

## 2019 AP<sup>®</sup> 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.)

The term “overrated” is often used to diminish concepts, places, roles, etc. that the speaker believes do not deserve the prestige they commonly enjoy; for example, many writers have argued that success is overrated, a character in a novel by Anthony Burgess famously describes Rome as a “vastly overrated city,” and Queen Rania of Jordan herself has asserted that “[b]eing queen is overrated.”

Select a concept, place, role, etc. to which you believe that the term “overrated” should be applied. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you explain your judgment. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.

**STOP**

**END OF EXAM**

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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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#### **Free Response Question 3**

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# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## 2019 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 read, 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.

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**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 a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. 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** explain a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. 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 explain a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. 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.

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## 2019 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3 (continued)

#### 4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** explain a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. 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 explaining a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. The essays may show less maturity in their control of writing.

#### 2 – Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in explaining a concept, place, role, etc. to which the student believes the term “overrated” should be applied. 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

My English teachers may be shocked upon my writing this. The Language Arts department may gasp and murmur; some poor Board of Education member may even faint upon knowing what I've done. But after years and years of this forced, drab, weary curriculum, I cannot hold my silence any longer. I think "classical literature" is overrated. You've heard this before, most probably - it is the typical cry of those from "my generation," which you adults have for so long scoffed at and rolled your eyes at. However, I reiterate again - I think classical literature is overrated, not due to my inability to relate to it, as a modern, wide, diverse person living in a metropolis.

Take Shakespeare, for example - an absolute favorite that takes up at least a quarter of the books I read in school - whether it be *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the gory *Macbeth*. I, personally, have nothing against those plays - but I feel they have fallen into the same trap as all classical literature: the loss of relevancy. Half the jokes and allusions in poor Shakespeare's plays have to be painstakingly scribed and explained into the margins of my books - to the point where I am distracted from the play's natural flow to look up some antiquated word or reference every 5 seconds! It's ridiculous! I appreciate how my teachers try to "relate" the book to me in various ways, whether pointing out the subtle euphemisms to genitalia in Mercutio's opening lines or chuckling over the petty squabbles between Queen Ophelia and her husband. It still does not change the fact that I cannot find it in myself to relate, which is what made these works, and many others like it, so vitally appealing and long-lasting in the first place! By giving a book the title of "classical literature," we let its relevancy last longer than it has any right to be - ultimately dooming the book's purpose in the first place.

I cannot relate to classical literature not only because of how outdated it is - but also, specifically, how much of a narrow, Western viewpoint most of these books come from. It's partly society's fault, I think; the wealthy and privileged were the ones with the education and time necessary to write these books. But I also think it's a problem of Westernism. There's no denying that over the past centuries, Europe and its colonies have dominated the global hemispheres, take a look at the British Empire, or America's "benevolent" imperialism throughout the 1900s to 2000s. Obviously, in a world dominated by Westerners, Western culture and viewpoints will be most prevalent - Greek myths like "The Odyssey", British literature like "1984", and American poets such as Emily Dickinson. However, the world has been around much longer than that - so where's my "Journey to the West" or Egyptian mythology, or contemporary Indian writers? I cannot relate to classical literature, as well as many others, because it is so focused on a specific cultural background - or at the very least, classical literature that is emphasized to me in school, media, and daily life. This year has probably been the worst in that respect - dystopian book after dystopian book of the same type of character that I find very hard to relate to - *Brave New World*, *Anthem*, *Lord of the Flies*, etc., you get the point. It's not only about the relatability - it's just plain interesting sometimes to see things from different perspectives!

Classical literature I cannot relate to due to its outdatedness and narrow perspective. I'm not just outright disregarding the skill, and craftsmanship that have been employed to make these works - I think despite these flaws, classical literature has its own reasons for being studied and focused upon. However, it is overrated - the contemporary books of today to me have all the same benefits of classical literature, only that it's not such a pain to decipher and that I can find myself relating to the stories told in these books. In short, classical literature has its good qualities - but I only do so wish it wasn't shoved into my face because of that.

### Sample 3B

Often proclaimed as "the most magical place on Earth," Disney parks get hundreds of thousands of visitors every day. But why are these parks so special? Besides the fantasy worlds they've created on screen, Disney is supremely overrated.

Starting with the cost. Let's say you're a middle-class family of five, and you decide you want to go to Disney World. Tickets alone cost over 100 dollars each, and that doesn't even begin to cover the price of food inside the parks. A Mickey ice cream bar can cost up to \$10, and a real meal will cost much more. It's simply not affordable for most people, and it makes no sense to spend so much money on a single activity on vacation. You can travel to new cities and see so many more things if you choose to go somewhere else, and it will most likely be cheaper.

The rides are another aspect of Disney that just falls flat. Each ride has waits of, on average, 45 minutes to an hour. Waiting in the hot, gross Florida afternoon for that long for a two-minute ride that's basically just a train in a circle is not worth it. Sure, there are some rides that make the ridiculous lines worth it, like the Tower of Terror, the Haunted Mansion, and the Rockin' Rollercoaster, but three rides compared to the hundreds they have is not a good ratio.

Disney is also pretty wasteful. They force you to buy plastic water bottles, yet they barely have proper recycling bins. And it can't be very green to keep all those rides and stores running for twelve hours a day. On a larger scale, they also just leave rides and even whole parks to be taken over by the wilderness instead of disposing of things properly and reusing things that can be reused. In the 20th century, they had a water park called River Country, and when they closed it in the early 2000s because it wasn't safe and wasn't making money, they didn't try to take anything down, they just left everything there! I'm sure they could have taken out the pipes and such and planted trees there - or at least done any other more environmentally friendly thing than just leaving it there.

I understand the alluring appeal of Instagrammable food and seeing movies brought to life. I'm not saying that Disney is 100% bad, but between the high prices, disappointing rides, and environmental degradation, I'd advise you to spend your money elsewhere because Disney is definitely overrated.

### Sample 3C

When people use the word overrated, we think something has been talked up to sound amazing and it didn't live up to those words. Just like Anthony Burgess with Rome, he was disappointed by how disappointing Rome was for him. The word overrated should be used when things or places do not live up to what you thought they were, or what they are said to be like.

One thing in my life that I thought was greatly overrated was high school. All through middle school, we are told that high school is so much different and is said to be amazing. But to me, it was overrated because high school was different than middle school but not as different as they made it seem. Also, every teacher talked about high school like it was this amazing experience that we'll never forget, but to me, it was nothing special. Sure, I made some new friends and yes, the school was a lot bigger, but other than that, high school was average for me. It was so over-talked that when I got there, I was underwhelmed.

Speaking of being underwhelmed, about the 100th time I went to Disney World, I had started to see Disney as being overrated. I had gone so many times and I had seen everything; Disney started to feel overrated. I believe as a kid Disney was everything it was said to be for me, but as I grew up, the less exciting and overwhelmed I got.

Just like all of the other places I have talked about, another place that has become overrated for me is the beach. No matter what beach I go to, it always seems so overrated. The way everybody makes the beach seem on social media and TV, it seems like such an interesting and fun thing to do. But once you get there and see it for yourself, you realize how overrated it really is. It does not live up to the expectations set up for it.

All of these things I have listed and explained are well-known places all across the world. So when I hear the word overrated, the first thing that comes to mind is places I have been that have not lived up to my expectations. But this does not mean these are the only things I find overrated, just the main things that pop into my mind.

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## 2019 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 3

**Note:** Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

#### Overview

The prompt for this year’s argument question first defined the key term it asked students to apply in their answer: “The term ‘overrated’ is often used to diminish concepts, places, roles, etc. that the speaker believes do not deserve the prestige they commonly enjoy.” Students were then given three specific examples of possible topics illustrating this term — a concept (success), a city (Rome), and a role (Queen Rania of Jordan’s declaration that being “queen is overrated”).

Students were expected to select “a concept, place, role, etc.” that they believed is “overrated” and to argue with supporting evidence from their “reading, experience, or observations” why their chosen topic is “overrated.”

#### Sample: 3A

**Score: 8**

This essay effectively argues that the “classical literature” studied in the school’s “forced, drab, weary curriculum” is overrated. The response supports its claims with convincing evidence and explanations, as demonstrated in the discussion on “the loss of relevancy” in the second paragraph. The student effectively explains having to read Shakespeare with notes to understand “antiquated” jokes and allusions so that the original purpose is lost. The third paragraph provides an effective explanation about how “classical literature” represents a narrow range of works that reflect the history of Western colonization and imperialism. The response continues this argument in the next paragraph by explaining the student’s preference for exploring literature more widely (i.e., “where’s my ‘Journey to the West,’ or Egyptian mythology, or contemporary Indian writers?”) and having choices other than dystopian fiction to study. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control the elements of effective writing, although it is not flawless (e.g., “I’m not just outright disregarding the skill, and craft that have been employed to make these works”). With its appropriate and well-developed evidence and explanations, this essay makes a convincing case for schools to incorporate works from more diverse backgrounds that will be viewed as more relevant by 21<sup>st</sup>-century students.

#### Sample: 3B

**Score: 6**

This essay adequately argues that Disney parks are overrated. The first paragraph presents the high cost of visiting the parks as one example of why they are overrated and offers adequate evidence and explanation as support (e.g., “Tickets alone cost over 100 dollars a piece, and ... [a] Mickey ice cream bar can cost up to \$10”). In the following paragraph, the response sufficiently explores the idea of long wait times and argues that the amount of time standing in line “the hot, gross Florida afternoon” compared to the actual time the ride lasts “is not worth it.” The response then presents the idea of waste as another reason why the parks are overrated, using the evidence of the lack of recycling options in the park, the amount of energy it must take to operate the park, and the space taken up by the deserted waterpark as support. The response offers a concession (i.e., “I understand the alluring appeal of Instagrammable food and seeing movies brought to life”) in the last paragraph but concludes by reiterating the “high prices, disappointing rides, and environmental degradation” as reasons why Disney parks are overrated. The prose is generally clear, despite a few lapses in diction and syntax.



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**2019 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3 (continued)**

**Sample: 3C**

**Score: 3**

This essay argues that the “word overrated should be used when things or places do not live up to what you thought they were, or what they are said to be like,” but it demonstrates less success than a response scored a 4 in explaining exactly why the student believes the term should be applied. The response displays an especially inadequate development of the three examples provided: high school, Disneyland, and the beach. The explanations of why these three examples should be regarded as overrated are particularly insufficient and unconvincing (e.g., “But to me it was overrated because Highschool was different than middle school, but not as different as they made it seem” and “But once you get [to the beach] and see it for yourself you realize how overrated it really is”), offering little to no support for the argument.