



## **AP<sup>®</sup> English Language & Composition 2004 Scoring Commentary**

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**Question 1**

**Sample: YYYY**  
**Score: 9**

This extremely fluent paper, which received a score of 9, represents a successful response to the prompt, one that portrays Lord Chesterfield's letter as an argument shot through with irony. Drawing abundantly from the text, the writer shows how Lord Chesterfield uses understatement, contradictions, rhetorical questions, and "simple guilt" to remind his son about his obligations and responsibilities, especially in regard to education. The writer notes that Chesterfield's "none-too-subtle" understatement actually discredits "his own opinion and the value of his morals"; the writer, moreover, asserts that this feigned "insignificance" is evidence of "a rhetoric of constant contradiction." Further, the writer explains that the second paragraph of the letter eschews "contradictions hiding intimidation" in favor of "rhetorical questions with obviously implied answers" that simply translate as "You had better not waste your opportunities, son." While the writer does employ a bit of ill-defined terminology (e.g., "harmless" and "sarcastic" syntax), he or she fully and correctly analyzes how Chesterfield's letter "leaves no doubt as to what he feels."

**Sample: WWW**  
**Score: 8**

This paper, an 8, is a full, effective response to the prompt. The writer sees the irony in Chesterfield's letter, but views it as just one of his rhetorical strategies. Relying frequently on implicit reference to the text, the paper explains how Lord Chesterfield's selection of details, diction, and use of irony "reveals how highly he values obedience and reputation." First, the writer points out that Chesterfield's use of details about his son's financial dependence and education are actually subtle reminders about what the son must do before Chesterfield will support him financially. Second, the writer explains that Chesterfield chooses to use specific words that "underline his son's possibility of gaining a bad reputation." Finally, the writer detects the irony in Chesterfield's letter. He or she sees that by saying he is not hinting, "Lord Chesterfield is not hinting but plainly calling attention to the fact" that he is not his son's "friend," but is instead an authority figure.

**Sample: DD**  
**Score: 7**

This paper, which scored a 7, is a better than adequate response to the prompt. The writer correctly detects Lord Chesterfield's "parental tone masquerading as that of a friend," perceptively notes how a "long stream of sentences, each beginning with 'I know'" shapes the son's attitudes, and perceptively points out how Chesterfield's directions "on how to live" are "backed up by hypothetical questions or expanded upon by examples." The paper is relatively general in its description of the "variety of reasons for Chesterfield's son to respect what he writes." A more specific reference to these reasons, with explicit or implicit reference to the text, might have elevated the score of this otherwise good paper.

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**Question 2**

**Sample: BB**

**Score: 9**

This paper, which scored a 9, represents exemplary work. The writer chooses a topic about which he or she clearly knows a great deal, the history of space exploration and its possible future directions. The writer carefully shapes the argument, clarifying that the controversy at hand is not whether there are benefits to space exploration—the writer provides ample support for the existence of those benefits—but instead whether the United States government should fund NASA more generously. To his or her credit, the writer examines both the benefits and drawbacks of supporting space exploration, drawing particularly intelligently from an Eric Severeid editorial arguing that such exploration actually limits young people’s imagination about space. The writer’s careful, balanced prose in this part of the paper is worth noticing and emulating. After considering similar historical moments when humankind had the chance to support exploration and did so, and after acknowledging that the space exploration program may not be perfect, the writer ends the paper on a hopeful note, calling for us to take the “opened” door of space exploration.

**Sample: WWW**

**Score: 8**

This paper, which received an 8, is a thoroughly effective response to the prompt. The writer focuses on a controversy that had been in the news regularly around the time of the 2004 examination, the outsourcing of American jobs to other countries. The writer in this case particularly focuses on the situation with information technology jobs. He or she examines in some detail the two sides of this controversy: on the one hand, outsourcing helps IT companies operate profitably, but on the other hand, outsourcing leads to greater unemployment for American workers. The writer sees a preliminary solution in better technological education for young Americans so that companies can find capable workers in the United States, but he or she clarifies that the ultimate solution must lie in American companies’ willingness to limit the amount of outsourcing they do. While not particularly artistic, the prose of this paper is full, articulate, and fluent.

**Sample: RR**

**Score: 7**

This paper, a 7, represents an adequate response to the prompt, marked by a relatively strong, if not particularly original, argument and a clear prose style. The writer focuses on the controversial possibility of the Federal Communication Commission’s regulating the content of television programs. With an unfortunate but perhaps forgivable solecism, the paper begins to develop the opposing positions by asserting, “As with every issue, there is two sides.” The writer examines the 2004 Super Bowl incident involving Janet Jackson’s attire that sparked the most recent instance of the controversy. He or she explains that some television viewers appreciate the government’s efforts to make television more suitable for families and points out, in somewhat less detail, that such regulation might be the first step toward total regulation of “what Americans are allowed to watch.” The solutions, according to the writer, are designated “family time” on television networks and the installation of chips to block out potentially offensive material. Both solutions, the author intelligently notes, will call for compromise.

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**Question 3**

**Sample: BB**

**Score: 9**

This paper, a 9, is an extremely full and intelligent response to the prompt. The writer builds his or her paper on the claim that Rodriguez contrasts Mexico and California not as places but as “polar states of mind,” and the writer sees Rodriguez’s ambivalence as encapsulated in a “classical metaphor”—California as comedy and Mexico as tragedy. Drawing amply on the primary text, the writer develops a series of strong claims about the path of Rodriguez’s thinking and the images he employs to convey his conflicting feelings about the two locales and his own state of mind. The writer’s prose style is quite admirable, marked by sophisticated vocabulary and clear, helpful transitions.

**Sample: MMM**

**Score: 8**

This paper, which scored an 8, is a solid, effective response to the prompt. The paper’s introduction is brief and to the point, promising to show how Rodriguez’s comparison shows “his own conflicting outlooks of optimism and pessimism.” The paper then proceeds, relying primarily on implicit reference to the text, by arguing that Rodriguez primarily sees California as emblematic of his “hopeful optimism,” while his view of Mexico shows “contradicting cynicism.” The writer does see these two perspectives co-existing in Rodriguez’s mind, and the paper concludes by rehearsing the thinking that led Rodriguez to declare that “both sides can claim wisdom.” The prose style of this paper is quite good—clear, simple, and direct.

**Sample: W**

**Score: 6**

This paper, a 6, represents an adequate response to the prompt. The writer notes that a “combination” of Rodriguez’s views on Mexico and California “best describes his life.” Relying a bit on summary and paraphrase and occasionally on direct reference to the text, the paper characterizes California as comedy and Mexico, somewhat cryptically, as “a place of almost existential finality.” The paper concludes by illustrating Rodriguez’s inclination “to believe more so in the Mexican way of life” and by rehearsing briefly his claim that “irresolution” will best describe his life. The prose style of this paper is strong, if not artistic. The relative brevity of the explanation keeps this paper in the adequate, rather than the effective, range of scores.