

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## 2010 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3

The score should reflect a judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

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- 9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for a score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in their development or particularly impressive in their control of language.

#### 8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** defend, challenge or qualify de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing, and the argument is especially coherent and well developed. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

- 7 Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for a score of 6 but provide a more complete explanation, more thorough development or a more mature prose style.

#### 6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** defend, challenge or qualify de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient, and the argument is adequately developed and coherent. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5 Essays earning a score of 5 defend, challenge or qualify de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. The evidence or explanations used may be uneven, inconsistent or limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

#### 4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** defend, challenge or qualify de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient or less convincing. The argument may be inadequately developed or have lapses in coherence. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be less consistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

- 3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in defending, challenging or qualifying de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

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## 2010 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3 (continued)

#### 2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in defending, challenging or qualifying de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. These essays may misunderstand the prompt or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate or inappropriate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of coherence and control.

- 1 Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation and argument, weak in their control of language or especially lacking in coherence and development.

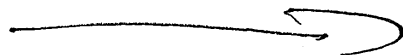
0 Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.

— Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering (1 of 3) on this page as it is designated in the exam.

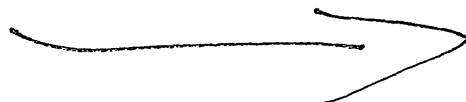
Although inane and trivial at times, well-played humor can change the world. As argued in his 2004 book Status Anxiety, Alain de Botton correctly emphasizes humorists as vital to society for their ability to act as society's ~~messengers~~ <sup>hermes</sup>, delivering messages without fail. Humor's importance has manifested itself in ~~political~~ <sup>political</sup> cartoons of ~~colonial~~ <sup>revolutionary France</sup> America, Mark Twain's satire of southern racism and ~~corrupt~~ hypocrisy. The adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and today's endless political commentary showcased on programs like Saturday Night Live.

When <sup>Louis XVI</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>French</sup> ~~monarch~~ tyrannically ruled the ~~colonies~~ in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he + his family became the frequent subjects of vicious political cartoons that painted him as an odious ~~brute~~ and his wife as a ~~stupid~~ dim-witted airhead. The ever present depictions of Louis' clumsiness as a ruler and his wife's towering headpiece <sup>vigilantly</sup> ~~kept~~ turned public opinion against them. The political cartoonists of this period, however vulgar or villainous their depictions of the monarchs were,



represented the public sentiment of discontent ~~or~~ with and anger at the poverty and despair brought on by the king and queen. The cartoonist delivered the message of a people itching to revolt but too afraid to speak out for fear of retribution.

It heralded as the pivotal American novel, Mark Twain's *Huckle Finn* satirized southern hypocrisy. Set in Missouri in the 1840's, the book criticizes the institution of slavery and the <sup>lack</sup> rights ~~of~~ for African Americans, two hotly contested issues at the time of the novel's publication, during the ~~the~~ late 1800's. In the American South in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to speak up for the rights of blacks was almost unthinkable, and could even be dangerous for the speaker. Former slaves had no voice in society at all, so a large portion of proponents of equal rights went unheard until Twain published his satire, which by definition uses humor ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> a vehicle for social change. After the publication of *Huckle Finn* many questioned for the first time the



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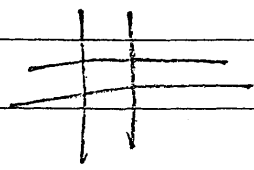
Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

issue of <sup>the</sup> rights of African Americans.

Even today, humorists affect our view of the world. Amidst an endless stream of political changes, elections, and controversy, satirical programs like Saturday Night Live provide welcome commentary on today's issues. By placing the leaders of our country and social issues of our day <sup>on a platform other than that of their own authority,</sup> the writers at SNL, the Daily Show\* and programs of the like\* allow us to not just accept what we see on the news at face value and encourage us to question the ills of our society through humor and eventually work to fix them in our daily lives.

Humor, ~~is~~ acts as a nonviolent yet extremely effective mechanism for highlighting injustice, challenging a system, ~~or~~ or even "rocking the vote."

\* While at times taking satire too far, usually



Humor is the art of saying what's on everyone's mind and either hasn't thought of or is too shy to say. Humor is essential to free speech, and furthermore, free thought. For those who argue that humor is only to entertain - have they ever considered ~~what~~ why it's so entertaining? What makes us laugh, besides the inappropriate jokes, and ~~the~~ tickling? Most laughter begat by humor, to be honest, is nervous laughter. "I can't believe she said that!" "Oooh, he went there..." Yeah. We're laughing because we are appalled, not necessarily at the sentiment, but at the fact that someone had the courage to say it. I also maintain that often we laugh partly out of jealousy, because we wish we were the ones who had made the joke.

Gulliver's Travels, by Jonathan Swift - political satire. Gulliver's first and most famous adventure was to ~~to~~ Lilliput, a country of very small people with seemingly equally petty problems. Lilliput and its neighboring country of Blefuscu warred



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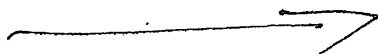
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(2 of 2)

for countless years over the proper way to eat an egg. Lives destroyed, bodies buried, millions lost - over cracking it ~~over~~ on the little end or the big end. The preposterous hyperbole of this conflict is part of what makes Swift so beloved and amusing as a satirist - but what is it that makes this situation seem like such a clever joke? Because it's reality, of course, and at Swift's time, he was the man crazy enough to point out how silly we all were being (and still, generally, are). Lilliput ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> England, Blefuscu ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> thinly veiled France, and the egg symbolizes all the petty issues we murder each other over. Swift had the courage to make us laugh at ourselves, which we need to do. We need to be prodded to understand that quite a bit of what we do is laughable, so that we can stop taking ourselves so seriously all the time and focus on what really matters - which, I promise you, is not an egg.

##

Laughing is proven to make people healthier, mentally and physically. Americans crave happiness. We have an entire section of movies for it in the video stores. Humorists are not merely there to entertain, they help put spin on events that are grave matters.

The evening news is notorious for bad news, they are also completely serious. The issues covered in the evening usually consist of death, rape and overall depressing stories, there are very few encouraging stories. The morning news is known for a more airy feeling, covering weather, local events, and overall more pleasant issues. After bad incidents is when the humorists help to lighten the tragic events. After the Watergate scandal the Washington Post had multiple cartoons poking fun at the scandal. After any major political debate or speech Comedy Central has people pointing out many mistakes and blunders, turning something serious into something more comical and fun. The comedian that make fun of these



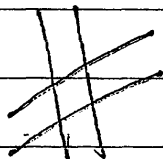


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politicians help to give understanding to the serious and formal talk.

The art of satire has been around for ages, ~~but not~~ satire has many forms that can be seen throughout the generations. Shakespeare was a satirist, but not the satire we know today. The satire was dry and sly, hiding within the ~~words~~ old english words. As the writing style changed so did the satire, it became more open, more out-there, less hidden within the words. Today satire is ~~comedy~~ <sup>comedy</sup>, a different name and a different style with the same objective, to make people laugh.

Humorists are vital, as America has moved through the highs and the lows they have been there to poke fun and spin them. They have made our highs higher and lessened our lows. Humor helps society to function, allows us to move past the negatives in life.



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**2010 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3**

**Overview**

This question examined students' ability to write an effective, compelling argument based on a prompt, drawing on evidence from their own experiences, observations and reading to support their central claim or thesis. In particular, students were presented with the assertion, made by Alain de Botton in his 2004 book, *Status Anxiety*, that the chief aim of humorists is not merely to entertain but "to convey with impunity messages that might be dangerous or impossible to state directly" and the claim, offered in the prompt, that "de Botton sees humorists as serving a vital function in society." Students were directed to "write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies de Botton's claims about the vital role of humorists."

**Sample: 3A**

**Score: 8**

This effective essay defends de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. It presents a thoughtful and thorough argument that begins with the introduction of the student's position: "Alain de Botton correctly emphasizes humorists [*sic*] as vital to society for their ability to act as society's Hermes, delivering messages without fail." Using the appropriate and convincing example of Louis XVI, the response explains: "The political cartoonists of this period, however vulgar or vicious their depictions of the monarchs were, represented the public sentiment of discontent with and anger at the poverty and despair brought on by the king and queen." The argument continues in the following paragraph with the example of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*: "Former slaves had no voice in society at all, so a large portion of proponents of equal rights went unheard until Twain published his satire, which by definition uses humor [*sic*] as a vehicle for social change." Further examples of contemporary humorists explain how modern-day satirists "encourage us to question the ills of our society through humor." The language, structure and organization are consistently controlled, and the response thoroughly develops its effective argument with appropriate and convincing examples.

**Sample: 3B**

**Score: 7**

The essay adequately defends de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists. It is well organized and developed, announcing the student's intentions in the first paragraph: "Humor is essential to free speech, and furthermore, free thought." The evidence is particularly convincing, with explanations that are appropriate and sufficient. The example from Swift is developed with the commentary that the "preposterous hyperbole of this conflict is part of what makes Swift so beloved and amusing as a satirist." The essay uses especially clear prose: "We're laughing because we are appalled, not necessarily at the sentiment, but at the fact that someone had the courage to say it." The response demonstrates a more mature style, and the evidence is more complete and more thoroughly developed than in a response earning a score of 6.

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**Question 3 (continued)**

**Sample: 3C**

**Score: 3**

The essay begins with a vague mention of its intent, appearing to be a better defense of de Botton's claim about the vital role of humorists than it is: "Humorists are not merely there to entertain, they help put spin on events that are grave matters." The response continues with an unclear sense of direction, drawing on evidence and explanations that are insufficient and less convincing: "Today satire is comedy, a different name and a different style with the same objective, to make people laugh." The argument is inadequately developed, relying instead on assertions: "Humor helps society to function, allows us to move past the negatives in life." The control of language is weak, and the prose is immature. This inadequate response demonstrates less success in its defense of de Botton's claim.