



AP[®] English Language and Composition 2004 Free-Response Questions Form B

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2004 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

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

In 1962, the noted biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book that helped to transform American attitudes toward the environment. Carefully read the following passage from *Silent Spring*. Then write an essay in which you define the central argument of the passage and analyze the rhetorical strategies that Carson uses to construct her argument.

Line
5 As the habit of killing grows—the resort to
“eradicating” any creature that may annoy or
inconvenience us—birds are more and more finding
themselves a direct target of poisons rather than an
6 incidental one. There is a growing trend toward aerial
applications of such deadly poisons as parathion to
“control” concentrations of birds distasteful to
farmers. The Fish and Wildlife Service has found it
necessary to express serious concern over this trend,
10 pointing out that “parathion treated areas constitute a
potential hazard to humans, domestic animals, and
wildlife.” In southern Indiana, for example, a group of
farmers went together in the summer of 1959 to
engage a spray plane to treat an area of river
15 bottomland with parathion. The area was a favored
roosting site for thousands of blackbirds that were
feeding in nearby cornfields. The problem could have
been solved easily by a slight change in agricultural
practice—a shift to a variety of corn with deep-set
20 ears not accessible to the birds—but the farmers had
been persuaded of the merits of killing by poison, and
so they sent in the planes on their mission of death.

The results probably gratified the farmers, for the
casualty list included some 65,000 red-winged
25 blackbirds and starlings. What other wildlife deaths
may have gone unnoticed and unrecorded is not
known. Parathion is not a specific for blackbirds: it is
a universal killer. But such rabbits or raccoons or
opossums as may have roamed those bottomlands and
30 perhaps never visited the farmers’ cornfields were
doomed by a judge and jury who neither knew of their
existence nor cared.

And what of human beings? In California orchards

35 sprayed with this same parathion, workers handling
foliage that had been treated a *month* earlier collapsed
and went into shock, and escaped death only through
skilled medical attention. Does Indiana still raise any
boys who roam through woods or fields and might
40 even explore the margins of a river? If so, who guarded
the poisoned area to keep out any who might wander
in, in misguided search for unspoiled nature? Who
kept vigilant watch to tell the innocent stroller that the
fields he was about to enter were deadly—all their
vegetation coated with a lethal film? Yet at so fearful
45 a risk the farmers, with none to hinder them, waged
their needless war on blackbirds.

In each of these situations, one turns away to ponder
the question: Who has made the decision that sets in
motion these chains of poisonings, this ever-widening
50 wave of death that spreads out, like ripples when a
pebble is dropped into a still pond? Who has placed
in one pan of the scales the leaves that might have
been eaten by the beetles and in the other the pitiful
heaps of many-hued feathers, the lifeless remains of
55 the birds that fell before the unselective bludgeon of
insecticidal poisons? Who has decided—who has the
right to decide—for the countless legions of people
who were not consulted that the supreme value is a
world without insects, even though it be also a sterile
60 world ungraced by the curving wing of a bird in flight?
The decision is that of the authoritarian temporarily
entrusted with power; he has made it during a moment
of inattention by millions to whom beauty and the
ordered world of nature still have a meaning that is
65 deep and imperative.

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Question 2

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

More than one hundred years ago, a writer for *The Atlantic Monthly* confronted an issue that is still timely. Read the following essay carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the nature of the writer's arguments and evaluate their validity for our own time.

Line 5 From time to time the question arises whether certain nude statues shall be exhibited in the museums of art where they are to be seen by the general public,—by children from the schools as well as by scholars from the universities. And from time to time the answer to the question is hotly debated, usually without agreement. Those who are concerned about the morals of the public maintain that grave harm is done by such exhibitions. Those who believe that beauty is its own excuse for being have scornful words for spectators who find evil where, most certainly, no evil was intended. Such controversies usually start from *a priori*¹ assumptions, and seldom lead to any useful end.

15 The question is capable of a practical solution that will be accepted by everyone. It is universally admitted that public libraries must reserve certain books from general circulation. In the same way, it is reasonable to affirm that a public museum of art may be justified in excluding certain statues. There need be no discussion of the first principles of morals or of beauty. The solution reached must rest on practical grounds. Moralists will justify it for one set of reasons; artists will accede to it for another.

25 Every librarian knows what books to reserve for the exclusive use of persons of mature age; and every curator of a museum is likewise bound to admit that his public must be considered. The general principle is entirely clear. There is no great difficulty in carrying it out in its details. The analogy between public libraries and public museums helps us to decide as to special points.

35 If a certain book offends any considerable number of persons, it should be placed on the reserved list, even though a considerable number of other persons may find no harm in it. No librarian would seek to enforce his private judgment in such a matter against the protests of a large group of respectable persons of a different opinion. The same procedure should be followed in arranging the statues in a museum open to the general public.

45 I, personally, find no harm in the statue of — from Pompeii. It interests me in itself, as a thing of beauty, and as an index of the feeling of the people who produced it. It was, in Pompeii, so placed that only adults saw it, probably. If the citizen of a modern

American town, two thousand years later, finds offense in it, for himself or for his children, I will not blame him. His point of view is essentially different from that of the Roman of that earlier day. His child's point of view is utterly different. He, as a citizen, pays the taxes that support his museum.

50 His opinion, therefore, deserves respect, even though he may be, from my point of view, uncultivated, intolerant, and unreasonable. If any considerable number of such citizens are offended, for themselves or for their children, I, for one, will not object if their opinions are respected by the public officer who is their servant as well as mine. Let the offending statue go to a reserved room, just as an offending book in the public library goes to a reserved shelf. Any one who has a right to see the statue will be admitted to do so by the curator. The general public is, on the whole, better off without access to the book, and, on the whole, the general public will be better off without access to the statue.

70 I can remember when Balzac's novels were kept on the top shelf, though now they are freely given out in many public libraries. It was, in my opinion, a loss that they were so long reserved. I acquiesced in the reservation, however, since it was demanded by a considerable number of intelligent people. I do not think they are good food for children, even now. The same principle can be, and should be, applied in public museums of art. If the public demands that the *Discobolus*² should be relegated to an attic because it is unclothed, very well, let it go there. Let me have the key to the attic when I wish it. If the statue is really good and pure, as thousands of good people believe, it will, by and by, be brought down to the main hall.

80 In the meantime, let us wait. There is no hurry. Do not let us oppose our canon of taste, however cultivated, to a canon of morals held by a considerable number of sincere persons, however mistaken.

The Atlantic Monthly, August 1901

¹ without examination or analysis

² a statue of a discus-thrower by the Greek sculptor Myron, dating from about 450 B.C.

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Question 3

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

Michael Ignatieff, Professor of the Practice of Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, made the following observation.

To belong is to understand the tacit codes of the people you live with.
—*Blood and Belonging*

Consider how unspoken rules help to define group identity. Then write a carefully reasoned essay that examines the relationship between unspoken rules and belonging. Use specific examples to develop your position.

END OF EXAMINATION