

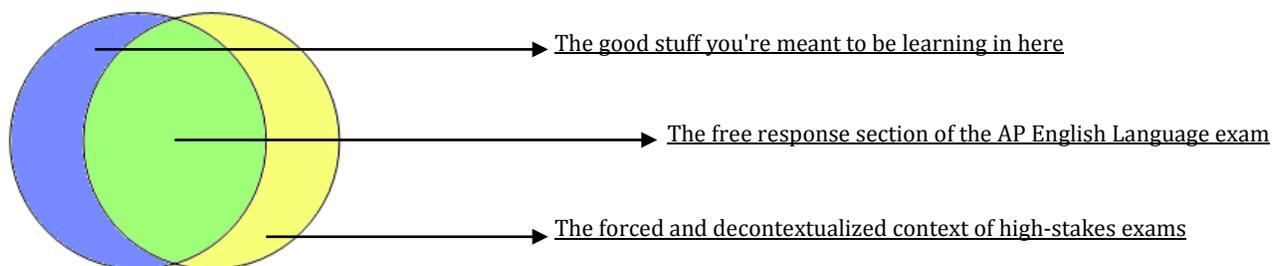
FREE-RESPONSE WRITING

First, a backhand compliment

Start with some relatively true statements about our course:

1. The best learning happens without grades, in groups, and over time.
2. Good writing, like all effective communication, requires revision and metacognition.
3. Critical thinking develops from authentic, contextualized, and constant reading.

It ought to seem strange, then, to have to sit down and prove that you can read, think, and write by taking a high-stakes test. Fortunately for you, this is one of the better ones, at least in terms of the free-response writing section. An old colleague of mine liked to say, “I like this test not because I am involved with the AP program, but rather I work for AP because this test measures what I want my students to learn, and measures what they should be able to do when they leave my classroom.” In a sense, preparing for this exam is no different from preparing to be a critically thinking member of a rational society; yet it *is* a test, and this guide is built around test performance as much as fundamental skills:



This exam does reflect your ability to think critically, read closely, and write effectively. There is something to be said for taking those skills you've developed and performing them in a pressurized, extemporaneous setting. It may not mirror a good academic environment (or the real world, for that matter), but it does strip away distraction and show us all what you can do.

You have two goals in taking this test, then, and you'll determine which one is more important to you. The first is to demonstrate effective reading, thinking, and writing skills. The second goal is to earn a 3 or higher, so that you can receive college credit. The two goals are linked, of course—you can't get a 3 without being a pretty good student—so doing well here is a sign that you are a student worth listening to.

A quick look at the time allotted

You have two hours total for the writing portion of this exam, with fifteen minutes to read and annotate the sources for the synthesis essay. In an ideal setting, you would divide your time as follows:

- ⊕ 15 minutes – annotating the sources for the synthesis essay
- ⊕ 40 minutes – writing the synthesis essay (Free Response #1)
- ⊕ 40 minutes – annotating a prose passage and writing the rhetorical analysis essay (Free Response #2)
- ⊕ 40 minutes – writing the general argument essay (Free Response #3)

Whether you follow that schedule or not depends on a strong sense of your strengths and weaknesses. Part of the goal of this review guide is to develop that profile for you, because you *can* approach this with a kind of gamesmanship—and, in fact, that may be the easiest way to earn the score you want.

Balance and the importance of the multiple-choice questions

Let's quickly look at the entire exam, then. This is the exam as described by our course syllabus:

Four non-fiction passages with multiple choice questions attached | This will test your ability to read non-fiction argumentative prose quickly and insightfully. All four passages will be non-fiction. One is likely by a British author from the 17th to 19th century; another is usually by an American ethnic author; the other two are often contemporary.

A synthesis essay | You will be given six or more short passages, including at least one visual source, that deal with a contemporary issue. You will need to synthesize at least three of those sources as you develop your own argument in response to the prompt.

An essay of rhetorical analysis | This is an examination of the *how* of an argument. You will be expected to dissect, to challenge, or to qualify an argumentative passage. In the past, the passages have been drawn from everything from *The Onion* to the philosophical writings of William Hazlitt.

An essay of general argument | This essay will test your ability to develop a perspective on a contemporary issue or timeless question and to argue it with rhetorical skill. You will need to provide your own evidence to support your argument, referencing readings, current media, and your own experiences (among many other options) in your response to the prompt.

On a multiple-choice section with 54 questions, the average student gets 30 correct and misses 24. Using that as a base, here are the overall results created by hypothetical scores on the essays:

- ⊕ 5 on all essays = 3 overall
- ⊕ 6 on all essays = 3 overall
- ⊕ 7 on all essays = 4 overall
- ⊕ 8 on all essays = 4 overall—but one point away from a 5 on the scoring matrix

If the student gets 40 answers correct and misses 14:

- ⊕ 5 on all essays = 3 overall
- ⊕ 6 on all essays = 4 overall
- ⊕ 7 on all essays = 5 overall

The first insight this should give you is that the multiple-choice section is extraordinarily important to your final score. The second insight, though, is much more comforting: If you perform well on the first half of the exam, you don't need to set the world on fire on the free-response portion. A healthy spark will do.

More number crunching for the student with 40 and 14 on Part I of the exam:

- ⊕ With a 5 on FR#1, a 6 on FR#2, and a 7 on FR#3, the student earns a high 4.
- ⊕ With a 5 on FR#1, an 8 on FR#2, and an 8 on FR#3, the student earns a 5.
- ⊕ With a 4 on FR#1, an 8 on FR#2, and an 8 on FR#3, the student earns a high 4.
- ⊕ With a 2 on FR#1, a 6 on FR#2, and a 6 on FR#3, the student earns a 3.

One more example, this time using a student who got 50 right and 4 wrong on the multiple-choice section:

- ⊕ With nothing but 4s on all the essays, she would earn a 4 overall.
- ⊕ With a 4, a 5, and a 6, she would earn a 5 overall.
- ⊕ And with a 5, a 5, and an 8, she would easily earn a 5 overall.

Here is the point: You can focus on the essay you realize you can write well, allotting slightly more time to it than to the others, and that can be more helpful than splitting your time evenly. You will see all three essay prompts at once; you might decide to allot 30 minutes for FR#1, 30 minutes for FR#2, and 60 minutes for FR#3.

This matters because it is very difficult to write multiple effective essays in two hours. A score of 8 is rare, and a score of 9 is rarer still; at one of the tables at the national scoring conference a few years ago, for example, only four of the 2000 essays scored earned a 9. But you don't have to be perfect to reach your goal here. This guide gives you the review to do well enough to boost a good performance on the multiple-choice section.

The AP scoring scale

The scores in the samples above derive from a scoring scale that is used to assess all AP-styled timed responses. The score you receive out of nine points reflects the paper's quality as a whole. Keep a few things in mind:

1. You will only have 40 minutes to read and to write, according to the suggested time; therefore, it is not a finished product and will not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment.
2. Your response is a draft, and you are first rewarded for what you do well. Graders are trained to keep in mind that even those papers that deserve an 8 or 9 may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics.
3. You should recognize, however, that distracting errors in grammar and mechanics set the ceiling of any response at 2, and most misinterpretations of a prompt or text set the ceiling at 4.
4. There is also a significant difference between occasional errors in an overall effective response and distracting weaknesses in an otherwise adequate or limited paper.

One final note: It is virtually impossible to earn a 9 without sophistication and maturity in your writing style. Similarly, it is virtually impossible to earn a 7 or 8 with pedestrian or perfunctory writing. That last adjective, perfunctory, is worth isolating for a moment, because it refers to writing that goes through the motions, fulfilling a task out of obligation and without style or insight. One of the significant differences between adequate responses and effective ones is the lack of perfunctory elements; if you can write an introduction and conclusion that are organic and essential, and if you can move between sections with style and inventiveness, you will avoid the sense of filling-in-the-blank that plagues weaker writers.

GENERAL AP SCORING RUBRIC

9 Papers earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 papers and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, explanation, or analysis or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

8 (Effective)

Papers earning a score of 8 **effectively** answer the prompt. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

7 Papers earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 papers but provide a more complete explanation or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

6 (Adequate)

Papers earning a score of 6 **adequately** answer the prompt. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5

Papers earning a score of 5 answer the prompt. These papers may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited focus or evidence, or may incompletely respond to the text or question. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas.

4 (Inadequate)

Papers earning a score of 4 **inadequately** answer the prompt. They may miss key elements of the question, misread a passage, or fail to complete the task. The prose generally conveys the writer's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

3 Papers earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in answering the prompt. The papers may show less control of writing.

2 (Little Success)

Papers earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in answering the prompt. These papers may substitute a simpler task by responding tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate information. The prose often demonstrates consistent weakness in writing.

1 Papers earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are underdeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation and/or weak in their control of language.

0 Indicates an on-topic responses that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.

- Indicates a blank response or one that is complete off-topic.

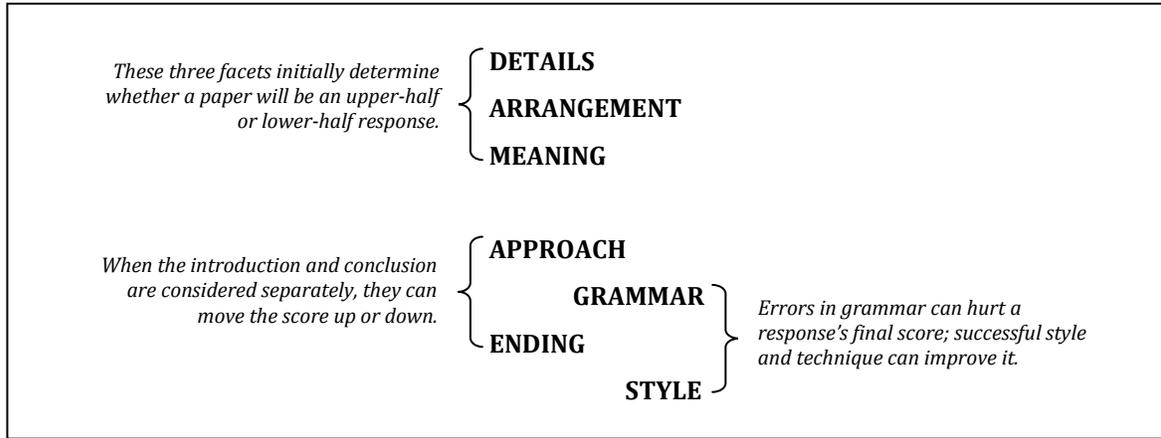
The DAMAGES scoring scale

The readers for this exam use an internalized understanding of what makes a paper *effective*, *adequate*, or *inadequate*. That internalized understanding is the same for all exam graders, and it maintains the same focuses whether we're discussing state writing tests, AP exams, or the SAT. It can also be articulated as a single sentence:

LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION: A.P. EXAM GUIDE

The effectiveness of any response rests on the meaningful arrangement of detail, especially the first and last things written, in answer to a prompt or question; grammatical errors hinder the response, whereas style and voice can help it.

That's the sentence you've been using all year to govern your reading, thinking, and communication, especially in writing; it's what we remember as **DAMAGES**, which stands for Detail, Arrangement, Meaning, Approach, Grammar, Ending, and Style. For your reference, here it is again broken down into component parts in different ways:



D	Detail, Evidence, Proof, Corroboration, Documentation, Specificity
A	Arrangement, Organization, Structure, Construction, Coordination, Connection
M	Meaning, Substance, Interpretation, Understanding, Insight, Observation
A	Approach, Introduction, Overview, Engagement
G	Grammar, Mechanics, Control
E	Ending, Conclusion, Summation, Extension
S	Style, Technique, Voice

A note on grammar and mechanics

You have always been warned to avoid mistakes in grammar. Fortunately, because this is a timed exam, graders do not expect your control of grammar and mechanics to be perfect. Remember, you are essentially writing a timed draft; even in effective papers, difficult language may be misspelled, and complicated syntax may contain punctuation errors. The key is to avoid what we're going to call mortal wounds—elementary mistakes that are unacceptable on a test of college-level reasoning and writing. Here is a partial list:

- homophone confusion (e.g., “to” for “too,” “its” for “it’s”)
- subject-verb agreement
- comma splices
- verb tense shifts
- sentence fragments with no rhetorical purpose
- run-on sentences
- incorrect capitalization
- misspelling words that are in the prompt or passage

Otherwise, your prose just had to be readable and comprehensible. Any errors that affect readability or comprehension *will* drop your score a level or two.

HOW YOUR SCORE IS DETERMINED

Section I: Multiple Choice

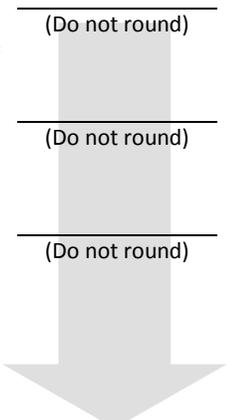
$$\frac{\text{\# correct (out of 54)}}{\text{\# wrong}} - (0.25 \times \frac{\text{\# wrong}}{\text{\# correct}}) \times 1.2500 = \text{Multiple-Choice Score (If less than zero, enter zero.)} = \text{Weighted Section I Score}$$

Section II: Free Response

Question 1 $\frac{\text{______}}{\text{(out of 9)}} \times 3.0556 = \frac{\text{______}}{\text{(Do not round)}}$

Question 2 $\frac{\text{______}}{\text{(out of 9)}} \times 3.0556 = \frac{\text{______}}{\text{(Do not round)}}$

Question 3 $\frac{\text{______}}{\text{(out of 9)}} \times 3.0556 = \frac{\text{______}}{\text{(Do not round)}}$



Sum = $\frac{\text{______}}{\text{Weighted Section II Score (Do not round)}}$

AP Grade Conversion Chart English Language and Composition	
Composite Score Range*	AP Grade
108-150	5
93-107	4
72-92	3
43-71	2
0-42	1

*The students' scores are weighted according to formulas determined in advance each year by the Development Committee to yield raw composite scores; the Chief Faculty Consultant is responsible for converting composite scores to the 5-point AP scale.

Composite Score

$$\text{Weighted Section I Score} + \text{Weighted Section II Score} = \text{Composite Score (Round to nearest whole number.)}$$



Free Response Essay #1: Synthesis Argument

Suggested time: 15 minutes (reading) + 40 minutes (writing)

PATTERNS IN TOPIC SELECTION

This is a prompt that tests your ability to craft a rhetorically effective argument quickly and with maturity while blending several sources into your support. The prompts are nuanced and often focus on specific events; the topics, however, usually fall under a sort of timeless heading: **conflict, competition, technology, media, identity, suffering, economics, perspective, truth, tolerance, community**. While incomplete, that list ought to suggest the breadth of this particular free response.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Like every free response on this exam, your response must meet the following standards:

- ⊕ **CLARITY:** Is the writing clear? Are there lapses in readability or intelligibility?
- ⊕ **COHERENCE:** Do the ideas in the writing connect in a consistent, systematic, and logical way?
- ⊕ **COGENCY:** Is the argument or crux of the writing convincing, reasonable, and thorough?
- ⊕ **CONTROL:** Does the prose demonstrate control of grammar and stylistic strategies?

OUTLINING

You should use a few moments to outline your thoughts before writing. Here are three possibilities:

- ⊕ **DAMAGES**
See below.
- ⊕ **Traditional (5 ¶s w/multi-part thesis)**
An introduction that moves into a thesis statement with two or three distinct claims, followed by two to three paragraphs of defense of each claim, ending in a stylistic conclusion.
- ⊕ **Classical/Cicero**
See the excerpted appendices from *Thank You for Arguing* to review the classical model of argumentation. Pay special attention to the idea of concession, which we can call the art of refuting the counterargument. The presence of an insightful concession or counterargument is one way that more nuanced and effective writing separates itself from the merely adequate.

OUTLINING: DAMAGES

1. Begin with **Meaning** first. Break down the prompt and take a position on the issue or idea at the crux of the question. Attempt to write a thesis statement to drive your entire argument.
2. **Details** will help prove the central argument of your response. Create a quick list of support for your thesis, focusing on the sources. Which details are most persuasive? Which ones are most relevant to your response, and which ones can you cross off? Quickly decide if, how, and where you will use the **three Aristotelian appeals**, too. See the section on additional skills below for more help.
3. Third, consider the **Arrangement** of the paper. How will you move between claims and support? What analysis and insight will drive each paragraph? What is the relationship between those paragraphs, and what kind of transitional language suits that relationship?
4. Next, determine what your **Approach** will be. There are as many ways to begin as there are arguments, so it is often a matter of inventiveness. Here are a few options (from IWU):
 - a. **Inquisitive:** Shows that the subject is interesting, important, or odd.
 - b. **Paradoxical:** Sets up an expectation on the reader's part, then contradicts it.
 - c. **Corrective:** Shows that the topic has been neglected or ignored.

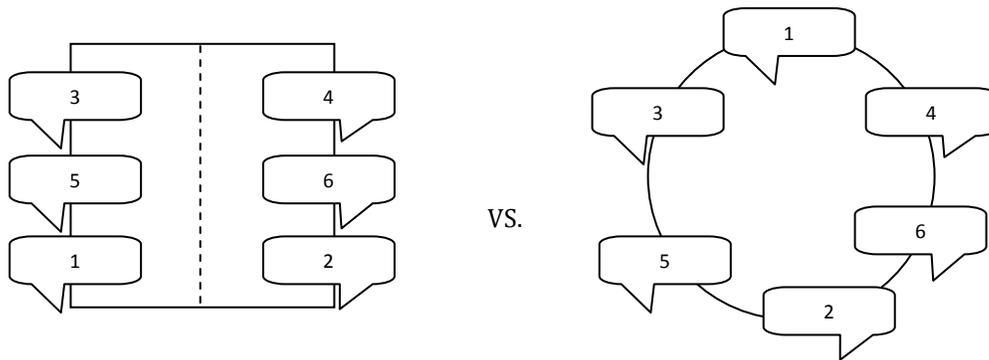
- d. **Preparatory:** The writer "prepares" the reader for the discourse by talking about it or apologizing or qualifying the following text.
 - e. **Narrative:** One of the most effective intros, this gambit tells an anecdote or story to snag the reader's interest and identify the subject.
5. Consider your **Ending** next. Like the **Approach**, you have many options, but you can memorize a few of the more useful stock possibilities (adapted in parts from IWU):
 - a. Leave the audience with a favorable impression of the writer's credentials and intentions
 - b. Stress the important claims made and weaken contradicting claims
 - c. Return to the opening narrative to "frame" the response
 - d. Recapitulate or summarize the most important points
 6. As you begin writing, concentrate on incorporating enough **Style** to set you apart from other writers. Focus on diction and syntax first, using the right language for your purpose and any audience the prompt provides; second, attempt to include rhetorically effective techniques and devices—whichever ones suit the moment and with which you are most comfortable.
 7. Finally, be aware of your **Grammar**. Avoid careless mistakes and proofread each section of your paper by re-reading it.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

There are three major areas on which to focus here:

- ⊕ **Entering a conversation**
You are given a topic and asked to formulate your own argument based on the sources in front of you. This is a conversation, then, and you are entering it as an informed participant. Your position and its defense are paramount; that defense *must* respond to and incorporate the sources, however.
- ⊕ **Rhetorical analysis in miniature**
To use those sources, you must evaluate them. Identifying who is logically sound and who is fallacious is a start; being able to use another author's rhetoric as part of your own is even better.
- ⊕ **Using the sources**
Cite them, either by the author's last name or the source letter (e.g., Source A), and focus on a balance between paraphrasing ideas and quoting significant sections directly.

ENTERING A CONVERSATION



On the left, there are two sides to the conversation. Sources are lined up against each other, and you are asked to pick one of those sides and help defend it. On the right, there are more than two sides to the issue. Some sources contradict each other, while others disagree only slightly; some argue one aspect of the issue, while others discuss more expository elements. The right represents the synthesis argument. You are entering a conversation where seeing the way that the sources are arranged is as important as determining where your own perspective fits in. (The left represents the kind of document-based question often given as part of history exams.)

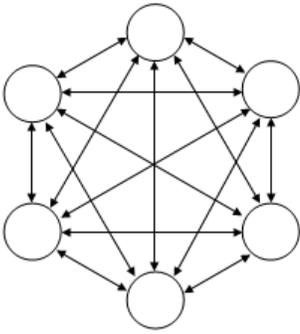
RHETORICAL ANALYSIS IN MINIATURE

The types of sources used on the synthesis question vary greatly. Almost all include a visual text, but the source could be anything from an editorial cartoon to an advertisement. Some texts are informal transcriptions of interviews; others are formal, scientific articles. The perspectives on the central issue can vary even more. Use the following approach to determine which sources fit your argument:

- ⊕ Read every text, briefly annotating key points and main positions
- ⊕ Eliminate one or two texts that you *cannot* use
- ⊕ Arrange the other texts according to how they speak to each other
- ⊕ Incorporate the sources into an argumentative outline

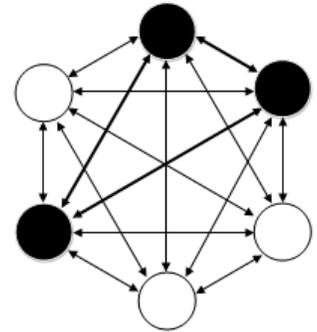
The following graphical organizers may help you to focus during the fifteen-minute planning portion of the synthesis free response. They are intended to offer another visual arrangement of the sources; remember, however, that you may have more than six sources, and that using more than three (effectively) can only boost your score.

USING THE SOURCES

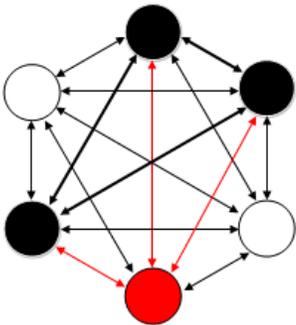


First, look for the connections between the sources as you skim over them. In a very real sense, the fifteen minutes you spend reading are an exercise in multitasking: You must develop your own position at the same time that you evaluate and accept or reject each of the sources with which you are presented. These sources should form a complex web of assertions and perspectives around the issue at hand. Keep that in mind, but also remember that you are being tested on your ability to bend those voices and their information to *your* argument, and that simply summarizing them will hurt your effectiveness.

One possible approach is to jump through the first hoop as quickly as possible: Identify three sources that relate to your developing position, isolate them, and annotate them. Then identify how those sources speak to each other. They might contradict one another; they might offer anecdotes or statistics that support a common assertion; or they might raise questions that you can answer with your own logic, experience, and understanding. Keep in mind that it is always easier to deal with three texts than six, and that this is a test with its own explicit rules. *At least* three of these sources belong together.



Finally, no matter how many sources you intend to incorporate into your own argument, you must be careful that you have not selectively ignored another source that *should* have been incorporated, as well. In any kind of argumentative writing, the absence of an obvious counterargument reveals a failure of insight and logic; however, if that counterargument is part of a source that has been given to you, the absence reveals a failure in close reading and recognition, too. Remember that this is a test of many skills, one of which is your ability to evaluate and organize disparate texts quickly and accurately.



Free Response Essay #2: Rhetorical Analysis

Suggested time: 40 minutes

PATTERNS IN TOPIC SELECTION

The rhetorical analysis section of the exam routinely yields the lowest mean scores. It is deceptively simple: You must read, understand, and analyze a rhetorically effective passage. In theory, it is the most straightforward of the prompts; in practice, it is much more difficult. One reason is that the passage tends to be older; even when it is more recent, the language tends to be more difficult. (A recent exam featured a passage from *The Onion*—seemingly easy to understand, but the ironic tone actually presented many students with quite a challenge.) This is a task as much about close reading as it is about writing. It is also a task about the universality of rhetoric.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Like every free response on this exam, your response must meet the following standards:

- ⊕ CLARITY: Is the writing clear? Are there lapses in readability or intelligibility?
- ⊕ COHERENCE: Do the ideas in the writing connect in a consistent, systematic, and logical way?
- ⊕ COGENCY: Is the argument or crux of the writing convincing, reasonable, and thorough?
- ⊕ CONTROL: Does the prose demonstrate control of grammar and stylistic strategies?

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

To analyze rhetoric, you must obviously have a deep awareness and appreciation of the elements of effective writing, everything from the discrete components (e.g., the parts of speech) to rhetorical devices (e.g., chiasmus and anaphora). As mentioned above, this response also requires excellent close reading abilities; just like the multiple-choice section of the exam, you must be fast, insightful, and accurate. Finally, your skill of citation and incorporation is tested here, since you must rely on the author of the passage to provide you with detail.

OUTLINING

While you can be inventive here, and while your essays may not necessarily follow this pattern, it is safe to approach the rhetorical analysis essay as a traditional, five-paragraph response. Again, you may find yourself writing more creatively; most of the sample 8s and 9s provided by the College Board, however, adhere closely to the five-paragraph structure in that they:

- ⊕ Begin with an accurate presentation of the author's purpose
- ⊕ End that same paragraph with a thesis that presents the rhetorical strategies used by the author to achieve that purpose
- ⊕ Support the first strategy in paragraph two with details that are analyzed and connected to purpose
- ⊕ Repeat with the second strategy in paragraph three
- ⊕ If necessary, repeat with the third strategy in paragraph four
- ⊕ Conclude by connecting the strategies one last time to the author's central purpose

In most cases, this structure will suffice. Your score comes less from your overall structure and more from your identification of rhetoric, the complexity and accuracy of your analysis, and your insight into the author's purpose.

PURPOSIVE RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The best way to get better at rhetorical analysis is to read constantly with an eye for the author's manipulation of what is outlined below. You can memorize devices and their effects, but until you practice *recognizing* those devices, you will be slow on the exam—too slow to do effective analysis, at least. When you have the passage in front of you, start by reading it through once, noting key sections, important details, rhetorical devices, and so on. Then begin your outline by determining the following:

⊕ **The writer's purpose**

A quick SOAPSTONE outline may help here. Focus on the context or occasion, the stated or implied goals, and the author's presence in the text.

⊕ **The writer's argument and claim(s)**

Then articulate the central argument in a sentence or two, i.e., if the argument and claims were written as a thesis statement in a traditional, five-paragraph essay, what might it look like?

⊕ **The writer's rhetoric**

This is the toughest part, because rhetoric has an incredibly diverse canon. Here, we will focus on three main ideas, and for each, the goal is to elucidate the connection between rhetoric and purpose:

- *Inventio*, or **means and detail**
- *Dispositio*, or **organization and arrangement**
- *Elocutio*, or **style**

NOTE: The italicized terms should *not* be used on any sort of exam response. I am giving them to you because those are the right terms.

INVENTIO, OR INVENTION: MEANS AND DETAIL

Again, the Greek or Latin terms don't matter (in that you shouldn't try to memorize them), but they tell us something about this kind of rhetoric. Here, the idea is invention; more specifically, it's the idea of choosing the details and evidence that support and argument. This includes the use of the three Aristotelian appeals. The outline below is a quick guide to those appeals; refer when instructed to the appendices from *Thank You for Arguing*, which are located on the resources page of our website.

⊕ **ETHOS: AN APPEAL TO CHARACTER**

- This is about the audience's perception of the speaker's character, and incorporates ideas of respect, expertise, and authority. *Trust* is a central pillar of ethos. Refer to *Thank You for Arguing* for more.

⊕ **PATHOS: AN APPEAL TO EMOTION**

- Identify *what* emotion is evoked and *why*. Focus on the nature of the emotion, the target of the emotion, and its specific cause. Refer to Heinrichs' guide.

⊕ **LOGOS: AN APPEAL TO LOGIC**

- Refer to *Thank You for Arguing* for the terms and overview you need. Focus on determining the validity of your writer's claims, especially what he or she *intends* the logic to be. Heinrichs offers a rundown of logical fallacies, which have been present in certain passages on previous exams.

DISPOSITIO, OR ORGANIZATION AND ARRANGEMENT

In constructing your own argument, this is critical; in rhetorical analysis, it is less useful. You might be able to analyze the order of detail, if it has special meaning—escalation of intensity, perhaps, or a general balance (of paragraphs, of ideas, of halves of a passage). My advice is for you to focus on the other elements of rhetoric.

ELOCUTIO, OR STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Elocutio literally refers to "clothing" the proof, and the metaphor is apt: These are the techniques that couch the detail and appeals in the paper in persuasive language. Heinrichs provides a list of the devices you might be able to identify in a text (see Appendix II in *Thank You for Arguing*), and you should also see my note on Silva Rhetoricæ below; for our purposes, however, there are basically two branches: **diction** and **syntax**, or word choice and word order. Within those categories, you find:

- ⊕ Figurative language, including metaphors, similes, and personification
- ⊕ Figures of repetition, such as anaphora and conduplicatio
- ⊕ Figures of connection, including parallelism (further split into figures like *chiasmus*) and antithesis

- ⊕ Figures of address, such as rhetorical questions and inclusive language (use of the second-person plural, for instance)
- ⊕ Grammatical manipulators, which covers coordinators, subordinators, and the types of sentences

There are many other categories, as well. (Refer to Heinrichs' appendices for an initial list.) Overall, you are looking for the rhetorical technique's **propriety**—its effect on the audience, its relationship to the occasion, and its connection to purpose. In other words, what does the technique *do*?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

As you write, try to remember these three goals for your rhetorical analysis responses:

- ⊕ **Be accurate in your analysis**
The easiest way to lose ground and earn a lower score is to miss the meaning of a rhetorical element. Use the devices with which you are comfortable and for which you can provide accurate insight.
- ⊕ **Use active verbs that convey shades of meaning**
If at all possible, avoid writing "the author uses anaphora to show us..." Instead, write that "the author's anaphora *solidifies*..." or "this anaphora *mirrors*..." Whatever verb you use, make sure it is active, accurate, and complex. The more meaning you convey in the subject-verb-object sentences you write, the more mature your writing will seem. (Example: "Johnson's parallel structure **mirrors** the plight of his subject, **dragging** us through a litany of pains clause by clause." This example employs active language, and it refers specifically to construction, specifically parallel clauses.)
- ⊕ **Quote the text often and effectively**
Focus on each quotation or example's effectiveness in proving *your* argument and in supporting *your* analysis.

FINAL THOUGHTS: SILVA RHETORICÆ

Earlier in the year, as part of our study of political rhetoric, I linked to this site: [Silva Rhetoricæ: The Forest of Rhetoric](#). It's an excellent resource of terminology and concepts for a course like ours, but it's helpful even if you don't make it past the first page:

A forest is the metaphor for this site. Like a forest, rhetoric provides tremendous resources for many purposes. However, one can easily become lost in a large, complex habitat (whether it be one of wood or of wit). The organization of this central page and the hyperlinks within individual pages should provide a map, a discernible trail, to lay hold of the utility and beauty of this language discipline.

*Don't be scared of the intimidating detail suggested by the odd Greek and Latin terms. After all, you can enjoy the simple beauty of a birch tree without knowing it is *Betula alba* and make use of the shade of a weeping willow without knowing it is in fact *Salix babylonica*. The same is possible with rhetoric. The names aid categorization and are more or less conventional, but I encourage you to get past the sesquipedalian labels and observe the examples and the sample criticism (rhetoric in practice). It is beyond the definitions that the power of rhetoric is made apparent.*

He's telling you what I will continue to tell you: Don't miss the forest for the trees. Don't get lost in these fancy names. They don't matter. What matters is the form and function of rhetoric—the big concepts and tools that govern beautiful and persuasive writing. There are a few terms worth memorizing (e.g., juxtaposition, appeals to logos/pathos/ethos, parallelism), but most of what you'll see beyond the basics is icing on the cake. (I'm not sure if icing goes with our forest metaphor, but there it is.)

If you know that an author is using a particular kind of tool, of course, you can go to that section of the site ([Rhetorical Terms Grouped and Sorted](#)). There you'll find all sorts of pathways to interesting terms. And while the truth is that it's pretty cool to recognize something like *congeries*, all that matters, in the end, is if you can articulate what the author is doing with language—and, most importantly of all, *why* he is doing it. If you see him (to quote the

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definition of *congeries*) "piling up words of differing meaning but for a similar emotional effect," and you can identify the emotional effect and *why* that effect matters to the overall purpose, the term itself is irrelevant.

Which is one way of telling you not to stress about terminology. Focus on the big ones—the ones you hear me identify when we read together, and the ones that appear again and again in the exemplary responses of your peers and other students—and remember the specific names only when it is obviously important (or you are told to). Keep in mind this part of Dr. Burton's introduction to the Forest of Rhetoric:

I encourage you to get past the sesquipedalian labels and observe the examples and the sample criticism (rhetoric in practice). It is beyond the definitions that the power of rhetoric is made apparent.

I hope that you will learn to love the precise names of things, because naming a thing gives you control over it. Just remember that to deconstruct an argument is really all about emulation—reading critically and thinking deeply about another's writing so that *you* can communicate more effectively. That goal stretches far beyond an author's use of chiasmus or conduplicatio. Don't miss the forest for the trees.

Free Response Essay #3: General Argument

Suggested time: 40 minutes

PATTERNS IN TOPIC SELECTION

In essence, this is an open-ended prompt that tests your ability to craft a rhetorically effective argument quickly and with maturity. The prompts are nuanced and often focus on specific events; the topics, however, usually fall under a sort of timeless heading: **conflict, competition, technology, media, identity, suffering, economics, perspective, truth, tolerance, community**. While incomplete, that list ought to suggest the breadth of this particular free response. You must be able to enter a wide range of debates with some insight and experience.

A NOTE ON GENERAL ARGUMENT PROMPTS

There are essentially two types: shorter ones that focus on *enthymemes*, or arguments in brief; and longer ones that ask you to respond to an excerpt or full passage. As you look at sample prompts, notice that the subject matter of either type usually falls under one of the patterns in topic selection listed above.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Like every free response on this exam, your general argument must meet the following standards:

- ⊕ CLARITY: Is the writing clear? Are there lapses in readability or intelligibility?
- ⊕ COHERENCE: Do the ideas in the writing connect in a consistent, systematic, and logical way?
- ⊕ COGENCY: Is the argument or crux of the writing convincing, reasonable, and thorough?
- ⊕ CONTROL: Does the prose demonstrate control of grammar and stylistic strategies?

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

The general argument also tests your intellectual and cultural awareness. Your ability to write well to one of these prompts reflects your insight into the world around you, as well as your depth of experience.

OUTLINING

You should use a few moments to outline your thoughts before writing. Here are three possibilities:

- ⊕ **DAMAGES**
See below.
- ⊕ **Traditional (5 ¶s w/multi-part thesis)**
An introduction that moves into a thesis statement with two or three distinct claims, followed by two to three paragraphs of defense of each claim, ending in a stylistic conclusion.
- ⊕ **Classical/Cicero**
See the excerpted appendices from *Thank You for Arguing* to review the classical model of argumentation. Pay special attention to the idea of concession, which we can call the art of refuting the counterargument. The presence of an insightful concession or counterargument is one way that more nuanced and effective writing separates itself from the merely adequate.

OUTLINING: DAMAGES

1. Begin with **Meaning** first. Break down the prompt and take a position on the issue or idea at the crux of the question. Attempt to write a thesis statement to drive your entire argument.
2. Second, decide what **Details** will help prove the central argument of your response. Create a quick list of support for your thesis. Which details are most persuasive? Which ones are most relevant to your response, and which ones can you cross off? Quickly decide if, how, and where you will use the **three Aristotelian appeals**, too.

3. Third, consider the **Arrangement** of the paper. How will you move between claims and support? What analysis and insight will drive each paragraph? What is the relationship between those paragraphs, and what kind of transitional language suits that relationship?
4. Next, determine what your **Approach** will be. There are as many ways to begin as there are arguments, so it is often a matter of inventiveness. Here are a few options (from IWU):
 - a. **Inquisitive:** Shows that the subject is interesting, important, or odd.
 - b. **Paradoxical:** Sets up an expectation on the reader's part, then contradicts it.
 - c. **Corrective:** Shows that the topic has been neglected or ignored.
 - d. **Preparatory:** The writer "prepares" the reader for the discourse by talking about it or apologizing or qualifying the following text.
 - e. **Narrative:** One of the most effective intros, this gambit tells an anecdote or story to snag the reader's interest and identify the subject.
5. Consider your **Ending** next. Like the **Approach**, you have many options, but you can memorize a few of the more useful stock possibilities (adapted in parts from IWU):
 - a. Leave the audience with a favorable impression of the writer's credentials and intentions
 - b. Stress the important claims made and weaken contradicting claims
 - c. Return to the opening narrative to "frame" the response
 - d. Recapitulate or summarize the most important points
6. As you begin writing, concentrate on incorporating enough **Style** to set you apart from other writers. Focus on diction and syntax first, using the right language for your purpose and any audience the prompt provides; second, attempt to include rhetorically effective techniques and devices—whichever ones suit the moment and with which you are most comfortable.
7. Finally, be aware of your **Grammar**. Avoid careless mistakes and proofread each section of your paper by re-reading it.

PREPARATORY LIST OF POSSIBLE DETAILS

The best way to prepare for a response like this—one for which you provide almost all of the detail, despite not knowing the topic going in—is to generative a list of possible examples ahead of time. Focus on *efficacy*, which is the capacity to produce an effect. Use these guidelines to start, preparing a description of:

- ⊕ **4-5 examples of important writing from the last few years**
If you use fiction, avoid the clichés of the high school English curriculum (e.g., *The Catcher in the Rye* or *The Crucible*). Avoid ubiquitous fictional texts like *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, unless they are perfect for your prompt. Try to think of specific articles that you've read carefully in or out of school.
- ⊕ **3-4 memorable movies**
Not necessarily your favorites, but a list of movies that can serve a variety of rhetorical purposes.
- ⊕ **3-4 groundbreaking television shows**
By "groundbreaking," you are looking for shows that redefined some element of the medium. *24* is an example, because it was the first modern television program to use one of Aristotle's rules of the theater (in this case, that the story should take place in real time).
- ⊕ **3-4 current events**
Choose events that are meaningful and that have generated multifaceted arguments on both sides. Don't choose celebrity weddings or scandals—unless, of course, they happen to fit.
- ⊕ **5-10 of the biggest historical moments**
Arguing from history is often effective, especially when you can use cause and effect arguments or draw allegorical parallels between historical fact and a contemporary issue.

⊕ **2-3 personal memories**

See the note below.

In addition, you will want to consider the worlds of art, music, the Internet, and so on. You need memorable data to jumpstart your thinking when you get to this essay. You need specifics. The College Board is looking for breadth and depth of cultural awareness; if your writing suggests that you only relate to the question through your personal life, you will seem egocentric, and if it suggests that you only relate to the question through pop-cultural trivia from the past year, you will seem shallow.

You should also avoid what are often called “the three Ds.” Don’t talk about death, divorce, or disease, because it is difficult to employ those ideas effectively in argument. They are charged with emotion in many cases, which impairs your thinking and writing; even when adroitly handled, they can read as trite and clichéd. In some cases, of course, death, divorce, or disease will work wonderfully. Be on the lookout for those prompts, but plan on limiting your personal anecdotal evidence to less traveled territory.