

AP[®] English Language and Composition 2009 Free-Response Questions Form B

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2009 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 for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Directions: The following prompt is based on the accompanying seven sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. When you synthesize sources you refer to them to develop your position and cite them accurately. *Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect references.

Introduction

Mass public schooling has traditionally proclaimed among its goals the following: (1) to help each student gain personal fulfillment and (2) to help create good citizens. These two goals—one aimed at the betterment of individuals and the other aimed at the betterment of society—might seem at odds with one another. At the very least, these two goals are a cause of much tension within schools at every level: schools want students to be allowed or encouraged to think for themselves and pursue their own interests, but schools also believe that it is right in some circumstances to encourage conformity in order to socialize students.

Assignment

Read the sources that follow (including the introductory information) carefully. Then choose an issue related to the tension in schools between individuality and conformity. You might choose an issue such as dress codes, mandatory classes, or the structure of the school day. You do not have to choose an issue that you have experienced personally. **Then, write an essay in which you use this issue to argue the extent to which schools should support individuality or conformity. Synthesize at least three of the sources for support.**

You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, etc.) or by the descriptions in the parentheses.

- Source A (Gatto)
- Source B (Bell schedule)
- Source C (Book cover)
- Source D (Postman)
- Source E (Holt)
- Source F (Photo)
- Source G (Expectations)

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Source A

Gatto, John Taylor. "Against School: How Public Education Cripples Our Kids, and Why."
Harper's Magazine Sept. 2003.

The following is excerpted from an essay by a former high school teacher who advocates educational reform.

Do we really need school? I don't mean education, just forced schooling: six classes a day, five days a week, nine months a year, for twelve years. Is this deadly routine really necessary? And if so, for what? Don't hide behind reading, writing, and arithmetic as a rationale, because 2 million happy homeschoolers have surely put that banal justification to rest. Even if they hadn't, a considerable number of well-known Americans never went through the twelve-year wringer our kids currently go through, and they turned out all right. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln? Someone taught them, to be sure, but they were not products of a school *system*, and not one of them was ever "graduated" from a secondary school. . . . We have been taught (that is, schooled) in this country to think of "success" as synonymous with, or at least dependent upon, "schooling," but historically that isn't true in either an intellectual or a financial sense. And plenty of people throughout the world today find a way to educate themselves without resorting to a system of compulsory secondary schools that all too often resemble prisons. Why, then, do Americans confuse education with just such a system?

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Source B

High school bell schedule

The following is the daily schedule followed by students in a public high school.

**Your High School
DAILY BELL SCHEDULE**

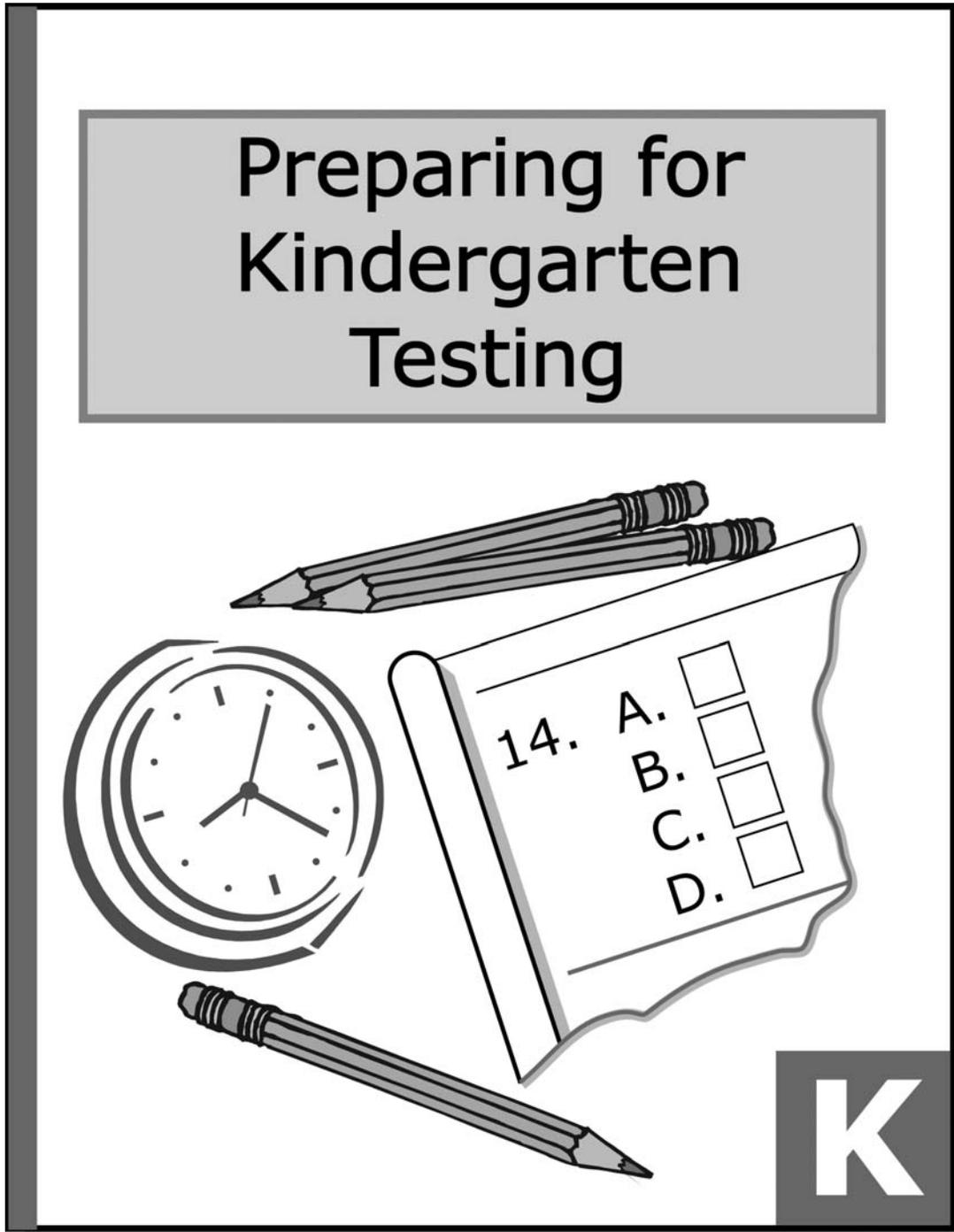
Period 1	(1 st Bell 8: 16 a.m.)	8: 20 - 9: 06
Period 2		9: 10 - 9: 56
Period 3		10: 00 - 10: 51
Period 4		10: 55 - 11: 41
Period 5		11: 45 - 12: 31
Period 6		12: 35 - 1: 21
Period 7		1: 25 - 2: 11
Period 8		2: 15 - 3: 01

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Source C

Book cover

The following is a possible cover design for a book about how to prepare kindergarten students for standardized tests.



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Source D

Postman, Neil. The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School. New York: Knopf, 1995.

The following is excerpted from a book about education in the United States.

There is, for example, the traditional task of teaching children how to behave in groups. You cannot have a democratic—indeed, civilized—community life unless people have learned how to participate in a disciplined way as a part of a group. One might even say that schools have never been essentially about individualized learning. It is true, of course, that groups do not learn; individuals do. But the idea of a school is that individuals must learn in a setting in which individual needs are subordinated to group interests.

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Source E

Holt, John. "School Is Bad for Children." Saturday Evening Post 8 Feb. 1969.

The following is excerpted from an essay written by an educational theorist.

And so, in this dull and ugly place, where nobody ever says anything very truthful, where everybody is playing a kind of role, as in a charade, where teachers are no more free to respond honestly to the students than the students are free to respond to the teachers or each other, where the air practically vibrates with suspicion and anxiety, the child learns to live in a daze, saving his energies for those small parts of his life that are too trivial for the adults to bother with, and thus remain his. It is a rare child who can come through his schooling with much left of his curiosity, his independence or his sense of his own dignity, competence and worth.

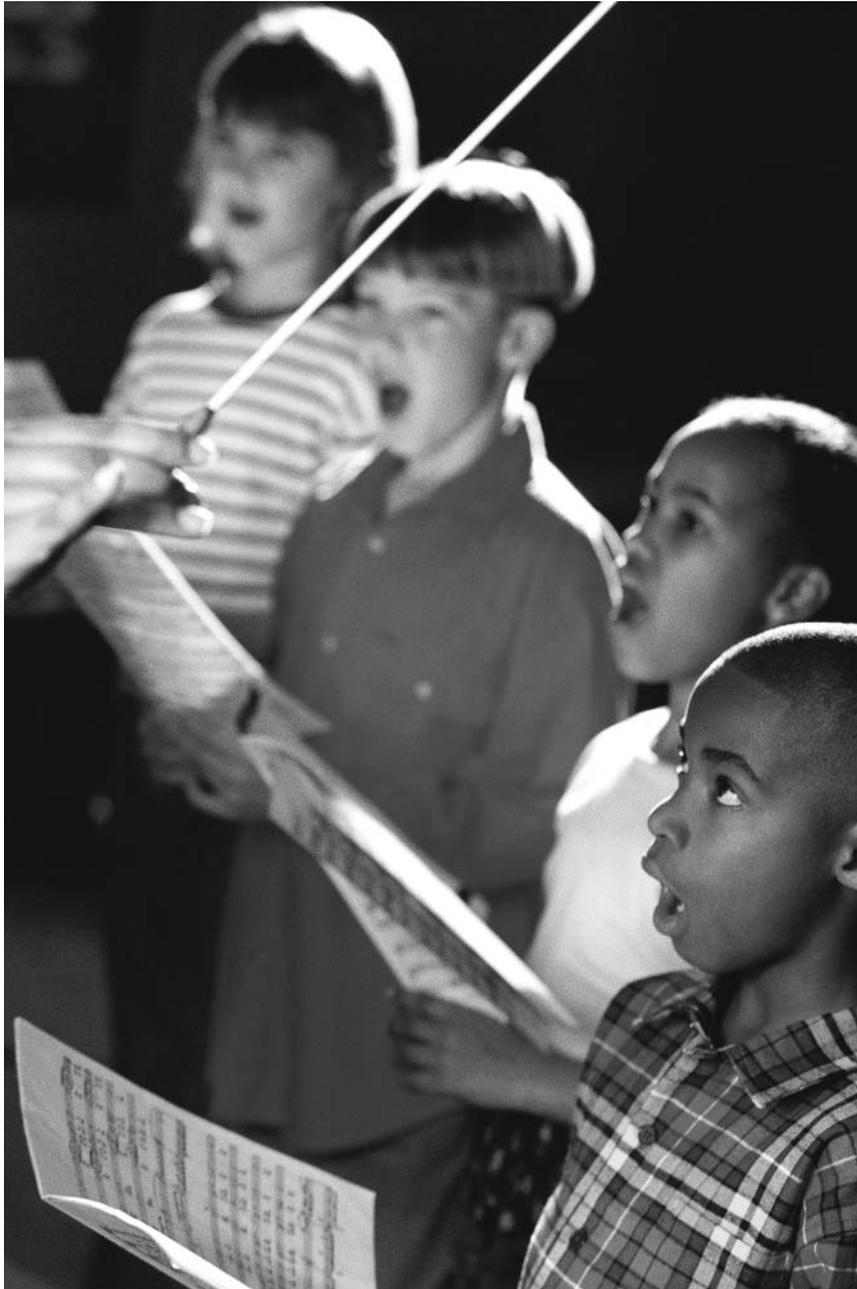
So much for criticism. What do we need to do? Many things. Some are easy—we can do them right away. Some are hard, and may take some time. Take a hard one first. We should abolish compulsory school attendance. At the very least we should modify it, perhaps by giving children every year a large number of authorized absences. Our compulsory school-attendance laws once served a humane and useful purpose. They protected children's right to some schooling, against those adults who would otherwise have denied it to them in order to exploit their labor, in farm, store, mine, or factory. Today the laws help nobody, not the schools, not the teachers, not the children. To keep kids in school who would rather not be there costs the schools an enormous amount of time and trouble—to say nothing of what it costs to repair the damage that these angry and resentful prisoners do every time they get a chance.

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Source F

Photo of children singing in school

The following is a photo taken in a school.



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Source G

Expectations of high school students published in the student handbook

The following expectations are published for students in a public high school.

**SCHOOL CLIMATE and
STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

All Students are expected to:

- report to class on time and attend all classes regularly;
- accept responsibility for their learning -
 - complete homework assignments,
 - bring required materials to class each day,
 - be attentive in class, and listen, speak and discuss when appropriate;
- respect the teacher's position as leader in the classroom -
 - follow the teacher's directions,
 - adhere to individual classroom guidelines;
- be considerate to and respectful of others -
 - refrain from teasing, interrupting or criticizing others,
 - refrain from using vulgar or obscene language,
 - refrain from acting out anger and frustration through fighting or other inappropriate behaviors,
 - keep all food and drink in the cafeteria and patio areas except when authorized by a teacher;
- cooperate with the specific rules of the school -
 - dress in appropriate attire which does not distract or offend others (wearing shoes is required by law),
 - refrain from running in the halls and speaking loudly and banging lockers while classes are in progress;
- respect the rights of others to learn -
 - do not create excessive noise in the halls, library, commons, quadrangle or other outside areas (radios and personal listening devices are generally inappropriate for classroom use unless approved by the teacher for a specific educational purpose),
 - obey the laws of society, including prohibitions against assault, theft, vandalism, possession of illegal substances and possession of weapons.

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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 from “The Indispensable Opposition,” an article by Walter Lippmann; it appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1939. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Lippmann uses to develop his argument.

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Were they pressed hard enough, most men would probably confess that political freedom—that is to say, the right to speak freely and to act in opposition—is a noble ideal rather than a practical necessity. As the case for freedom is generally put to-day, the argument lends itself to this feeling. It is made to appear that, whereas each man claims his freedom as a matter of right, the freedom he accords to other men is a matter of toleration. Thus, the defense of freedom of opinion tends to rest not on its substantial, beneficial, and indispensable consequences, but on a somewhat eccentric, a rather vaguely benevolent, attachment to an abstraction.

It is all very well to say with Voltaire, ‘I wholly disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it,’ but as a matter of fact most men will not defend to the death the rights of other men: if they disapprove sufficiently what other men say, they will somehow suppress those men if they can.

So, if this is the best that can be said for liberty of opinion, that a man must tolerate his opponents because everyone has a ‘right’ to say what he pleases, then we shall find that liberty of opinion is a luxury, safe only in pleasant times when men can be tolerant because they are not deeply and vitally concerned.

Yet actually, as a matter of historic fact, there is a much stronger foundation for the great constitutional right of freedom of speech, and as a matter of practical human experience there is a much more compelling reason for cultivating the habits of free

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men. We take, it seems to me, a naïvely self-righteous view when we argue as if the right of our opponents to speak were something that we protect because we are magnanimous, noble, and unselfish. The compelling reason why, if liberty of opinion did not exist, we should have to invent it, why it will eventually have to be restored in all civilized countries where it is now suppressed, is that we must protect the right of our opponents to speak because we must hear what they have to say.

We miss the whole point when we imagine that we tolerate the freedom of our political opponents as we tolerate a howling baby next door, as we put up with the blasts from our neighbor’s radio because we are too peaceable to heave a brick through the window. If this were all there is to freedom of opinion, that we are too good-natured or too timid to do anything about our opponents and our critics except to let them talk, it would be difficult to say whether we are tolerant because we are magnanimous or because we are lazy, because we have strong principles or because we lack serious convictions, whether we have the hospitality of an inquiring mind or the indifference of an empty mind. And so, if we truly wish to understand why freedom is necessary in a civilized society, we must begin by realizing that, because freedom of discussion improves our own opinions, the liberties of other men are our own vital necessity.

The Atlantic Monthly

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Question 3

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

The passage below is from *The Worst Years of Our Lives* by Barbara Ehrenreich. Ehrenreich is writing about life in the 1980s. Read the passage carefully and then write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify Ehrenreich's assertions about television. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

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Only after many months of viewing did I begin to understand the force that has transformed the American people into root vegetables. If you watch TV for a very long time, day in, day out, you will begin to notice something eerie and unnatural about the world portrayed therein. I don't mean that it is two-dimensional or lacks a well-developed critique of the capitalist consumer culture or something superficial like that. I mean something so deeply obvious that it's almost scary: when you watch television, you will see people doing many things—chasing fast cars, drinking lite beer, shooting each other at close range, etc. But you will never see people *watching television*. Well, maybe for a second, before the phone rings or a brand-new, multiracial adopted child walks into the house. But never *really watching*, hour after hour, the way *real* people do.

Way back in the beginning of the television era, this was not so strange, because real people actually

20 did many of the things people do on TV, even if it was only bickering with their mothers-in-law about which toilet paper to buy. But modern people, i.e., couch potatoes, do nothing that is ever shown on television (because it is either dangerous or would
25 involve getting up from the couch). And what they do do—watch television—is far too boring to be televised for more than a fraction of a second, not even by Andy Warhol,* bless his boredom-proof little heart.

30 So why do we keep on watching?

* Artist and filmmaker known for using repeated images and for making movies dealing with time, boredom, and repetition

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