



AP[®] English Language and Composition 2003 Free-Response Questions

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**2003 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

In his 1998 book *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, Neal Gabler wrote the following.

One does not necessarily have to cluck in disapproval to admit that entertainment is all the things its detractors say it is: fun, effortless, sensational, mindless, formulaic, predictable and subversive. In fact, one might argue that those are the very reasons so many people love it.

At the same time, it is not hard to see why cultural aristocrats in the nineteenth century and intellectuals in the twentieth hated entertainment and why they predicted, as one typical nineteenth century critic railed, that its eventual effect would be “to overturn all morality, to poison the springs of domestic happiness, to dissolve the ties of our social order, and to involve our country in ruin.”

Write a thoughtful and carefully constructed essay in which you use specific evidence to defend, challenge, or qualify the assertion that entertainment has the capacity to “ruin” society.

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Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

Alfred M. Green delivered the following speech in Philadelphia in April 1861, the first month of the Civil War. African Americans were not yet permitted to join the Union army, but Green felt that they should strive to be admitted to the ranks and prepare to enlist. Read the speech carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the methods that Green uses to persuade his fellow African Americans to join the Union forces.

Line
5 The time has arrived in the history of the great Republic when we may again give evidence to the world of the bravery and patriotism of a race in whose hearts burns the love of country, of freedom, and of civil and religious toleration. It is these grand principles that enable men, however proscribed, when possessed of true patriotism, to say, “My country, right or wrong, I love thee still!”

10 It is true, the brave deeds of our fathers, sworn and subscribed to by the immortal Washington of the Revolution of 1776, and by Jackson and others in the War of 1812, have failed to bring us into recognition as citizens, enjoying those rights so dearly bought by those noble and patriotic sires.

15 It is true that our injuries in many respects are great; fugitive-slave laws, Dred Scott* decisions, indictments for treason, and long and dreary months of imprisonment. The result of the most unfair rules of judicial investigation has been the pay we have received for our solicitude, sympathy and aid in the dangers and difficulties of those “days that tried men’s souls.”

20 Our duty, brethren, is not to cavil over past grievances. Let us not be derelict to duty in the time of need. While we remember the past and regret that our present position in the country is not such as to

30 create within us that burning zeal and enthusiasm for the field of battle which inspires other men in the full enjoyment of every civil and religious emolument, yet let us endeavor to hope for the future and improve the present auspicious moment for creating anew our claims upon the justice and honor of the Republic; and, above all, let not the honor and glory achieved by our fathers be blasted or sullied by a want of true heroism among their sons.

35 Let us, then, take up the sword, trusting in God, who will defend the right, remembering that these are other days than those of yore; that the world today is on the side of freedom and universal political equality; that the war cry of the howling leaders of Secession and treason is: “Let us drive back the advance guard of civil and religious freedom; let us have more slave territory; let us build stronger the tyrant system of slavery in the great American Republic.” Remember, too, that your very presence among the troops of the North would inspire your oppressed brethren of the South with zeal for the overthrow of the tyrant system, and confidence in the armies of the living God—the God of truth, justice and equality to all men.

* A slave who sued in federal court for his and his family’s freedom

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Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts one-third of the total essay section score.)

The two passages below, one by John James Audubon and the other by Annie Dillard, describe large flocks of birds in flight. Read the passages carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast how each writer describes the birds and conveys their effect on the writer as observer.

Passage 1

Line
5 In the autumn of 1813, I left my house at Henderson, on the banks of the Ohio, on my way to Louisville. In passing over the Barrens a few miles beyond Hardensburgh, I observed the pigeons flying from north-east to south-west, in greater numbers than I thought I had ever seen them before, and feeling an inclination to count the flocks that might pass within the reach of my eye in one hour, I dismounted, seated myself on an eminence, and began to mark with my pencil, making a dot for every flock that passed. In a short time finding the task which I had undertaken impracticable, as the birds poured in in countless multitudes, I rose, and counting the dots then put down, found that 163 had been made in twenty-one minutes. I travelled on, and still met more the farther I proceeded. The air was literally filled with Pigeons; the light of noon-day was obscured as by an eclipse; the dung fell in spots, not unlike melting flakes of snow; and the continued buzz of wings had a tendency to lull my senses to repose.

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40 Whilst waiting for dinner at YOUNG's inn, at the confluence of Salt-River with the Ohio, I saw, at my leisure, immense legions still going by, with a front reaching far beyond the Ohio on the west, and the beech-wood forests directly on the east of me. Not a single bird alighted; for not a nut or acorn was that year to be seen in the neighbourhood. They consequently flew so high, that different trials to reach them with a capital rifle proved ineffectual; nor did the reports disturb them in the least. I cannot describe to you the extreme beauty of their aerial evolutions, when a Hawk chanced to press upon the rear of a flock. At once, like a torrent, and with a noise like thunder, they rushed into a compact mass, pressing upon each other towards the centre. In these almost solid masses, they darted forward in undulating and angular lines, descended and swept close over the earth with inconceivable velocity, mounted perpendicularly so as to resemble a vast column, and, when high, were seen wheeling and twisting within their continued lines, which then resembled the coils of a gigantic serpent.

John James Audubon,
Ornithological Biographies, 1831-1839

Passage 2

Line
5 Out of the dimming sky a speck appeared, then another, and another. It was the starlings going to roost. They gathered deep in the distance, flock sifting into flock, and strayed towards me, transparent and whirling, like smoke. They seemed to unravel as they flew, lengthening in curves, like a loosened skein.¹ I didn't move; they flew directly over my head for half an hour. The flight extended like a fluttering banner, an unfurled oriflamme², in either direction as far as I could see. Each individual bird bobbed and knitted up and down in the flight at apparent random, for no known reason except that that's how starlings fly, yet all remained perfectly spaced. The flocks each tapered at either end from a rounded middle, like an eye. Over my head I heard a sound of beaten air, like a million shook rugs, a muffled whuff. Into the woods they sifted without shifting a twig, right through the crowns of trees, intricate and rushing, like wind.

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25 After half an hour, the last of the stragglers had vanished into the trees. I stood with difficulty, bashed by the unexpectedness of this beauty, and my spread lungs roared. My eyes pricked from the effort of trying to trace a feathered dot's passage through a weft³ of limbs. Could tiny birds be sifting through me right now, birds winging through the gaps between my cells, touching nothing, but quickening in my tissues, fleet?

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 1974

¹ A length of yarn or thread wound in a loose, elongated coil

² An ensign, banner, or standard

³ The horizontal threads in a piece of weaving

END OF EXAMINATION