

2010 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

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

Benjamin Banneker, the son of former slaves, was a farmer, astronomer, mathematician, surveyor, and author. In 1791 he wrote to Thomas Jefferson, framer of the Declaration of Independence and secretary of state to President George Washington. Read the following excerpt from the letter and write an essay that analyzes how Banneker uses rhetorical strategies to argue against slavery.

Line
5 Sir, suffer¹ me to recall to your mind that time in which the arms and tyranny of the British Crown were exerted with every powerful effort in order to reduce you to a State of Servitude, look back I entreat you on the variety of dangers to which you were exposed; reflect on that time in which every human aid appeared unavailable, and in which even hope and fortitude wore the aspect of inability to the conflict and you cannot but be led to a serious and grateful sense of your miraculous and providential preservation; you cannot but acknowledge that the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy you have mercifully received and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven.

15 This sir, was a time in which you clearly saw into the injustice of a state of slavery and in which you had just apprehensions of the horrors of its condition, it was now, sir, that your abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you publickly held forth this true and valuable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remembered in all succeeding ages. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

25 Here, sir, was a time in which your tender feelings for yourselves had engaged you thus to declare, you were then impressed with proper ideas of the great

30 valuation of liberty and the free possession of those blessings to which you were entitled by nature; but, sir, how pitiable is it to reflect that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of mankind and of his equal and impartial distribution of those rights and privileges which he had conferred upon them, that you should at the same time counteract his mercies in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time be found guilty of that most criminal act which you professedly detested in others with respect to yourselves.

45 Sir, I suppose that your knowledge of the situation of my brethren is too extensive to need a recital here; neither shall I presume to prescribe methods by which they may be relieved, otherwise than by recommending to you and all others to wean yourselves from those narrow prejudices which you have imbibed with respect to them and as Job² proposed to his friends, “put your souls in their souls stead,” thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards them, and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others, in what manner to proceed herein.

2 In the Bible, Job is a righteous man who endures much suffering.

¹ allow

Close Reading and Rhetorical Analysis of 2010 Question 2

A. Prompt Deconstruction

- (1) Label the TAG (title, author, genre). Underline relevant background information that the Test Development Committee has included to help you understand the prompt and the passage. Such information might include the 5Ws (who, what, where, when, and why).

- (2) Articulate the BIG question in the form of an interrogative sentence. Include the author's name. Remember that the BIG question refers to the author's meaning, purpose, or stance.

- (3) Articulate the Little question in the form of an imperative sentence beginning with a command

B. Multiple Readings

- (1) Read the passage individually. Bracket every other sentence. Enter the total # of sentences here: _____
- (2) Read the passage aloud with no "California stops."
- (3) Consider the passage in light of the rhetorical web. Audience is especially important here. Since Banneker is directly addressing Jefferson, he uses second person (you). Fill in the blanks in the chart for each sentence of the excerpt.

1	What does Banneker ask Jefferson to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To recall British tyranny</i> • <i>To look back on</i> _____ • <i>To reflect on</i> _____ • <i>To acknowledge</i> _____
2, 3, & 4	What does Banneker say that Jefferson (you) did in the past?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Saw the injustice of slavery</i> • <i>Had just apprehensions of</i> _____ • <i>Publicly held forth that</i> _____ • <i>Were impressed with ideas of</i> _____ • <i>Counteract his mercies in</i> _____
5	What advice does Banneker ("I") offer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I recommend that you</i> _____ <i>prescribed,</i> _____ <i>and, as Job</i> _____

- (6) Determine the point at which a major shift occurs in the passage. Two templates have been provided so that you may state the shift in different ways or determine different places at which shifts occur. If you see only one shift or one way to articulate it, you can use the second template to record someone else's statement of shift. Shifts may occur in tone, time, place, point of view, topic, etc.

A SHIFT FROM _____

TO _____

OCCURS AT LINE _____.

OR

A SHIFT FROM _____

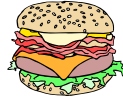
TO _____

OCCURS AT LINE _____.

C. Learning from Effective Student Responses

- ✓ An effective introductory paragraph establishes context (TAG + relevant background) and answers both the **BIG** and **Little** questions posed by the prompt. Read Sample 2B, beginning on p.129. This essay earned a score of 7.
- (1) Label the author (A) and genre (G). Draw a squiggly line under other relevant information that contributes to context.
- (2) Highlight the answer to the **BIG** question. Using a different color, highlight the answer to the **Little** question. Create a key for the colors you used in the space under the # sign at the end of the essay.
- ✓ An effective body paragraph begins with a clear topic sentence that echoes the thesis and informs the reader of the topic of the paragraph. According to the scoring rubric, it includes "evidence and explanations" that, according to the scoring rubric, are "appropriate and convincing." The paragraph ends with a concluding sentence that summarizes the paragraph insightfully or creates a smooth transition to the next paragraph.
- (1) In body paragraph one (beginning "Banneker uses . . ."), draw an arrow in red ink from the word or words in the topic sentence that echo the thesis. HINT: "Echo" words may take the form of repetitions or synonyms. They are important because they guide the reader.
- (2) Repeat this process for body paragraphs two and three.

- (3) Notice the quotation sandwich in body paragraph two (beginning “Banneker uses . . .”).

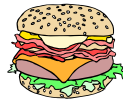


TOP SLICE: *Banneker uses logical appeal to point out the hypocrisy of Jefferson’s situation.*

FILLING: *He notes “how pitiable it is” that while God granted the Americans freedom, Jefferson and his fellow white Americans “counteract” [God’s] mercies in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression.”*

BOTTOM SLICE: *This example of the hypocrisy of the whites appeals logically to the reader because a nation that stands for freedom, liberty, and bravery is oppressing thousands of its own people.*

- (4) Identify the quotation sandwich in the third body paragraph (beginning “Banneker’s use of allusions . . .”).



TOP SLICE:

FILLING:

BOTTOM SLICE:

Sample 2B

In 1791, African-American, Benjamin Banneker wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson in an effort to persuade Jefferson to see the injustice of slavery. Banneker uses emotional and logical appeal, allusions to historical events and biblical stories, and a retrospective and respectful, yet critical tone to argue against slavery.

Banneker uses emotional appeals to invoke a sense of sympathy and guilt in the reader. He asks Jefferson to look back on when the British oppressed their colonies and notice the parallel between the British oppression of the colonies and the white oppression of blacks that they now face because of slavery. Through this allusion to a time of oppression for Americans, Banneker creates sympathy for his enslaved people because Jefferson and other white men should understand the injustice of oppression. Banneker also invokes guilt by noting that Jefferson “cannot but acknowledge the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy” now that America has been freed from the “arms of tyranny of the British crown.” The reader feels a sense of guilt since the African Americans remained enslaved and oppressed even after their nation was freed from England.

Banneker uses logical appeal to point out the hypocrisy of Jefferson’s situation. He notes “how pitiable it is” that while God granted the Americans freedom, Jefferson and his fellow white Americans “counteract [God’s] mercies in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression.” This example of the hypocrisy of the whites appeals logically to the reader because a nation that stands for freedom, liberty and bravery is oppressing thousands of its own people.

Banneker’s use of allusions provide credibility for him as a writer and help support his argument against slavery. He alludes to the Declaration of the Independence to point out that Jefferson himself wrote “all men are created equal” and have the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Not only does this allusion prove that Banneker is knowledgeable, but it also once again points out the hypocrisy of the whites. He also draws a parallel through his allusion to the Biblical story of Job. Like the enslaved African-Americans, Job faced numerous hardships and suffering even though he was an innocent and righteous man.

Banneker uses a respectful yet critical tone throughout his letter. Rather than use harsh and condemning diction, Banneker remains deferential even when pointing out the injustice which Jefferson and other whites have placed on his people. Banneker also concedes to Jefferson, saying he knows his “knowledge of the situation of my brethren is too extensive to need recital.” Banneker’s use of emotional and logical appeals, allusions, concession and a deferential yet critical tone invoke guilt and sympathy in the reader and effectively display the injustice of slavery in America in 1791.