

**AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis
2020 Scoring Commentaries
(Applied to 2018 Student Responses)**

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Sample H

6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it clearly articulates a thesis with a defensible position about the rhetorical choices the writer makes: “By contrasting hypotheticals and reality, providing examples and personal anecdote, and strong repetition of the word ‘persevere’, Albright successfully conveys her message to these graduates that they must continue the fight for rights in the face of opposition and that they will succeed.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it successfully integrates evidence throughout to support the analysis and the commentary connects consistently to the thesis. In paragraph two, the response addresses Albright’s choice to evoke the past – in this case, “the Berlin Wall” – but then examines her use of a hypothetical to challenge that past, “we could be satisfied with that.” This rhetorical choice becomes the focus of the response’s analysis and explicitly connects to the thesis and Albright’s message that “perseverance can make a difference.” The response further analyzes Albright’s rhetoric by suggesting that her language “allude[s] to the idea that accomplishing is not enough, we must never stop trying to get better.” Paragraph three focuses on Albright’s use of “person[al] anecdotes of what women across the world are doing.” The commentary within this paragraph is thoughtful and consistently supports the argument that if these “fellow women were standing up to injustices...we can too!” References to “Women in Sarajevo,” “Women in Burundi,” and “Women in Guatemala,” highlight that women everywhere are involved in a “movement” that showcases how “women are stepping across the globe.” The response recognizes and explains how these examples demonstrate Albright’s message about the pursuit of gender equality. Paragraph four then becomes a general commentary on the choices Albright made throughout her speech and how those choices combine to convey her message. Looking specifically at choices related to the organization of her speech, the response skillfully examines her repetition of “perseverance” coupled with her repeated “if you aim high enough” followed by description of an opposition challenging her audience to aim higher. The line of reasoning, present throughout, is explicitly stated in the concluding paragraph: “Albright’s commencement speech successfully drives home the will to fight for gender equality among her audience by showing them that they can always push harder, that others are already in the fray, and that the path is hard and is a challenge that you may partake in.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because it explains the significance of the writer’s rhetorical choices. In paragraph one, the response presents a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation: “The glass ceiling remains unbroken and women continue to fight on all fronts for rights they deserve, rights that should be inherent.” In paragraph four, the response

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recognizes the implications of the text in recognizing Albright's call for action: "She knows that these graduates, in their struggle for equality, will face resistance, ridicule, distraction...Walking away from college, they will remember to persevere in the face of opposition, that perseverance is the key to continued struggle."

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Sample F

6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it provides a defensible thesis relative to the rhetorical choices Albright made to convey her message. In paragraph one, the response identifies “referencing the efforts of marginalized women who are fighting to make a difference, utilizing powerful diction and repetition, and illustrating American efforts to improve the world even further” as the key rhetorical choices Albright makes. The thesis then links these decisions to its own commentary on Albright’s message: “Albright inspires a young generation of graduate students on the brink of adulthood with the future in their hands to never settle, always persevere and fight to elevate the status of women around the world.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it provides commentary that engages specific evidence to draw conclusions about rhetorical choices then effectively and explicitly explains how those choices – both independently and collectively – contribute to Albright’s message. The line of reasoning is most vivid in the concluding paragraph that states, “Albright’s commencement speech successfully drives home the will to fight for gender equality among her audience by showing them that they can always push harder, that others are already in the fray, and that the path is hard and is a challenge that you may partake in.” In paragraph two, the response provides examples from the text that it labels “powerful stories of women fighting challenges they face” and then explains that “Albright uses the stories of these women to illustrate how many problems still exist and to inspire her audience into helping fight those problems.” In paragraph three, the response specifically examines Albright’s repetition of “have courage still and persevere” at the end of several paragraphs, then explains how Albright “repeats these words to emphasize the need to continue fighting for what you believe in even in the face of doubt and criticism.” The response links these choices directly back to the message of the speech to persevere and “push through in face of these challenges.” In paragraph four, the response examines the text’s structure: “The structure of the opening paragraphs is built to illustrate the importance of constantly pushing forward. This extends from a discussion of political issues into a discussion of issues faced by women.” Then the response explains how the choice to organize the speech in this way furthers Albright’s argument “that women should not settle for their current status after years of progress.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because it provides several examples of sophistication in its argument. In paragraph one, the response frames the speech within an historical context and then positions the message of the speech within that context as “she urges her audience to

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seek out problems that still exist in the world and to help fix them.” Having established the broader context for the message in paragraph one and returned to it consistently throughout, the response closes by recalling Albright’s focus on “the power women have to elevate their status around the world even further and the importance of never settling.”

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Sample A

4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it provides a one-sentence, defensible thesis that establishes analytical categories for Albright’s rhetorical choices: “...Secretary of State Madeleine Albright connect with her audience through parallel syntax, repetition, assertions and other tactics to convince her audience that they have an opportunity to change the world and break through the glass ceilings around them.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points for Row B because the evidence relates to the thesis. However, the response only explains how some of the evidence connects to the line of reasoning. In paragraph two, the response examines how Albright creates a comparison between her audience and the rest of America, “comparing how ‘they’ as individuals ‘must choose how to lead their life,’ to the larger America who ‘as a nation’ must choose ‘how to shape history.’” Though this is an insightful observation that is connected to the thesis and the message of the text, once stated, the response moves quickly to discuss how “parallel syntax” helps to develop this comparison, but with little explanation. The result is commentary that describes Albright’s parallel structure within the context of another famous speech: “Albright’s echoing syntax rings out in the manner of King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech, each repetition relating her claims back to her central statement of unity and opportunity, each ring drawing in her listeners.” The response then makes comments on how Albright’s choice to follow a “verse-refrain form” affects her audience, but then lapses into description of that “form” to explain how it causes her audience “to chant in their heads.” Paragraph four examines comparison of Albright’s audience to “women ‘in Burundi’ or ‘in Guatemala’ or ‘in Burma’” and looks at choices in diction for the passage. With so much to examine, there is little room for the response to connect these appropriate pieces of the text to its message. The result is limited commentary that does little to explain how the choices being examined contribute to the message, stating only that they do: “Through this quote and repetition, she has touched the hearts of her listeners and cemented an idea, the idea of perseverance.” The line of reasoning is clearest in the concluding paragraph: “Even at this point they don’t believe her, through her repetition they have classically conditioned much like Pavlov’s dog, to instantly think ‘preserve’ whenever a hardship arises. And thus Albright has used rhetoric to inspire and protect a graduating class of women.”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because, though it attempts to provide some larger context, it does not present a complex understanding of the possible contexts of the speech or of the rhetorical situation. In paragraph four, the response attempts to contextualize

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Albright herself as “an authority on the subject” to elevate her as a speaker “so when she tells her audience to ‘persevere,’ they act without questioning.” However, it is neither explained how these choices create that authority, nor is that idea of authority carried throughout the response to contextualize the message or Albright herself. Also, while the response does focus on examination of specific rhetorical choices, it does not approach the relationships among different choices throughout the speech.

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Sample D

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it provides a defensible thesis focused on analyzing Albright’s rhetorical choices of “using...historical events and encounters with women in other countries” and “what occurred after important historical events” to convey her message to “never settle.” Although paragraph one largely consists of summary, the bridge between paragraphs one and two presents the thesis. The response argues that the message of the speech is to motivate the audience using historical events as well as their aftermath.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because there is some specific evidence cited. The response does not establish a line of reasoning. While the examination of the historical example of the Berlin wall in paragraph two does extend from and support the thesis, the commentary does not further the analysis and oversimplifies the effects of the example. The example used by Albright to demonstrate American perseverance is oversimplified and misinterpreted as an example of “being threatened by dangerous weapons” which, in turn, “motivates the audience to always look out for themselves.” Though this could connect to the idea of perseverance, the response does not make that connection. In paragraph three, the response simply describes information and repeats from the speech and oversimplifies their effect. After listing and describing the different sets of women to whom Albright refers in her speech, the commentary simply states, “those women are mentioned in Albright’s speech to motivate her audience to always fight for what may even seem impossible.” Again, while this assertion could relate to the message of perseverance, no connection is attempted.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. The response focuses specific rhetorical choices but does not consider how those rhetorical choices work cohesively.

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Sample I

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it does provide a defensible thesis in paragraph one that analyzes Albright’s rhetorical choices: “Throughout the essay, the most effective devices employed were parallel structure, allusions, and metaphors.” It is also effective to consider the previous sentence as part of the thesis, explaining that, “Albright was able to successfully employ different rhetorical devices, each of which helped Albright convey her message to the audience.” Taken together, these sentences clearly connect the rhetorical choices to the message of the speech.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because, though it does provide relevant examples, the commentary oversimplifies and misinterprets those examples. The response does not establish a line of reasoning. In paragraph two, the commentary on “we could” oversimplifies its effect and loses focus, concentrating on the United States instead of the audience. The commentary does not connect the cited example to a message about perseverance and thus fails to link the evidence to the thesis. The commentary on “allusions” in paragraph three does not connect the examples of women around the world to the message of perseverance, instead this response explains the example and then makes what amounts to an oversimplified assertion about it: “The allusions also motivate the audience to continue to seek peace, prosperity, and equality around the world.” Likewise, in paragraph four, the commentary on metaphor misinterprets the speech and fails to connect the evidence to the thesis. While it is not completely clear how the example used is a metaphor, the commentary also makes a broad assertion that the “metaphor draws a comparison between the audience’s actions and the boundaries of what is thought as achievable on this Earth.” Even if this were the case, the commentary again makes no connection to the message of the speech.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. The response attempts to explain the significance of the text’s message within a broader context, explaining that Albright uses her choices ‘to motivate the audience, push them towards greatness, and show how the smallest of actions can change the world.’ This explanation is not connected to perseverance and is not maintained throughout the response.

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Sample G

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it provides a minimally defensible thesis: “Madeline Albright uses multiple convincing rhetorical devices to prove her point and convince the reader. Her speech is passionate and urging; it helps the reader to analyze and appreciate the productive and beneficial changes made by U.S. leadership. Albright uses logos and pathos to convince the audience.” While the response alludes to rhetorical choices, it fails to offer specificity. It vaguely identifies logos and pathos but fails to clarify the function or effect of either.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because it does provide specific relevant evidence to the thesis, however it merely repeats and oversimplifies that evidence. The response does not establish a line of reasoning. In paragraph two, the response oversimplifies and misrepresents logos as “stating a fact that [many] would agree with and accept,” replacing the necessity for reasoning and logic with the idea that statements of fact are themselves always logical. The commentary does not explain how these examples convey the message, stating that Albright “uses logos in her speech to present facts and evidence that is difficult to deny, and therefore, is quite convincing.” The response never explains how Albright’s logos is convincing. A similar treatment of pathos appears in paragraph three. Focusing on the mention of rape in the speech, the response then asserts that the “mention of rape likely appeals to the emotions of many rape victims who desire justice, and the emotions of those who know rape victims.” While true, the commentary proceeds to ignore the audience of the speech and demonstrates a misunderstanding about pathos, arguing that it relies on the emotions of the audience. The response then moves on to a weaker point about “those entrapped by poverty and discrimination” before wrapping up with commentary relying on the broad and oversimplified assertion that “Albright uses pathos as a technique to convince the audience that the government is doing its best and has made significant progress....”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. While the final statement may attempt to broaden the context and implications of the message, it is neither consistent through different parts of the response nor does it demonstrate sophistication of thought, relying instead on a broad comment that misinterprets the overall message of the text: “Her speech uses well-developed rhetoric and techniques to convince the audience of the government’s positive impact on society and how U.S. leaders are benefitting the world.”

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Sample B

2/6 Points (A1 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it provides a minimally defensible thesis focused on analysis of “strategies used like emotion, history, and cause and effect.”

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B because it provides examples relevant to the subject. There is little to no commentary. In paragraph two, there is no explanation about the history example; rather the response provides restatement of the example as explanation: “These events were all great things that happened in America in the college graduates lifetimes.” While this is true and the cited evidence fits the description, the response fails to explain the message of the speech. While the response again correctly identifies a significant rhetorical choice in the speech in paragraph three – the cause-and-effect example of women standing up for themselves and the resulting “advances in the status of women” – the analysis only restates the issue. There is no explanation about how the targeted choices convey the message: “The effect is women are ready to take their role in every society on Earth.” Paragraph four presents a statement about how “Albright used emotion to make the audience think of everything they have while some people have nothing at all.” This observation does nothing to examine or explain how the choices related to emotion have that effect, much less how they convey the message of the speech.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no sophistication of thought.

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Sample E

1/6 Points (A0 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row A because it does not present a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices made. The response instead repeats provided information: “Madeline Albright reads the commencement letter to the graduating class.” It then goes on to provide a barely coherent misinterpretation of the context and message of the speech.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B. While it does contain some references to specific points in the text such as, “the Berlin Wall,” “growing world economy,” and “different types of women,” this evidence is only summarized with no connection to any argumentation. The response attempts to reference Albright’s purpose, but the comment that “any type of woman can do what she sets her mind too” is only a sweeping generalization.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no sophistication of thought.

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Sample C

0/6 Points (A0 – B0 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row A because it does not respond to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices. There seems to be an attempt to develop a thesis in the last sentence of paragraph one, but it relies on a misinterpretation of the text and of the provided context: “...her speech gave clear evidence that war is coming to an end.”

Row B: 0/4

The response did not earn any points for Row B. The evidence the response provides is not relevant to the prompt and does not contribute to the provided message of the speech. The reference that, “America is making the right choice” in paragraph two and the reference to “uncommon women” in paragraph three remain vague as they are neither connected to analysis of the speech nor does any commentary explain how they might support the interpretation being made by the response.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no sophistication of thought.