

2016 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

Suggested time—40 minutes.

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

On June 11, 2004, Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of Great Britain, delivered the following eulogy to the American people in honor of former United States president Ronald Reagan, with whom she had worked closely. Read the eulogy carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message.

We have lost a great president, a great American, and a great man, and I have lost a dear friend.

In his lifetime, Ronald Reagan was such a cheerful and invigorating presence that it was easy to forget what daunting historic tasks he set himself. He sought to mend America's wounded spirit, to restore the strength of the free world, and to free the slaves of communism. These were causes hard to accomplish and heavy with risk, yet they were pursued with almost a lightness of spirit, for Ronald Reagan also embodied another great cause, what Arnold Bennett once called "the great cause of cheering us all up." His policies had a freshness and optimism that won converts from every class and every nation, and ultimately, from the very heart of the "evil empire."¹

Yet his humour often had a purpose beyond humour. In the terrible hours after the attempt on his life, his easy jokes gave reassurance to an anxious world. They were evidence that in the aftermath of terror and in the midst of hysteria one great heart at least remained sane and jocular. They were truly grace under pressure. And perhaps they signified grace of a deeper kind. Ronnie himself certainly believed that he had been given back his life for a purpose. As he told a priest after his recovery, "Whatever time I've got left now belongs to the big fella upstairs." And surely, it is hard to deny that Ronald Reagan's life was providential when we look at what he achieved in the eight years that followed.

Others prophesied the decline of the West. He inspired America and its allies with renewed faith in their mission of freedom.

Others saw only limits to growth. He transformed a stagnant economy into an engine of opportunity.

Others hoped, at best, for an uneasy cohabitation with the Soviet Union. He won the Cold War, not only without firing a shot, but also by inviting enemies out of their fortress and turning them into friends.

I cannot imagine how any diplomat or any dramatist could improve on his words to Mikhail Gorbachev² at the Geneva summit. "Let me

tell you why it is we distrust you." Those words are candid and tough, and they cannot have been easy to hear. But they are also a clear invitation to a new beginning and a new relationship that would be rooted in trust.

We live today in the world that Ronald Reagan began to reshape with those words. It is a very different world, with different challenges and new dangers. All in all, however, it is one of greater freedom and prosperity, one more hopeful than the world he inherited on becoming president.

As Prime Minister, I worked closely with Ronald Reagan for eight of the most important years of all our lives. We talked regularly, both before and after his presidency, and I've had time and cause to reflect on what made him a great president.

Ronald Reagan knew his own mind. He had firm principles and, I believe, right ones. He expounded them clearly. He acted upon them decisively. When the world threw problems at the White House, he was not baffled or disorientated or overwhelmed.

He knew almost instinctively what to do. When his aides were preparing option papers for his decision, they were able to cut out entire rafts of proposals that they knew the old man would never wear. When his allies came under Soviet or domestic pressure, they could look confidently to Washington for firm leadership, and when his enemies tested American resolve, they soon discovered that his resolve was firm and unyielding.

Yet his ideas, so clear, were never simplistic. He saw the many sides of truth. Yes, he warned that the Soviet Union had an insatiable drive for military power and territorial expansion, but he also sensed that it was being eaten away by systemic failures impossible to reform. Yes, he did not shrink from denouncing Moscow's evil empire, but he realized that a man of good will might nonetheless emerge from within its dark corridors.

So the president resisted Soviet expansion and pressed down on Soviet weakness at every point until the day came when communism began to collapse

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- 85 beneath the combined weight of those pressures and its own failures. And when a man of good will did emerge from the ruins, President Reagan stepped forward to shake his hand and to offer sincere cooperation.
- 90 Nothing was more typical of Ronald Reagan than that large-hearted magnanimity, and nothing was more American.
- 95 Therein lies perhaps the final explanation of his achievements. Ronald Reagan carried the American people with him in his great endeavours because there was perfect sympathy between them. He and they loved America and what it stands for: freedom and opportunity for ordinary people.

¹ A phrase used by Reagan to describe the Soviet Union

² The leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991

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Question 2

The essay's score should reflect the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay 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 your holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case should you give a score higher than a 2 to an essay with errors in grammar and mechanics that persistently interfere with your understanding of meaning.

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

8 – Effective

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

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

6 – Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and sufficient, referring to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 – Essays earning a score of 5 analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message. 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** analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message. These essays may misunderstand the passage, misrepresent the strategies Thatcher uses, or analyze these strategies insufficiently. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or unconvincing. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

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Question 2 (continued)

3 – Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in analyzing the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the passage or Thatcher’s strategies, or the explanations or examples may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in their control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in analyzing the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message. The student may misunderstand the prompt, misread the passage, fail to analyze the strategies Thatcher uses, 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 control.

- 1 –** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, or weak in their control of language.
- 0 –** Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.
- Indicates an entirely blank response.

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

Sample 2A

The Cold War can be thought of as one of the most intense times in American history. Tensions were high, and people turned on family in an attempt to subdue communism. In Margaret Thatcher's lengthy eulogy about Ronald Reagan, she elaborates on Reagan's astounding ability to unite a previously divided nation. Reagan's leadership, according to Thatcher, inevitably was the key that got the globe out of the Cold War, during which he defied many doubters in his process to do so. It is noted that, in the time period that Thatcher references, America was in great turmoil with WMDs lined up to destroy the world on both sides of the fight. Thatcher establishes incredible diction in her piece to illustrate how Reagan's personality had a large part to do with decreasing the "Red Scare" tension that was ravaging the country. Forgoing with "lightness of spirit", Reagan had the ability to embody another great cause" to show that he gave off the perception that the leader of this free nation wasn't afraid to take on the challenge of defeating the "heart of the evil empire". Thatcher's diction establishes that Reagan was always optimistic and happy, confident of his ability to do good. She demonstrates causality in her essay when she says "his policies won converts from every class and every nation" to illustrate how Reagan's leadership is what helped unite other countries against the horrifying acts of communism. However, there were many people that doubted Ronald. Even before his presidency, there were people that thought he wouldn't be capable of leading a nation in a time of crisis. For the purpose of deconstructing those beliefs, Thatcher interposes thinking and prediction with what actually happened.

"Others prophesied the decline of the west, he inspired America and its allies with renewed faith in their mission to freedom." shows two contrasting ideas in an attempt to show how Reagan was much more effective than people thought he would be. Margaret Thatcher probably says this because she is a very close ally with the United States and wants to maintain this relationship given the fact that the United States is a new world power. By showing how great of a leader Reagan was, she showed that the Great Britain and USA alliance would be effective.

The prime minister shifts to establish her ethos later in the piece when she says, "I worked closely with Reagan for eight years" to illustrate that she must have got to know much less vocal and different parts of his personality. She says this in order to validate her claims made earlier about Reagan's optimism, to show that she is justified in making those claims. When she says, "we talked regularly before and after his presidency" to elucidate the fact that they must have had a better relationship than most, further reestablishing her purpose for presenting a stronger alliance between the two nations. She attempts to twist perception in her favor by constantly referencing the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" to show similarities in ideology between the Americans and British in terms of defeating communist Russia. She continues to describe how "Reagan's decisive actions" and "his principle" were key in order to defeat Soviet Russia. "They could look confidently to Washington for firm leadership, and his resolve was unmatched" is a key contrast that is essential to understanding the piece.

Margaret Thatcher attempts to laud Reagan for his ability to lead a country by contrasting different notions and perceptions of Reagan. While her eulogy may have seemed sincere, she may have been looking to maintain an alliance with America by praising a person who was a great part of the USA.

Sample 2B

Margaret Thatcher, a close associate of Ronald Reagan, wrote a powerful, respectful, and emotional eulogy that described the passion and work ethic displayed by the great president. She lists descriptive examples of accomplishments that he achieved, using figurative language to highlight the difficult tasks he faced, while employing repetition and short, plentiful sentences. She uses a multitude of details in this eulogy, which enables her to express honor for his vigorous actions and decisions. She describes the compassion and emotion he exhibited to express the ways in which he was a great president.

In the first sentence of the eulogy, she repeats the word "great." Thatcher does this to emphasize the extent of how truly great he was. By repeating this simple word, she lists all the ways he was great and also the amount of respect she holds for him. She continues by quickly and efficiently listing the major key examples of accomplishments he achieved. She does not give detailed descriptions of these yet in her eulogy as she only lists the broad achievements. By listing these pressures that he mended and resolved, it enables the reader to imagine the difficulties and time put into them that Ronald Reagan sacrificed. It allows the reader to grasp the extent of his accomplishments throughout 8 years of the presidency. She further discusses his personal traits, for example, his humor, to provide a description of himself. This description of him enables the reader to get a personal glance at what Ronald Reagan was like. It shows that even through all of the world's difficulties he dealt with, he continued to provide a light-hearted spirit. This example shows qualities of a great leader who composes himself during turmoil.

Margaret Thatcher gives the reader a personal side of the eulogy when she calls him "Ronnie." This simple nickname allows the reader to see the close relationship that they had. By using this, it shows the depth of their conversations and how well she knew him. It signifies how accurate the information she expresses is and also allows the reader to trust her. Her use of a personal quote by him connects the audience to the piece. The context of the quote shows how hard of a fighter Reagan was and the compassion he had during his lifetime. She also uses figurative language as she states, "[He invited enemies out of their fortress and turned] them into friends." This language specifies how far away his enemies were from his opinions and how much they differed in opinions, yet he was still capable of engaging with them and resolving conflict. He solved problems efficiently, and this figurative language proves solely this. This recognition of his talents as president shows the honor that she holds for him. Thatcher also uses short sentences to describe the actions he made. This enables her to list many and show the significance of each. Each short sentence she provides in this eulogy is an appreciation towards Ronald Reagan and the respect that she holds for each of the actions he performed.

Margaret Thatcher uses a myriad of tactics to show the honor and appreciation she holds for Ronald Reagan. She uses repetition to recognize the qualities of a great president and to emphasize what she describes. She uses "Ronnie" as a nickname to show her personal connection with the reader and also to provide an informal tone to the piece. Her descriptive examples also describe and express the immense pressures he faced and the accomplishments he achieved.

Sample 2C

Throughout this essay, Margaret Thatcher uses many rhetorical strategies to convey her message, by using "we," by repetition in words, pathos to show her emotion, and logos to demonstrate her credibility on this topic. First, Margaret Thatcher uses pathos right at the beginning of her essay on lines one and two. By doing this, she is showing her strong emotion for Ronald Reagan. Next, she uses repetition of words at the beginning of phrases, from lines 30-35. She does this to convey the emotion of all the people, as well as to help us understand each one's opinion. Throughout the essay, Thatcher uses "we." She does this to prompt people to think about what she is truly saying and to ask themselves, "Do we really live in a world like this?" Lastly, she uses logos all throughout the essay, which makes her a credible source by including facts about what he believed in and what he had done for America. All of these rhetorical strategies help convey her message by showing her knowledge on the topic, by showcasing his emotion, and by getting the reader to ask themselves questions.

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2016 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 2

Overview

This year’s “Rhetorical Analysis Question” asked students to evaluate the rhetorical strategies used in a piece of epideictic rhetoric, specifically a eulogy to Ronald Reagan given by Margaret Thatcher. As in past years, this year’s task asked students to consider the rhetorical situation a speaker faces and to examine the choices the rhetor makes to move his or her audience to respond in a way that the rhetor desires. This task is very different from that required in analyses of literary texts: a rhetorical text is created to prompt a specific and timely action or reaction.

For students who may not have known who either Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan was, the prompt supplied the information about their leadership positions (“the former prime minister of Great Britain” and “former United States president” respectively), as well as specifics regarding the date (“June 11, 2004”) and audience of the address (“the American people”). Though the prompt did not tell students that this text was a speech of praise, students could quickly recognize the laudatory nature of Thatcher’s work.

While the prompt did ask students to “analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message,” this direction did not ask for them to discuss solely or primarily elements of style. To understand the strategies used by a rhetor, a student must first consider the rhetor’s relationship to the audience, as well as how this relationship requires both what this specific rhetor should include — or exclude — in the speech for this specific audience. Additionally, a student must consider how the rhetor arranges the speech for the particular audience in the specific circumstances of the speech. While elements of style are certainly fodder to consider, they are not the first ingredient rhetors focus on when developing strategies to persuade audiences: style is the third canon of rhetoric, not the first or even second.

Sample: 2A

Score: 8

This essay effectively analyzes Thatcher’s strategies, demonstrating an awareness of how the historical moment and a sense of audience shapes her rhetoric. From the outset, the student makes judicious use of contextual information not provided in the passage (e.g., discussion of the Cold War and the “Red Scare”) to show how Thatcher’s rhetorical choices are calculated to celebrate Reagan’s achievements while solidifying the ties between Britain and the United States. For example, the student effectively integrates knowledge of historical context with analysis of Thatcher’s strategies by linking public doubts about Reagan (“Even before his presidency, there were people that thought he wouldn’t be capable of leading a nation in a time of crisis”) to a series of juxtapositions that illustrate the triumph of Reagan’s optimism (“Thatcher juxtaposes thinking and prediction with what actually happened”). The student’s analysis is further distinguished by the insight that Thatcher’s eulogy not only is a personal remembrance but also serves the purpose of “creating a stronger alliance between the two nations”: for instance, the student notes that “by constantly referencing the Soviet Union as the ‘evil empire,’ ” Thatcher implies “similarities in thinking between the Americans and British.” In spite of occasional lapses, the essay consistently shows a control of the elements of effective writing and thereby earned a score of 8.

Sample: 2B

Score: 6

This essay adequately analyzes the rhetorical choices Thatcher makes in her eulogy. The essay begins with an analysis of Thatcher’s repetition of “great” that, while remaining on a fairly superficial level, nevertheless demonstrates the student’s adequate grasp of the task at hand. As the essay develops, the appropriateness of the student’s evidence and explanation becomes clear: the third paragraph, for instance, presents a

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Question 2 (continued)

sufficiently nuanced discussion of ethos in the student’s discussion of Thatcher’s use of “Ronnie” (“This simple nickname allows the reader to see the close relationship that they had,” “shows the depth of their conversations,” and “allows the reader to trust her”). The student’s discussion of Thatcher’s use of figurative language is also sufficient, highlighting how the image of Reagan inviting his enemies “out of their fortress’ ... specifies how far away his enemies were from his opinions ... yet he was still capable of engaging with them and resolving conflict.” The analysis falters a bit towards the end when the student attempts to make a connection between “short sentences” and Thatcher’s “appreciation towards Ronald Reagan,” but neither this nor the occasional lapses in the student’s prose prevented the essay from earning a score of 6.

Sample: 2C

Score: 2

This essay demonstrates little success in analyzing the rhetorical strategies Thatcher uses to convey her message. The essay lacks explanation, and where there is an attempt to discuss Thatcher’s rhetorical choices, it is often inaccurate. For instance, the student writes, “she uses logos all throughout the essay which makes her a credible source” and tries, inappropriately, to establish a connection between “repetition [*sic*] of words at the beginning of phrases” in lines 30–35 and Thatcher’s supposed aim “to show the emotion of all the people, as well as understand each ones [*sic*] opinion.” Lacking development and making assertions that are at best supported with simplistic explanations, the essay fails to provide a coherent analysis of Thatcher’s eulogy and thus earned a score of 2.