AP® English Language & Composition
2003 Sample Student Responses

The materials included in these files are intended for use by AP teachers for course and exam preparation; permission for any other use must be sought from the Advanced Placement Program®. Teachers may reproduce them, in whole or in part, in limited quantities for noncommercial, face-to-face teaching purposes. This permission does not apply to any third-party copyrights contained herein. This material may not be mass distributed, electronically or otherwise. These materials and any copies made of them may not be resold, and the copyright notices must be retained as they appear here.
The gates of the transport unhinge and with it comes a shower of bullets, mixed with tracer ammunition, a rainfall of death produced by German machine guns on courageous Americans in the Normandy invasion. As troops progress up the war-torn, blood-stained beach, a nearby explosion sends movie-goers scurrying to the backs of their seats. Yes, this is the scene described is from the opening scene of the famed Saving Private Ryan. One of the most visually spectacular war films of all time. Only entertainment? No. An insight to the harsh, merciless, and cruel realities of war? Yes. Movies such as this adjust from their widespread acceptance and praise, demonstrate that yes, the cinema can be as much a symbol of America as the White House. Although some proclaim that the entertainment industry has poisoned society, entertainment does operate. Certainly, some entertainment has been found to foster negative consequences, such as violence, sexual activity, and use of contraband. Television, especially, has come under attack from moral-minded critics for shows like MTV's "Jackass," "Beverly Hills Chihuahua." Yet why men perform like threatening, sometimes outright psycho sickening stunts and which numerous fatal and near-fatal incidents have been attributed to as youth attempt to imitate what they see on TV. Sexually explicit movies, plays, and novels, etc., have contributed to a trend of heightened sexual activity and experimentation at an early age. The entertainment, as much as the cigarette industry with figures like Joe Camel, is guilty of targeting specific demographic groups with lead material.

However, the entertainment industry is held in high esteem by a majority of Americans for its positive impact. Movies like Saving
Private Megan are historically informative as well as entertaining. Entertainment, as has been proven frequently, does not limit itself to "fun, effortless, sensational, mindless, formulaic, predictable" expressions, but exercises of wide-range of capabilities. Writers, producers, directors, and actors alike use entertainment to convey artistic concepts and ideas, for creative expression and discourse, while, yes, someboltedbtalletcompanies derive entertainment solely for pecuniary return, others make it their Michelangelis workshop. A place to perfect and master creative pieces, not only for enjoyment purposes, but for a positive artistic impact as well. The author of the excerpt, Neil Cohler, too, presents wellness and education examples subservient to his own logic. While 18th century critics deplored entertainment as a means to "overturn all morality," they also functioned in an age of the industrial revolution, where life existed on the majority in pure subjectivity, and when entertainment was viewed shown only in dime theatres and cinemas. Places where the poor of society congregated to shunt and interact with entertainment, or production houses and theaters suffered vociferous criticism from the well to do. Today, however, entertainment has evolved into something more complex, developed entity into a versatile art form. While not only offering an escape from the drudgery of life, entertainment functions to promote a creative and artistic and enlightenment of the mind. The Media, not to be missed is the media. More than an acidic influence on society, entertainment informs, enlightens, and acts as an intellectual forum. The bullets from Tom Hanks' semi-automatic are not meant to tell someone...
that telling is ok, but to stress the dangers and urgency of war, while simultaneously astound watches with visual reality.

#
Taking the definition of capacity in its purest form—that is, "ability," certainly, I agree that some extreme forms of entertainment do have the capacity to "ruin." However, in most instances of "risky" books, movies, and plays—entertainment (conservatively seen as damnable)—has something to offer beyond the cover, that most people are not willing to look for.

Two nights ago, I left my house feeling guilty and tiring of my church-going, Republican-voting, 81-year-old grandmother—and my final destination that night, which was in fact the Broadway Production of The Full Monty, a play commonly viewed as a "strip show," and one she would have never let me attend, being a "Southern Belle." However, upon arriving to a half-empty theater (obviously others in the Bible Belt felt the same—shared many grandmother's view) I began looking deeper into the story of The Full Monty and realized it was not about stripping at all, but rather, a group of men doing what was necessary to keep wives, pay rent, please their children, and provide for their families. Though the "nakedness" of some of the performers may mislead people into contempt for the theater, it is shows like The Full Monty that open our eyes to reality, and do not "ruin" it, but rather embrace it, provide hope for all people in similar situations.

Similarly, in books, such as The one-armed Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, we find great relationships between blacks and whites, discover the harsh reality of a black man's life in the south and also watch a white boy grow from a "nigger" to a lover. That is the common view of destructive word "nigger" and wish to embrace understand—black Twain's purpose.
In using the language he did. Though sometimes Twain was as
destructive to society, I think, in his time, and neglect to see Huckleberry Finn's evolution in the book - I view
it as an "eye opener" and an irreplaceable classic.

And lastly - the movies. In all of movie history people
have debated what is and isn't released on the big screen.
From the smock of John Wayne's gun to the
"shower murder" in Alfred Hitchcock's acclaimed film *Psycho*,
directors and writers have brought imagination as well as realism
to the public. Some embrace it with open arms, finding
beauty in stories such as "A Beautiful Life," the story of an
Italian man and his son finding the beauty in the midst of
the horrific Holocaust. Others see it as outrageous and
inappropriate for the general public. The list of movies
such as those could go on forever, but as the cliche goes,
beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

And so it is with all entertainment, be it film, books,
plays, or even true life - there is beauty in all, it just needs
to be found. As far as I'm concerned: "The show
must go on."
Entertainment is popular among all different age groups, among different ethnicities, and has always been present throughout the ages. Entertainment often defines a certain time period, or it can identify a group of people. As a teenager, I am most vulnerable to entertainment, but at the same time, I can understand how it "tarnishes society." Many things in life have its pros and cons, as does entertainment.

As a junior in high school, I have much pressure from the many tests, homework assignments, and extra activities. It is my belief that one with so much pressure should absorb some entertainment from time to time. Nobody should ever work themselves, so it is important to relax and tune in to a few television programs from time to time. Entertainment serves as a scapegoat to live in times of frustration. A little music always brightens my day and takes certain burdens off my shoulders. Also, Gabler forget the programs on television that are not "mindless," such as news specials and important interviews with political candidates. Not only is entertainment a soothing friend that will not judge, but it also educates others culturally, politically, and knowlegably.

While I enjoy entertainment, I also have experienced how it can be "formulaic," and just "fun" in which entertainment "has the capacity to ruin society." Many youths, like myself, now spend hours in front of the television and computer screens, searching for intense entertainment. This not only is detrimental to one's health, but takes away from one's social life as well. The time that an individual spends in front of the t.v. can be used for helping the community.
or for enjoying activities with friends, sports. This power of controlling teenagers' "ruins society" indefinitely. Entertainment may also corrupt the society by the sex appeal on television, or certain uncensored programs. Many people have access to the internet, to the television, or to the radio, where there lurks material only suitable for certain age groups. Entertainment has the power to mature a child too quickly, and this is what is dangerous. The characters in certain shows, plays, or musical tunes may also mislead certain individuals into believing that the "ideal person" should look glamorous, beautiful, and only weigh a certain number of pounds, as well. The message that entertainment sends may be misconstrued, and therefore be harmful to the uniqueness of an individual, or to the society.

Entertainment most certainly should not be completely trusted for the messages it sends, as it can also help an individual during his/her worst pressuresome times. It has the capacity to both end to run...