



AP[®] English Language and Composition 2002 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

Sample DDD — Score 9

With its impressive control of language and its apt analysis, this essay is a solid 9. The student explains why specific rhetorical techniques are especially appropriate for Lincoln’s audience and connects technique and effect with a succinct and accurate statement of Lincoln’s purpose. Focusing upon Lincoln’s use of parallel structure to reinforce his claims about the similarities between the north and south, his use of Biblical allusions to point out shared spiritual beliefs, and his use of personification to treat the war as the enemy, this student writes an effective essay that also displays his or her command of varied syntax and vocabulary.

The student is also careful to present appropriate evidence from the text as support. In the final paragraph, the student successfully links Lincoln’s techniques to the traditional appeals of pathos and logos, demonstrating a clear understanding of the connection between heart and head and of the necessity for appealing to both when a speaker, such as Lincoln, needs to persuade a large and varied audience.

Sample LL — Score 7

While this essay is only slightly better than adequate in its explanation of how Lincoln uses rhetorical devices to persuade his audience, it demonstrates a more mature prose style than most essays in the 6 category and is elevated to the score of 7 primarily because of its writing. As did the writer of DDD, this student correctly identifies Lincoln’s use of the Bible and parallelism as important in the overall effectiveness of his speech. However, this student is considerably less able than the writer of DDD when explaining how and why these strategies are effective.

In its discussion of Lincoln’s diction, LL relies far too much upon general terms. While the gist of the student’s claims is correct, the essay fails to provide the finer distinctions that can make such discussion especially fruitful.

Sample X — Score 5

Essays earning the score of 5 are generally uneven and inconsistent, and these words seem particularly appropriate in describing this sample. It has one well-developed and argued point, and its other areas of discussion are confused and confusing.

The essay’s treatment of Biblical allusions is solid, as the student explains that the references to God make Lincoln’s words appear “just” and “form a common ground between the two opposing sides of the war.” If the essay had been able to rise to this level of discussion throughout, it would have earned a higher score, but the writer also discusses diction in a very limited way, and the treatment of compound/complex sentences is baffling.

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Question 2

Sample VV — Score 8

This essay offers readers an effective analysis of how Woolf uses language to convey the lasting significance of moments from her past. Focusing upon Woolf’s use of specific details and memories and her use of metaphor, the student writes an insightful essay that discusses how these elements of language function within the passage.

The student clearly understands the seed metaphor and its significance to the passage as a whole: “that is possibly the most important use of her memories: as the vehicles of living vicariously.” While the essay’s prose is effective, it is not particularly impressive nor is the analysis especially apt or full. These elements of the student’s essay prevent its receiving the highest score, even though it offers perceptive observations and musters appropriate textual support in their defense.

Sample U — Score 6

This essay offers an adequate analysis of how Woolf uses language to convey moments from her past. Its solid discussions of syntax and structure demonstrate an understanding of how these specific elements function in the passage.

The essay also offers a rudimentary understanding of the function of Woolf’s figurative language, even though it does not capture the full complexity of the seed metaphor. In general, the essay’s claims and language are not as effective as those in essays earning a higher score.

Sample W — Score 3

Inadequate responses often merely touch upon the task that they have been assigned. That is certainly true of this student, who ignores most of what the question asks. Instead, the student describes how Woolf’s use of language makes readers feel as though they are actually present during the events that Woolf describes in her memoir.

While the student can recognize and identify specific elements, the student does not offer an adequate discussion of their function; for example, the essay includes such obvious (and unnecessary) statements as similes are used to make “the image more imaginable.” The student also seems to misunderstand the significance of Woolf’s seed metaphor.

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Question 3

Sample LLL — Score 9

This cogent, well-supported, and carefully qualified argument is among the best of the samples from this year's exam. It is a 9+ — if such a score exists — for it demonstrates both especially sophisticated argument and particularly impressive control of language. The student musters considerable and variable proofs for his or her claims and demonstrates an ability to make a point economically and compellingly before moving swiftly on to the next part of his or her carefully constructed argument.

The evidence ranges widely from Michael Jackson to President Clinton, and the student carefully qualifies his claim to point out that the invasion of an ordinary citizen's privacy can actually present opportunities for financial gain. The essay's success is certainly based upon its persuasive argument, but the writer's language is equally impressive with its demonstration of fluency, expressive vocabulary, and syntactical variety.

Sample RR — Score 8

This student responded to another of Kundera's claims, his argument that the public and private worlds are very different — a choice that many students seemed to make and one that is entirely justified since the prompt does not specify which claim students should address. In an essay that relies almost entirely upon personal experience, the student presents a convincing argument that the public and private worlds are as different as Kundera suggests.

While the student's prose is less sophisticated than that of the preceding sample, she demonstrates particular skill in her ability to use personal anecdotes in a telling and convincing manner. She is also able to convey a distinctive personal voice that greatly enhances her persuasive ability.

Sample XX — Score 7

This essay, which is basically in full agreement with Kundera's claims, takes another tact. It relies almost entirely upon logic and the writer's ability to connect the audience with her position through enumerating common shared experiences.

While the essay does not have the explicit, specific kinds of evidence that are offered in the two previous responses, it does provide a convincing argument. Its purposeful argumentation and mature prose lift it above adequate and the score of 6 and firmly into the higher score of 7.