

2018 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.)

In her book *Gift from the Sea*, author and aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1906–2001) writes, “We tend not to choose the unknown which might be a shock or a disappointment or simply a little difficult to cope with. And yet it is the unknown with all its disappointments and surprises that is the most enriching.”

Consider the value Lindbergh places on choosing the unknown. Then write an essay in which you develop your own position on the value of exploring the unknown. Use appropriate, specific evidence to illustrate and develop your position.

STOP

END OF EXAM

AP English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

Inside:

Free Response Question 3

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

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 3

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 paper, assistance from the Table Leader should be sought. 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 40 minutes to read and 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 a paper 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 their development, or particularly impressive in their control of language.

8 – Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations appropriately and convincingly support the student's position, 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 value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations appropriately and sufficiently support the student's position, 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 value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations used to support that position may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. 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 3 (continued)

4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The evidence and explanations used may inappropriately, insufficiently, or unconvincingly support the student's position. 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.

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 value of exploring the unknown. The essays may show less maturity in their control of writing.

2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in developing a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The student may misunderstand the prompt or substitute a simpler task by 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 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

The unknown is a concept that brings crippling anxiety to many. There is fear in the unfamiliar, the possibility of failure, of danger, of embarrassment. In a contrasting way, author Anne Morrow Lindbergh describes the "disappointments and surprises" of the unfamiliar, the failures, and the unexpected moments that are "the most fulfilling." In this sense, she is absolutely correct. The exploration of the unknown has led to unprecedented scientific development, cultural development, and personal development alike.

The principles of science are synonymous with the exploration of the unknown. President John F. Kennedy is famously quoted as saying that the US would land on the moon "not because it is easy, but because it is hard." In the face of public uncertainty, Kennedy set out to explore one of the biggest unknowns of modern humanity: outer space. Obviously, the moon landing was successful, and the subsequent technological development benefited all aspects of society. Billions were allocated in research funding, and as a result, humanity expanded its sphere of knowledge greatly. Yet, this is not a recent phenomenon. One of the most famous scientists in history, Galileo Galilei, chose to explore and challenge commonly held truths. He was ridiculed for claiming that the Earth revolved around the Sun, yet it was his desire to enter into the unfamiliar that led to the scientific advances by the US under Kennedy so many centuries later. Scientists throughout history - Kepler, Brahe, Boyle, Tyson, Hawking, Curie, Gauss, and more - made their names by engaging with the unknown, and humanity will forever be indebted to them for their tenacity.

Yet, this trend is not limited to the realm of science. Theorists of music know of the many "eras" of music, from medieval to classical to romantic. The most notable example of an exploration into the unknown is found in the Baroque period, under the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach is one of the few composers who can claim to have created his own era of music, and he did this by exploring the possibilities of a chamber orchestra. He, by exploring new territory in music, changed the face of string and orchestral music, employing elements of fugue and counter-melody that can be found frequently in subsequent eras and even in the pop music of today. Like scientists, musicians are known for being barrier-breakers. Listening to a performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's 12th String Quartet (written in the 20th century, which is considered "modern" by musicians) will demonstrate how musicians are continuing to explore the limitless possibilities of sound. By breaking the constraints of cultural norms and exploring the unknown, composers have brought lasting cultural development to fruition.

Finally, an exploration of the unfamiliar is a powerful tool for personal development, in addition to the scientific and cultural benefits. This is best demonstrated by the life and legacy of Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau famously spent a period of his life living in seclusion on the banks of Walden Pond in the northern United States. Like Bach and Shostakovich, Thoreau helped to establish a new genre in his craft. Thoreau, along with others like Ralph Waldo Emerson, created the transcendentalist movement, now studied by millions of scholars and students across the world. While his exploration of new ideas in literature is certainly notable, it is the content of his writing that is most important in the context of the theme of the unknown. Thoreau wrote "Walden" to summarize his thoughts and experiences throughout the time he spent on the pond of the same name. Reading "Walden" gives a clear impression of Thoreau as a dynamic character, one who develops and alters himself thanks to the knowledge he obtains. It is clear that after his experience at the pond, Thoreau has changed for the better: he is more introspective; he has come to realizations about the world. Thus, Thoreau's decision to leave society and live in the unfamiliar wilderness led to his own personal grand improvement in a truly remarkable way.

When Lindbergh writes of the unknown being "enriching," she severely understates the positive benefits of exploration. The Unknown is more than "enriching." It is a demonstration of true humanity, a reflection of the desire to understand the world, and a crucial part of living in a changing world. The unknown has allowed the human race to develop, improve, and augment itself scientifically, culturally, and personally, and for those reasons, it is clearly incredibly valuable.

Sample 3B

Many children hesitate to swim in natural bodies of water, compared to an artificial swimming pool. Artificial swimming pools have a clear, heated bottom surface that is easy to see. Lakes, ponds, harbors, and ocean beaches, on the other hand, have many more interesting features that are more difficult to identify. As such, children often have a very difficult time trying to navigate these unknown things. Lindbergh correctly identifies this as the human reaction to exploring the unknown alongside the reality of the unfamiliar.

Lindbergh's words effectively contrast the term "unknown" with new things that humans are not aware of. She then states that children tend to stay away from things that are unfamiliar. Children cannot see the bottom of a lake or sea due to the lack of clarity in the water. Because they cannot see the bottom, it is difficult to see the latter surface, and they develop irrational fears. This is also true for many, comparable to the story of Jonah, an evangelist who disobeyed God's orders to preach at a specified city. This was due to the fact that Jonah feared the people of said city because he had not been there before. As a result, Jonah began traveling to a city he did have direct experience with, and subsequently faced consequences. This fear of the unknown causes people to stay away from places they find unfamiliar.

This insight is also correct when it comes to the natural environments of the unknown. This is due to the allure of discovering what is actually in natural bodies of water, which are home to many plants, animals, natural formations, and other survival features. If hesitant children develop the courage to dive below the surface, the world becomes new with species and other interesting phenomena. In a similar vein, exploring unfamiliar foods can bring about a change in the way a person thinks about food and other matters. Exploring the unknown provides opportunities for surprise and enlightenment.

Things that are unknown also come with a sense of fear, alongside the opportunity for amazement. The definition of progress in any society is trying a new method, striving for success, and determining whether it should be pursued or avoided. A society will make progress when they find a strategy that works and continue to use it. Therefore, choosing the unknown is a necessity.

Sample 3C

When we are born into this world, we are naturally adventurous. Even before we can walk, we crawl around looking for new things to feel, and also new things to bite or taste. But around 10 years old, we start developing preferences, and begin to fear the "unknown."

When you think of the Unknown, many will think of deep space or deep in the ocean, but the unknown can be something as simple as a new food. The unknown, simply put, can be anything you don't know. Using the example of food, we are quick to get something we always get, but very hesitant to try something new. One explanation is that it is our survival instinct. We only trust that the food we know will taste good, and we have no trust for new food, only skepticism.

Some people in society are naturally adventurous. They seem to be getting rare, but without them, we would not have walked on the moon or have someone break the speed of sound. For the few courageous ones, the unknown is a fascinating place, and they will keep looking for the unknown until they perish.

I believe that exploring the unknown is essential to be a well-cultured and intelligent individual. To be intelligent, you must want to learn about the unknown and understand it. A man who stops wanting to learn new things is a fool. I believe to gain knowledge, you need to keep pursuing "your" unknown.

When we are born, everything is the unknown and we want to know it. But as we get older, we get lazier and stop pursuing the unknown. I believe the most intelligent man on earth is the one that never stops pursuing the unknown.

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

The argument prompt asked that students read a quote from Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea* and write an essay in which they develop a position on the value of exploring the unknown. Therefore, the students were expected to demonstrate some understanding of what the unknown might be.

Students were then expected to take a position on Lindbergh's statement and to support that claim with discussion of ways in which the unknown has or does not have value.

Sample: 3A **Score: 9**

This essay is especially sophisticated in its argument and particularly impressive in its control of language. The response employs overwhelmingly convincing evidence, calling on the likes of JFK, Galileo, as well as a list of ground-breaking scientists at the end of the second paragraph. The seamless transitions from the scientific to the musical (Bach and Shostakovich) and ultimately to the literary (Thoreau) are offered with appropriate and convincing explanations and extensive development (e.g., "Bach ... created his own era of music ... by exploring the possibilities of a chamber orchestra. He, by exploring new territory in music, changed the face of string and orchestral music, employing elements of fugue and countermelody"). This essay presents an ideal example of a five-paragraph essay done more than effectively, as evidenced in the last line: "The unknown has allowed the human race to develop, improve, and augment itself scientifically, culturally, and personally, and for those causes, it is clearly incredibly valuable."

Sample: 3B **Score: 5**

This essay attempts to use the concept of children preferring swimming in a pool as opposed to in a natural body of water as a metaphor for the fear of exploring the unknown. The student speaks of "human hesitation" to explore the depths of lakes and oceans that "harbur [*sic*] ... interesting features, that are more difficult to identify." Carrying this metaphor forward, the response notes that "humans tend to stay away from things that are unknown" due to fear. It builds on this evidence by offering the Biblical story of Jonah and drawing on his fear, but the evidence used is uneven and limited (e.g., "As a result, Jonah began traveling to a city he did have recent experience with, and suffered consequences"). In another instance of discussing fear, the essay alludes to "[t]rying new foods" but does not develop that thought beyond one sentence. Overall, the limited nature of the response resulted in it earning a score of 5.

Sample: 3C **Score: 3**

This essay struggles to take a position on the value of exploring the unknown. The response discusses humans being born "naturally adventurous" but later becoming fearful of the unknown. The student references trying new foods, walking on the moon, and breaking the speed of sound, but the development of this evidence and the examples provided are inadequate and insufficient (e.g., "Using the example of food, we are quick to get something we always get, but very hesitant to try something new" and "A man who stops wanting learn new things is a fool"). There is simply very little explanation given. Ultimately, this essay demonstrates less success in developing a position and less maturity in the control of writing than an essay scored a 4.