

2014 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.)

Authors Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman published “The Creativity Crisis” in *Newsweek.com* in July 2010. They reported that the Torrance Test, a test of creativity that has been administered to millions of people worldwide in 50 languages, indicates that the public’s “creativity quotient” has steadily crept downward since 1990. In their article, Bronson and Merryman cite the claim of Professor Kyung Hee Kim at the College of William and Mary: “It’s very clear, and the decrease is very significant.” Kim reports that it is the scores of younger children in America—from kindergarten through sixth grade—for whom the decline is “most serious.”

Bronson and Merryman state that “[t]he potential consequences are sweeping. The necessity of human ingenuity is undisputed. A recent IBM poll of 1,500 CEOs identified creativity as the No. 1 ‘leadership competency’ of the future. Yet it’s not just about sustaining our nation’s economic growth. All around us are matters of national and international importance that are crying out for creative solutions, from saving the Gulf of Mexico to bringing peace to Afghanistan to delivering health care. Such solutions emerge from a healthy marketplace of ideas, sustained by a populace constantly contributing original ideas and receptive to the ideas of others.”

One possible approach to this reputed decline in creativity is to explicitly teach creative thinking in school. Write to your school board explaining what you mean by creativity *and* arguing for or against the creation of a class in creativity.

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 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 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** explain what the writer means by creativity *and* argue for or against the creation of a class in creativity. 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** explain what the writer means by creativity *and* argue for or against the creation of a class in creativity. 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 explain what the writer means by creativity *and* argue for or against the creation of a class in creativity. 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 writer's ideas.

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** explain what the writer means by creativity *and* argue for or against the creation of a class in creativity. 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 writer'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 explaining what the writer means by creativity *and* arguing for or against the creation of a class in creativity. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

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Question 3 (continued)

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in explaining what the writer means by creativity *and* arguing for or against the creation of a class in creativity. These essays may demonstrate misunderstanding of 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.

* For the purposes of scoring, argument means asserting a claim justified by evidence and/or reasoning

Sample 3A

Creative thinking is central to today's idea-driven economy and technological advancement in the face of pressing national and international issues. Our society demands creativity and novelty, making it essential that young people are introduced to the concept and its application from a young age. It is important to integrate the idea of creativity into school classrooms and teach the value of developing novel ideas, applying, and adapting them. However, the creation of a class solely focused on creativity would not meet the purposes for which it was established. Instead, the value of creative thinking should be implemented into classes themselves.

One of the most important steps in addressing the decline in the public's creativity quotient is to help students understand what it means to be creative and engage in creative thinking. In my opinion, creativity is the process of developing novel or original ideas, applying them, and learning how to adapt them to different circumstances. Creativity should be taught as a fluid process, one that integrates into a wide range of applications, not as a separate process. The power of creativity lies in its applicability, and it is the School Board's responsibility to ensure that this fact is emphasized in schools.

Although creating a class in creativity seems good superficially, further analysis reveals that it is not effective. Teaching creative thinking as a separate class detracts from the need to teach the versatility and value of creativity in different applications. A separate class would suggest that creative thinking is distinct from the traditional school curriculum. In my middle school experience, an elective entitled "Creative Thinking" was meant to increase our knowledge of the creative process through various projects and exercises. However, this creative process was not referenced or reinforced in my other classes, making it difficult to see how creativity could be applied to more traditional subjects.

Instead of teaching creative thinking as a separate class, the School Board should ensure that the creative process is highlighted and focused on in traditional classes. Many classes now focus on rote learning or busy work, hindering students' ability to see how their creativity can impact a particular field of study. Integrating creativity into the curriculum would require more effort but would be more valuable than a standalone creative thinking class because of the inherent connection it would provide between creativity, problem-solving, and the importance of applying creative ideas.

With the "Creativity Crisis" deepening and creativity becoming more imperative to global progress and human development, creative thinking needs to gain importance in the school system. However, a class in creativity would not accomplish its goals due to the separation it creates between creative thinking and other subjects. A more viable solution providing better results would be to integrate the teaching of the creative process into all subjects, helping students easily see the power of creativity and the fluidity of its applicability.

Sample 3B

What makes a world power? Is it the money? The political parties? The equality of the nation's people? To all of these, yes. However, to summarize, what makes a world power emerge is the ability to get ahead and provide the unexpected. The recent drought in the creativity of our nation's children can be significantly important. This decrease in the public's creativity quotient is seen as more than crucial to our nation's future.

Sometimes, creativity is thought of only in terms of painting, drawing, and artistically creating things. However, this is not the case. Who's to say that our nation would have survived World War I or II without the brilliant minds of our army generals? We rely solely on our mental capacities to provide us with a multitude of inventive options in overcoming problems, where generalities are looked down upon.

Also, consider the creative minds that helped create the things we honor to this day. The Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Washington Monument are all creations that required thought and imagination to be built in an apolitical way. These monuments and memorials are seen as great importance and respected accomplishments in our country. What will we have if we lack the ability to not only appreciate, but also add to these accomplishments?

Our entire nation's history is rooted in creativity. From the ability to assimilate other cultures into an idealistic one, to the civil rights movements in the early 1900s, our nation does not grow, or better yet, improve, without the ability to create new ways and cultural advancements.

It is for our nation's greater good to create a class dedicated to creativity. Such a class could only be beneficial to children and our future. If we do not nurture the children of our country now, they will not be able to save us in the future. Our country relies on creative minds to continue our place as a world power and to move forward rather than taking steps backwards.

Sample 3C

Creativity can be identified as many things. It starts from how you think and how you express yourself. Just as the text suggests, creativity can create solutions to many situations. While some people are born with creativity, others may not naturally possess it. However, I believe creativity can be cultivated if one thinks deeply and outside the box. The creation of a class focused on creativity has its advantages and disadvantages. Having a creativity class will definitely challenge many students when it comes to thinking. This will compel students to think more deeply and critically. Ultimately, it all depends on the extent or level to which you want to take creativity.

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Question 3

Overview

Question 3, the argument question, begins by recounting a research claim that the “creativity quotient” of American young people, particularly those in kindergarten through sixth grade, has declined. Students were asked to consider this claim in the context of looming, unprecedented global crises that require creative responses (e.g., pollution in the Gulf of Mexico and the war in Afghanistan). Finally, students were asked to consider whether one particular attempt to solve the creativity crisis — adding a separate class in creativity — was a viable solution for their own schools to implement. In an effort to help students focus and address their arguments to an audience with the capacity to take action, the prompt asked students to address their arguments to their school boards. Because specifying an audience was intended to help students respond successfully to the prompt, not to give them a way to fail, students were not penalized for not writing in the form of a letter or for not explicitly addressing their arguments to their school boards. While some students had a clear understanding of who makes up their school boards and how school boards function, others did not. So while some students may have been rewarded in the scoring for skillfully employing rhetorical strategies such as appealing to shared values such as quality education, community involvement, and finding solutions to global problems, students were not penalized for failing to use these strategies.

The question was intended to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities to produce sound and convincing arguments in support of clearly articulated positions. Unlike some previous argument questions, this year’s prompt gave students an either/or choice — to argue for or against establishing a creativity class in their school’s curriculum. Unlike prompts that required students to build arguments about abstract concepts (e.g., last year’s argument prompt about the relationships between ownership and sense of self), this year’s prompt explicitly directed students to supply their own definitions of “creativity.” This explicit direction was intended to underscore the importance in argumentation of defining terms that might otherwise be interpreted differently by audience members.

Sample: 3A

Score: 8

This essay convincingly and purposefully develops the argument that creativity ought not to be the subject of a specific class, proposing instead that “the value of creative thinking should be implemented into classes themselves.” The student first defines creativity as a process of developing new ideas, applying them, and adapting them to different circumstances, then continues by making the point that creativity “should be taught as being a fluid process, one that seamlessly integrates into such a wide range of applications, not as one that is a separate process altogether.” The essay establishes a well-articulated line of reasoning, acknowledging an alternative position and effectively using a personal example to support its position. It aptly elaborates that, in the student’s middle school class on “Creative Thinking,” the creative process that was taught “was not referenced and reinforced in my other classes, making it difficult for me to make the connection of how creativity could be applied to more traditional subjects.” This essay earned a score of 8 for its especially coherent 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: 4

This essay asserts the need for a class devoted to instruction that would foster creativity. It attempts to provide a definition of creativity, but in doing so, relies on examples of creative fields and accomplishments (the “Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Washington monument”) rather than developing a definition that might be used to develop an argument for creating a class. The argument inadequately explains the kind of classroom instruction that will produce the accomplishments proposed, the particular creative achievements that are said to be crucial, or the particular fields associated with creativity. Consisting mainly of general and vague assertions (“If we do not save the children of our country now, they will not be able to save us in the future”), this essay earned a score of 4.

Sample: 3C

Score: 2

This essay attempts to define creativity (“Creativity starts from what you think and how you express yourself”) but demonstrates little success in arguing for or against the creation of a class in creativity. Each sentence in this essay makes a somewhat reasonable point, though often too generally or vaguely. The essay does not express a clear position on whether or not a class in creativity should be created. The essay as a whole lacks development, organization, and control, and therefore it earned a score of 2.