

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

2009 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.

- 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 Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing. 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 Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient. 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 Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. 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 Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or less convincing. 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 Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

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Question 3 (continued)

2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in defending, challenging, or qualifying Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing a person's character. 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 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, or weak in their control of language.
- 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.

An old proverb states, "Character is what you are in the dark," and it is in the darkest of times that who we are sometimes shines through. Nelson Mandela, Stephen Hawking, Lance Armstrong; our society loves to hear of a man who triumphs through adversity. But would these talents and achievements have arisen anyway - or ~~more~~ ^{more easily} - if there had been no adversity? Possibly, but I agree with the Roman poet Horace in that adversity has a way of rousing talent from slumber. Adversity can stimulate, force, and sharpen a person in ways prosperity cannot - there is, ~~no~~ then, value in hardship.

Biology teaches us that a stimulus will elicit a response. Newton taught us that one force provokes another, in opposition to it. ~~But Adversity~~ While various life experience might "elicit" a response, adversity may analogize better with physics than biology. It does not simply request a response - it demands it. Otherwise the adversity will never be lifted ~~and~~ and hardship will prevail. Hamlet's tragic



flow was indecision, and Shakespeare no doubt understood that those in adversity must learn to be capable of a response if they are to survive,

Survival, of course, is a powerful motivator. Evolution runs on it; in this sense every organism on the planet ~~can~~ works due to adversity. This survival imperative is so powerful, it has been used beyond the biological creatures it is hard-coded into. Computers now make use of genetic algorithms, where competing solutions to a problem—say, the correct shape of an aircraft wing—are selected, mathematically “bred”, and mutated into a new generation. Adversity, it seems, elicits talents in more than humans.

Prosperity, on the other hand, does not always engender growth. The prosperous man has no pressing needs or emergencies that require him to develop talents to counter. Brave New World provides a literary example. The people in this “utopia” are always fed. They are always



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on this page as it is designated in the exam.

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happy. There is infinite entertainment, in all imaginable forms. But there is no growth. When the leader of this society asks an outsider if he truly wants pain, death, and hardship, the "savage" simply replied "I claim them all," and took with him all the good things the "prosperous" lacked—love, family, Shakespeare, and much more.

In fiction, a character often ends a story realizing far more than he did when he began. The conflicts and resolutions he has been through have forced it on him. Character development is not merely a literary construct — it exists in life. We cannot live and we cannot grow without the realization that we are not living perfectly and that we have ideals to grow towards, and revealing these is the true value of adversity.

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Every person is different in their own way. They have different talents, hobbies, abilities, and dreams. The world is beautiful because of diversity. Roman poet, Horace, stated that, "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant."

Hard times make people stronger. Roman poet Horace states that "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant." From personal experience as well as from reading the novel The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck I absolutely agree with his statement.

Spoiled children never learn how to do anything themselves. I have a few friends that are extremely spoiled and never work for what they receive. Their parents pay for cleaners to clean their room and they get brand new cars for their 16th birthdays. One friend in particular has been struggling lately. Her mother has recently become ill and she has been forced to take care of her siblings. Her father is always working, therefore, she is expected to drive everywhere and make dinner. Through her mother's sickness she



has been able to see how ~~much~~ much she truly loves her family. She has also realized that she loves cooking. She loves mixing crazy foods and getting a great result. Had it not been for the difficult time she would have never realized her talent for cooking and her love for her family.

The Grapes of Wrath is an extremely touching book that shows the difficulty of life in the 1930s. In this book, there is a young woman named Pessy who miscarries her baby due to lack of ^{healthy} food during the depression. She was absolutely crushed that her baby had died, but through this experience she became stronger. She was able to grow up and mature much more quickly than she would have had it not been for her miscarriage. She was able to save a poor man from dying with her breastmilk despite her ~~insecurity~~ insecurities. She had a talent for helping people. She possessed an extreme nurturing nature that would never have been discarded had it not been for adversity. ~~People~~ ^{People} are spoiled and ~~the~~ need to experience adversity in order to be compassionate and caring individuals. People are most vulnerable.



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3

3B
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and most receptive when enduring difficult circumstances. Adversity is a part of life that everyone deals with one time, or another. It ~~is~~ may not be fun at the moment, but looking back lessons were learned and talents discovered.

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No matter how great life may seem or yet for an individual, every person is virtually guaranteed a period of struggling with adversity. ~~Adversity~~ It comes in different forms, at different times, and on different people. The bright side of this is that having adversity may actually make a person physically and mentally better. How? By overcoming adversity, a feeling of confidence overwhelms you and makes you strive for excellence in everything that you take pride in. So just by enduring and tolerating your hard times, you will obtain enough strength needed to reach your ~~goals~~ goals.

First, adversity comes at different times in your life. It may first appear right away when someone questions your good ~~luck~~ luck. When adversity shows up, so should your ~~determination~~ determination. When you are determined to do anything, it is hard for anything to stop you. So, you should always be determined for greatness because adversity can strike at any time, and when it does, you will be ready.

Second, ~~adversity~~ ~~adversity~~ ~~adversity~~ adversity comes in many different forms. For example, it may not just be a strange occurrence in the weather, but a strange change in your friends' attitude toward you. They may change their perception of you, only momentarily; consequently, a form of adversity.

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2009 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

This question presented students with a quotation from Horace's *Satires* in which a dinner party guest, Balatro, observes, "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant." Students were asked to consider the quotation and write an essay in which they defended, challenged, or qualified that assertion about the role of adversity in developing character. The prompt suggested some possible types of adversity—financial or political hardship, danger, misfortune. (This did not deter some students from writing about advertising.) Students were encouraged to provide support for their arguments with appropriate evidence from their reading, observation, or experience.

This task hearkened back to the classical essay, presenting the very type of theme that might have attracted Montaigne, Samuel Johnson, Charles Lamb, or William Hazlitt. The question provided considerable freedom, permitting students to use expository or narrative modes of discourse in creating an original argument. The question encouraged students to address how adversity affects the human condition, but more sophisticated responses also looked at redefining adversity or establishing the conditions under which adversity impacts humankind. Fewer responses addressed the second half of Horace's comment, which implies that during times of prosperity, human beings may be less likely to develop their latent talents or character strengths.

Sample: 3A

Score: 8

This essay effectively crafts an argument in response to Horace's assertion about the role that adversity plays in developing character by offering evidence and explanations that are both appropriate and convincing. The argument builds steadily, anchored by a series of logical deductions. The evidence is particularly full, as the student draws upon an impressively broad body of knowledge—considering famous figures, each of whom "triumphs" over adversity; offering parallels to biology, physics, and engineering; and discussing an aptly chosen novel (*Brave New World*, from which the student even quotes). Such a breadth of examples provides a much richer source for convincing argumentation than is found in lower-range essays, which all too often limit themselves to singular and/or less significant examples. The accompanying explanations in this essay demonstrate insight and facility with critical thinking. First, the student qualifies Horace's claim about adversity with a rhetorical question, recognizing the possibility that Mandela, Hawking, and Armstrong might have accomplished what they did even without the adversity each faced. Later, the student lends qualified support to Horace's claim regarding prosperity (it "does not always engender growth") and nicely concludes the explanation of how Huxley's novel validates Horace by mentioning Shakespeare, whose character Hamlet serves as an example in the student's earlier discussion. The prose is not flawless: it slips into the passive voice, offers prepositions without objects, and ends with an awkward sentence. However, it does demonstrate a consistent and sometimes impressive control of a wide range of the elements of effective writing: the student has a rich vocabulary ("engender," "literary construct"); uses metaphor ("rousing talent from slumber"); makes clear and clean transitions ("of course," "on the other hand"); understands parallel structure ("stimulate, force, and sharpen," "It does not simply request a response—it demands it," and "are always fed . . . are always happy"); and displays a facility in using dashes and parenthetical phrases. This student converses comfortably with both readers and the chosen sources by gently weaving qualifiers such as "or more easily," "[p]ossibly," "say," and "not merely" throughout the essay while still managing to evince an authoritative voice.

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Question 3 (continued)

Sample: 3B

Score: 6

This essay adequately defends Horace's assertion about the role adversity plays in developing a person's character with a pair of appropriate examples, each accompanied by sufficient explanation. The student opens with an unambiguous, albeit somewhat pedestrian, thesis and defends it with two body paragraphs. The first starts with a defense of Horace's claim that prosperous circumstances do not elicit talent ("I have a few friends that are extremely spoiled") that is quick and somewhat superficial but adequate. It then presents the example of "[o]ne friend in particular" and illustrates how the student witnessed adversity eliciting talent when a friend discovered she could cook only after her mother became ill. The second body paragraph, in which the student draws on reading and explains how adversity brings out talent in *The Grapes of Wrath*, is happily more developed than the first. The student works harder to tie the evidence to Horace, offering a serviceable explanation that Rose of Sharon "was able to grow up and mature much more quickly that [sic] she would have had it not been for her miscarriage." The prose contains lapses in syntax as well as diction, but it remains generally clear, and it adequately expresses the student's ideas without confusion. In the final sentence of the *Grapes of Wrath* paragraph ("She possessed an extreme nurturing nature that would never have been discovered had it not been for adversity") and the brief conclusion, the student shows an adequate understanding of the role adversity played in developing each girl's character, which is what the prompt asked students to do.

Sample: 3C

Score: 2

Although Horace is never mentioned, this essay does attempt to respond to the prompt. The student seems to have some understanding of the relationship between adversity and character, noting that adversity may actually make a person "better" because "[b]y overcoming adversity, a feeling of confidence overwhelms [sic] you and makes you strive for excellence [sic] in everything that you take pride in." However, the second and third paragraphs do little to advance the argument. The evidence presented is very limited, consisting mainly of generalities and assertions but no developed examples. The control of language is weak, and the prose is immature. This response demonstrates little success.