

# The AP English Language and Composition Exam

Every year the AP English Language and Composition Development Committee prepares an exam that asks students to demonstrate their mastery of reading and writing skills promoted by the course. To be sure, a single three-hour exam cannot measure how students perform all the literacy skills promoted in the diverse and complicated curriculum of the year-long AP English Language and Composition course. Although the course requires students to practice writing processes that involve extensive review and revision, the exam does not assess students' control of this process, nor can the exam assess all the component skills required by the extensive research and writing projects that form a significant part of most AP English Language and Composition courses. With a combination of multiple-choice questions and essay prompts, however, the exam asks students to apply several essential skills that figure prominently in every AP English Language and Composition course curriculum: reading comprehension of rhetorically and topically diverse texts, rhetorical analysis of individual texts in isolation, synthetic reading of multiple texts, and written argumentation.

The multiple-choice section of the exam features questions about four short passages, each about a different topic and written from the perspective of a different academic discipline, sociocultural position, or period in the evolution of written English. Typically these questions test students' comprehension of the literal meaning of the text, their ability to infer the writer's intended meaning from the formal features of the text (e.g., vocabulary, sentence structure, organizational pattern, grammatical and mechanical choices), and their ability to use basic academic terminology to discuss features and functions of written English. The multiple-choice section occupies 1 hour of the total 195-minute exam period; students' scores on this portion of the exam count for 45 percent of their total scores. Multiple-choice scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly; points are not deducted for incorrect answers, and no points are awarded or deducted for unanswered questions.

The free-response portion of the exam consists of three essay prompts:

1. The synthesis prompt requires students to address an issue by synthesizing information from multiple texts.
2. The analysis prompt requires students to analyze the rhetoric of a single text.
3. The argument prompt requires students to compose an argument supported by evidence and reasoning drawn from their own reading, observations, and/or personal experiences.

Ordinarily, the free-response section occupies 2 hours and 15 minutes of the total exam period, 15 minutes of which is allocated for students to read the sources accompanying the synthesis essay prompt and to plan a response. The remaining 2 hours are allotted for students to write their essay responses. The three essays in the written portion of the exam are read and scored by college composition and

AP English Language and Composition teachers, using standardized procedures guided by nine-point, multidimensional rubrics tailored to the demands of individual questions.

## Summary of Scoring Rubrics

At the annual AP Exam Reading, students' responses to the analysis, synthesis, and argument prompts are scored "holistically" — Exam Readers assess each essay as a whole performance instead of separately assessing individual features of the writing. Readers are trained to apply a nine-point scale that analyzes the quality of student responses by four descriptive categories: unsuccessful (score points 1 and 2), little success (3 and 4), adequate (6 and 7), and effective (8 and 9). A score of 5 represents a response that is inadequate and adequate in equal measure. It is important to remember that the nine-point scoring scale only applies to the free-response questions on the exam. The scores from the free-response section are then combined with the score from the multiple-choice portion of the exam, and the cumulative score is then converted to a 1–5 scale.

The skills collectively measured by each point of the scale are identified on a scoring rubric and illustrated by sample student essays. Each year, the Chief Reader for the exam oversees revision of the scoring rubrics to adapt them to the current year's writing prompts. Because the reading and writing skills measured by the exam remain essentially the same from year to year, annual changes in the scoring rubric tend to be minimal. However, as the focus and format of the free-response prompts vary from year to year, the terms of measurement must change accordingly. These annual changes in prompts and scoring rubrics reflect the broad coverage goals of the course and the rhetorical flexibility the course requires students to develop as college-level readers and writers. Despite these annual revisions, the rubrics are constant in directing Readers' attention to the same four general characteristics of student writing: (1) content development, (2) organization, (3) coherence, and (4) fluency and control of Standard Written English.

Each year before the AP Reading, high school and college teachers of the course select student samples from exam booklets to illustrate the holistic quality represented by all points of the scale. These samples generally represent different ways of achieving a particular holistic score point through relative strengths and weaknesses in the four major categories. After the Reading, the rubrics and student samples (with commentary by the Chief Reader) are published on the AP Central website ([http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam\\_information/2001.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_information/2001.html)).

# Sample AP English Language and Composition Exam Questions

The following multiple-choice and free-response exam questions are typical of those used on past AP English Language and Composition Exams.

## Sample Multiple-Choice Questions

**Questions 1–11.** Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.

*This passage is excerpted from an essay written in nineteenth-century England.*

It has been well said that the highest aim in education is analogous to the highest aim in mathematics, namely, to obtain not *results* but *powers*, not particular solutions, but the means by which endless solutions may be wrought. He is the most effective educator who aims less at perfecting specific acquirements than at producing that mental condition which renders acquirements easy, and leads to their useful application; who does not seek to make his pupils moral by enjoining particular courses of action, but by bringing into activity the feelings and sympathies that must issue in noble action. On the same ground it may be said that the most effective writer is not he who announces a particular discovery, who convinces men of a particular conclusion, who demonstrates that this measure is right and that measure wrong; but he who rouses in others the activities that must issue in discovery, who awakes men from their indifference to the right and the wrong, who nerves their energies to seek for the truth and live up to it at whatever cost. The influence of such a writer is dynamic. He does not teach men how to use sword and musket, but he inspires their souls with courage and sends a strong will into their muscles. He does not, perhaps, enrich your stock of data, but he clears away the film from your eyes that you may search for data to some purpose. He does not, perhaps, convince you, but he strikes you, undeceives you, animates you. You are not directly fed by his books, but you are braced as by a walk up to an alpine summit, and yet subdued to calm and reverence as by the sublime things to be seen from that summit.

Such a writer is Thomas Carlyle. It is an idle  
35 question to ask whether his books will be read a  
century hence: if they were all burnt as the grandest  
of Suttees<sup>1</sup> on his funeral pile, it would be only like  
cutting down an oak after its acorns have sown a  
forest. For there is hardly a superior or active mind  
40 of this generation that has not been modified by  
Carlyle's writings; there has hardly been an English  
book written for the last ten or twelve years that  
would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived.  
The character of his influence is best seen in the fact  
45 that many of the men who have the least agreement  
with his opinions are those to whom the reading of  
*Sartor Resartus* was an epoch in the history of their  
minds. The extent of his influence may be best seen in  
the fact that ideas which were startling novelties when  
50 he first wrote them are now become common-places.  
And we think few men will be found to say that this  
influence on the whole has not been for good. There  
are plenty who question the justice of Carlyle's  
estimates of past men and past times, plenty who  
55 quarrel with the exaggerations of the *Latter-Day*  
*Pamphlets*, and who are as far as possible from  
looking for an amendment of things from a Carlylian  
theocracy with the 'greatest man', as a Joshua who is  
to smite the wicked (and the stupid) till the going  
60 down of the sun.<sup>2</sup> But for any large nature, those  
points of difference are quite incidental. It is not as a  
theorist, but as a great and beautiful human nature,  
that Carlyle influences us. You may meet a man  
whose wisdom seems unimpeachable, since you find  
65 him entirely in agreement with yourself; but this  
oracular man of unexceptionable opinions has a  
green eye, a wiry hand, and altogether a *Wesen*, or  
demeanour, that makes the world look blank to you,  
and whose unexceptionable opinions become a bore;  
70 while another man who deals in what you cannot but  
think 'dangerous paradoxes', warms your heart by the  
pressure of his hand, and looks out on the world with  
so clear and loving an eye, that nature seems to reflect  
the light of his glance upon your own feeling. So it is  
75 with Carlyle. When he is saying the very opposite of  
what we think, he says it so finely, with so hearty

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1 A suttee is a now-obsolete Hindu funeral practice.

2 Carlyle believed that great men, or heroes, shaped history through their personal actions and divine inspiration. Joshua, a military leader and successor to Moses, led the Jewish people to the Promised Land.

conviction—he makes the object about which we differ stand out in such grand relief under the clear light of his strong and honest intellect—he appeals  
80 so constantly to our sense of the manly and the truthful—that we are obliged to say ‘Hear! hear!’ to the writer before we can give the decorous ‘Oh! oh!’ to his opinions.

1. What is the relationship between the two paragraphs in the passage?
  - (A) The first paragraph describes strengths of a writer that Carlyle exhibits, and the second discusses his legacy.
  - (B) The first paragraph surveys various types of writers, and the second focuses on Carlyle.
  - (C) The first paragraph describes Carlyle’s critics, and the second depicts his supporters.
  - (D) The first paragraph considers who influenced Carlyle, and the second lists those he influenced.
  - (E) The first paragraph explains Carlyle’s major ideas, and the second evaluates his predictions.
  
2. Which of the following best represents the author’s intended audience?
  - (A) Individuals who are fairly well acquainted with Carlyle’s writing
  - (B) Readers who are having trouble understanding Carlyle’s prose
  - (C) Writers who hope to produce books that are like Carlyle’s
  - (D) Instructors looking for different ways to teach Carlyle
  - (E) Scholars seeking information about Carlyle’s personal life
  
3. Lines 5–12 (“He is ... noble action”) contrast
  - (A) the acquisition of skills and the possession of aptitude
  - (B) the labor of reasoning and the exhilaration of acting
  - (C) the dissemination of knowledge and the cultivation of intellectual and moral powers
  - (D) the traits of practical students and those of creative thinkers
  - (E) the benefits of learning and the rewards of teaching
  
4. The author uses the phrase “On the same ground” (lines 12–13) to set up a comparison between
  - (A) the aims of mathematics and those of education
  - (B) conceptually powerful writers and exemplary educators
  - (C) intellectual challenges faced by writers and those faced by readers
  - (D) the formulation of solutions and the identification of problems
  - (E) scientific writing and inspirational writing

5. On the basis of the first paragraph, Thomas Carlyle is best characterized as a writer who is
- (A) ambitious, seeking to increase the number of people buying his books
  - (B) revolutionary, agitating his readers to adopt a radically new worldview
  - (C) charismatic, enticing his readers to support his views and beliefs
  - (D) provocative, compelling his readers to reach their own conclusions
  - (E) masterful, overpowering his readers with a sense of awe and veneration
6. The “acorns” (line 38) represent
- (A) Carlyle’s young children
  - (B) Carlyle’s less prominent contemporaries
  - (C) ideas in Carlyle’s books
  - (D) books written about Carlyle
  - (E) those who are critical of Carlyle
7. In lines 47–48, the author refers to “an epoch in the history of their minds” to
- (A) illustrate the ways in which other intellectuals disagreed with Carlyle
  - (B) define the meaning of the title *Sartor Resartus*
  - (C) question the continued relevance of Carlyle’s ideas
  - (D) describe the major impact that Carlyle had on other people
  - (E) characterize the arduous process of reading *Sartor Resartus*
8. The author mentions the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (lines 55–56) primarily to
- (A) provide an example of what is indisputably “good” (line 52)
  - (B) identify the book that discusses “past men and past times” (line 54)
  - (C) acknowledge some of the concerns held by the “plenty” (line 54)
  - (D) justify Carlyle’s desire for “an amendment of things” (line 57)
  - (E) explain Carlyle’s inspiration for the theory of the “greatest man” (line 58)
9. Which rhetorical strategy does the author adopt in lines 44–63 (“The character ... influences us”)?
- (A) She goes on the offensive, berating opponents of Carlyle for their absence of wisdom, judgment, and foresight.
  - (B) She acknowledges but discredits other arguments, accusing Carlyle’s critics of misunderstanding the originality of Carlyle’s ideas.
  - (C) She claims that most people do not recognize Carlyle’s genius, suggesting that only a discerning few are capable of doing so.
  - (D) She cites facts to counter opposition to Carlyle’s eminence, claiming that all of Carlyle’s judgments are unassailable.
  - (E) She gives examples of Carlyle’s far-reaching influence, noting that even criticism of Carlyle implies praise.

10. What purpose do lines 63–74 (“You may ... own feeling”) serve?
- (A) They contrast the appeal of a writer who merely confirms his readers’ views with that of a writer who boldly challenges them.
  - (B) They develop an analogy between the kinds of individuals people are attracted to and the kinds of writing they prefer.
  - (C) They challenge the idea that writers modify their ideas to appeal to a wide range of readers.
  - (D) They examine whether relationships based on shared ideas and interests are rewarding to both parties.
  - (E) They provide examples from various writers in which the appearance of good and evil is deceptive.
11. In lines 75–83 (“When he ... his opinions”), the author develops her rhetorical purpose by
- (A) contrasting “he” and “we” to set Carlyle apart and show how he is critical of everyone else
  - (B) inserting dashes to highlight Carlyle’s most influential ideas and opinions
  - (C) employing dramatically urgent adverbs to create a surprising conclusion for the reader
  - (D) delaying the conclusion of the independent clause to build up the reader’s sense of anticipation
  - (E) utilizing the parallel “Hear! hear!” and “Oh! oh!” to imitate a chorus of approval for Carlyle

**Questions 12–24. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.**

*This passage consists of excerpts from an essay published in the 1940s.*

It is the fate of actors to leave only picture postcards behind them. Every night when the curtain goes down the beautiful coloured canvas is rubbed out. What  
Line remains is at best only a wavering, insubstantial  
5 phantom—a verbal life on the lips of the living. Ellen Terry was well aware of it. She tried herself, overcome by the greatness of Irving as Hamlet and indignant at the caricatures of his detractors, to describe what she remembered. It was in vain. She  
10 dropped her pen in despair. “Oh God, that I were a writer!” she cried. “Surely a *writer* could not string words together about Henry Irving’s Hamlet and say *nothing, nothing*.” It never struck her, humble as she was, and obsessed by her lack of book learning, that  
15 she was, among other things, a writer. It never occurred to her when she wrote her autobiography, or scribbled page after page to Bernard Shaw late at night, dead tired after a rehearsal, that she was “writing.” The words in her beautiful rapid hand bubbled off her pen.  
20 With dashes and notes of exclamation she tried to give them the very tone and stress of the spoken word. It is true, she could not build a house with words, one room opening out of another, and a staircase connecting the whole. But whatever she took up became in her warm,  
25 sensitive grasp a tool. If it was a rolling-pin, she made perfect pastry. If it was a carving knife, perfect slices fell from the leg of mutton. If it were a pen, words peeled off, some broken, some suspended in mid-air, but all far more expressive than the tapings of the  
30 professional typewriter. With her pen then at odds and ends of time she has painted a self-portrait. It is not an Academy portrait, glazed, framed, complete. It is rather a bundle of loose leaves upon each of which she has dashed off a sketch  
35 for a portrait—here a nose, here an arm, here a foot, and there a mere scribble in the margin. The sketches done in different moods, from different angles, sometimes contradict each other. . . .  
Which, then, of all these women is the real Ellen  
40 Terry? How are we to put the scattered sketches together? Is she mother, wife, cook, critic, actress, or should she have been, after all, a painter? Each part seems the right part until she throws it aside and plays another. Something of Ellen Terry it seems overflowed



45 every part and remained unacted. Shakespeare could  
not fit her; not Ibsen; nor Shaw. The stage could not  
hold her; nor the nursery. But there is, after all, a  
greater dramatist than Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Shaw.  
There is Nature. Hers is so vast a stage, and so  
50 innumerable a company of actors, that for the most  
part she fobs them off with a tag or two. They come  
on and they go off without breaking the ranks. But  
now and again Nature creates a new part, an original  
part. The actors who act that part always defy our  
55 attempts to name them. They will not act the stock  
parts—they forget the words, they improvise others  
of their own. But when they come on the stage falls  
like a pack of cards and the limelights are extinguished.  
That was Ellen Terry’s fate—to act a new part. And  
60 thus while other actors are remembered because they  
were Hamlet, Phèdre, or Cleopatra, Ellen Terry is  
remembered because she was Ellen Terry.

12. Which of the following statements is best supported by information given in the passage?
- (A) Terry never focused on one career; she was skilled at so many things that she did not excel in any one thing.
  - (B) Terry was so clever an actress that her portrayal of a role seemed to change every night.
  - (C) Shaw encouraged Terry to become a play-wright by carefully tutoring her in creating plots and characters.
  - (D) Because Terry lacked confidence in certain of her skills, she never fully realized she was a person of rare talents and gifts.
  - (E) Because Terry did not have natural talent for either writing or acting, she struggled to learn her crafts and became great through sheer willpower.
13. The author’s attitude toward Terry can best be described as
- (A) superior and condescending
  - (B) unbiased and dispassionate
  - (C) sympathetic and admiring
  - (D) curious and skeptical
  - (E) conciliatory and forgiving
14. In line 1, “picture postcards” functions as a metaphor for the
- (A) published text of a play
  - (B) audience’s impressions of the actors’ performances
  - (C) critical reviews of plays
  - (D) plays in which the actors in the company have previously performed
  - (E) stage designer’s sketches of sets and scenes

15. The passage implies that the primary enemy of the “beautiful coloured canvas” and the “wavering, insubstantial phantom” (lines 3 and 4–5) is the
- (A) cost of producing plays
  - (B) whims of critics
  - (C) passage of time
  - (D) incredulity of audiences
  - (E) shortcomings of dramatists
16. The phrase “a verbal life on the lips of the living” (line 5) suggests that
- (A) performances live only in the memories of those who witness and speak of them
  - (B) actors do not take the trouble to explain their art to the public
  - (C) the reviews of critics have a powerful influence on the popularity of a production
  - (D) dramatists try to write dialogue that imitates ordinary spoken language
  - (E) audiences respond to the realism of the theater
17. What is the relationship of the second and third sentences (lines 2–5) to the first sentence (lines 1–2)?
- (A) They are structurally less complex than the first.
  - (B) They are expressed in less conditional terms than the first.
  - (C) They introduce new ideas not mentioned in the first.
  - (D) They clarify and expand on the first.
  - (E) They question the generalization made in the first.
18. The pronoun “it” (line 6) refers to which of the following?
- (A) “fate” (line 1)
  - (B) “curtain” (line 2)
  - (C) “canvas” (line 3)
  - (D) “phantom” (line 5)
  - (E) “life” (line 5)
19. The effect of italicizing the words “*nothing, nothing*” (line 13) is to
- (A) emphasize Terry’s sense of frustration
  - (B) indicate a sarcastic tone
  - (C) suggest the difficulty of writing great parts for actors
  - (D) link a clear sense of purpose to success in writing
  - (E) imply that Terry’s weakness in writing is her tendency to exaggerate

20. The words “bubbled off” (line 19) and “peeled off” (line 28), used to describe the way Terry wrote, emphasize
- (A) polish and sophistication
  - (B) thoughtfulness and application
  - (C) bluntness and indiscretion
  - (D) mystery and imagination
  - (E) ease and spontaneity
21. Which of the following stylistic features is used most extensively in lines 25-30 ?
- (A) Inversion of normal subject/verb/object order
  - (B) Repetition of sentence structure
  - (C) Periodic sentence structure
  - (D) Sentence fragments for emphasis
  - (E) Use of connotative meanings that add complexity
22. The effect of mentioning an “Academy portrait” (line 32) is to
- (A) imply that Terry deserved to have her portrait painted by a great artist
  - (B) suggest that Terry was adept at self-expression both in writing and in painting
  - (C) clarify the informal nature of Terry’s self-portrait through contrast
  - (D) hint that Terry’s self-absorption prevented her from writing about herself dispassionately
  - (E) blame Terry for her rebellion against the conventions of art forms
23. The “sketches” (line 36) are most probably
- (A) responses to reviewers who have criticized Terry’s acting
  - (B) paintings by Terry of other actors
  - (C) stage directions from playwrights
  - (D) self-revelatory remarks
  - (E) descriptions of characters Terry has portrayed
24. The author suggests that Shakespeare, Shaw, and Ibsen could not “fit” (line 46) Terry chiefly because
- (A) the parts they created did not allow Terry to make use of every aspect of her talents
  - (B) their dramatic talents were focused on plot rather than on character
  - (C) Terry was better at conveying certain kinds of characters and emotions than she was at conveying others
  - (D) their plays were set in historical periods different from the one in which Terry lived
  - (E) the speeches they wrote for their female characters were written in accents and dialects different from Terry’s

**Questions 25–37. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.**

*This passage is taken from a book that examines Canadian book clubs.*

So pronounced is the book-club phenomenon that the format has spread to other venues and media, the most famous of these being the ‘book club’ component of Oprah Winfrey’s television talk show.

5 Staged like an actual book-group meeting, with invited discussants and a cozy living-room setting, the Winfrey show can boost a featured title to instant bestsellerdom and turn authors into stars. There are now ‘book clubs’ online, in bookstores, and

10 functioning as consumer focus groups for publishers.<sup>1</sup> Colleges, bookstores, and resorts have recently begun to develop ‘readers’ retreats.’<sup>2</sup> Newsletters, magazines, newspapers, and published guides advise readers how to find, establish, and manage successful

15 clubs.<sup>3</sup>

The widespread popularity of these reading groups has even occasioned a form of ‘book-club backlash.’ In a newspaper opinion piece titled ‘Why I Won’t Join the Book Club,’ one contributor expressed alarm

20 that reading was becoming another scheduled activity to be slotted in ‘like the trip to the gym and the grocery store’; self-improving readers ‘pop’ books as they would vitamin tablets. But books ‘are not about schedules,’ author Stephanie Nolen argues; rather, they are ‘about submerging yourself . . . about getting

25 lost, about getting consumed.’<sup>4</sup> Considerable attention was garnered by another article, detailing the darker side of some New York City reading groups. Headlined ‘Book-Club Lovers Wage a War of Words’

30 when reprinted by the *Globe and Mail*, it could equally well have been titled ‘When Book Clubs Go Bad’: ‘No longer just friendly social gatherings with a vague continuing-education agenda, many of today’s book groups have become literary pressure

35 cookers, marked by aggressive intellectual one-upmanship and unabashed social skirmishing. In

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1 For an example of an online ‘book club’—this one produced by a mass-market circulation women’s magazine—see Conversations (Book Club) on Chateleine Connects at <http://www.chatelaine.com/living/chatelaine-book-club/>.

2 For example, Vancouver bookseller Celia Duthie is developing such ‘retreats’ at a country inn. There are discussion periods and visits by authors and, most importantly, time to read. See Keyes, ‘Out of the Woods.’

3 Some popular guides are Greenwood et al., *The Go on Girl!*; Jacobson, *The Reading Group Handbook*; and Saal, *The New York Public Library Guide to Reading Groups*. A new entry to the field, developed with a particular eye to the needs of Canadian clubs, is Heft and O’Brien, *Build a Better Book Club*.

4 Nolen, ‘Why I Won’t Join the Book Club.’

living rooms and bookshops, clubs are frazzling under the stress, giving rise to a whole new profession: the book-group therapist.<sup>25</sup> The clubs that Elaine Daspin describes here seem to be functioning as  
40 unconsciousness- rather than consciousness-raising sessions, where competitive readers battle for interpretive supremacy. While book-club therapists may well be confined to the rarefied worlds of the  
45 Upper East Side or Long Island, authors of recent book-club guides reiterate the need to establish common purposes, regular routines, and guidelines for thorough preparation.

Clearly, the positives outweigh the pitfalls; book  
50 clubs are in demand because they offer individual readers an extra dimension of appreciation and understanding. Yet despite the fact that shared discussion of literary texts is also the foundation of literary study in school, college, and university  
55 classrooms, literary theorists and reader-response critics have yet to devote much attention to such shared and synergistic study, instead construing readers as isolates or abstractions. (Studies tend to focus on the emotional responses or cognitive  
60 activities of individual readers, or to infer such reactions by examining the properties of a literary text.) But club and classroom participants know that there is something different, something added, about sharing and discussing literature with other people.

25. The organization of the passage can best be described as
- (A) personal narrative followed by analysis
  - (B) empirical data followed by conjecture
  - (C) nonjudgmental explanation of a current phenomenon followed by a question
  - (D) descriptive analysis followed by a final judgment
  - (E) condemnation of a practice followed by partial acceptance
26. In context, the author places the term “book club” in quotation marks in lines 3 and 9 in order to
- (A) show that these are humorous examples
  - (B) highlight how formal some of these clubs are
  - (C) reveal that the book clubs that appear online or on television are unsatisfactory
  - (D) suggest that the term is being broadened beyond its original meaning
  - (E) imply that many book club members do not like the term

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5 Daspin, ‘Book-Club Lovers Wage a War of Words.’ The piece originally appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*.

27. The first paragraph (lines 1–15) serves to
- (A) explain why the author enjoys one way of reading
  - (B) describe the extension of a particular activity into nontraditional areas
  - (C) make generalizations that will be developed later
  - (D) explore ways in which people can structure free time
  - (E) detail the power of media and mass marketing to censor
28. According to lines 23–26, Stephanie Nolen’s primary criticism of book clubs is that they
- (A) are too programmed
  - (B) do not offer enough variety
  - (C) cause readers to be anxious
  - (D) overlook many classics
  - (E) forego quality for quantity
29. The clubs referred to in line 39 are discussed in
- (A) the online discussion group of a particular book club
  - (B) a study sponsored by book club participants
  - (C) an editorial in a Canadian magazine
  - (D) a guide written by Elaine Daspin
  - (E) an article published in the *Wall Street Journal*
30. The “recent book-club guides” (lines 45–46) tend to emphasize
- (A) how book clubs need to be structured and regular in order to succeed
  - (B) how difficult it is to start a book club in New York
  - (C) how often even the best book clubs fail
  - (D) the variety of reasons that people have for starting book clubs
  - (E) the challenges of selecting books for discussion
31. The last paragraph (lines 49–64) marks a shift from
- (A) popular to academic contexts
  - (B) supported to unsound generalizations
  - (C) impersonal to personal examples
  - (D) subtle irony to explicit sarcasm
  - (E) neutral to negative characterization of book clubs
32. The function of lines 52–58 (“Yet despite ... abstractions”) is to
- (A) argue for the value of a particular literary theory
  - (B) explain how important it is not to make abstract judgments
  - (C) point out a discrepancy between teaching practices and literary theory
  - (D) highlight the demand for a way to measure emotional responses to texts
  - (E) explore the author’s views about reading in isolation

33. The final sentence (lines 62–64) serves to
- (A) conclude an argument begun in the first paragraph
  - (B) suggest a probable cause for an ongoing phenomenon
  - (C) argue that publishers need to pay more attention to book clubs
  - (D) offer a final analysis of the phenomenon described in the second paragraph
  - (E) explain why the author has chosen a particular field of study
34. One function of sentence 3 (lines 8–10) and footnote 1 is to
- (A) give an example of a group that earns money by reading
  - (B) show that book clubs are not intended for literary scholars
  - (C) note the connection between marketing and book clubs
  - (D) cite one book club as a particular model of excellence
  - (E) suggest the benefits of online discussion groups
35. It can be inferred from footnote 2 that “Out of the Woods” is
- (A) an article about a type of retreat
  - (B) an exposé about fee-based book clubs
  - (C) an essay about book club protocol
  - (D) a meditation on favorite works by famous authors
  - (E) an article about how to start a traditional book club
36. The function of footnote 3 is to
- (A) offer specific examples of one of the types of resources mentioned
  - (B) convince the reader of the value of book clubs
  - (C) test whether the reader is interested in particular books
  - (D) evaluate tips on how to set up book clubs
  - (E) compare the strengths and weaknesses of certain books
37. The information in footnote 2 is different from that in footnote 3 in that footnote 2
- (A) is critical while endnote 3 is neutral
  - (B) assumes that readers do not like research while endnote 3 assumes that readers like research
  - (C) is concerned with local book clubs while endnote 3 relates to global issues
  - (D) primarily provides an illustration of a phenomenon while endnote 3 primarily lists resources
  - (E) relates mostly to marketing while endnote 3 relates mostly to cultural conflicts in book clubs

**Questions 38–50. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.**

*This passage is excerpted from a nonfiction book published in the late twentieth century.*

Line Climatologists speak of thunderstorms pregnant  
with tornadoes, storm-breeding clouds more than twice  
the height of Mount Everest; they speak of funicular  
5 envelopes and anvil clouds with pendant mammati and  
of thermal instability of winds in cyclonic vorticity,  
of rotatory columns of air torquing at velocities up to  
three hundred miles an hour (although no anemometer  
in the direct path of a storm has survived), funnels that  
can move over the ground at the speed of a strolling  
10 man or at the rate of a barrel-assing semi on the turn-  
pike; they say the width of the destruction can be the  
distance between home plate and deep center field and  
its length the hundred miles between New York City  
and Philadelphia. A tornado, although more violent  
15 than a much longer lasting hurricane, has a life  
measured in minutes, and weathercasters watch it  
snuff out as it was born: unnamed.

I know here a grandfather, a man as bald as if a  
cyclonic wind had taken his scalp—something wit-  
20 nesses claim has happened elsewhere—who calls  
twisters Old Nell, and he threatens to set crying  
children outside the back door for her to carry off.  
People who have seen Old Nell close, up under her  
skirt, talk about her colors: pastel-pink, black, blue,  
25 gray, and a survivor said this: *All at once a big hole  
opened in the sky with a mass of cherry-red, a yellow  
tinge in the center*, and another said: *a funnel with  
beautiful electric-blue light*, and a third person: *It was  
glowing like it was illuminated from the inside*. The  
30 witnesses speak of shapes: a formless black mass, a  
cone, cylinder, tube, ribbon, pendant, thrashing hose,  
dangling lariat, writhing snake, elephant trunk. They  
tell of ponds being vacuumed dry, ... chickens clean-  
plucked from beak to bum, water pulled straight up  
35 out of toilet bowls, ... a wife killed after being jerked  
through a car window, a child carried two miles and set  
down with only scratches, a Cottonwood Falls mother  
(fearful of wind) cured of chronic headaches when a  
twister passed harmlessly within a few feet of her  
40 house, and, just south of Chase, a woman blown out of  
her living room window and dropped unhurt sixty feet  
away and falling unbroken beside her a phonograph  
record of “Stormy Weather.”



38. The author develops the passage primarily through
- (A) accumulation of detail
  - (B) pro-and-con argument
  - (C) thesis followed by qualification
  - (D) assertion supported by evidence
  - (E) analysis of the ideas of other
39. The author is best described as
- (A) a curious individual who seeks out diverse information from a variety of sources
  - (B) a serious scientist who is determined to learn more about the causes of these storms
  - (C) an excited eyewitness who is too distracted to fear for personal safety
  - (D) a confused novice who is unable to decide which claims are accurate
  - (E) an ironic interpreter who comments on the failures and follies of others
40. Compared with that of the rest of the passage, the diction of lines 1–8 (“Climatologists ... survived”) is
- (A) informal and straightforward
  - (B) technical and specialized
  - (C) subjective and impressionistic
  - (D) speculative and uncertain
  - (E) understated and euphemistic
41. The statement “although ... survived” (lines 7–8) is an admission that
- (A) details about technical equipment are of interest only to specialists
  - (B) some tornadoes are so powerful that scientists cannot quantify them precisely
  - (C) scientists have abandoned the effort to measure the wind speed of tornadoes
  - (D) predicting the path a tornado will take is extremely difficult
  - (E) precise measurement of wind speed will aid climatologists in categorizing tornadoes
42. Which of the following is true of the comparisons in lines 11–14 (“they say ... Philadelphia”)?
- (A) They emphasize the unpredictable nature of tornadoes.
  - (B) They exaggerate the danger of tornadoes in order to make people cautious of them.
  - (C) They use technical terminology in order to ensure accuracy of description.
  - (D) They draw on familiar information to particularize an aspect of tornadoes.
  - (E) They clarify the distinctions between the language of climatologists and that of weathercasters.

43. The first sentence of the passage (lines 1–14) employs all of the following to convey the power and variety of tornadoes EXCEPT
- (A) abstract generalization
  - (B) the jargon of climatologists
  - (C) metaphor
  - (D) parallel construction
  - (E) varying degrees of formality
44. The passage implies that unlike hurricanes, tornadoes are not given human names because
- (A) there are too many of them
  - (B) their destruction is not as great as that of hurricanes
  - (C) they last too short a time
  - (D) they move too erratically to be plotted
  - (E) they can appear in any area of the world
45. When the passage moves from the first paragraph to the second, it also moves from
- (A) overview to illustration
  - (B) analysis to argumentation
  - (C) narration of the past to analysis of the past
  - (D) assertion to definition
  - (E) objective presentation to *ad hominem* argument
46. The phrase “as bald as if a cyclonic wind had taken his scalp” (lines 18–19) does all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) describe the grandfather with an image related to the cyclone
  - (B) suggest a lighter tone for the paragraph
  - (C) particularize the first of several sources of information mentioned in the paragraph
  - (D) suggest the power of the tornado
  - (E) express concern about the condition of the grandfather
47. In context, the image of being up under Old Nell’s skirt (lines 23–24) is meant to suggest
- (A) safety
  - (B) confusion
  - (C) domesticity
  - (D) familiarity
  - (E) imprisonment

48. Which of the following best describes the images in the last sentence of the passage (lines 32–43)?
- (A) A disdainful rehearsal of other people’s experiences
  - (B) A random listing of repulsive or frightening occurrences
  - (C) A thorough review of absurd legends
  - (D) A series of increasingly detailed and implausible events
  - (E) A chronological account of major storms
49. The second paragraph of the passage relies especially on the use of
- (A) cautionary advice
  - (B) colorful anecdotes
  - (C) self-deprecating humor
  - (D) extended analysis
  - (E) terrifying juxtapositions
50. The passage ends on a note of
- (A) utter exhaustion
  - (B) genuine relief
  - (C) catastrophic destructiveness
  - (D) ominous warning
  - (E) lighthearted irony

## Answers to Multiple-Choice Questions

1 – A	14 – B	27 – B	40 – B
2 – A	15 – C	28 – A	41 – B
3 – C	16 – A	29 – E	42 – D
4 – B	17 – D	30 – A	43 – A
5 – D	18 – A	31 – A	44 – C
6 – C	19 – A	32 – C	45 – A
7 – D	20 – E	33 – B	46 – E
8 – C	21 – B	34 – C	47 – D
9 – E	22 – C	35 – A	48 – D
10 – A	23 – D	36 – A	49 – B
11 – D	24 – A	37 – D	50 – E
12 – D	25 – D	38 – A	
13 – C	26 – D	39 – A	

## Sample Free-Response Questions

The free-response questions on AP English Language and Composition Exams prompt students to respond to demonstrate three essential skills developed in the course: rhetorical analysis, synthesis, and argumentation (see definitions on pages 18–19). Each of the following sample prompts represents a single manifestation of those skill categories; in any given AP English Language and Composition Exam administration, the analysis, synthesis, and argument prompts present unique tasks to elicit student performance of these essential skills. Free-response prompts from any given exam administration may vary from the tasks described in these samples in the specific language used or tasks described, although the essential skills they ask students to perform will remain the same. To encourage flexible application of these skills, teachers should help students practice them in a variety of civic and academic contexts throughout the year. For a broad view of task variation in AP English Language and Composition free-response prompts, please see the list available on the AP Central website at [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam\\_information/2001.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/exam/exam_information/2001.html).

### Synthesis Prompt

Foods that have been genetically modified are widely produced and consumed throughout the world. Despite the growth in genetically modified (GM) foods, most people are unaware of the place of GM foods in the food supply. Producers of GM (also called biotech) foods insist that they are safe and desirable, especially as the rapidly increasing human population requires more food. Many scientists and health practitioners, however, maintain that GM foods are not just undesirable but dangerous, both to individuals and to ecosystems.

Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-written essay that addresses this question: What should be the role of GM foods in the global food supply?

Use the sources to develop and explain your argument. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, and so forth, or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Agadoni)

Source B (McKie)

Source C (graph/map)

Source D (Human Genome Project)

Source E (Cage)

Source F (University of Queensland)

Source G (Manda)

## Source A

Agadoni, Laura. "Is Genetically Modified Food Healthy?" **Livestrong.com**. July 9, 2011.

*The following is excerpted from an article on a website devoted to healthful eating and living.*

**About GM Food** GM food is grown and genetically engineered with genetic material that does not occur naturally. Scientists also select genes from one organism and transfer them to another. Scientists genetically modify food for various reasons—a main one is to improve crop production. Other reasons for tampering with Mother Nature are to lower the price of food and to make food more durable and resistant against plant diseases caused by insects or viruses or through increased tolerance towards herbicides.

**Health Risks** Because of the introduction of new genetic material, possible health risks could ensue. For example, to create insect resistant crops, scientists use a gene from soil bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis*. This BT gene is a toxin that kills insects that disturb crops and is supposed to be safe for humans. Monsanto, a U.S.-based multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation, uses this genetically modified gene for growing corn. Jeffrey Smith of the Institute for Responsible Technology, who wrote the bestselling books, "Seeds of Deception" and "Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods," is concerned about the safety of BT toxin. He cites a study conducted by researchers at Sherbrooke University Hospital in Quebec that study found BT toxins in 93 percent of the 30 pregnant women tested and in 67 percent of non-pregnant women. The study has been accepted for publication in 2011 in the journal, "Reproductive Toxicology."

**Allergies** The U.S. started using BT corn in 1996, and many people are concerned about increased allergies because of this gene, according to WHO (World Health Organization). As of 2005, WHO has not found any allergic effects. However, Smith disputes that assessment, stating that the BT gene triggers immune system responses based on research conducted in Italy, which found that mice fed the Monsanto corn showed elevated antibodies associated with infections and allergies. The Italian study was performed on mice and was published in 2008 in the "Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry."

**Other Health Risks** According to WHO, gene transfer and outcrossing are other main concerns regarding GM foods. There's a danger that modified genes can turn out to be harmful for human health and that the body could develop antibiotic-resistant genes in response to transferred genes. Outcrossing occurs when food that is not approved for human consumption, but is approved for animal feed, appears in products made for humans. This happened before with maize, according to WHO.

**Bottom Line** You cannot lump all GM foods together because they all have different modified genes. WHO believes that with proper assessment, GM foods are not likely to present health risks. The benefits to be gained are plants that can withstand disease, crops with more nutrients and fish that can grow bigger.

"Is Genetically Modified Food Healthy?" by Laura Agadoni, from **Livestrong.com**, copyright by Demand Media. Used by permission.

## Source B

McKie, Robin. "Genetically Modified Crops Are the Key to Human Survival, Says UK's Chief Scientist." *The Guardian* [U.K.]. January 22, 2011.

*The following is excerpted from an article on the website of a major British newspaper.*

Moves to block cultivation of genetically modified crops in the developing world can no longer be tolerated on ethical or moral grounds, the government's chief scientist, Sir John Beddington, has warned. He said the world faced "a perfect storm" of issues that could lead to widespread food shortages and public unrest over the next few decades. His warning comes in the wake of food riots in north Africa and rising global concern about mounting food prices.

"A number of very important factors are about to change our world," said Beddington, an expert in population biology. "Its population is rising by six million every month and will reach a total of around 9,000 million by 2050. At the same time, it is estimated that by 2030 more than 60% of the population will be living in cities and will no longer be involved in growing crops or raising domestic animals. And on top of that the world's population is getting more prosperous and able to pay for more food."...

Beddington said humanity had to face the fact that every means to improve food production should now be employed, including widespread use of new biotechnological techniques in farming. He stressed that no harm should be inflicted on humans or the environment. His remarks were made in advance of publication tomorrow of a major report, "The Future of Food and Farming."...

He emphasised the role of modern biotechnological techniques, including GM crops, in the future of global food production. "There will be no silver bullet, but it is very hard to see how it would be remotely sensible to justify not using new technologies such as GM. Just look at the problems that the world faces: water shortages and salination of existing water supplies, for example. GM crops should be able to deal with that."

Such remarks will enrage many environmental groups, who believe it is wrong for the west to impose a technology it has developed on the third world. But Beddington was adamant about the benefits of GM crop technology. "Around 30% of food is lost before it can be harvested because it is eaten by pests that we never learnt how to control. We cannot afford that kind of loss to continue. GM should be able to solve that problem by creating pest-resistant strains, for example. Of course, we will have to make sure these crops are properly tested; that they work; that they don't harm people; and that they don't harm the environment."

GM crops alone would not be sufficient to hold off widespread starvation, he added. No single approach would guarantee food security for humanity for the rest of the century. A widespread approach, including the development of proper sustainability, protecting fish stocks and changes to patterns of consumption, was also critical, he said. "This report was set up to find out if we can feed nine billion people sustainably, healthily and equitably. We can, but it will take many different approaches to crack the problem."

Almost a billion people now suffer serious food shortages and face starvation. “It is unimaginable that in the next 10 to 20 years that there will not be a worsening of that problem unless we take action now, and we have to include the widest possible range of solutions.”

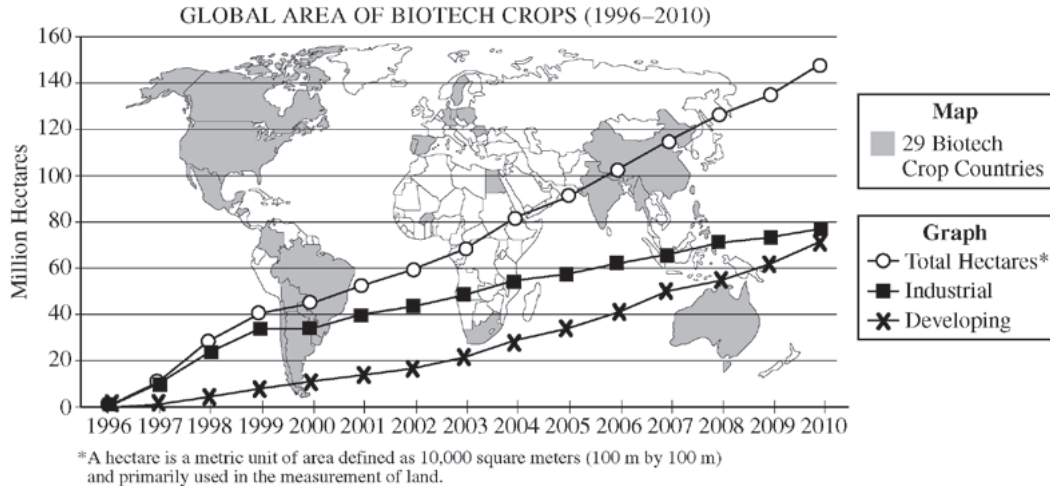
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**Source C**

James, Clive. "Brief 42: Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops." ISAAA. 2010.

*The following chart is adapted from a yearly brief published by an international not-for-profit organization.*



## Source D

“Genetically Modified Foods and Organisms.” *Human Genome Project Information*. United States Department of Energy Office of Science. November 5, 2008.

*The following is drawn from an online article on genetically modified foods published by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Human Genome Program.*

### Benefits

- ▶ Crops
  - › Enhanced taste and quality
  - › Reduced maturation time
  - › Increased nutrients, yields, and stress tolerance
  - › Improved resistance to disease, pests, and herbicides
  - › New products and growing techniques
- ▶ Environment
  - › “Friendly” bioherbicides and bioinsecticides
  - › Conservation of soil, water, and energy
- ▶ Society
  - › Increased food security for growing populations

### Controversies

- ▶ Safety
  - › Potential human health impacts, including allergens, transfer of antibiotic resistance markers, unknown effects
  - › Potential environmental impacts, including: unintended transfer of transgenes through cross-pollination, unknown effects on other organisms (e.g., soil microbes), and loss of flora and fauna biodiversity
- ▶ Access and Intellectual Property
  - › Domination of world food production by a few companies
  - › Increasing dependence on industrialized nations by developing countries
  - › Biopiracy, or foreign exploitation of natural resources
- ▶ Ethics
  - › Violation of natural organisms’ intrinsic values
  - › Tampering with nature by mixing genes among species
- ▶ Labeling
  - › Not mandatory in some countries (e.g., United States)
  - › Mixing GM crops with non-GM products confounds labeling attempts
- ▶ Society
  - › New advances may be skewed to interests of rich countries

U.S. Department of Energy Genome Programs: <http://genomics.energy.gov>

## Source E

Cage, Sam. "High Food Prices May Cut Opposition to Genetically Modified Foods." *The New York Times*. July 8, 2008.

*The following is excerpted from an online article published by a major American newspaper.*

In a Eurobarometer opinion poll in March, the number of European respondents saying they lacked information on genetically modified food fell to 26 percent, compared with 40 percent in the previous survey, which took place in 2005.

But 58 percent were apprehensive about the use of such crop technology and just 21 percent were in favor, down from 26 percent in a 2006 Eurobarometer survey on biotechnology.

"People do change attitudes, just gradually, because they become used to technologies," said Jonathan Ramsay, spokesman for Monsanto, the world's biggest seed company. "Consumers are looking at prices, consumers hear the stories about food production, growing population in the world, and I think people do understand that agriculture needs to be efficient."

Friedrich Berschauer, chief executive of the world's fourth-biggest seed producer, Bayer CropScience, believes that acceptance of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, will be gradual.

"Long-term, I am certain that GMOs will be accepted," Berschauer said. "But I dare not give a forecast whether that will be in 5 years or in 10."

But critics of genetic modification say that the technology does not bring the benefits promised. A recent report by the organic group Soil Association concluded that yields of all major GM varieties are equivalent to or less than those from conventional crops.

"GM chemical companies constantly claim they have the answer to world hunger while selling products which have never led to overall increases in production," said Peter Melchett, Soil Association's policy director, "and which have sometimes decreased yields or even led to crop failure."

Geert Ritsema, a genetic engineering campaigner at Greenpeace International, said that proponents of biotech crops are using high market prices to scare consumers into thinking that their food will become too expensive unless they turn to GM technology.

More awareness of the technology could also reinforce wariness, said Jean Halloran, head of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union.

"I think that if consumers become really educated," she said, "that's the point they'll end up at and say, 'Why should I mess around with this technology when it has no benefits to me?'"

"High Food Prices May Cut Opposition to Genetically Modified Food," Author Sam Cage, Reuters, 2008, Reuters. Used by permission.

## Source F

“Benefits Outweigh Risks from Genetically Modified Plants.” *UQ News*. University of Queensland, Australia. January 23, 2008.

*The following is excerpted from an article on the website of an Australian university.*

Australian states should not ban commercial production of genetically modified (GM) plants and food as the risks are alarmist and exaggerated, according to a new study.

The UQ PhD study found the benefits of GM plants and food outweighed the risks, finding no compelling evidence of harm to humans from GM plants.

GM plants have been trialled in most states with South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia the only states to ban GM plants. South Australia and Tasmania are reviewing their moratoriums.

The study author, ethicist Dr Lucy Carter, spent three-and-a-half years examining arguments and evidence for and against the development and use of GM plants and food in Australia and in the developing world.

Dr Carter said there was no evidence to justify continuing moratoriums on commercial GM planting so long as thorough risk assessments were done.

Opponents say GM products are unnatural, potentially harmful to humans and capable of environmental injury and creating ‘superweeds’.

She said the risks of GM plants transferring allergenic proteins to novel foods or creating superweeds were very low.

“If you take a GM plant and a conventional plant, you can’t easily create a hybrid that is both strong enough to withstand natural environmental conditions as well as survive all eradication attempts unless you’re in the lab,” Dr Carter said.

“It’s just too difficult.”

Asked if it was too early to tell if GM plants were safe, Dr Carter said research that included risk assessments showed no reason for alarm.

Food products that contain more than one percent of a GM ingredient must be labelled and most people have already eaten GM food in some supermarket junk food.

“I think the risks and benefits are overstated by both sides of the debate,” she said.

“Opponents tend to inflate the risks while proponents at times overstate the benefits.”

## Source G

Manda, Olga. "Controversy Rages Over 'GM' Food Aid." *Africa Renewal* 16.4 (2003). February 21, 2012.

*The following is excerpted from an article in "Africa Renewal," an online magazine published by the United Nations.*

Southern African governments find themselves in a dilemma: they have to choose between letting their citizens starve to death or giving them genetically modified food aid that many believe may be harmful to health.

That was the predicament facing the region's cash-strapped governments when the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) provided them with thousands of tonnes of emergency food aid to help combat severe famine conditions. Some of the food came from donor countries, such as the US, which produce large quantities of genetically modified (GM) maize and other grains.

Several governments in the region objected to the GM grain, especially Zambia and Zimbabwe, the countries hardest hit by the drought. Citing health and environmental concerns, Zimbabwe blocked the GM food aid from entering the country. In Zambia, where some GM grain had already arrived, the government placed it under lock and key, banned its distribution and then blocked another 40,000 tonnes that were in the pipeline.

### Scientific uncertainty

In Zambia, the decision came after months of intense debate. Environmental and other "watchdog" groups critical of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have been influential, and through networking, forums and protests applied pressure on the government. Local civic groups and scientists conducted a study tour of the US, India, South Africa and Europe to investigate views about genetic modification. "We established from all the countries we visited that GMOs are a health hazard," the team maintained after returning to Lusaka.

Many Zambians believe that GMOs cause resistance to antibiotics, thereby cutting immunity to diseases, and that they may lead to the emergence of new food toxins or to allergies in people with poor health. "For Zambia, most people in outlying areas are of an average health status," argued Dr Mwananyanda Mbikusita-Lewanika, a Zambian scientist, "and if consumption [of GM grains] is high, then toxicity would equally increase."...

### 'Zambians are not guinea pigs'

Although nearly 30 per cent of Zambia's 10.2 million people are facing starvation, the government of President Levy Mwanawasa has bowed to the concerns about the potential hazards of genetic modification and has flatly refused to accept GM grain. President Mwanawasa has repeatedly said that until he has sufficient and credible information to the contrary, he will not risk feeding Zambians a "poison" that could have long-term effects.

The government has said it will follow the "cautionary principle," which states that in the face of scientific uncertainty, a country should not take action that might adversely affect human and animal health or harm the environment.

Noting that it currently has no technological capacity to handle GMOs, the administration nevertheless announced that it will set up a task force to study the issue more closely.

In the meantime, President Mwanawasa has asked Zambians to be “patient” while the government does all it can to secure non-GM food. “I will not allow Zambians to be turned into guinea pigs no matter the levels of hunger in the country.”

*Africa Renewal*, United Nations

## Analysis Prompt

(Suggested time—40 minutes.)

*The letter below was written by Samuel Johnson in response to a woman who had asked him to obtain the archbishop of Canterbury's patronage to have her son sent to the university. Read the letter carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Johnson crafts his denial of the woman's request.*

MADAM,

I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness  
*Line* 5 which this world affords: but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge,  
10 experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed,  
15 and the general rules of action to be broken.

When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a  
20 supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should chuse<sup>1</sup> to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should chuse your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly  
25 conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it; but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation  
30 both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure: but this proposal is so very remote from usual methods, that I cannot comply with it, but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish  
35 me to undergo.  
I have seen your son this morning; he seems a pretty

---

1 choose

youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him; but though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy.

(June 8, 1762)



## Argument Prompt

(Suggested time—40 minutes.)

For centuries, prominent thinkers have pondered the relationship between ownership and the development of self (identity), ultimately asking the question, “What does it mean to own something?”

Plato argues that owning objects is detrimental to a person’s character. Aristotle claims that ownership of tangible goods helps to develop moral character. Twentieth-century philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre proposes that ownership extends beyond objects to include intangible things as well. In Sartre’s view, becoming proficient in some skill and knowing something thoroughly means that we “own” it.

Think about the differing views of ownership. Then write an essay in which you explain your position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.