

**AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis
Scoring Commentaries on 2020 Rubrics
(Applied to 2019 Student Responses)**

Index of Scores for Samples: Question 2

Sample Reference	Row A	Row B	Row C
PP	1	4	1
SS	1	4	1
HH	1	4	0
J	1	3	0
T	1	2	0
E	1	2	0
LL	1	1	0
TT	0	1	0

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Sample PP

6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it clearly articulates a defensible thesis that analyzes the rhetorical choices Gandhi makes in his letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin: “Throughout his letter, Gandhi applies a conciliatory, yet forceful tone, he places the blame onto the British, and he continually repeats his plan for the march in order to convince the British to reverse their policies before he acts.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it successfully integrates specific textual references to support all claims within the student’s argument. By referencing Gandhi’s use of rhetorical choices including tone, language focused on personal responsibility, and repetition, the response constructs a line of reasoning that successfully argues “Gandhi’s legacy as the nonviolent aggressor.” The response includes a mix of specific words and paraphrased examples that directly support the thesis and lend themselves to insightful, effective commentary. In paragraph two for example, the response demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the text when analyzing Gandhi’s “conciliatory and respectful” tone, while also recognizing that this is Gandhi’s way of “standing up to the British.” Paragraph two also indicates a clear understanding of the context and the moves Gandhi must make to convince his audience: “He writes to the British with the intent of asking for the reversal of a law, so he knows that he must be polite and courteous.” The response continues to engage with the text, showing an understanding that Gandhi is not “submitting,” but is “asserting himself, but with respect” and concluding that although Gandhi’s word choices (“I invite you,” for example) may not be threatening the letter is “forceful in its message.” In paragraph three, the response moves on to analyze textual references to British commerce and greed, supporting the claim that Gandhi “places responsibility on to the British” for the violence and conflict. The response accurately draws the conclusion that these methods are used to evoke “a sense of guilt” and “make the British consider their position more fully.” Paragraph four then acknowledges that Gandhi honestly informs the British of his plans as a means of making them “more receptive to his plans” and references the “poor man’s standpoint” on the tax as a means to “cause the British to regard him more favorably” and give “reason for the British to pity the Indians,” all serving to “further Gandhi’s case.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because there is great attention paid to the significance of the writer’s rhetorical choices. This is especially noticeable in the references to Gandhi’s complex tone that is “respectful” yet “urgent.” The response accurately identifies the complex relationship between Gandhi and his intended audience, noting that Gandhi chooses language that “conveys his sense of servitude” while “standing up to the British respectfully.” By arguing that Gandhi evokes a “sense of guilt and responsibility in the British,” the response correctly identifies the complexity of Gandhi’s task.

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Sample SS

6/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it effectively articulates a defensible thesis that analyzes the rhetorical choices Gandhi makes in his letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin: “By describing the British control of Indian commerce as greedy and misguided, clearly asserting the peaceful nature of the protest, and offering to negotiate with Viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi makes the case that his nonviolent protests stand up for the good of mankind against the tyranny of the British.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it integrates evidence to support a line of reasoning; that Gandhi’s focus on the “heroism of nonviolence” demonstrates “an effort to convince the British that their domination of Indian commerce is wrong.” The response examines a variety of rhetorical choices, specifically Gandhi’s word choice and thematic focus, and develops consistent commentary. From the outset, the response focuses on the heroic action of employing peaceful protest to “display the unfair British monopoly on salt.” To build this line of reasoning in paragraph two, the response focuses on Gandhi’s concession that there are necessary “risks” for “the victories of truth to prevail.” The understanding and analysis of the idea of Gandhi’s “heroism” through peaceful protest is especially apt in the commentary: “Gandhi’s focus on using an ‘equal love for your people with mine’ serves to demonstrate the peaceful nature of his protests and also highlights the wrongdoing of the British empire by juxtaposing it with his own ‘weapon’ of love and peace.” In paragraph three, the student clearly articulates Gandhi’s desire to convince the British to “see their own wrongdoing” while analyzing Gandhi’s explanation of the evils of the British government and the greed of the salt act. The commentary here effectively concludes that Gandhi is “standing up for the rights of mankind” and will “take peaceful action to disobey the laws he deems unjust.” Paragraph four reiterates the ideas of this “heroic resistance” and comments on the “salt monopoly” as “a social issue as well as one of commerce.” The response further explains Gandhi’s focus on non-violence and recognizes that “his message is not a threat, but rather an attempt to reason with the British.” The response is especially insightful at the end of paragraph four with the assertion that Gandhi sent the letter with a “young English friend who believes in the Indian cause” to show that “the change in British action that he advocated for is not only possible, but already occurring.” The final paragraph clearly ties together Gandhi’s focus on nonviolence with the inevitable march and the “eventual independence of India.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row C because it discusses in detail how the passage’s complexities support Gandhi’s purpose. The response asserts in paragraph four that “Gandhi makes Indian resistance seem inevitable . . . emphasizing how ‘tens of thousands’ will protest with him,” yet “continues to maintain a reasonable tone, and offers to discuss matters with Viceroy Lord Irwin.” The student’s own style is persuasive and convincing throughout: “Gandhi acknowledge the risks that he is undertaking by standing up to the British government, but also asserts that they are necessary for ‘the victories of truth’ to prevail.”

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Sample HH

5/6 Points (A1 – B4 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it articulates a defensible thesis that analyzes the choices Gandhi makes in his letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin. This is most clearly expressed in the conclusion of the paper: “Gandhi presents his case in a way designed to make Lord Irwin remove the Salt Act without needing to march and risk the lives of those who march with him. Gandhi does this by showing how India and Britain are not that different, and that if the Indian people are not treated better then they will simply end all ties with Britain. Gandhi balances fear of losing a resource and thoughts of gaining an ally in his letter.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned four points for Row B because it integrates evidence from throughout the passage to support the analysis. The response provides well-developed commentary that explicitly establishes a line of reasoning about Gandhi’s purpose to “make Lord Irwin remove the Salt Act without needing to march and risk the lives of those who march with him.” Within this line of reasoning, the response offers multiple supporting claims. In paragraph two, the response argues that “Gandhi establishes an equal relationship between Britain” to convince Lord Irwin to change his treatment of the Indians. The response incorporates a comparison of the histories of India and Great Britain along with an effective analysis of the use of the word “serve” to illustrate Gandhi’s focus on equality and his effort to “help people in both nations.” Paragraph three then goes on to address Gandhi’s use of “threats to British power to motivate Lord Irwin to remove the Salt Act.” The lengthy textual example included focuses on the possibility of India severing ties with the British: “If we want to sever the British connection it is because of the evils. When they are removed, the path becomes easy.” The response effectively develops this focus with a more thorough discussion of the words “sever” and removed.” The commentary clearly explains how these language choices contribute to Gandhi’s message: “Gandhi’s purpose in using these words is to threaten an ending of relations between Britain and India completely if the Salt Act and conditions in general do not change. After informing Lord Irwin of his plan Gandhi is aware that actions could be taken to stop them.” The paragraph continues with a discussion of the “tens of thousands” of people ready to march, commenting that “this will not end with Gandhi.” The commentary suggests that the march should “scare Lord Irwin” because it could lead to India’s independence “if he does not take actions to improve conditions, starting with the removal of the Salt Act.” The final paragraph then summarizes the claims made in the response and provides some insightful commentary about balance of fear and hope present in the letter.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for this row because it did not demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical choices or the purpose of the passage’s complexities. Paragraphs analyzing the rhetorical choices are well developed, but relationships between the strategies are not examined. The sentence structure is repetitive in nature and does not enhance the argument. There is an attempt to contextualize the text, but it relies on paraphrased statements from the prompt: “This peaceful and non-violent protest was a turning point for the civil disobedience that eventually won India its independence.”

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Sample J

4/6 Points (A1 – B3 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because it articulates a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices the writer makes: “In Gandhi’s letter to viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi is able to effectively use specific diction, his appeal to his logical reasoning, and his tone of the letter to strengthen his case.” The purpose, “strengthen his case,” becomes clear in the first sentence of paragraph the following paragraph with “strengthen his case of the independence India seeks.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned three points for Row B because it includes textual references relevant to the thesis and explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. It relies upon several rhetorical choices including “specific diction,” “logical reasoning,” and a tone of “resolve.” The response’s line of reasoning is focused on how Gandhi’s letter is “not intended to further disconnect Britain and India but maintain a future relationship while India is an independent country.” While it is insightful in places, the links between the evidence and the thesis are strained in other instances. In paragraph two, the response adequately incorporates examples of language such as “evil” and “friendly.” The response quite appropriately explains that “By using the word evil in his letter he wishes not to degrade Lord Irwin but to open his eyes on what the people of India feel towards Britain’s actions.” However, the commentary in the analysis of the use of “friendly” is limited and the connection between this and the thesis is thin: “Ghandi could have just written negotiation, however, it would not be able to create a harsher impact than intended to.” Paragraph three continues with the concept of evil and introduces the idea of “resolve” that will be central to the third body paragraph. Paragraph four demonstrates a solid understanding of the passage and the purpose. It reiterates the purpose of Gandhi’s letter: “the negotiation of India’s freedom.” It then pinpoints the shift in the letter where Gandhi moves from “wanting independence to claiming that he will not take no for an answer.” The response recognizes and explains that Gandhi has a “godly duty to the people of India to gain independence.” The paper ends with a solid, two-sentence conclusion that both restates the thesis and helps strengthen the argument. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the context and the rhetorical strategies Gandhi uses to achieve his purpose. The analysis, while accurate, is limited in the first half of the paper, thus the commentary does not fully support all claims.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C. The writing style is repetitive, often using the same sentence structure and language, and is not especially vivid or persuasive. Use of examples and analysis is adequate, but the response does not demonstrate the sophistication of thought.

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Sample T

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because the response concludes with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices: “Gandhi presents his case to Viceroy Lord Irwin to describe how his doings are evil, to show how it is effecting India by using ethos to show the effects and he gives a reasoning to why they should negotiate because he is applying no threat to them.”

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because it provides some specific relevant evidence; however, only some of the commentary is clearly related to the student’s argument and no line of reasoning is established. The paragraphs in this response are not connected to one another in a meaningful way. In paragraph two, the response shows understanding of the connection between the word “evil” and the actions of the British: “Gandhi believes that describing this way is appropriate as the British are evil in the sense that they are taking the salt when there are a lot of poor people.” However, the development of how this works in the text is absent as is the connection between this example and the assertion that “This would make Irwin realize that what he is doing might be considered wrong.” Paragraph three of the response continues to discuss this “evil” and Gandhi’s appeal to emotion with an example directly from the text: “You have unnecessarily laid stress upon communal problems that unhappily affect this land.” The oversimplified commentary, “This appeal to emotion shows how Irwin is the cause of this problem. This can give him the implication that he is doing wrong things,” does little to defend the thesis and is unconvincing. Finally, the quoted text in paragraph four does little to further the argument. Rather than this being a paragraph of evidence and commentary, it is another statement of Gandhi’s purpose similar to that found in paragraph one.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no demonstration of sophistication of thought. Individual rhetorical choices are briefly examined but effective commentary is not developed. The first two sentences of the introduction indicate a general understanding of the rhetorical situation, but the response does not demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of how Gandhi’s rhetorical choices support a larger argument or purpose. Errors in writing prevent the writing style from being persuasive or convincing.

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Sample E

3/6 Points (A1 – B2 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A because in the first two sentences it responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes Gandhi’s rhetorical choices: “In the letter to Lord Irwin by Gandhi, the author expresses his desire for a nonviolent end to the Salt Laws Britain has imposed on India. Through the use of his impeccable word choice, flash back to the year of 1919, and the use of a metaphorical weapon, Gandhi wishes to move his audience to understand that what he is proposing is not a threat, but a duty he must fulfill.”

Row B: 2/4

The response earned two points for Row B because it includes some specific relevant evidence and explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument; however, there is no line of reasoning established. Instead, the paragraphs in this response do not connect to one another and do not develop deep and meaningful argumentation. In paragraph two, the response addresses Gandhi’s word choice with an appropriate textual example about the word “conversion” and Gandhi’s commitment to nonviolence. However, the comment that this “helps his letter flow, and get across the certain point he would like Irwin to understand” is simplistic and does not help explain the relationship between the evidence and the thesis. Paragraph three then misrepresents Gandhi’s statement, “I served them up to 1919, blindly,” as a flashback. The commentary does address the difference between Gandhi’s past beliefs and behaviors “compared to what he stands for now,” but there is no line of reasoning connecting the evidence to the thesis. In paragraph four, the response addresses “humility” as Gandhi’s method “to lead his people to get what they want, lower taxes.” Here the response makes assertions that are unclear and are not supported by the text: “The use of humility is a powerful message to Lord Irwin that Gandhi is not doing this for himself, which leaves him with a lot of peaceful protestors joining him to fight for what they believe in.”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because there is no demonstration of sophistication of thought or complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. Individual rhetorical choices are briefly examined but the relationships among different choices throughout the text are not. The writing style is not persuasive or convincing and does not enhance the analysis as seen in paragraph two: “Also, later in the passage he uses words such as sacred, disciplined, and movement to express why an how the things he mentions in the letter will be done.”

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Sample LL

2/6 Points (A1 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned a point for Row A. While the thesis may not be particularly clear, the first sentence conveys the idea of “conflicting ideas” as a rhetorical tool and the second explains these ideas as words of non-violence versus “an angry intolerant tone.”

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B. There are quotations pulled directly from the text to serve as examples such as, “seek to harm you people,” “I employed the same weapon that I have,” “this letter is not in any way intended as a threat.” However, the selected examples are only vaguely relevant to the thesis. The response does not make it clear what Gandhi’s “terms” are, nor does it explain how these examples convince Irwin to “agree to Gandhi’s terms.” Much of the attempted connection lacks clarity and is either a summary of the quoted text or a statement of opinion with no analysis: “With words such a weapons and combat, I feel as though they directly violate what Gandhi had wanted with not wanting violence . . .” While there seems to be some understanding, the attempt at analysis is not clear enough to warrant an additional point.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C as it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought. The response does begin to examine individual rhetorical choices (“conflicting ideas”), but it is simplistic, merely pointing out examples rather than making connections. Further, the student’s own writing style and use of rhetorical choices lack clarity at times and do not enhance the analysis.

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Sample TT

1/6 Points (A0 – B1 – C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row A. The response launches into a discussion of “Ghandi’s non-violent personality” being a rhetorical device and claims this “makes him look approachable.” However, there is no identifiable, defensible thesis pertaining to rhetorical choices in the letter.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B because it includes references to the text that are vaguely relevant and provides little to no commentary. “Ghandi’s non-violent personality” is listed as a rhetorical device, but the example included is not related to that and is instead related to the letter with no connection of these two ideas. Much of the response is focused on a description of ideas from the original text with no further development or commentary: “he offers not to publish the letter so they can sit down and have a civil talk about it” and “he has it hand-delivered by an English friend.” The idea that Gandhi is “far more inviting than the Americans were in their Declaration of Independence” is not relevant to the analysis.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn a point for Row C because it does not demonstrate sophistication of thought. There is no indication of understanding of the relationship between the parts of the text or the rhetorical choices and Gandhi’s intended outcome. The attempts at commentary are simplistic and undeveloped.