



AP[®] English Language and Composition 2006 Free-Response Questions

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**2006 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 for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The passage below is an excerpt from Jennifer Price’s recent essay “The Plastic Pink Flamingo: A Natural History.” The essay examines the popularity of the plastic pink flamingo in the 1950s. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Price crafts the text to reveal her view of United States culture.

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When the pink flamingo splashed into the fifties market, it staked two major claims to boldness. First, it was a *flamingo*. Since the 1930s, vacationing Americans had been flocking to Florida and returning home with flamingo souvenirs. In the 1910s and 1920s, Miami Beach’s first grand hotel, the Flamingo, had made the bird synonymous with wealth and pizzazz. . . . [Later], developers built hundreds of more modest hotels to cater to an eager middle class served by new train lines—and in South Beach, especially, architects employed the playful Art Deco style, replete with bright pinks and flamingo motifs.

This was a little ironic, since Americans had hunted flamingos to extinction in Florida in the late 1800s, for plumes and meat. But no matter. In the 1950s, the new interstates would draw working-class tourists down, too. Back in New Jersey, the Union Products flamingo inscribed one’s lawn emphatically with Florida’s cachet of leisure and extravagance. The bird acquired an extra fillip of boldness, too, from the direction of Las Vegas—the flamboyant oasis of instant riches that the gangster Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel had conjured from the desert in 1946 with his Flamingo Hotel. Anyone who has seen Las Vegas knows that a flamingo stands out in a desert even more strikingly than on a lawn. In the 1950s, namesake Flamingo motels, restaurants, and lounges cropped up across the country like a line of semiotic sprouts.

And the flamingo was *pink*—a second and commensurate claim to boldness. The plastics industries of the fifties favored flashy colors, which

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Tom Wolfe called “the new electrochemical pastels of the Florida littoral: tangerine, broiling magenta, livid pink, incarnadine, fuchsia demure, Congo ruby, methyl green.” The hues were forward-looking rather than old-fashioned, just right for a generation, raised in the Depression, that was ready to celebrate its new affluence. And as Karal Ann Marling has written, the “sassy pinks” were “the hottest color of the decade.” Washing machines, cars, and kitchen counters proliferated in passion pink, sunset pink, and Bermuda pink. In 1956, right after he signed his first recording contract, Elvis Presley bought a pink Cadillac.

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Why, after all, call the birds “pink flamingos”—as if they could be blue or green? The plastic flamingo is a hotter pink than a real flamingo, and even a real flamingo is brighter than anything else around it. There are five species, all of which feed in flocks on algae and invertebrates in saline and alkaline lakes in mostly warm habitats around the world. The people who have lived near these places have always singled out the flamingo as special. Early Christians associated it with the red phoenix. In ancient Egypt, it symbolized the sun god Ra. In Mexico and the Caribbean, it remains a major motif in art, dance, and literature. No wonder that the subtropical species stood out so loudly when Americans in temperate New England reproduced it, brightened it, and sent it wading across an inland sea of grass.

The American Scholar, Spring 1999

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Question 2

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

The passage below is an excerpt from “On the Want of Money,” an essay written by nineteenth-century author William Hazlitt. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Hazlitt uses to develop his position about money.

Line Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the
5 world without money. To be in want of it, is to pass
through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live
out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it;
10 it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner,
or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion
consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your
acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things
disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to
15 say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and
neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to
circumstances, an exile in one’s own country; to
forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be
20 dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or
earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some
laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand
behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public
office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person
25 you would wish; or to go out to the East or West
Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return
home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer,
or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or
to read law and sit in court without a brief; or to be
deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing
Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore
yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of

30 the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes,
and most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the
exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of
mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with
envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite
with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the
background—or a gaol,* by the fickleness of taste
and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and
35 extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment
in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you
do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who
know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on
their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your
40 relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be
ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort
at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any
talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose,
and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most
45 so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look
about for a place to die in, and quit the world without
any one’s asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will
possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise
a monument at a considerable expense, and after a
50 lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your
misfortunes!

(1827)

*jail

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Question 3

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

From talk radio to television shows, from popular magazines to Web blogs, ordinary citizens, political figures, and entertainers express their opinions on a wide range of topics. Are these opinions worthwhile? Does the expression of such opinions foster democratic values?

Write an essay in which you take a position on the value of such public statements of opinion, supporting your view with appropriate evidence.

STOP

END OF EXAM