into a single idea of oneself. Like Jean-Paul Sartre, I believe that ownership extends beyond objects and includes intangible things too. Finding your own sense of ownership, where you belong in this world, helps you discover your own true self. Ownership can be found within yourself or through experiences that help you discover your own sense of self.

I found my sense of self when I moved back from Ireland and found where I truly belonged. I lived in Ireland between the ages of five and eleven. During this time, I grew very connected with my relatives and my sense of cultural identity. My cousins and I would learn Irish Gaelic together, celebrate St. Patrick's Day, and play Gaelic Football together. When I moved back to America, I started to reject Ireland and my heritage because I had newfound opportunities in academics and athletics. I had new friends and started to abandon my old ones. I became so determined to excel at school and on the track field that I had lost sense of my ownership - where I truly belonged. One summer, my family and I visited Ireland and our relatives. I was nervous at first, but they were so welcoming that it was as if we had never left. I missed the laid-back atmosphere and felt the lifestyle in America was too hectic. When I came back from vacation, I reflected and realized my true ownership was back in Ireland. I began to find my roots again and my true self. I started to take Irish Gaelic lessons again at the San Francisco Irish Cultural Center, play Gaelic Football again, and became a part of my school's Irish Club, which I am now the president of. Understanding and appreciating my heritage has helped me find my ownership and my true self.

In "The Great Gatsby" by Fitzgerald, Gatsby loses track of his ownership and falls to the clutches of success. Gatsby grew up in a poor family from the Midwest and eventually strives for the American Dream. Gatsby becomes one of the richest men in West Egg, but yearns for his "dream girl" Daisy. Ultimately, Gatsby's wiping out of his past and determination leads to his demise. Gatsby lost sight of all he had and of his roots. If Gatsby had remained true to his previous life and his ownership, while also aiming for success, the American Dream may not have consumed him.

Finding ownership within yourself or through experiences can help you discover your true self and direction in life. If I had let the American Dream consume me like Gatsby, I would not have found my ownership and my love of my true self.

Sample 3C

Ownership and sense of self are different, but both are interconnected. Ownership is crucial to a person's acquisition of objects. It shapes the person's character and can change their personality and how people around them perceive them. Sense of self comes when someone owns something valuable and protects it.

Owning something is when you and everyone around you know that a particular object belongs to you. Owning something means you have worked for it. I agree with Aristotle's claim that "ownership of tangible goods helps to develop moral character." For instance, if a person owns something valuable to them, they would not take someone else's valued object because they understand its importance. If someone did that to them, they would not be pleased. It teaches them responsibility and how to be fair.

Ownership develops self-identity and moral character. When people own something that everyone else desires, it makes them feel important and gives them confidence. It inspires those who don't own it to work for it, fostering a sense of achievement and self-worth.

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2013 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

This year's argument prompt raised the question, "What does it mean to own something?" followed by a brief account of three Western philosophers' views on ownership. Students were then directed to "think about the differing views of ownership" and to "explain your position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self," drawing support for their arguments from reading, experience, or observation.

The question was intended to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their rhetorical skills by formulating convincing, original arguments — articulating claims and substantiating them with appropriate and sufficient evidence and explanation. The positions taken by Plato, Aristotle, and Sartre on the meaning of "ownership" were provided in the prompt to "jump start" students' thinking about the abstract concepts they needed to juggle in formulating their arguments: ownership and sense of self. To argue successfully, students needed to ascend to an even higher level of abstraction — to consider the "relationship" between the abstract concepts of ownership and sense of self. By requiring students to think and write at this level of abstraction, the prompt was intended to elicit students' skills in defining and defending the terms of their arguments; they needed to clarify their understandings of ownership and sense of self as they asserted their positions on how these two concepts are related. While the question demanded abstract thought, successfully defining and explaining the terms of their arguments typically required students to demonstrate the ability to present abstractions in terms of concrete examples and illustrations.

Sample: 3A Score: 8

The essay opens with an abstract but effective exploration of ownership and considers whether it applies to both tangible and intangible objects. The essay extends the explanation by examining how the student both physically owns a copy of Voltaire's *Candide* and intangibly owns the ideas gleaned from *Candide* because the "experience and memory of reading" the text has added to the student's sense of self. Although the student is somewhat redundant in expressing the relationship between ownership and self, the student effectively connects the teachings and traditions of Judaism to the student's personal philosophy of ownership and sense of self, describing "a history of persecution" and a value system that honors the acquisition of "knowledge and learning." The essay transitions to examining how owning one's sense of self is "attractive because it gives [the student] a feeling of permanence" in a world where the student has been "taught to question" beliefs. However, the student reflects that personal "experiences," "memories," and a "core set of values" allow a return to stasis when the student feels bombarded by uncertainty, particularly in the example of going to college, where personal beliefs and a sense of self can be tested. Although the student repetitively refers to this sense of "permanence" as an "anchor," the overall discussion in the conclusion of the essay provides a convincing explanation of the relationship between ownership and self. The essay earned a score of 8 for its sophisticated argument and its consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

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Question 3 (continued)

Sample: 3B

Score: 5

The student opens the argument by defending Jean-Paul Sartre's position that an individual can own both tangible and intangible things and by explaining that "finding your own sense of ownership to where you belong in this world, helps you discover your own true self." The student offers an adequate discussion of finding a sense of self on a return visit to Ireland, recounting first the strong sense of cultural identity that existed when the student lived with family in Ireland. Upon returning to America, the student reflected on a "lost sense of . . . ownership" from forfeiting his or her Irish heritage for "newfound opportunities in academics and athletics"; however, the student argues that a return to Ireland ultimately brought back a sense of self. While the prose is generally clear, the student struggles somewhat with repetitive ideas, and the discussion of the relationship between ownership and sense of self in *The Great Gatsby* is limited: the student has difficulty connecting the example of Jay Gatsby with the question posed in the prompt. The summary at the end of the essay does not add any further evidence to support the student's argument. The essay earned a 5 for its uneven development in arguing the relationship between ownership and sense of self.

Sample: 3C

Score: 2

The essay achieves little success in developing a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The opening paragraph demonstrates a consistent weakness in expressing the student's position that "[o]wnership and sense of self are different, but both connect." The student attempts to respond to the task by defining ownership and agreeing with Aristotle's claim that ownership and moral character go hand in hand but fails to provide any specific evidence as support. Unsubstantiated claims about how ownership teaches "responsibility" and develops "self identity" fail to assist the student in articulating and supporting a position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. The essay received a 2 for its lack of development and organization and its consistent weakness in the control of language.