

Task Verbs Used in Free-Response Questions

The following task verbs are commonly used in the free-response questions:

Analyze: Examine methodically and in detail the structure of the topic of the question for purposes of interpretation and explanation.

Argue your position: Formulate a claim and support it with evidence.

Read: Look at or view printed directions and provided passages.

Synthesize: Combine different perspectives from sources to form a support of a coherent position.

Write: Produce a response in writing.

Sample Exam Questions

The sample exam questions that follow illustrate the relationship between the course framework and the AP English Language and Composition Exam and serve as examples of the types of questions that appear on the exam. After the sample questions is an answer key and alignment table that shows how the questions relate to the course framework.

Section I: Multiple-Choice

The first set of questions assess reading skills and the second set of questions assess writing skills.

Questions 1–8 refer to the passage below.

The following passage is an excerpt from a speech delivered by a leading women's rights activist in 1913.

If I were a man and I said to you, "I come from a country which professes to have representative institutions and yet denies me, a taxpayer, an inhabitant
Line of the country, representative rights," you would at once
5 understand that that human being, being a man, was justified in the adoption of revolutionary methods to get representative institutions. But since I am a woman it is necessary in the twentieth century to explain why women have adopted revolutionary methods in order to win the
10 rights of citizenship.

You see, in spite of a good deal that we hear about revolutionary methods not being necessary for American women, because American women are so well off, most of the men of the United States quite calmly acquiesce in
15 the fact that half of the community are deprived absolutely of citizen rights, and we women, in trying to make our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact—a very simple fact—that women are human beings.
20 It is quite evident you do not all realize we are human beings or it would not be necessary to argue with you that women may, suffering from intolerable injustice, be driven to adopt revolutionary methods. We have, first of all to convince you we are human beings, and I hope to
25 be able to do that in the course of the evening before I sit down, but before doing that, I want to put a few political arguments before you—not arguments for the suffrage,* because I said when I opened, I didn't mean to do that—but arguments for the adoption of
30 militant methods in order to win political rights.

A great many of you have been led to believe, from the somewhat meager accounts you get in the newspapers, that in England there is a strange manifestation taking place, a new form of hysteria being swept across part of
35 the feminist population of those Isles, and this manifestation takes the shape of irresponsible breaking of windows, burning of letters, general inconvenience to respectable, honest business people who want to attend to their business. It is very irrational you say: even if these
40 women had sufficient intelligence to understand what they were doing, and really did want the vote, they have adopted very irrational means for getting the vote. "How are they going to persuade people that they ought to have the vote by breaking their windows?" you say. Now, if
45 you say that, it shows you do not understand the meaning of our revolution at all, and I want to show you that when damage is done to property it is not done in order to convert people to woman suffrage at all. It is a practical political means, the only means we consider open to
50 voteless persons to bring about a political situation, which can only be solved by giving women the vote.

Suppose the men of Hartford had a grievance, and they laid that grievance before their legislature, and the legislature obstinately refused to listen to them, or to
55 remove their grievance, what would be the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed? Well, it is perfectly obvious at the next general election, when the legislature is elected, the men of Hartford in sufficient numbers would turn out
60 that legislature and elect a new one: entirely change the personnel of an obstinate legislature which would not remove their grievance. It is perfectly simple and perfectly easy for voting communities to get their grievances removed if they act in combination and make
65 an example of the legislature by changing the composition of the legislature and sending better people to take the place of those who have failed to do justice.

But let the men of Hartford imagine that they were not in the position of being voters at all, that they were
70 governed without their consent being obtained, that the legislature turned an absolutely deaf ear to their demands, what would the men of Hartford do then? They couldn't vote the legislature out. They would have to choose; they would have to make a choice of two evils:
75 they would either have to submit indefinitely to an unjust state of affairs, or they would have to rise up and adopt some of the antiquated means by which men in the past got their grievances remedied.

the right of voting

1. Which of the following best describes the writer's exigence in the passage?
 - (A) The lack of interest among eligible voters in the political process
 - (B) The growing trend of using violence to address women's employment concerns
 - (C) The limited resources available to women for changing existing power structures
 - (D) Widening disparities in the socioeconomic circumstances of American and British women
 - (E) Public resentment of the high tax rate imposed by the government

2. In the opening paragraph (lines 1–10), the writer contrasts a hypothetical rhetorical situation with her own primarily to
 - (A) illustrate the double standards for men and women in the political realm
 - (B) explain why women are more reluctant to adopt revolutionary methods than men
 - (C) emphasize the influence of women on democratic culture in the United States
 - (D) suggest that American women's civil rights have been eroded in the twentieth century
 - (E) highlight the obstacles women encounter when emigrating from other countries

3. In the second paragraph (lines 11–30), which of the following best characterizes the writer's position on the relevance of her topic for American women?
 - (A) Because American women are "so well off" {reference: so well off,}, it is unnecessary for them to adopt the methods described by the writer.
 - (B) Because American women are "so well off" {reference: so well off,}, they have access to methods other than those described by the author.
 - (C) By adopting the methods described by the writer, American women have succeeded in winning important civil rights.
 - (D) Although the methods described by the writer are best suited for American men, American women could adapt such methods for use in the domestic sphere.
 - (E) Although American women are perceived as "well off" {reference: so well off,}, they should nonetheless consider adopting the methods described by the writer.

4. In context, lines 11–23 ("You see . . . revolutionary methods") could be used to support which of the following claims about the writer's tone?
 - (A) Her tone when discussing American women is patronizing.
 - (B) Her tone when discussing American men is ingratiating.
 - (C) She adopts a bold, forthright tone in approaching her subject.
 - (D) She adopts a reverent, admiring tone in dealing with her subject.
 - (E) She adopts a detached, impersonal tone when discussing her subject.

5. In the third paragraph, the writer criticizes the logic of those who dismiss the methods of British feminists as “irrational” (line 42) on the grounds that they have
- (A) misconstrued the feminists’ reasons for employing the strategies they have chosen to employ
 - (B) failed to verify the identities of those responsible for acts of vandalism
 - (C) overlooked accounts that present a less provocative view of feminist activism in Britain
 - (D) ignored a key distinction between American feminists and British feminists
 - (E) assumed that feminists do not understand the normal political process
6. In the fourth paragraph (lines 52–67), the writer introduces a hypothetical scenario primarily to
- (A) question the motives of those who demand immediate changes to the status quo
 - (B) underscore the efficiency of voting as a means of addressing political discontents
 - (C) affirm the value of compromise in resolving political issues
 - (D) spotlight the special political privileges recently accorded to the men of Hartford
 - (E) encourage women’s rights activists to emulate the example of the men of Hartford
7. In the context of the passage, all of the following phrases refer to the same idea EXCEPT
- (A) “revolutionary methods” (line 6)
 - (B) “militant methods” (line 30)
 - (C) “the only means we consider open to voteless persons” (lines 49–50)
 - (D) “the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed” (lines 55–57)
 - (E) “some of the antiquated means by which men in the past got their grievances remedied” (lines 77–78)
8. At the end of the passage, the writer uses the “either . . . or” construction in lines 75–78 (“they would either . . . grievances remedied”) in order to
- (A) provide two possible explanations for why American women have not yet won the right to vote
 - (B) offer two alternative methods of accomplishing the same goal
 - (C) assert that patience is critical to smooth political transitions
 - (D) imply that disruptive action may be the only way of resisting oppression in certain situations
 - (E) suggest that old-fashioned methods of creating political change may be superior to modern methods in certain situations

Questions 9–17 are based on the following passage.

The passage below is a draft.

(1) After an unsuccessful search, NASA determined that instead of following a trajectory that would allow the Orbiter to enter orbit around Mars, it came too close to the planet, causing it to enter and disintegrate in Mars's atmosphere. (2) The culprit was a discrepancy in the software that controlled the spacecraft's thrusters: one team of engineers had calculated the force needed from the thrusters in *pounds*, an imperial unit, while another team calculated the force in *newtons*, a metric unit.

(3) The Orbiter mission failure is just one reason, albeit an extremely expensive one, that the United States needs to abandon future Mars survey missions. (4) Most of the world uses the metric system, a decimal measurement system that allows for simple scaling and calculations by adding the relevant prefixes: one kilometer, for example, is 1,000 meters, and one kilogram is 1,000 grams. (5) The imperial measurement system used in the United States assigns values haphazardly: one mile is 5,280 feet long, while one pound is 16 ounces.

(6) The United States is one of only three countries—the others are Liberia and Myanmar—that have not fully adopted the metric system. (7) Not only are conversion errors such as the Orbiter one costly, they can be deadly.

(8) Wrong dosing of medicine due to unit confusion (teaspoons versus milliliters) results in trips to the emergency room each year. (9) Switching to the metric system would also benefit United States industries; the European Union, for example, has been requiring its member states to standardize their metric systems since 1971.

(10) Converting to metric may seem difficult, but the United States already uses it more than you might think, from races (that 5K you're running) to soft drinks (that 2-liter bottle you bought) to high school science classes (those 250-milliliter beakers you used in chemistry). (11) It's time for the United States to make the leap to metric in everything else it measures.

9. Which of the following sentences, if placed before sentence 1, would both capture the audience's interest and provide the most effective introduction to the topic of the paragraph?
- (A) NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter was launched on December 11, 1998, from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.
 - (B) On September 23, 1999, NASA officials were aghast when the \$125 million Mars Climate Orbiter vanished as it prepared to enter the red planet's orbit.
 - (C) As part of a new set of missions intended to survey the planet Mars, the Mars Climate Orbiter was launched by NASA scientists to study Mars's climate and weather.
 - (D) When NASA officials lost contact with their Mars Climate Orbiter on September 23, 1999, they immediately instigated a search for the spacecraft using NASA's Deep Space Network of radio antennae.
 - (E) The Mars Climate Orbiter carried two instruments when it attempted and failed to enter Mars's orbit in September, 1999: the Mars Climate Orbiter Color Imager (MARCI) and the Pressure Modulated Infrared Radiometer (PMIRR).

10. In sentence 2 (reproduced below), the writer wants an effective transition from the introductory paragraph to the main idea of the passage.

The culprit was a discrepancy in the software that controlled the spacecraft's thrusters: one team of engineers had calculated the force needed from the thrusters in pounds, an imperial unit, while another team calculated the force in newtons, a metric unit.

Which of the following versions of the underlined text best achieves this purpose?

- (A) (as it is now)
 - (B) thrusters; the data from the spacecraft and the data from NASA's computers on the ground had not been matching up for months since the launch of the Orbiter
 - (C) thrusters (two different engineering teams—one from Lockheed Martin Astronautics and another from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory—had worked on creating different parts of the software)
 - (D) thrusters—software that was used to calculate the trajectory the Orbiter needed to take in order to enter Mars's orbit successfully
 - (E) thrusters: four thrusters were used for trajectory correction maneuvers as well as pitch and yaw control, while another four were used for roll control
11. In sentence 3 (reproduced below), which of the following versions of the underlined text best establishes the writer's position on the main argument of the passage?

The Orbiter mission failure is just one reason, albeit an extremely expensive one, that the United States needs to abandon future Mars survey missions.

- (A) (as it is now)
 - (B) should consider privatizing space exploration
 - (C) needs to adopt the metric system
 - (D) should partner with other countries on future missions to outer space
 - (E) must stress STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education starting at an early age
12. The writer wants to add a phrase at the beginning of sentence 5 (reproduced below), adjusting the capitalization as needed, to set up a comparison with the idea discussed in sentence 4.

The imperial measurement system used in the United States assigns values haphazardly: one mile is 5,280 feet long, while one pound is 16 ounces.

Which of the following choices best accomplishes this goal?

- (A) Furthermore,
- (B) For example,
- (C) Similarly,
- (D) By contrast,
- (E) In fact,

13. In sentence 9 (reproduced below), the writer wants to provide a convincing explanation for why switching to the metric system would benefit United States industries.

Switching to the metric system would also benefit United States industries; the European Union, for example, has been requiring its member states to standardize their metric systems since 1971.

Which version of the underlined text best accomplishes this goal?

- (A) (as it is now)
 - (B) industries: since most of the world already uses the metric system, it is likely to be the only measuring system in the future
 - (C) industries; in fact, the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, encouraged United States industries to adopt the metric system
 - (D) industries: those with products in both domestic and international markets would no longer need to design in and produce to two different measurement systems, reducing both product overlap and manufacturing inefficiencies
 - (E) industries; the United States Metric Board was established in 1975 as part of the Metric Conversion Act to encourage the adoption of the metric system in the United States, something it continued to do until it was abolished in 1982
14. The writer wants to add the following sentence to the third paragraph (sentences 6–9) to provide additional explanation.
- This means that the United States must convert to metric units whenever it is dealing with the rest of the world.*
- Where would the sentence best be placed?
- (A) Before sentence 6
 - (B) After sentence 6
 - (C) After sentence 7
 - (D) After sentence 8
 - (E) After sentence 9
15. The writer wants to add more information to the third paragraph (sentences 6–9) to support the main argument of the paragraph. All of the following pieces of evidence help achieve this purpose EXCEPT which one?
- (A) An airplane that ran out of fuel mid-flight because of a conversion error by the pilots when they calculated how much fuel they needed
 - (B) A mechanical failure on an amusement park ride that occurred because the imperial size of a particular part was ordered instead of the metric size
 - (C) A quote from Thomas Jefferson’s eighteenth-century proposal for a new decimal system to standardize weights and measures
 - (D) Data from a United States company demonstrating an increase in profits because of its conversion to the metric system
 - (E) A map showing the countries that use the metric system shaded in one color and those that use the imperial system shaded in another color

16. In the fourth paragraph (sentences 10–11), the writer wants to expand on the concession that converting to the metric system may seem difficult. Which of the following claims would best achieve this purpose?
- (A) The imperial system the United States uses today functions perfectly well, so there’s no need to change it.
 - (B) Many attempts to make the United States adopt the metric system have already been made.
 - (C) The units in the imperial system were first officially defined by the Office of the Exchequer in Great Britain in 1824, but they have existed as the Winchester Standards since 1588.
 - (D) Some people in Great Britain, which adopted the metric system decades ago, want to return to the imperial system.
 - (E) It would be extremely costly as well as confusing for the United States to manage the overwhelming task of converting everything from road signs to measuring cups to the metric system.
17. In the fourth paragraph (sentences 10–11), the writer wants to provide further evidence to rebut the claim that converting to the metric system might be difficult. Which of the following pieces of evidence would best achieve this purpose?
- (A) A 2012 petition, signed by over 25,000 people, urging the White House to adopt the metric system in the United States
 - (B) An interview from an opponent of adopting the metric system in the United States
 - (C) A personal anecdote about a failed attempt to make a cake because of a measurement conversion error
 - (D) A description of the successful adoption of the metric system by Great Britain, which had previously used the imperial system
 - (E) A United States government report estimating the cost of converting highway signs on state roads at \$334 million dollars

Section II: Free-Response

Synthesis (Free-Response Question 1 on the AP Exam)

As the Internet age changes what and how people read, there has been considerable debate about the future of public libraries. While some commentators question whether libraries can stay relevant, others see new possibilities for libraries in the changing dynamics of today's society.

Carefully read the six sources, found on the AP English Language and Composition Classroom Resources Page, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the role, if any, that public libraries should serve in the future.

Source A (Kranich)

Source B (calendar)

Source C (Shank)

Source D (charts)

Source E (Siegler)

Source F (ALA)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that may establish a line of reasoning.
- Provide evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your thesis. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Rhetorical Analysis (Free-Response Question 2 on the AP Exam)

In May 2012 former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was the first African American woman to hold that position, gave a commencement speech to the graduating class of Southern Methodist University, a private university in Dallas, Texas. The passage below is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Rice makes to convey her message to her audience.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

[W]hat do I mean by human progress? I believe that all human beings share certain fundamental aspirations. They want protections for their lives and their liberties. They want to think freely and to worship as they wish. They want opportunities to educate their children, both boys and girls. And they want the dignity that comes with having to be asked for their consent to be governed.

All too often, difference has been used to divide and dehumanize. I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama—a place quite properly called the most segregated city in America—and I know how it feels to hold aspirations when half your neighbors think that you're incapable of or uninterested in anything higher. And I know there are some in this audience who have perhaps faced the same.

And in my professional life, I have listened in disbelief as it has been said of men and women in Asia and Africa and Latin America and Eastern Europe and Russia, from time to time, that they did not share the basic aspirations of all human beings. Somehow these people were just “different.” That meant “unworthy of what we enjoy.” “Maybe they're just not ready for democracy,” it would be said. But of course this was once said even about black people. We were just too childlike. We didn't care about rights or citizenship or the vote. We didn't care about freedom and liberty.

Well, today in the Middle East, the last bastion of that argument, people are putting a nail in the coffin of that idea. They are not just seeking their freedom, they are seizing it. But freedom and democracy are not the same thing. Freedom and rights have to be institutionalized into rule of law, into constitutions. And if you don't think constitutions matter, just remember this: When Martin Luther King Jr. wanted to say that segregation was wrong, in my hometown of Birmingham, he didn't have to say that the United States had to be something else—only that the United States had to be what it said it was. That is why the creed matters.

But stable democracy requires more than just the institutionalization of freedom. It requires that there can be no tyranny of the majority. And most importantly, it requires that the strong cannot exploit the weak. Indeed, democracy is only as strong as its weakest link. And indeed, if every life is equal before the law, and within the eyes of God, then every life is worthy. Every life is capable of greatness. And it truly doesn't matter where you came from, it matters where you are going.

At SMU, you have been taught the importance of service. You have been taught to serve those who are less fortunate. And yes, it will help them, but it will help you more. Because when you encounter those who are less fortunate, you cannot possibly give way to grievance—“Why do I not have?”—or its twin brother, entitlement—“Why don't they give me?” In fact, you will ask instead, not “Why do I not have?” but “Why have I been given so much?” And from that spirit, you will join the legions of impatient patriots and optimists who are working toward a better human future. And yes, sometimes it seems very hard indeed. But always remember in those times of trial, that what seems impossible seems inevitable in retrospect.

I read one summer the biographies of the Founding Fathers, when things weren't going very well for us in the Bush Administration.* And by all rights, the United States of America should actually never have come into being—what with a third of George Washington's troops down with smallpox on any given day, the Founding Fathers squabbling among themselves, and against the greatest military power of the time—but we did come into being.

And then we fought a civil war, brother against brother, hundreds of thousands dead on both sides—and yet we emerged a more perfect Union.

And those of us who live in the West and have ever come across the Continental Divide know that they did it in covered wagons. And they had to be optimists, because they didn't even know what was on the other side and they kept going anyway.

And in Birmingham, Alabama, a little girl whose parents can't take her to a movie theater or to a restaurant—her parents nonetheless have her convinced that she may not be able to have a hamburger at Woolworth's lunch counter, but she can be president of the United States if she wanted to be, and she becomes the Secretary of State. You see, things that seem impossible very often seem inevitable in retrospect.

*Rice was Secretary of State from 2005 to 2009 under George W. Bush.

Argument (Free-Response Question 3 on the AP Exam)

The late Barbara Jordan, a former United States representative, once warned, “[T]his is the great danger America faces—that we will cease to be one nation and become instead a collection of interest groups: city against suburb, region against region, individual against individual; each seeking to satisfy private wants.”

Write an essay that argues your position on Jordan's claim that “private wants” threaten national identity.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that may establish a line of reasoning.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.