

**AP English Language and Composition**  
**Question 3: Argument (2019)**  
**Sample Student Responses**

The student responses in this packet were selected from the 2019 Reading and have been rescored using the new rubrics for 2020. Commentaries for each sample are provided in a separate document.

Student responses have been transcribed verbatim; any errors in spelling or grammar appear as they do in the original handwritten response.

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**Sample AA**

[1] The term “overrated” can best be applied to capitalism. Capitalism is quite possibly the most overrated concept in the modern world. Propaganda from western nations, namely the United States, have falsely made capitalism a synonym for freedom. Wars have been fought to preserve it and any nation that strays from it is staunchly criticized. While capitalism undeniably has its upsides, it has many downsides that are rarely recognized. When considering the downsides, capitalism is clearly overrated as it commodifies humanity and uplifts a minority at the expense of the majority.

[2] One of the key problems with capitalism is how it commodifies basic humanity. From a moral standpoint, it is wrong to put a price on human life because human life is worth more than even the highest price tag could express. Two of the main necessities to maintain human life are food and water, and recent situations regarding these necessities that are commodities demonstrate the danger of their commodification. Millions of people starve annually because they cannot afford food. This is not an issue of resources, but rather of distribution. The harmful and false notion bred by capitalism that it is every man for himself makes people indifferent or even indignant about other people not having enough to survive, which can be seen in the U.S. with opposition to food stamps. Regardless of personal beliefs, any society that has enough to feed its people but sees it people starve is failing. Another clear failure to protect humanity occurred in Flint, Michigan. Residents in this area were left without clean running water for years while the government and others in power sat idly by with the \$55 million that has been promised to fix the issue. They only recently had their pipes fixed, and many have noted the problems with a government that can but will not help its citizens. Meanwhile, the government was allowing water companies such as Nestle to take resources from the area, which incited further public outrage. Any government or society that prioritizes profit over human life is broken.

[3] Furthermore, capitalism uplifts a minority at the expense of the majority. Under capitalism, the majority does the work while the minority reaps the rewards. This can be seen in the fact that a small percentage of the world’s wealthiest people hold more wealth than the poorest half of the world combined. One such individual, Jeff Bezos, at one point has the wealth to buy every homeless person (not family but person) in the U.S. a \$200,000 house and still fix Flint’s pipes twelve times over. This man is a great example of someone uplifted at the expense of the majority, as his company Amazon is frequently criticized for its poor wages and conditions for workers. Bezos could improve this, as he could get every one of his employees off food stamps if he reduced his wealth by less than one percent, but he does not.

[4] Some may argue that capitalism is not overrated because it is better than communism. First of all, that’s a false dichotomy that can be traced back to Cold War ideas that the only two systems are capitalism and communism. Second of all, while communism has killed millions of people, so has capitalism. While millions starve or die of treatable illnesses and injuries for economic reasons yearly, it is hard to argue that capitalism is that much less bloody than communism.

[5] It is clear that capitalism is an overrated system. It commodifies basic humanity and helps a minority at the expense of the majority. However, that is not to say that capitalism does not have its upsides. Late-stage capitalism is inextricably toxic, but capitalism in and of itself is not necessarily

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harmful. It is possible to have free enterprise without sacrificing freedom, even if it is rarely seen nowadays. One should be able to criticize capitalism without entirely, writing it off. After all, if a system cannot be challenged, how can it improve?

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**Sample W**

[1] Every four years, Americans across the nation cast a ballot. They are voting for the political candidate they believe is most qualified and can best serve their interests, both foreign and domestic. Then, the person who receives the most votes is elected President. Except they're not. Written into the fabric of the American constitution and voting laws is the Electoral College, a set amount of Electives from each state who cast a ballot for president according to the winner of the vote in that specific state. Each state has a set number of electoral votes that is the number of Congressional Representatives they have added with the two Senators from their state. While the Electoral College was created in the name of equality for smaller states, it is ultimately overrated because it undercuts the popular vote, it is an archeic practice that is unsuitable for the modern era.

[2] The primary reason why the Electoral College is overrated is due to the fact that it does not always reflect the popular vote. Reason would dictate that the person who receives the most votes from ordinary Americans should be elected. But that is not the case with the Electoral College. For example, three years ago in the 2016 presidential election, Secretary Hillary Clinton beat President Donald Trump by almost three million votes, yet he won by a large margin in the Electoral College. In the election of 2000 between Vice President Al Gore and President George W. Bush, despite winning the popular vote Gore lost in the Electoral College. If a system is in place that consistently fails the American people and silences their voice (2 out of the last 3 presidents have been elected without popular mandate) that is an overrated system.

[3] Another important reason why the Electoral College is overrated today specifically because it no longer serves its original purpose. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the framers of the Constitution were worried that an uneducated public would elect a bad president. They wanted an elite core of aristocrats and learned peoples representing every state in the [illegible] elections. Today, with the presence of the internet, radio, television, smartphones, and countless other devices, the entire nation can follow campaigns and make at least semi-informed decisions. The elitist mindset behind the Electoral College is so [illegible] because it has more than 400 people no one has ever had of or electing convening in a room and voting for a president. While it might have made sense in 1819, the Electoral College has no place in 2019. It is anathema to American democracy and it is extremely overrated and should be expunged from the political system.

[4] Some of the effects of the Electoral College are beneficial. For example, in a popular election, small states would not be campaigned in or represented because there simply aren't enough people in concentrated areas. But by giving enough small states Electoral votes, anywhere from three to six, candidats have to campaign in these smaller, rural states and areas because these votes are given great value. The platforms in political parties reflect the values of all states, not just the larger ones. But there is one fundamental problem with this. It gives voters in smaller states a greater weight in the Electoral College. In a state like Wyoming with its three votes, a vote there is worth much more than a vote in New York. A person in Lexington, Kentucky is worth three people in Los Angeles, California. These inequities that are plaguing our voting system are undemocratic and are a result of the highly overrated Electoral College.

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[5] Despite being completely different people, a person in Texas should be worth the same as a person in Vermont. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson said that “all men were created equal,” but the system he created is not. The Electoral College is a relic of the past that suppresses the voices of the American people. Not only is it overrated, but it is dangerous to democracy.

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**Sample E**

[1] Competition is “overrated.” The notion of motivation between peers has evolved into a source of unnecessary stress and even lack of morals. Whether it be in an academic environment or in the industry, this new idea of competition is harmful to those competing and those around them.

[2] Back in elementary school, competition was rather friendly. It could have been who could do the most pushups or who could get the most imaginary points in a classroom for a prize. If you couldn’t do the most pushups or win that smelly sticker, you would go home and improve yourself – there would be no strong feelings towards anyone, you would just focus on making yourself a better version of yourself. Then as high school rolled around, suddenly applying for college doesn’t seem so far away – GPA seems to be that one stat that defines you – extracurriculars seem to shape you – test scores seem to categorize you. Sleepless nights, studying for the next day’s exam, seem to become more and more frequent. Floating duck syndrome seems to surround you (FDS is where a competitive student pretends to not work hard but is furiously studying beneath the surface just like how a duck furiously kicks to stay afloat). All of your competitors appear to hope you fail – but in the end what do you and your competitor’s gain? Getting one extra point on the test? Does that self-satisfaction compensate for the tremendous amounts of acquired stress? This new type of “competition” is overrated – it serves nothing except a never-ending source of anxiety and seeks to weaken friendships and solidarity as a whole in the school setting.

[3] A similar idea of “competition” can be applied to business. On the most fundamental level, competition serves to be a beneficial regulator prices and business models for both the business themselves and consumers. However, as businesses grew increasingly greedy and desperate, companies have resorted to immoral tactics that only hurt their reputations and consumers as a whole. Whether it be McDonald’s coupons that force you to buy more food or tech companies like Apple intentionally slowing down your iPhone after 3 years to force you to upgrade to the newest device, consumers suffer and in turn speak down upon these companies. Similar to the evolved form of competition in school, this overrated form causes pain for all parties and has since diverged from the encouraging nature that the principle of competition was “founded” on.

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**Sample GG**

[1] From a young age, we are told to be unique and to stand out, and its okay to be different. However, as time progressed, being different snowballed into ingenuity. Nowadays, people try too hard to be different to the point where it has become overrated.

[2] As a music journalist, this is a concept that I have come across quite often. It is my job to rate albums and express my opinion, as do many other journalists. Many of them feel such a need to be different to a point where they negate certain projects by certain artists just because they're "mainstream," no matter how talented they might be. It is quite ironic because they call those artists overrated, when their behavior is what is truly overrated. They have grown to be pretentious and believe that they have more knowledge than the average person to the point where they would never admit talent simply because its on the "top 40 hits" playlists. This behavior seed from arrogance and this desperation to be validated and praised for having a "unique" opinion is what is overrated. This phenomenon is so common to the point where some journalists will stop listening to their absolute favorite artists because they have over 50 million streams.

[3] This concept can also be seen in everyday life, particularly, fashion trends. Currently, street wear is in style and on a daily basis, I see people wearing button up pants and multi-colored racer jackets in the school hallway who a few months back, swore to never wear something like that. I have friends that called my patched jeans ugly only two weeks before buying their own pair. Many people grow a liking to "unique" fashion once it is popularized while calling themselves different. Certain trends become overrated because of this as well.

[4] In the book "humans are always selfish," the theory that people will always make themselves look better if an opportunity presents itself support this notion. In theory, if the trend is to be different, then people will always try to be different in order to fit in and simultaneously make themselves look better. The reason that this is so overrated is because almost everyone does this, you stop being different the second youre trying to be different.

[5] The main issue is that often times, while trying to be different you hate on the mainstream, it makes you ignorant and arrogant. In one way or another, everyone is guilty of this mentality. The term overrated is perfectly applied here, because the trying ruined everything good and genuine in being unique to the point where most people will think youre trying too hard anyways.

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**Sample RR**

[1] The term “overrated” has been used in conversation to diminish the value of roles. In unusual circumstances the term “overrated” should be applied to the idea of freedom in regards to social change, but overall it should not be applied in regards to global devastation and cruel treatment.

[2] To Kill a Mockingbird demonstrates that “overrated” should be applied to freedom in regards to social change. In this book, Tom Robinson is claimed guilty of abusing a white girl, Mayella, in that he loses his freedom; however his freedom is overrated because his conviction inspires a small change in how people think about the black community. Tom Robinson is a black man who is wrongfully accused of raping Mayella and declared guilty – the all white jury has prejudice against blacks – stripping away his freedom. When Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson, he makes the white people question their outlooks on society and racism. Tom’s trial and Atticus’ defense inspires a gradual social change, therefore Tom’s conviction supports that his freedom is overrated. Although Tom is declared guilty, and his freedom is taken away from him, he stirs social change in how civilization views blacks.

[3] While To Kill a Mockingbird supports that freedom is “overrated,” the Holocaust shows that “overrated” should not be applied to freedom in regards to global devastation. Millions of Jews are forced into concentration camps and lose their freedom; hence, overrating freedom does not apply to the immorality Jews face. During WWII the holocaust takes place enslaving Jews and slaughtering people – concentration camps like Auschwitz were built for Jews to be worked to death. Jews lost their freedom; and were subjugated to painful deaths, creating global devastation; hence, their freedom was not overated.

[4] Similar to the Holocaust, slavery in America shows that freedom is not “overated” in regards to cruel treatment. Millions of African Americans were put into slavery where their freedom was stripped away from them. Whites abused their slaves – many blacks were whipped and suffered brutal work in plantation farms. One slave, Harriet Tubman, escaped slavery to help others gain freedom in the north because of the cruel treatment slaves endured, their freedom was not overated. Like the unjust, cruelty that Jews faced in the Holocaust and that the slaves face in the 1800s, overall freedom is not overated.

[5] In unusual situations the term “overrated” should be applied in regards to social change but not when it comes to global devastation and cruel treatment. Overrating freedom does not give liberty the value it deserves. Society under appreciates the simple freedoms in life, so freedom must not be overated in the long run to show the importance it has in humanity.



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**Sample KK**

[1] There are children born in destitution who smile and laugh when their parents and friends play with them. There are adolescents born in luxury who grimace at the prospect of not receiving gifts. The concept of wealth is overrated as those who do and don't have financial problems are both capable of experiencing joy and happiness. When one has too much of something others presume to be "good," they may consider it to be overrated.

[2] Before his passing, the distinguished CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs, remarked on his regrets. While he has an extraordinary sum of money, true happiness came from his time spent with his friends and family. "Money cannot buy happiness" is a common saying and it is applicable to many situations. In *Death of a Salesman*, the father wants to leave his son with a large sum of money to make him happy and does so by committing suicide and transferring that money to his children. In the end, his death is not met with exuberation but with exasperation. Although this is an extreme example, the basic idea still applies. The children were content with doing their own thing out in the Midwest despite the evident lack of financial gain. While wealth can provide for a lavish lifestyle, people do not need all of those commodities to lead a joyful life.

[3] In broader terms, the denotation of overrated can be applied to anything that the speaker has enough of and has grown tired of. To ordinary people having the title of Queen of Jordan is beyond their dreams, but to Queen Ranta, the position is not nearly as interesting as others make it out to be.

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**Sample VV**

[1] Kicking a ball in a net and scoring, is not as important as saving lives. Soccer to me would be considered overrated. Many fans have problems when it comes to cheering for their team. It causes many conflicts, that can't be solved by a simple resolution like shaking hands. Sports, especially soccer is not worth a heart attack or increase of blood pressure. Those scoring in a soccer game earn more money than a doctors salary who saves lives of human beings every second of the time in the world.

[2] Based on my experience, watching soccer games or being a fan of any type of sport shouldn't cause your blood pressure to decrease or increase. Conflicts rise between a team against another team, and instructors against other instructors. Many don't keep in mind that we don't live on earth eternally, so theres no need to waste time thinking about a lost game.

[3] "Overrated" is often used to diminish concepts, places, and even roles. I believe that soccer does not deserve the prestige it is given today. I know mostly about famous soccer players who can score goals two times in a row, than I know about doctors who scored an important goal by saving the lives of people, who were on the border of loosing their lives.

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**Sample MM**

[1] Over-rated should be used to describe a place. When you go somewhere that's constantly talked about as being the best, but then you see how boring it is you'll say its overrated. Or when you to go to give 1-5 stars on a places page you could overrate the place or underrate the place.

[2] When describing a person, you tend to use more harsh and subtle words. I've never heard someone call another person overrated, while I have heard other things: mean, selfish, ugly, etc.

[3] An outfit can also be described as over-rated depending on material, reviews, color and design. It really depends on how you feel at the time and the place you're going while wearing the outfit. It could be overrated for the place or not good enough.

[4] The label overrated is all about opinion, you chose what happens and what don't.