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AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE · FREE RESOURCE

AP English Language and Composition — Practice Exam 2: Answer Key, Explanations & Sample Essays

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1. Section I Answer Key

Skill codes follow the AP Course and Exam Description (1.A–8.C). Reading sets (Passages 1–2) test categories 1, 3, 5, and 7. Writing sets (Passages 3–5) test categories 2, 4, 6, and 8. Difficulty: E = easy, M = medium, H = hard.

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
1	A	1.A	1 (Reading)	E
2	C	7.A	1	M
3	B	5.C	1	M
4	D	7.A	1	E
5	A	3.C	1	M
6	B	5.C	1	M
7	D	1.B	1	H
8	C	7.B	1	H

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
9	A	3.C	1	M
10	D	5.B	1	H
11	B	7.A	1	M
12	C	3.B	1	E
13	D	1.A	2 (Reading)	E
14	A	5.C	2	M
15	B	3.C	2	M
16	C	3.A	2	E
17	A	5.C	2	M
18	D	1.B	2	M
19	B	5.B	2	H
20	C	7.C	2	H
21	D	3.C	2	M
22	A	5.A	2	H
23	C	7.A	2	E
24	B	1.B	2	H
25	D	4.B	3 (Writing)	M
26	B	4.A	3	E
27	A	6.B	3	M
28	C	4.C	3	H
29	D	2.B	3	H
30	A	6.A	3	M
31	C	8.A	3	H
32	B	2.A	3	E
33	A	8.C	4 (Writing)	E
34	D	8.B	4	M
35	B	4.A	4	E
36	C	6.C	4	M
37	D	2.B	4	M

Q#	ANSWER	SKILL	PASSAGE	DIFFICULTY
38	A	6.B	4	M
39	B	4.C	4	M
40	C	2.A	4	E
41	D	4.B	5 (Writing)	M
42	A	8.C	5	M
43	C	8.A	5	M
44	B	6.A	5	H
45	D	2.A	5	E

Answer-letter distribution: A = 11, B = 11, C = 11, D = 12. No letter repeats more than once in a row.

Difficulty distribution: 12 easy, 22 medium, 11 hard.

Skill coverage: 1.A–1.B (5 items), 2.A–2.B (5), 3.A–3.C (6), 4.A–4.C (6), 5.A–5.C (7), 6.A–6.C (5), 7.A–7.C (6), 8.A–8.C (5).

2. Section I Explanations

Passage 1 (Questions 1–12)

1. Answer: A. [Skill 1.A: Identify the exigence of a rhetorical situation.] The opening sentence announces that the writer is speaking up for hours that “the counting-house and the schoolroom agree to regard as the dregs of the day, fit only for the finishing of what the morning began” (lines 1–3). The essay exists because of that prevailing assumption, and the writer answers it directly in lines 20–22 when his neighbors say a walker “has nothing to do.” (B) is wrong because walking is the writer’s own practice, not a trend he describes. (C) is wrong because ownership of land is a metaphor in the second paragraph, not a dispute. (D) is wrong because the writer does not lament any decline in appreciation of morning; he grants “the morning its beauties” (line 30).

2. Answer: C. [Skill 7.A: Explain how word choice contributes to tone and purpose.] “Ledger,” “clerk,” “column,” and “account” form a cluster of bookkeeping words applied to the sun and the day: “We have made a ledger of the sun.” The writer uses commercial diction to characterize how his society thinks about time, as a thing to be tallied and closed out. (A) is wrong because the words are metaphors, not evidence of business experience. (B) is wrong because the writer is critical, not approving, of the ledger mentality. (D) is wrong because the writer is not praising this orderliness but implicitly questioning it.

3. Answer: B. [Skill 5.C: Recognize methods of development.] The writer states that “the ownership of things” shifts with the light, then supports this by contrasting the field at morning (belongs to the ploughman), noon (belongs to no one), and “toward four o’clock” (belongs to “whoever has the leisure to stand in it”). This is a contrast across three times of day. (A) is wrong because no farmer is quoted. (C) is wrong because legal procedures are mentioned only to say the registry “does not record” this title. (D) is wrong because the “country” no surveyor has entered (lines 10–11) is not compared to the field.

4. Answer: D. [Skill 7.A: Determine word meaning in context.] The cattle regard the writer with “incurious benevolence”; they are placid and uninterested. “Indifferent” captures this. (A) is wrong because “benevolence” rules out hostility. (B) is wrong because “unintelligent” is a literal-minded reading that misses the context of lacking curiosity about a passer-by. (C) is wrong because “curious” can mean “peculiar,” a trap built on the other sense of the root word; “incurious” is not “peculiar.”

5. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C: Explain how claims are qualified through concession.] “I do not disparage the brook” concedes that the brook (and by extension commerce) has value, which sets up the “But” in the next sentence: the brook has “never once been seen to pause upon its bank and consider where it is going.” The writer qualifies his criticism. (B) is wrong because the writer has not criticized his neighbors in a way that needs retracting. (C) is wrong because the brook is not held up as a model; it is criticized for never looking up. (D) is wrong because the writer does not concede idleness here; he insists he has “found something to do” (line 21).

6. Answer: B. [Skill 5.C: Explain the use of comparison/analogy to accomplish a purpose.] The brook is “busy” yet has never “paused upon its bank and consider[ed] where it is going”; commerce “runs because it must... and it never looks up.” The comparison separates ceaseless activity from reflection. (A) is wrong because the writer allows that commerce “carries much that is valuable” but does not celebrate it. (C) is wrong because the writer does not argue nature is superior; the brook is criticized. (D) is too broad and overreaches: the claim is that commerce lacks reflection, not that neighbors are unaware of their surroundings.

7. Answer: D. [Skill 1.B: Explain how an argument demonstrates understanding of an audience’s beliefs.] The concession “I grant the morning its beauties” presumes that readers already hold a conventional admiration for morning (“There is a notion abroad that Nature is best met early”), which the writer acknowledges before offering an unexpected criticism (“officious”). (A) is wrong because nothing suggests readers rarely rise early. (B) is wrong because the writer is not criticizing nature. (C) is wrong because the passage never suggests readers secretly prefer the afternoon. This is a hard item because (C) flatters the writer’s thesis; the passage supports only the claim that the audience holds the conventional view.

8. Answer: C. [Skill 7.B: Explain how clauses are combined to show relationships and create effects.] The sentence “It comes to the walker as a friend comes who does not need to be entertained, and sits down beside him, and says nothing, and is the better company for saying it” strings verbs together with “and,” producing a slow, calm cadence that mirrors the friend’s quiet presence. The syntax enacts what it describes. (A) is wrong because the effect is leisurely, not hurried. (B) is wrong because the clauses describe the afternoon’s actions, not a walker’s tasks. (D) is wrong because the sentence is carefully controlled, not disorganized.

9. Answer: A. [Skill 3.C: Explain how writers address counterarguments.] “I would not be understood to preach idleness” anticipates that readers (like the neighbors) might take the praise of the walker as praise of laziness, and it immediately distinguishes the walker from “the idle man.” (B) is wrong because the writer does not confess idleness. (C) is wrong because he redefines rather than rejects work: the walker is “pursuing a different work.” (D) is wrong because the subject remains the afternoon walk.

10. Answer: D. [Skill 5.B: Explain how organization reflects a line of reasoning.] The fifth paragraph first distinguishes the walker from the idle man (lines 38–41), a position the neighbors might confuse with his, and then offers what the walk yields: the maple, the ice, and being “a witness.” (A) is wrong because the paragraph’s observations are evidence for the argument, not a departure from it. (B) is wrong because it adds illustration and does not restate in technical language. (C) is wrong because the writer rejects his neighbors’ view. This item is hard because the correct option is a two-part description and distractors each get one piece plausibly wrong.

11. Answer: B. [Skill 7.A: Explain how word choice and syntax create tone.] The paragraph ends with a pointed warning: "If we cannot spare an hour to hear the question, we have perhaps answered it already—and not to our credit." The moral tone is cautioning, which fits "admonitory." (A) is wrong because wistfulness would require longing for a lost past, which the passage does not express. (C) is wrong because the closing is measured, not jubilant. (D) is wrong because the writer is not seeking agreement through accommodation but warning.

12. Answer: C. [Skill 3.B: Identify the overarching thesis.] The writer claims that the walker is "pursuing a different work, which the world has not yet learned to pay for" (lines 40–41) and that the afternoon "asks what we have become." The thesis is that unhurried attention is valuable work that society undervalues. (A) is wrong because the writer does not claim walkers accomplish more. (B) is too narrow and misrepresents a minor point. (D) is wrong because "commerce has destroyed" overstates; the writer says commerce "carries much that is valuable."

Passage 2 (Questions 13–24)

13. Answer: D. [Skill 1.A: Identify purpose.] The writer begins by noting how little is understood, reports laboratory findings, then says "I should be sorry to leave the reader with the notion that the matter is settled" (line 40). The purpose is to explain recent findings while admitting their limits. (A) is wrong because no medical advice is given. (B) is wrong because the writer is gently humorous about physiologists, not ridiculing them. (C) is too narrow: methods are one part of one paragraph.

14. Answer: A. [Skill 5.C: Recognize the use of analogy to accomplish a purpose.] The comparison, "explaining the purpose of a railway by remarking that trains are frequently observed to stand still," shows how little it tells us to say that sleep is "for resting": it describes what happens without explaining what it accomplishes. (B) is wrong because the analogy is about an inadequate explanation, not about sleep as travel. (C) is wrong because the target of the joke is the physiologist's answer, not the visitor's question. (D) is wrong because the regularity of sleep is not the point.

15. Answer: B. [Skill 3.C: Explain how claims are qualified.] The writer grants the older view some truth ("There is truth in this") and then limits it ("but it does not go far"), setting up the example of the man who lies awake. (A) is wrong because the view is not dismissed as "entirely mistaken." (C) is wrong because the writer does not endorse the schoolbooks. (D) is wrong because the bankruptcy metaphor was introduced in the previous sentence.

16. Answer: C. [Skill 3.A: Identify and explain claims and evidence.] The man who lies "perfectly still in a darkened room for eight hours, resolutely awake, is not refreshed; he is exhausted. Rest alone will not do what sleep does." The example is evidence that rest and sleep differ. (A) is wrong because darkness is not compared with daylight. (B) is wrong because the problem is not duration. (D) is wrong because insomnia is not discussed.

17. Answer: A. [Skill 5.C: Recognize methods of development.] The paragraph describes the course of a night's sleep and organizes it around the image of "a landscape of hills and valleys," with "trough," "climbs," and "slopes." (B) is wrong because the paragraph describes a typical pattern, not one volunteer's night. (C) is wrong because the banker and ploughboy are mentioned once, in passing. (D) is wrong because the poets' view is mentioned briefly, not refuted at length.

18. Answer: D. [Skill 1.B: Explain how an argument appeals to audience.] Naming extremes of social station (a financier and a farm laborer) makes the point that the pattern is universal, which lends the findings authority for a general audience. (A) is wrong because the writer is not suspicious of science. (B) is wrong because nothing here evokes nostalgia. (C) is wrong because the reference is not about money.

19. Answer: B. [Skill 5.B: Explain how organization reflects a line of reasoning.] The question and “Here the evidence grows thinner and the speculation thicker” mark the shift from the measured patterns of sleep (the third paragraph) to theories about what the mind does, which the writer treats with caution. (A) is wrong because the writer is not confused; he is characterizing the state of evidence. (C) is wrong because the question is rhetorical and answered immediately. (D) is wrong because the paragraph moves to new material rather than summarizing the old.

20. Answer: C. [Skill 7.C: Explain how punctuation contributes to clarity and effect.] The dash introduces a correction of what readers might assume: that the newspaper interfered “because it was dull.” The writer instead says “because it was new,” and the dash sets up that reversal. (A) is wrong because the dash is not an interruption. (B) is wrong because the aside is directly related to the experiment. (D) is wrong because the passage specifically denies that dullness was the issue. This is a hard item because (D) is the intuitive wrong reading.

21. Answer: D. [Skill 3.C: Explain how claims are qualified.] The writer qualifies the harbor theory by naming what it fails to explain: why the sleeper deprived of the deepest trough wakes “irritable and stupid,” and the dream. (A) is wrong because the experimental evidence is accepted as “suggestive.” (B) is wrong because the theory is attributed to “one school,” not to poets. (C) is wrong because no alternative theory of dreams is proposed.

22. Answer: A. [Skill 5.A: Describe the line of reasoning.] The passage opens by saying sleep is little understood, rejects the “bankruptcy” explanation as insufficient, reports hints from the laboratory, admits what remains unexplained, and closes by claiming that sleep is actively valuable. (B) is wrong because the passage is not chronological. (C) is wrong because it does not argue for one of two theories. (D) is wrong because several findings are discussed, and the claims are carefully limited.

23. Answer: C. [Skill 7.A: Determine word meaning in context.] “Strenuous occupations” refers to the idea that sleep is active work; “actively demanding” fits and matches the contrast with sleep as “the absence of life.” (A) is wrong because “exhausting” carries a sense of draining that the passage does not suggest. (B) is wrong because sleep is not painful. (D) is wrong because “difficult to understand” confuses “strenuous” with a different idea that appeared earlier.

24. Answer: B. [Skill 1.B: Explain how an argument anticipates its audience.] The writer says the man “who boasts of needing only five hours” is “leaving half his correspondence unanswered,” and predicts that the well-slept man will not be seen “as a loafer who has found an excuse.” This assumes readers currently admire the short sleeper and suspect the long sleeper of idleness. (A) is wrong because the writer is still persuading. (C) is wrong because the writer values being well-read. (D) is wrong because nothing suggests readers took part in experiments.

Passage 3 (Questions 25–32)

25. Answer: D. [Skill 4.B: Write a thesis that requires proof and previews structure.] Sentence 3 is a bare position. Choice (D) states the claim and previews the two lines of reasoning the paragraphs develop: tuition as a barrier for low-income students (paragraph 2) and the public benefit of education (paragraph 3). (A) is a claim but does not preview the structure and introduces “human right,” which the draft never argues. (B) is a claim with vague intensifiers (“definitely,” “as soon as possible”) and no preview. (C) is a statement of fact rather than a defensible claim.

26. Answer: B. [Skill 4.A: Develop a paragraph with a claim and supporting evidence.] Sentence 6 asserts that first-generation enrollment “rose sharply.” Choice (B) supplies specific, comparative data. (A) offers anecdotal opinion on a different point (feeling welcome). (C) is on topic but is not evidence. (D) is true but irrelevant to the enrollment claim.

27. Answer: A. [Skill 6.B: Use transitions to clarify relationships.] Sentence 6 is about enrollment and sentence 7 adds a different benefit, completion rates. “Beyond enrollment,” signals this addition. (B) implies a contrast that does not exist. (C) is wrong because sentence 7 is not an example of sentence 6. (D) is wrong because improved completion is not presented as a result of enrollment.

28. Answer: C. [Skill 4.C: Qualify a claim using counterarguments.] “To be sure, federal grants already cover tuition for the poorest students” raises a real objection and then answers it, specifying the gap that free tuition fills. This both acknowledges the counterargument and supports the thesis. (A) dismisses opposing views condescendingly and adds nothing. (B) overstates (“the only obstacle”) and contradicts the draft’s own acknowledgment of other factors. (D) attacks opponents’ motives, which is a fallacy and undermines credibility.

29. Answer: D. [Skill 2.B: Demonstrate understanding of an audience’s beliefs, values, or needs.] Skeptical taxpayers care about efficient use of limited public money. Choice (D) states their position fairly and in their terms (“limited public money,” “scarce dollars,” “targeting aid”), which makes the later rebuttal more credible. (A) insults critics. (B) is vague and loaded (“terrible idea”). (C) restates a generic objection that is not the critics’ actual argument in the draft.

30. Answer: A. [Skill 6.A: Develop commentary that explains the line of reasoning.] The writer drew an analogy between free high school and free community college. Choice (A) explains how the analogy supports the thesis: if the logic of free schooling is public benefit, it extends to the next two years. (B) is a historical fact that does not explain. (C) asserts a conclusion without explanation. (D) raises a point that complicates the analogy.

31. Answer: C. [Skill 8.A: Strategically use words and syntax to convey tone.] The sentence needs to be more emphatic while staying measured. Choice (C) names the evidence and ends firmly (“points firmly toward yes”). (A) is colloquial and unsupported. (B) is condescending toward readers. (D) abandons the claim and shifts to an inappropriate first-person stance.

32. Answer: B. [Skill 2.A: Write conclusions appropriate to purpose.] Choice (B) returns to the 1947 commission mentioned in the introduction and reinforces the argument by tying it to the evidence discussed. (A) is generic. (C) shifts to advice about scholarships that contradicts the thesis. (D) introduces a new claim about four-year universities unsupported in the draft.

Passage 4 (Questions 33–40)

33. Answer: A. [Skill 8.C: Use grammar and mechanics.] The original is a comma splice. Choice (A) fixes it with “and” and keeps the comparison clear (“than other students do”). (B) and (C) create fragments and awkward constructions (“since athletes needing...”), (D) is a run-on with no punctuation.

34. Answer: D. [Skill 8.B: Write sentences that clearly convey ideas.] Choice (D) preserves all the information, orders the ideas logically, and uses a semicolon with “therefore” to connect cause and effect. (A) misplaces modifiers (“this is for decades”). (B) strings clauses together awkwardly and misplaces “roughly two hours.” (C) drops the point entirely.

35. Answer: B. [Skill 4.A: Develop a paragraph with a claim and evidence.] Choice (B) offers a specific, quantified study that directly supports the injury claim. (A) is anecdotal. (C) is background not evidence for the claim. (D) addresses fatigue in classes, not injuries.

36. Answer: C. [Skill 6.C: Use appropriate methods of development.] Choice (C) uses cause-and-effect reasoning ("Because deep sleep is when the brain consolidates the motor patterns... an athlete who shortens that sleep is effectively erasing part of the afternoon's practice"). (A) is an irrelevant fact. (B) is a broad generalization. (D) offers a remedy that does not extend the causal reasoning.

37. Answer: D. [Skill 2.B: Understand an audience's needs.] Administrators need practical solutions. Choice (D) acknowledges the problem and supplies concrete ways districts have solved it. (A) insults the audience. (B) dismisses real concerns, and the writer has just conceded they are real. (C) concedes the problems cannot be solved, undermining the thesis.

38. Answer: A. [Skill 6.B: Use transitions.] Sentence 10 concedes the problems are real and sentence 11 reports that they are overcome. "Yet" signals the turn. (B) implies that sentence 11 follows from sentence 10. (C) suggests a parallel that does not exist. (D) suggests a restatement.

39. Answer: B. [Skill 4.C: Qualify a claim.] Choice (B) softens "the group for whom the change matters most" to "among the groups" and supports it with reasons. (A) and (C) strengthen the claim through absolutes ("only," "every," "equally"). (D) retreats so far that no claim remains.

40. Answer: C. [Skill 2.A: Write conclusions.] Choice (C) ties athletes' training demands to the need for sleep and names the proposed solution, reinforcing the line of reasoning. (A) is generic. (B) and (D) shift to topics not developed in the draft.

Passage 5 (Questions 41–45)

41. Answer: D. [Skill 4.B: Write a thesis that previews structure.] Choice (D) takes a position (the rise owes more to features of the medium than to any hit show) and previews the three features the second paragraph develops: flexibility (sentence 4), freedom from the screen (sentence 5), and intimacy (sentences 6–8). (A) is a narrow claim the draft does not support. (B) is a vague overgeneralization. (C) is a statement of fact.

42. Answer: A. [Skill 8.C: Use conventions of grammar.] The original is a comma splice. Choice (A) uses a colon to introduce an explanation, and the coordinated clauses that follow are correctly joined. (B) and (D) retain comma splices. (C) creates a sentence with no main clause.

43. Answer: C. [Skill 8.A: Convey a specific tone or style.] The draft uses concrete, plainspoken examples ("a sink full of dishes"). Choice (C) continues this with concrete images. (A) is stiffly jargon-laden. (B) is too casual ("really cool," "stuff"). (D) shifts to unsourced statistics, a different register.

44. Answer: B. [Skill 6.A: Develop commentary that explains the claim.] Choice (B) explains why weakness and appeal are "the same thing": the unedited quality that builds trust is what makes unreliable hosts trusted. (A) is a bare opinion. (C) denies the premise. (D) is a vague summary that explains nothing. This is hard because the correct answer must be read carefully against the claim.

45. Answer: D. [Skill 2.A: Write introductions appropriate to the purpose.] Choice (D) opens with a concrete, vivid scene that engages and anticipates the paragraph's subject. (A) announces rather than engages. (B) gives a definition the next sentence already implies is unnecessary. (C) shifts to first person in an expository essay.

3. Question 1 (Synthesis): Community Service Requirements

3.1 Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	There is no defensible thesis. The response only restates the prompt, summarizes the sources without taking a position, or equivocates ("there are good arguments on both sides").
1	The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position on the extent to which high schools should require community service for graduation.

Decision rules. The thesis may be one or more sentences and may appear anywhere in the response. It must take a position; "service has benefits and drawbacks" does not. A conditional position ("yes, but only if...") is defensible and earns the point because it takes a stance that could be argued against. A thesis that merely says "service requirements are controversial" earns 0. The point is earned even if the body of the essay does not support the thesis.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Restates the thesis, repeats provided information, or references fewer than two of the provided sources.
1	Evidence from or references to at least two of the provided sources. Commentary summarizes the sources rather than explaining how they support the thesis.
2	Evidence from at least three of the provided sources. Commentary explains how some of the evidence relates to the thesis, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.
3	Specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources supports all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of the evidence supports the line of reasoning, but the explanation is uneven.
4	Specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources supports all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning.

Typical responses by point value.

- **1 point:** Mentions Sources A, B, and D by letter but mostly paraphrases ("Source B says reflection is important. Source D has a table showing different percentages."). Little or no explanation of why this

matters for the thesis.

- **2 points:** Uses three sources with some explanation, but the paragraphs are parallel, each tied to one source, and could be reordered ("Source A shows cost. Source C shows equity. Source E shows an example."). Or relies on generalities about "teaching responsibility" with thin source evidence.
- **3 points:** Builds a recognizable line of reasoning (for example, benefits depend on design; design carries costs; therefore require with conditions), supports each claim with specific evidence, but commentary lapses into "this shows" for one or more points, or one claim is supported only by assertion.
- **4 points:** Each paragraph develops the preceding one; sources are put in conversation (for example, using Source D's table to test Source B's claim, or Source E to complicate Source C); commentary consistently says why the evidence matters to the thesis, not just what it says. Mechanical errors do not interfere with communication.

Decision rules. A response cannot earn the fourth point if errors in grammar or mechanics interfere with communication. Merely listing "as seen in Sources B, C, and E" without specific evidence is bundling and does not count as specific evidence from each. Evidence from the visual (Source F) or the table (Source D) counts if the student accurately interprets it. Misreading the table (for example, treating the 38% as the share who dislike service) limits Row B because the evidence is not accurate.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Does not meet the criteria for sophistication.
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing one of the following consistently: (1) crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions across the sources; (2) articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student's or the sources') by situating it within a broader context; (3) making effective rhetorical choices that strengthen the force and impact of the student's argument; (4) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

What does NOT earn the point: sweeping generalizations about "society" or "today's youth" presented as context; a single acknowledgment of the other side ("Of course, some people disagree") without exploration; ornate or overly writerly language that does not advance the argument; a sophisticated final sentence that is not part of the essay's overall argument.

3.2 Scoring notes for this prompt

What a defensible thesis looks like. The thesis must take a position on "the extent to which" high schools should require service. Defensible theses include:

- Yes, require it, with structured reflection and accommodation for working students.
- No, do not require it; fund and recognize voluntary service instead.

- Require it, but only in the form of a short, high-quality program (for instance, a one-semester service-learning course) rather than an hour total.
- Districts should decide locally, since costs and opportunities vary (defensible only if it takes a position and supports it).

What strong responses might argue (at least six):

1. The mandate is not the “active ingredient”; the quality of the program is (Source B). Therefore, if schools require service, they must fund reflection and partnerships.
2. Source D’s table quantifies this: required hours with reflection yield 54% volunteering a year later, while required hours without reflection yield 38%, which is *lower* than the 41% for schools with no requirement but service recognition. A mandate done badly appears to be worse than none.
3. Source E (Navarro) shows the “door-opening” effect: she would never have walked in without the requirement, yet she also says the requirement “is not the thing that works”; what worked was being asked to contribute her Spanish. The requirement and the relationship are separable.
4. Source C (Haines) and Source A (Adeyemi) raise equity: students with jobs and caregiving duties are burdened, and caregiving at home may not “count.” A thoughtful mandate should credit work and family service or reduce hours.
5. Source F (cartoon) satirizes the transactional result: the teenager asks the volunteer to sign a form while the line of people waits. This is the failure mode Source B and D’s “box to check” column describe (61%).
6. Source A’s cost estimate (\$40–\$90 per student per year) is evidence that doing the program well has costs, which supporters understate and which should be weighed against its benefits.
7. A student could argue that the voluntary/compulsory distinction is overstated: other graduation requirements (such as a government course) compel civic learning without being called a tax, which complicates Source C’s claim that compelled service is a “tax.”
8. Sophisticated responses may note that Source B’s study is correlational and that schools with reflection components may differ in other ways; they may also note that Source D surveys graduates one year out, so long-term effects are not shown.

Common traps.

- Summarizing each source in turn (“Source A says... Source B says...”).
- Misreading Table 1, for example saying 54% of students “hated” service.
- Treating the cartoon as decoration; strong responses interpret it, but weak ones only describe it.
- Taking an extreme position and ignoring evidence that complicates it (for instance, ignoring Navarro’s account).
- Quoting without commentary, or commentary that only restates the quotation.
- Citing the sources as “the article” or “the graph” so that the reader cannot tell which is meant.

3.3 Sample Response: Score 6

Row A: 1 | Row B: 4 | Row C: 1 | Total: 6

Legislators who want to build civic habits in teenagers are tempted by a simple instrument: a number of hours, a form, and a signature. But the evidence suggests that the number is not the point. High schools should require community service for graduation only when they are willing to pay for what makes service mean something,

which is structured reflection and flexibility for the students who can least afford the time. A mandate without those things buys a statistic and not a habit.

The strongest argument for a requirement is that compulsion can open a door that students would not open themselves. Teresa Navarro, interviewed in Source E, is honest about this. Working at a pharmacy and picking up her brother every day, she “would never have walked in the door” of the food pantry if her school had not made her. Her story matters because it answers the objection that required service is hollow by definition: for her, the requirement was the only thing that put her in the room where a director could learn her name and ask for her Spanish. Source B, the longitudinal study by Rosen and Okafor, supports the general point: graduates of schools with requirements were “modestly more likely” to volunteer and vote as adults. A voluntary program, which draws the students who would have served anyway, cannot reach a student like Navarro.

Yet Navarro herself undercuts any simple defense of the mandate. “I don’t think the requirement is the thing that works,” she says, pointing to classmates who filed papers in an office, “never talked to a single person who benefited,” and forgot it by graduation. Source D puts numbers on her intuition, and the numbers are more troubling than the averages in Source B. One year after graduation, 54 percent of graduates from schools that required hours with structured reflection had volunteered, against 38 percent where hours were required without reflection. The second figure is lower than the 41 percent in schools with no requirement at all but with service recognized on transcripts. In other words, a requirement badly done is not merely useless; it may be worse than doing nothing. The 61 percent of that group who called their service “mostly a box to check” explain why. Source F makes the same point in a single image: a teenager at the head of a soup-kitchen line holds out a clipboard to the volunteer ladling the soup, thanking her for “letting me help” and asking for a signature, while a hungry man behind him looks at his empty bowl. The cartoon is unfair to many students, but it identifies the failure mode exactly: when the hour becomes the goal, the people served become props.

If reflection is the active ingredient, then the cost of a good mandate is higher than supporters admit, and this is where opponents have their best case. Source A reports that the state education department expects administration to cost districts \$40 to \$90 per student per year, and that figure covers verifying placements, not running the reflection seminar that Source B says matters. Meanwhile Senator Adeyemi’s objection that a student who works at a grocery store until ten “must also find sixty unpaid hours” and Gregory Haines’s story of a girl whose care for her sick mother “did not count” show that the burden lands unevenly. A mandate that ignores these facts will punish the students the policy claims to help, which is Haines’s central charge. But the charge is a criticism of a design, not of the idea. A district that credits caregiving and paid work, reduces the hours, and funds a debriefing seminar answers Haines without surrendering the door that Navarro walked through.

Therefore the question for legislators is not whether to require service but whether they are willing to require the whole of it. Haines is right that a gift compelled can become a tax, and Navarro is right that a gift never offered is often never given. The resolution is a requirement that is short enough to respect students’ time, flexible enough to count the service they already perform, and structured enough that someone asks them to be, in Navarro’s words, “a person instead of a time sheet.” Without that investment, the state should save its \$40 to \$90 and spend it on programs that students want to join.

(Approximately 725 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis (“High schools should require community service for graduation only when they are willing to pay for what makes service mean something...”) takes a conditional but clear position that someone could argue against. It earns the point.

Row B (4 points). The essay uses specific evidence from Sources A, B, C, D, E, and F, and each claim in the line of reasoning is supported. The line of reasoning builds: compulsion opens doors (E, B) → but the door leads nowhere without reflection (E, D, F) → reflection costs money and burdens the poor (A, C) → therefore the mandate should be conditioned on investment. Each paragraph develops the one before it. Commentary is consistent: for example, the writer does not merely report the 38 and 41 percent figures; she explains that they imply “a requirement badly done... may be worse than doing nothing.” The writer also uses sources in conversation: Navarro complicates Haines; Table 1 tests the general claim of Source B; Source A’s cost figure is placed against what Source B says is needed. Grammar and mechanics are controlled.

Row C (1 point). The essay consistently explores a tension (compulsion that opens a door versus compulsion that turns service into a transaction) and does not resolve it by picking a side. It also articulates a limitation in the sources (the \$40–\$90 figure covers verification, not reflection), situating the argument in the practical context of legislative cost. Sophistication is part of the argument throughout.

3.4 Sample Response: Score 4

Row A: 1 | Row B: 3 | Row C: 0 | Total: 4

High schools should require community service hours for graduation because service teaches students responsibility and helps their communities, even though some students may be burdened by the requirement.

One reason schools should require service is that it can get students involved who would never volunteer on their own. In Source E, Teresa Navarro says that she had a job at a pharmacy and took care of her brother, so she did not think she had time for sixty hours. But the only slot that fit her schedule was Saturday mornings at a food pantry, and after two months the director knew her name and asked her to help Spanish-speaking families. She says that she is “still going” after the requirement ended and that she would never have walked in the door if the school had not made her. This shows that a requirement can start a habit of service in a student who did not plan to serve. Without the requirement, Teresa would have missed the chance to feel useful, and the food pantry would have lost a volunteer.

Another reason is that research shows service requirements can have a lasting effect on students, as long as they are done well. Source B is a study that followed over three thousand graduates for eight years. It found that students from schools with requirements were more likely to volunteer and vote as adults. However, the study found that this was mostly true where the program included reflection, such as writing or discussing the experience with a teacher. Where hours were only logged and signed, the effects were small. This means that schools should require service but also make sure that students think about what they did. Source D supports this with a table that shows that 54% of students from schools with reflection volunteered later, compared to only 38% from schools without it.

Some people argue that a service requirement is unfair. In Source C, a retired principal says that “a gift that is compelled is a tax” and that students with jobs or families have the heaviest loads. This is a good point, because some students really do have a lot to do. Source A also says that nearly a third of seniors have paying jobs. However, I think the benefits outweigh the problems. Schools could let students count work or family care hours, or give them more time to finish the hours, so the requirement would not be as hard. The cartoon in Source F shows a student asking a volunteer to sign a form, which shows that some students only care about the hours, but this is why reflection is important.

In conclusion, service requirements help students and communities if they are designed with reflection and flexibility. Schools should require community service because it builds responsible citizens, and the evidence in the sources shows that it can make a lasting difference.

(Approximately 470 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis ("High schools should require community service hours for graduation because service teaches students responsibility and helps their communities, even though some students may be burdened") takes a defensible position. It earns the point.

Row B (3 points). The essay draws specific evidence from Sources B, C, D, E, and A and F, and it offers a recognizable line of reasoning: a requirement can start a habit (E) → but only if done well (B, D) → and the burden on students can be reduced (C, A, F). The evidence is specific (Navarro's Saturday mornings; the 54% versus 38% figures). Commentary explains some of the evidence: the paragraph on Source B draws a real inference ("schools should require service but also make sure that students think about what they did"). However, the commentary is uneven. In the first paragraph, "This shows that a requirement can start a habit" mostly restates the anecdote, and the closing sentence of that paragraph ("the food pantry would have lost a volunteer") is generic. The cartoon is described and then dismissed in one sentence without being integrated into the argument. The response does not reach 4 because commentary is not consistent, and because sources are used one at a time (paragraph by paragraph) rather than placed in conversation with each other: the counterargument from Source C is acknowledged but answered with an unsupported claim ("Schools could let students count work or family care hours").

Row C (0 points). The essay recognizes the opposing view but concedes it briefly and then moves on ("I think the benefits outweigh the problems"). It does not explore a tension in the sources or situate the argument in a broader context, and the conclusion repeats the thesis. A token concession does not earn sophistication.

3.5 Sample Response: Score 2

Row A: 1 | Row B: 1 | Row C: 0 | Total: 2

I think that high schools should require community service for graduation. It is a good thing for students to do because it helps the community and makes students more responsible.

In Source A, the state Senate voted to make every high school student do 60 hours of community service. Senator Lindqvist said that it would give students "a reason to look up from their phones and see who lives next door." This is a good reason because many students are on their phones too much and they do not pay attention to their communities. Community service gets them off their phones and helps them see other people.

In Source E, Teresa Navarro talks about how she had to do 60 hours at a food pantry. She did not want to at first but then she liked it and she is still going. This shows that service is a good thing for students. A lot of students would never do service if they were not made to.

Some people do not agree. In Source C, the author says that you cannot mandate a virtue and that service should be a gift. He says that some students have jobs and families and do not have time. Source A also says that some students have jobs. These are some problems with the requirement but I still think it is a good idea because the benefits are bigger.

Source D has a table that shows how many students volunteered after graduating. It shows that students who had a requirement with reflection volunteered more. This shows that requirements work.

In conclusion, high schools should require community service. It helps students and it helps communities. Students who do service learn to care about other people and become better citizens. Therefore schools should make it a requirement for graduation.

(Approximately 305 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The first sentence takes a clear, defensible position. It earns the point.

Row B (1 point). The response references at least three sources (A, C, D, E) but mostly summarizes them. Paragraph two paraphrases Source A and then makes a generalization about phones that the source does not support. Paragraph three retells Navarro's story and concludes only that "service is a good thing." Paragraph four reports that Source C has objections and then dismisses them with "I still think it is a good idea because the benefits are bigger," without evidence. The treatment of Source D's table is a misreading in effect: the response says the table shows "requirements work," but the table shows that requirements without reflection performed worse than no requirement at all (38% vs. 41%), which is the opposite of the claim. There is no line of reasoning; the paragraphs are parallel and could be reordered. Because the evidence is general and commentary consists of summary and "this shows," the response earns 1 point and not 2.

Row C (0 points). There is no nuance, tension, or broader context; the conclusion repeats the thesis and relies on generalizations ("become better citizens").

4. Question 2 (Rhetorical Analysis): Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments"

4.1 Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	There is no defensible thesis. The response only restates the prompt, describes the passage, or names devices ("Stanton uses ethos, pathos, and logos") without making a claim about her rhetorical choices.
1	The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.

Decision rules. The thesis must make a claim about *how* Stanton's choices work, not just that she makes an argument. Naming choices by description ("Stanton borrows the structure of the Declaration of Independence and then lists grievances against men") is as acceptable as naming them by label. A thesis that merely repeats the prompt ("Stanton uses rhetorical choices to convey that women deserve equal rights") earns 0. The thesis may be more than one sentence and may appear anywhere.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Simply restates the thesis, repeats information from the prompt, or offers no evidence from the passage.
1	Provides evidence that is mostly general. Commentary summarizes the passage or only identifies devices without explaining them.
2	Provides some specific, relevant evidence. Commentary explains how some of the evidence relates to the thesis, but there is no line of reasoning, or the line of reasoning is faulty.
3	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer's argument or purpose.
4	Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer's argument or purpose.

Typical responses by point value.

- **1 point:** "Stanton uses repetition, allusion, and appeals to emotion." Quotes appear without explanation of function, or the response retells what the Declaration says.
- **2 points:** Identifies the allusion to the Declaration of Independence and the repeated "He has," with some effect named ("emphasizes her point," "shows she's angry"), but paragraphs are organized by device and no line of reasoning builds.
- **3 points:** Follows the passage's movement (preamble, grievances, demand) and explains specific choices (the "decent respect" opening, the anaphora) in relation to Stanton's purpose, but commentary on other choices drops to labeling, or the explanation is uneven.
- **4 points:** Explains how several choices work together and why each suits the audience and occasion (for example, how the borrowed language, the concession to prudence, the escalating grievances, and the closing resolution build a case that women's claims are conservative applications of existing American principles).

Decision rules. Multiple instances of the same choice (for example, the many "He has" sentences) count toward the fourth point only if each is shown to advance the argument. Errors in grammar or mechanics that interfere with communication prevent the fourth point. Treating the text as an essay and referring to "readers" when it is a document meant to be read aloud at a convention is not itself penalized, but misidentifying the speaker or audience weakens the demonstration of understanding the rhetorical situation.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Does not meet the criteria for sophistication.

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing one of the following consistently: (1) explaining the significance or relevance of the writer's rhetorical choices given the rhetorical situation; (2) explaining the purpose or function of the passage's complexities or tensions; (3) employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.

What does NOT earn the point: sweeping generalizations about the history of women's rights; hinting at other arguments without exploring them; examining individual choices without relating them to one another; oversimplifying the passage's complexities (for example, treating the text as a simple attack on men); ornate language that does not enhance the argument.

4.2 Scoring notes for this prompt

What a defensible thesis looks like. A strong thesis names choices and purpose. Examples: "By recasting the Declaration of Independence to include women, building an indictment through the escalating, repeated charges of 'He has,' and closing with a demand framed as a legal and natural right, Stanton presents women's claims not as a radical departure from American principles but as their unfulfilled completion." Also defensible: a thesis arguing that Stanton adopts the rhetoric of revolution while restraining it with the language of prudence, to win a skeptical audience that equates reform with disorder.

What strong responses might argue (at least six):

1. **Allusion and appropriation.** The passage borrows the structure and language of the Declaration of Independence ("When, in the course of human events," "We hold these truths to be self-evident") and adds "and women," which asserts that women's claim rests on the nation's own founding principles and invites the audience to apply their own values consistently.
2. **Concession to prudence.** Stanton includes the acknowledgment that "governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes" and that "mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable." This presents the demand as reluctant and reasoned, establishing credibility (ethos) with moderate listeners wary of agitators.
3. **Reversal of the target.** In Jefferson's text the tyrant is a distant king. Here "man" is the tyrant, and the audience (including men present) is implicated. The phrase "let facts be submitted to a candid world" pairs a legal register (evidence, trial) with a call for fairness that the audience is expected to share.
4. **Anaphora and escalation.** The repeated "He has" builds an inescapable pattern, and the grievances rise from political (the franchise) to legal and economic (civil death, property, wages) to bodily and moral (chastisement) to educational and psychological (confidence and self-respect). The move from external laws to internal damage frames the cumulative harm as total.
5. **Legal and juridical diction.** "Civilly dead," "usurpations," "impunity," "elective franchise," and "covenant" speak the language of law and contract. They show that Stanton understands her audience's own vocabulary of rights and treat marriage as a legal arrangement open to critique.
6. **Irony and comparison.** The charge that rights are withheld "from her... which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners" shames an audience that prizes citizenship, making the exclusion appear arbitrary rather than principled.

7. **Shift from grievance to demand.** The transitional “Now, in view of...” marks the move from indictment to action: “we insist that they have immediate admission.” The first-person plural “we” now replaces the third-person “she/her” of the grievances, uniting the convention and shifting from description to resolve. The Resolution then rests the claim on “the great precept of nature,” giving it authority above any statute.
8. **Complexity/tension (sophistication).** Stanton is simultaneously radical (declaring tyranny) and loyal (invoking national founding documents and claiming “citizens of these United States”). The grievances also use the passive, victimized “her” while the declaration itself shows women acting as political agents. Strong responses explain the function of these tensions.

Common traps.

- Listing devices (allusion, anaphora, appeal to pathos) without saying what each does.
- Calling the grievances “emotional appeals” without explaining that the legal diction is largely logical and ethical.
- Writing as though Stanton were speaking in the twenty-first century or “today’s feminists” (anachronism).
- Misidentifying the Seneca Falls convention as an event for men only, or confusing the Declaration of Sentiments with the Declaration of Independence.
- Summarizing the grievances in order (paraphrase) rather than analyzing their arrangement.
- Not using the rhetorical situation (a convention in 1848, an audience that includes both skeptics and allies, and later newspaper readers).

4.3 Sample Response: Score 6

Row A: 1 | Row B: 4 | Row C: 1 | Total: 6

In 1848, a woman who wished to claim a political right had to do so in the voice of people who had already denied it. Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s solution at Seneca Falls was to use that voice itself. By borrowing the language of the Declaration of Independence, tempering its revolutionary logic with an appeal to prudence, building a pattern of charges that escalates from the ballot box to the mind, and finally turning from indictment to demand, Stanton presents women’s claim to equal citizenship not as an assault on American principles but as their overdue fulfillment.

Stanton’s opening moves establish that fulfillment. “When, in the course of human events” and “We hold these truths to be self-evident” are phrases that her audience, a convention of reformers meeting in a nation that revered its founding documents, would have known by heart. She changes one thing: “all men and women are created equal.” That small addition accomplishes two things at once. It tells the audience that she is not inventing a new standard, only applying theirs, and it forces them to ask why a principle that is “self-evident” for men needs a footnote for women. The rhetorical force of the allusion lies in its reliability; to reject Stanton’s claim, a listener would have to reject the Declaration’s.

Stanton is aware, however, that a text so closely modeled on a revolution could sound like a threat, and she restrains it. In the middle of her preamble she concedes that “governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes” and that “mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves.” The concession is Jefferson’s, but in Stanton’s mouth it performs a different task. It presents women as reluctant, not rash: their demand comes only after “a long train of abuses” and “patient sufferance.” This restraint builds her credibility with the moderate listeners she needs, the men and women who might sympathize but who fear disorder, and it makes the later charges harder to dismiss as a tantrum.

The core of the Declaration is the list of grievances, and here Stanton's most important choice is its arrangement. The repeated "He has" gives the list the cadence of a verdict. But the sequence matters as much as the repetition. The first charges are political: "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise." Then they become legal and economic: "He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead"; "He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns." The diction is the vocabulary of courts, and so it invites a lawyer's, not a sentimentalist's, response; "civilly dead" is a legal fact stated plainly, and the horror comes from its plainness. Next the charges turn bodily and moral: the husband is "her master" with the power "to administer chastisement." Finally they reach the inner life: "to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life." Moving from the franchise to the psyche, Stanton implies that each injury produces the next, and that the withdrawal of political rights is not one wrong among many but the root of a system. It is a logical argument disguised as a list.

Stanton also knows how to shame. She observes that the franchise is denied to women while it is "given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners." The insult is calculated for an audience that prided itself on citizenship: it exposes the exclusion as arbitrary, since the criterion cannot be intelligence or native birth, and so what remains is only sex.

The passage turns at "Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement." The grammatical subject changes from "he" and "her" to "we," and the verb from "has" to "insist." After pages of reporting what has been done to women, Stanton shows women acting, and the call for "immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States" claims citizenship in the very sentence that demands it. The closing Resolution then declares that unequal laws are "contrary to the great precept of nature, and therefore of no force or authority." The final appeal moves above the statute book to nature, the same authority that grounded Jefferson's claim, and so completes the circle begun in the first line.

What makes the rhetoric effective is the tension it holds without resolving: Stanton is both revolutionary and loyal. She accuses, but she does so in the nation's own words; she declares tyranny, but she claims membership. That tension is the source of her authority, because it tells the audience that women are not asking to leave the republic, only to be counted in it.

(Approximately 810 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis names specific choices (borrowing the Declaration's language, tempering it with prudence, escalating the grievances, turning to demand) and a purpose (to present women's claim as the fulfillment of American principles). It earns the point.

Row B (4 points). The essay follows the passage's movement and builds a line of reasoning in which each paragraph advances the last: allusion establishes the claim as American → restraint makes it credible → the escalating list makes the case → the comparison to "ignorant and degraded men" shames → the shift to "we" converts argument to action. Evidence is specific and quoted. Commentary explains *how* each choice works on this audience and consistently ties the choice to Stanton's purpose (for example, "'civilly dead' is a legal fact stated plainly, and the horror comes from its plainness"). Several choices (allusion, concession, anaphora and escalation, comparison, pronoun shift, appeal to nature) are explained, so the multiple-choices criterion for the fourth point is met. Mechanics are controlled.

Row C (1 point). The essay explains the significance of the choices in light of the rhetorical situation (an 1848 convention that reveres the founding documents and fears disorder) and the function of a tension in the passage: Stanton is simultaneously revolutionary and loyal, and that tension is the source of her authority. The essay relates the choices to each other rather than examining them in isolation.

4.4 Sample Response: Score 4

Row A: 1 | Row B: 3 | Row C: 0 | Total: 4

In the Declaration of Sentiments, Elizabeth Cady Stanton uses allusion to the Declaration of Independence, repetition, and appeals to logic and emotion to convince her audience that women deserve equal rights as citizens.

Stanton begins by using words from the Declaration of Independence. She writes, "When, in the course of human events," and "We hold these truths to be self-evident." These are famous words that every American would recognize. She changes the line to "all men and women are created equal." By doing this, she shows that her argument is based on the same principles that the founders used. This is effective because the audience at Seneca Falls would respect the Declaration and would have a hard time disagreeing with the idea that women are included in it. It also gives her credibility, because she shows that she knows American history.

Next, Stanton lists the grievances against women. She repeats "He has" in each sentence, such as "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise" and "He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns." This repetition is called anaphora, and it makes the reader feel the weight of each injustice. The grievances get more serious as the list goes on, starting with voting and ending with how men have tried "to destroy her confidence in her own powers." This builds her argument because it shows that women are being hurt in every part of their lives. It also appeals to pathos because the audience feels sorry for women who cannot own property or earn their own wages.

Stanton also uses strong language to show how unfair the situation is. She says women are "civilly dead" and that husbands are their "master." These words are powerful because they compare women to slaves or to dead people, which makes the audience realize how unjust the law is. She also points out that even "the most ignorant and degraded men" can vote, but women cannot. This makes the audience angry because it shows that the laws do not make sense.

At the end of the passage, Stanton makes a demand. She says "we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens." The word "insist" shows that she is serious and is not going to take no for an answer. She then ends with a Resolution that says that unfair laws are "contrary to the great precept of nature." This appeals to nature, which gives her argument even more power.

In conclusion, Stanton uses allusion, repetition, and strong language to convince her audience that women should have equal rights. Her argument is effective because it uses ethos, pathos, and logos.

(Approximately 450 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis names choices (allusion, repetition, appeals to logic and emotion) and a purpose. Although it is formulaic, it makes a claim about her rhetorical choices and earns the point.

Row B (3 points). The essay offers a line of reasoning that follows the passage's order and supports claims with specific, accurate quotations. It explains how at least one choice contributes to the argument: the paragraph on allusion explains that it shows "her argument is based on the same principles that the founders used" and that the audience "would have a hard time disagreeing." The second paragraph's observation about the escalation of the grievances ("starting with voting and ending with... confidence") is also a genuine analytic point. The essay does not earn 4 points because explanation is not consistent: the paragraph on strong language includes a questionable claim (that "civilly dead" and "master" compare women to "slaves or to dead people," when the passage is using legal language), and "This makes the audience angry" is asserted without explaining how the choice produces that response. The conclusion's reliance on "ethos, pathos, and logos" is the kind of device-labeling that Chief Readers report as a recurring weakness. The paragraphs also function somewhat independently, with limited development from one to the next.

Row C (0 points). The essay examines choices individually and does not relate them to one another or to the rhetorical situation beyond a general reference to "the audience at Seneca Falls." It does not explore any tension or complexity, and the conclusion simplifies the passage to "ethos, pathos, and logos."

4.5 Sample Response: Score 2

Row A: 0 | Row B: 2 | Row C: 0 | Total: 2

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the Declaration of Sentiments to show that women should have the same rights as men. She uses many rhetorical devices to make her point and convince the audience.

Stanton starts the Declaration by copying the Declaration of Independence. She says "all men and women are created equal." This is a good strategy because everyone knows the Declaration of Independence. It makes the audience think about the rights that men have and that women should have them too.

Stanton uses repetition in the Declaration. Almost every sentence starts with "He has." For example she says "He has taken from her all right in property" and "He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead." The repetition shows how many bad things men have done to women. It also makes the reader feel bad for women. Stanton uses a lot of emotion in this part to make the audience feel sorry for women.

Stanton also uses tone. Her tone is angry and serious. She says "we insist" and she calls women "aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived." This shows that she is angry about how women are treated and wants things to change.

At the end, Stanton says that the laws that make women lower than men have no force or authority. This is a strong ending because it says the laws are not real. It shows that Stanton believes in women's rights and wants her audience to believe in them too.

Stanton also uses a list of problems to show that women are treated badly. She says that men have closed the colleges to women and that women can only get low paying jobs. These are examples of unfairness and they help the audience understand why women are upset. The audience would probably agree that these things are not right, so they would agree with Stanton that something should be done about it.

In conclusion, Stanton uses allusion, repetition, and tone to convince the audience that women deserve equal rights. This makes her argument effective.

(Approximately 320 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (0 points). The first paragraph restates the prompt (“to show that women should have the same rights as men”) and says only that she “uses many rhetorical devices,” without naming any choices or making a claim about how they work. The final sentence of the introduction, “to make her point and convince the audience,” is not a thesis about rhetorical choices. (The conclusion names allusion, repetition, and tone, but a list of devices without a claim about their function does not earn the point.)

Row B (2 points). The response provides some specific, relevant evidence (the changed phrase “men and women,” the “He has” sentences, “civilly dead,” and “we insist”) and explains how some of it relates to the argument (“everyone knows the Declaration of Independence”). However, the commentary frequently only restates or labels (“The repetition shows how many bad things men have done to women”; “This shows that she is angry”). No line of reasoning is established. The paragraphs are parallel and could be reordered. It earns more than 1 point because the evidence is specific, not general, and some commentary is relevant.

Row C (0 points). There is no attention to the rhetorical situation beyond “the audience,” no tension or complexity, and the conclusion repeats the thesis.

5. Question 3 (Argument): Ambition and Failure

5.1 Rubric (6 points)

Row A: Thesis (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	There is no defensible thesis. The response restates the prompt, summarizes the quotation, says “there are many sides,” or takes no position.
1	The response responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position on the extent to which Wilde’s claim about ambition is valid.

Decision rules. The position may be agreement, disagreement, or qualification, and it must be a position about the *extent* of validity (not simply “ambition is good” with no reference to Wilde’s claim). The thesis may be several sentences. “Ambition is good and bad” does not earn the point, but “Ambition is a refuge for failure only when it is a flight from the self” does. There are no sources to check the thesis against, so any position that can be argued is defensible. A thesis that depends on an unsupported or inferred position, or that never addresses the claim, earns 0.

Row B: Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Restates the thesis, repeats the prompt, or offers no evidence.
1	Evidence is mostly general, and commentary summarizes or restates it (“Many people have succeeded because of ambition”).

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
2	Some specific evidence; commentary explains how some of the evidence relates to the thesis, but there is no line of reasoning, or the reasoning is faulty.
3	Specific evidence supports all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary explains how some of the evidence supports the line of reasoning.
4	Specific evidence supports all claims in a line of reasoning. Commentary consistently explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning.

Typical responses by point value.

- **1 point:** Uses broad examples (Steve Jobs, athletes, “my own life”) without specifics; commentary repeats the thesis (“This shows ambition is good”).
- **2 points:** Offers two or three specific examples (Macbeth, Douglass, a personal example) but each supports the same assertion, with commentary like “this proves that ambition is not a refuge for failure.” No development between paragraphs.
- **3 points:** Builds a recognizable line of reasoning (for example, defines ambition, distinguishes two motives, tests each against examples), with specific evidence, but some commentary is thin or one claim is supported only by assertion.
- **4 points:** Each claim is supported by specific evidence, and the commentary explains the *relevance of each example to the abstract claim*, not just what happened. Example selection is purposeful, and the paragraphs build on one another.

Decision rules. Specific evidence may come from reading, history, current events, observation, or personal experience. Personal and hypothetical examples work when the writer explains their specific significance and context. A response cannot earn the fourth point if grammar or mechanics interfere with communication. Misattributing details of a literary or historical example weakens the evidence.

Row C: Sophistication (0–1 point)

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0	Does not meet the criteria.
1	Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing one of the following consistently: (1) crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions; (2) articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (the student’s or the prompt’s) by situating it within a broader context; (3) making effective rhetorical choices that strengthen the force and impact of the argument; (4) employing a consistently vivid and persuasive style.

What does *NOT* earn the point: sweeping generalizations about “society today”; a brief nod to the opposing view (“Of course, some people disagree”) followed by dismissal; token qualification at the end of the essay; ornate vocabulary that does not advance the argument; examples treated as interchangeable illustrations of one point.

5.2 Scoring notes for this prompt

What a defensible thesis looks like. A strong thesis defines “ambition,” addresses Wilde’s causal claim (that people turn to ambition because they have failed at something), and takes a position on its extent. Defensible positions:

- *Agree (in part)*: Ambition often is a refuge, a way of escaping the present self by fixing on a future one (*Gatsby*, *Macbeth*).
- *Disagree*: Ambition is typically the *source* of achievement, and Wilde’s remark mistakes the effect for the cause; contentment, in fact, is more often the “refuge” of those who fear risk.
- *Qualify*: The claim is valid for ambition as flight from dissatisfaction with oneself, and invalid for ambition directed at a purpose beyond oneself.
- *Challenge the premises*: Wilde’s epigram sets ambition and contentment in false opposition; a person may be both.

What strong responses might argue (at least six):

1. Wilde was himself ferociously ambitious (the plays, the lecture tours, the cultivated persona) and fell in 1895, so the line may be a joke at his own expense or a pose; strong responses may use this to explore the gap between the aphorist’s wit and truth.
2. **Macbeth** (“vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself”) and **Gatsby** show ambition as a flight from a diminished self (*Gatsby*’s reinvention from James Gatz), which supports Wilde in part.
3. **Frederick Douglass** or **Malala Yousafzai** or **Marie Curie** show ambition born of obstruction, not failure; it is the opposite of a refuge because it risks everything.
4. The word “refuge” implies hiding. Ambition can hide a person from the present, but contentment can also hide a person from risk or injustice (the “contented” majority in nineteenth-century or Jim Crow societies).
5. The statement is a paradox by inversion (the cliché is that ambition is the *first* resort of the successful); the wit lies in insulting the ambitious while flattering the idle, which readers can analyze as a rhetorical move.
6. Contemporary examples: “hustle culture,” college admissions pressure, social-media ambition as performance, which can reflect insecurity. Contrast with entrepreneurs who start companies out of curiosity rather than from a sense of failure.
7. Ambition and contentment are not opposites: Aristotelian *eudaimonia* or the idea of “striving without anxiety” lets someone pursue goals while being at peace with who they are.
8. Distinguishing ambition for status from ambition for craft or service; the validity of Wilde’s claim depends on what the ambition is *for*.

Common traps.

- Treating the claim as “ambition is bad” and rebutting a position Wilde did not take.
- A list of successful people (Jobs, Gates, Jordan) with no analysis of motive; Wilde’s claim is about *why* people become ambitious, so evidence must address motive.
- Conflating ambition with hard work, success, or “believing in yourself.”
- Using “contentment” without defining it, or treating it as laziness.

- Formulaic three-example essays where all examples prove the same thing.
- Personal anecdotes that explain what happened but not why it bears on the claim.

5.3 Sample Response: Score 6

Row A: 1 | Row B: 4 | Row C: 1 | Total: 6

It is easy to see why Oscar Wilde's line has lasted: it lets the idle feel superior to the industrious. "Ambition is the last refuge of failure" flatters anyone who has ever shrugged at a striver and whispered that he is only compensating. But the line is more interesting than it is true. Ambition is a refuge only when it is a flight from the self; when it is pursued for something outside the self, it is the opposite of a refuge, because it exposes the person who pursues it to every kind of risk. And the claim carries its own twist: the contentment Wilde implicitly praises can be a refuge as well.

Wilde is right about a particular kind of ambition, the kind that is meant to cover a wound. F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby is the clearest case. Gatsby is born James Gatz, the son of poor farmers in North Dakota, and everything he builds, the mansion, the parties, the invented Oxford past, is the architecture of escape from that boy. His ambition is not an appetite for achievement; it is a verdict on who he was, and he spends his fortune trying to reverse it. The novel's tragedy is that no height can satisfy him, because the wound is at the origin. That is what "refuge" means: a place one runs to, not a place one builds. Shakespeare's Macbeth, whose "vaulting ambition... o'erleaps itself," is a similar case. Told by the witches what he might be, he cannot rest in what he is, and the ambition he pursues is really a flight from the unbearable gap between the two. In both men, Wilde's aphorism describes the psychology exactly.

But a reader who stops there has mistaken a type for the whole. Consider Frederick Douglass, who as an enslaved child in Baltimore taught himself to read by trading bread for lessons from the white boys in the street. Douglass was not fleeing failure; he was a child who had been told by law that he could not succeed at anything, and his ambition was a direct assault on that verdict. It was the opposite of a refuge. A refuge protects; Douglass's ambition put him in danger every time he opened a book. What separates Douglass from Gatsby is where the ambition points. Gatsby's points backward, at a self to be erased. Douglass's points outward, at a freedom to be built, and it does not need the past to be undone in order to be satisfied. The difference suggests a better test than Wilde's: ask not whether a person is ambitious but whether the ambition is a verdict on himself or a commitment to something beyond himself.

This distinction also undoes the contrast Wilde implies, in which the ambitious are failures and the unambitious are sages. Contentment, too, can be a refuge. In the antebellum North, many comfortable people were content to leave slavery to someone else, and their contentment was not wisdom but a lack of the very ambition that abolitionists had. A student who declines to try out for the play because she is "perfectly happy" is not necessarily at peace; she may be protecting herself from the risk of being rejected. The word "refuge" fits her far better than it fits the person who auditions and is cut. Wilde's epigram works by making one kind of retreat sound like a flaw and another sound like a philosophy.

There is one more complication, which is Wilde himself. This is a man who built a persona, wrote four comedies in four years, and courted London's attention so deliberately that his own downfall, in 1895, came in a courtroom where he had insisted on suing. If ambition is the last refuge of failure, it must be said that the man who coined the phrase never took it. Perhaps that is the real lesson: the aphorism is a pose, a clever thing to say, and its cleverness is a reason to be suspicious. The question of what ambition is for cannot be settled by a line that ignores it.

So Wilde's claim is valid in a narrow sense and misleading in a broad one. Ambition can be a refuge when it is a way of avoiding the self, and the wise response to such ambition is compassion for the person fleeing. But ambition that has a purpose beyond its owner is not a refuge at all, and a society that mistakes it for one will leave its Douglasses without encouragement and its contented without questions.

(Approximately 755 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis (ambition "is a refuge only when it is a flight from the self; when it is pursued for something outside the self, it is the opposite") takes a qualified, defensible position on the extent of the claim's validity.

Row B (4 points). The line of reasoning builds: Wilde is right about wound-covering ambition (Gatsby, Macbeth) → but Douglass shows ambition directed outward is the opposite of a refuge → so the test is the ambition's direction, which also exposes contentment as a possible refuge → Wilde's own life complicates the claim. The evidence is specific (Gatz's origin, the "o'erleaps itself" line, Douglass's learning to read) and the commentary consistently explains relevance to the abstract claim. For example, the writer does not merely say Douglass succeeded; she explains that "a refuge protects; Douglass's ambition put him in danger every time he opened a book." Mechanics are controlled.

Row C (1 point). The essay explores tensions throughout: ambition as wound versus ambition as commitment; contentment as wisdom versus contentment as refuge; Wilde as aphorist versus Wilde as ambitious man. It also situates the aphorism as a rhetorical pose, making the sophistication part of the argument rather than a closing flourish. Style is vivid ("a verdict on who he was").

5.4 Sample Response: Score 4

Row A: 1 | Row B: 3 | Row C: 0 | Total: 4

Oscar Wilde said that "Ambition is the last refuge of failure." I partly agree with this statement because some people become ambitious only because they have failed at something else, but I disagree because many successful people were ambitious from the start and ambition helped them.

Some people are ambitious because they feel like failures. An example of this is Macbeth in Shakespeare's play. At the beginning, Macbeth is a respected soldier and a thane, but when the witches tell him he will be king, he becomes obsessed. He murders King Duncan and then keeps killing to protect his crown. Macbeth's ambition does not make him happy, and it leads to his downfall. This shows that sometimes ambition is a way of trying to fill an emptiness. Macbeth was not content with what he had, so he kept going after more and more, and in the end he lost everything. Wilde would say that this is because deep down he felt like a failure.

However, there are many people for whom ambition was not a refuge at all. For example, Malala Yousafzai was a young girl in Pakistan who wanted to go to school. The Taliban banned girls from attending school, but Malala spoke out anyway and was shot in 2012. She survived and went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Malala was not a failure when she started speaking out. She was a student who cared about education and had big goals. Her ambition did not come from failure but from a belief that girls should have the right to learn. This shows that ambition can come from strength and not weakness.

I have also seen this in my own life. Last year I wanted to make varsity soccer even though I was told I was too small. I practiced every day for months and I made the team. I was not a failure who was running from something. I was someone who wanted to improve. This shows that ambition can be a good thing and can help a

person succeed.

The difference between these two examples is important. Macbeth wanted a crown for himself, and once he had it, he was afraid and could not enjoy it. Malala wanted something for other girls, and being shot did not make her stop. Maybe the real question is whether ambition is about the person or about something bigger than the person. Wilde may be right about the first kind, but he does not seem to think about the second kind, since he is mostly making a joke.

In conclusion, Wilde's statement is true for some people, like Macbeth, but not for others, like Malala. Ambition can be a refuge for failure, but it can also be a source of success. People should be ambitious but also be careful not to lose what they have.

(Approximately 470 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The thesis ("I partly agree... because some people become ambitious only because they have failed... but I disagree because many successful people were ambitious from the start") takes a qualified position. It earns the point, though it is somewhat formulaic.

Row B (3 points). The response uses specific evidence (Macbeth's trajectory, Malala's story, a personal soccer example) and a recognizable line of reasoning: ambition sometimes comes from emptiness (Macbeth) → sometimes from conviction (Malala) → so the claim is true for some and not others. Commentary explains some of the evidence ("This shows that ambition can come from strength and not weakness"). However, commentary is uneven and sometimes generic: the soccer example establishes that the writer was ambitious but does not engage Wilde's claim about *why* people become ambitious, and "This shows that ambition can be a good thing and can help a person succeed" shifts to a different question (is ambition useful?) from the one the prompt poses (is it a refuge for failure?). The examples are also treated as two opposing cases without a principle to explain the difference. For these reasons the response does not reach 4.

Row C (0 points). The essay presents two sides but does not explore the tension between them or what distinguishes the cases. The conclusion offers a generic moral ("People should be ambitious but also be careful"). A nod to both sides is not sophistication.

5.5 Sample Response: Score 2

Row A: 1 | Row B: 1 | Row C: 0 | Total: 2

I disagree with Oscar Wilde's statement that "Ambition is the last refuge of failure." Ambition is important and is the reason that people succeed in life.

Ambition is what makes people try hard to reach their goals. Without ambition, people would not do anything and would just sit around all day. For example, Steve Jobs was very ambitious and he started Apple in his garage. He wanted to change the world and he did. Now Apple is one of the biggest companies in the world. This shows that ambition leads to success, not failure.

Another example is athletes. Athletes have to be very ambitious to get to the top of their sport. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team but he did not give up and he became the best player ever. He was ambitious and worked hard every day. This shows that ambition is a good thing.

Also, in my own life ambition has helped me. When I was in middle school I wanted to get good grades so I studied hard and got all A's. If I did not have ambition I would not have gotten good grades. Ambition helps people in school and in work.

Ambition is also important for the country. If nobody was ambitious, then there would not be any new inventions or businesses and the economy would not grow. Doctors and scientists are ambitious people too, and they have found cures for diseases and made life better for everyone. Without them, we would still be living in the past. People who say that ambition is a refuge for failure are probably just jealous of people who are successful and do not want to put in the work themselves.

Some people might say that ambition is bad because it makes people greedy. But I think ambition is good if you use it the right way.

In conclusion, ambition is not the last refuge of failure. Ambition helps people to succeed and everyone should be ambitious. It is a good thing for society.

(Approximately 320 words.)

Scoring commentary.

Row A (1 point). The response takes a clear position ("I disagree with Wilde's statement"), though it does not define ambition or engage the "refuge" claim. It earns the point because the position is defensible.

Row B (1 point). The evidence (Jobs, Jordan, the writer's grades) is general and is not tied to the question of *why* people become ambitious. Commentary consists of "This shows that ambition leads to success" and "This shows that ambition is a good thing," which restate the thesis. No line of reasoning develops; the examples are interchangeable. Jordan's example could have engaged the claim (being cut as a "failure") but is not analyzed that way.

Row C (0 points). The counterargument ("ambition makes people greedy") is not the one Wilde raised and is dismissed in one sentence. There is no nuance and no broader context.

6. How to Score Yourself

6.1 Section I (Multiple Choice)

Count one point for each correct answer. There is no penalty for wrong answers or blanks. Your Section I raw score is out of 45. Review any missed question with the explanation above, noting its skill code. If you missed three or more in one skill category, spend your next practice session on that category (for example, categories 3 and 5 are Reading items about claims and line of reasoning; categories 4 and 6 are Writing items about evidence and organization).

6.2 Section II (Free Response)

Score each essay against its rubric (Row A 0–1, Row B 0–4, Row C 0–1; maximum 6 per essay). It helps to have a teacher or a peer read your essay independently, and then discuss any difference of more than one point. Compare your essay with the samples above, checking the specific evidence you used, whether your commentary says something the quotation does not, and whether your paragraphs build on one another. Add the three essay scores for a total out of 18.

6.3 Composite estimate

College Board does not publish a conversion chart, and cut scores change from year to year. The following is an approximation drawn from commonly used reconstructions. Treat it as a rough guide only.

Composite (out of 150) $\approx$ (MCQ raw $\times$ 1.5) + (essay total $\times$ 4.58)

COMPONENT	MAXIMUM RAW	MULTIPLIER	MAXIMUM COMPOSITE POINTS
Section I (45 questions)	45	$\times 1.5$	67.5
Section II (three essays, 6 points each)	18	$\times 4.58$	82.4
Total			about 150

APPROXIMATE COMPOSITE	APPROXIMATE AP SCORE
105 or higher	5
87–104	4
65–86	3
45–64	2
Below 45	1

Worked example: A student who answers 32 multiple-choice questions correctly ($32 \times 1.5 = 48$) and earns essay scores of 4, 3, and 4 ($11 \times 4.58 = 50.4$) has a composite of about 98, which falls in the approximate range for a 4.

These bands are approximate. Score cut-offs are reset each year, and the 2025 administration reported a higher percentage of scores of 3 or above than earlier years. Use your results mainly to see where you are strong and which skills and question types to practice next.

6.4 Pacing check

If you did not finish Section I, note where you spent more than 80 seconds per question. Reading sets should take about 10–12 minutes each; writing sets about 7–9 minutes for the longer drafts and 5 minutes for the shortest one. For Section II, use the 15-minute reading period to read all six sources of Question 1 and to sketch a thesis, then spend about 40 minutes on each essay.

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