

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

The student responses in this packet were selected from the 2019 Reading and have been rescored using the new rubrics for 2020. Commentaries for each sample are provided in a separate document.

Student responses have been transcribed verbatim; any errors in spelling or grammar appear as they do in the original handwritten response.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample PP

[1] During the British occupation of India, they exerted colonial monopolies and control against the Indian people. The Indians rebelled against these monopolies, similar to the American revolution against the British. However, the movement in India was largely driven by nonviolent acts of civil disobedience, led by Mahatma Gandhi. Throughout his letter, Gandhi applies a conciliatory, yet forceful tone, he places the blame onto the British, and he continually repeats his plan for the march in order to convince the British to reverse their policies before he acts.

[2] Throughout his letter, Gandhi is conciliatory and respectful. He writes to the British with the intent of asking for the reversal of a law, so he knows that he must be polite and courteous. His demeanor conveys to the British his sense of servitude to the British in lines 16-20. However, he is not stepping down, but rather standing up to the British respectfully. He states that he “does not seek to harm your people,” which simultaneously reassures the British of nonviolence but also conveys Gandhi’s sense of urgency. He is going to act, he is going to do something, and he is informing the British of it. Gandhi is not submitting; he is asserting himself, but with respect. Through his letter, he uses imperative verbs, but states them politely so to not convey a violent tone. He says, “I invite you,” which sounds polite, but indirectly is an order to the British to reverse their ways. He finishes his letter by reminding the British that he is not threatening them, but merely reminding them that he will act if they do not. Through the letter, his tone is both respectful to the British but is also clear and forceful in its message.

[3] Gandhi’s rhetorical tactics place the blame onto the British. When he continually reassures them of his nonviolence, he is demonstrating that the Indians are not going to act violently, thereby indirectly asking the British if they too will follow the Indians. He uses phrases such as “unless the British nation...retraces its steps” and “if the British commerce with India is purified of greed.” These statements are Gandhi’s way of placing responsibility on to the British. They evoke the sense that the violence and conflict are the British’s fault not the Indians. In this way, Gandhi leaves it to the British to decide whether they want to stop their actions, thereby evoking a sense of guilt and responsibility in the British. These methods serve Gandhi’s purpose of asking the British to revise their laws without outrightly asking. His methods make the British the aggressors and, in this way, makes the British consider their position more fully.

[4] By repeating his plans to march, Gandhi is showing the British that he will not make any surprises. He, from the start of the passage, informs the British of his nonviolent plans. By ensuring that the British know of his plans, he is showing a sense of responsibility and honesty in his actions. This causes the British to regard him more favorably, because they recognize that his actions and motives are clear and honest. This will serve to make them more receptive to his demands. Gandhi also describes the situation in such a way to make the British pity the Indians. He calls the tax the “most iniquitous from a poor man’s standpoint,” and he wonders how they “have submitted to the cruel monopoly for so long.” By describing the situation in such terms, he gives reason for the British to pity the Indians, and again to see the harm they have caused them. These all serve to further Gandhi’s case.

[5] Throughout his letter to the British, Gandhi evokes a sense of imperative, yet polite force, evokes a sense of guilt in the British, and clearly states his demands. He is trying to ask the British to

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

revise their salt act before he marches, so throughout his letter, he implores the British to consider his demands, yet still presents himself respectably and worthy of consideration. Although the letter did not work, retrospectively this letter shows the fault of the British to not accept Gandhi and furthers Gandhi's legacy as the nonviolent aggressor. This causes the British to be more respectful of Gandhi, for respect will be met with respect. Gandhi is now in a position to gain the British's favor, and now they will be more likely to accept him.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample SS

[1] Nonviolence has often been a technique used by social and political figures to peacefully display opposition to a certain law of practice. In the book “On Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau, Thoreau argued that citizens must exercise their responsibility to refuse to adhere to unjust laws. Later, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. would take a similar approach by organizing peaceful protests to further the rights of African Americans. In 1930, Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi used the principles of civil disobedience and nonviolence to protest the unjust control of India by Britain by arranging a Salt March to display the unfair British monopoly on salt. By describing the British control of Indian commerce as greedy and misguided, clearly asserting the peaceful nature of the protest, and offering to negotiate with Viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi makes the case that his nonviolent protests stand up for the good of mankind against the tyranny of the British.

[2] Gandhi acknowledges the risks that he is undertaking by standing up to the British government, but also asserts that they are necessary for the “the victories of truth” to prevail. By doing so, Gandhi is establishing an underlying theme of heroism in the face of misguided evil. This noble theme is furthered by Gandhi’s desire to make the British “see the wrong they have done to India,” but not to harm the British. Gandhi’s focus on using an “equal love for your people with mine” serves to demonstrate the peaceful nature of his protests and also highlights the wrongdoing of the British empire by juxtaposing it with his own “weapon” of love and peace. Gandhi appeals to emotion, saying that the suffering of the Indian people rebelling against British rule “will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.”

[3] After establishing his theme of standing up to tyranny, Gandhi shifts to emphasizing the benefits that a change in British policy could bring to relations with India. Gandhi frames British control of commerce as wrong by saying that his goal is to “combat such evils” as the British government has enacted on India. Gandhi says that British commerce must be “purified of greed,” and states that after they can do so they will clearly see their own wrongdoing. This once again builds upon the foundation of the noble goal that Gandhi built in the earlier segment, because it portrays Gandhi as standing up for the rights of mankind. Although Gandhi encourages the British to “deal with these evils” and change their ways, he also gives them an ultimatum by saying if they do not change, he will lead a nonviolent protest to disregard the provisions of the salt laws.” Here Gandhi ties back his discussion to the British monopoly on salt while also asserting that he will take peaceful action to disobey the laws he deems unjust.

[4] The previously established theme of heroic resistance is reiterated as Gandhi says that the independence movement is “for the poorest in the land.” Gandhi’s reference to poverty makes the salt monopoly a social issue as well as one of commerce. Gandhi makes Indian resistance seem inevitable by questioning why they have “submitted to the cruel monopoly” and emphasizing how “tens of thousands” will protest with him. However, Gandhi continues to maintain a reasonable tone, and offers to discuss matters with Viceroy Lord Irwin if he so chooses. This is another example of Gandhi encouraging the British, represented by Lord Irwin to reflect on their actions and change their ways. As the letter draws to a conclusion, Gandhi once again makes it clear that his message is not a threat, but rather an attempt to reason with the British. In the last sentence, Gandhi gives tangible evidence that some British already see the wrongness of their actions by saying the letter is being delivered “by a

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

young English friend who believes in the Indian cause.” Through this, Gandhi is giving proof that the change in British actions that he advocated for is not only possible, but already occurring.

[5] Gandhi’s portrayal of British control of India presents his case for Indian independence to Lord Irwin by showing it as cruel and greedy, while the resistance movement is shown as just as inevitable. Gandhi subtly weaves in implications of the heroism of nonviolence in an effort to convince the British that their domination of Indian commerce is wrong. This letter is the precursor to the Salt March protest, and the eventual independence of India.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample HH

[1] In the 1930s, Indians were oppressed by the British. Britain had a monopoly on the taxation of salt. This unjust tax and control led to the rise of Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi as the leader of the Salt March. This peaceful and non-violent protest was a turning point for the civil disobedience that eventually won India its independence. However, before the march began Gandhi sent a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin to ask him to end the salt laws before the march took place. Gandhi attempts to have Lord Irwin remove the law by merely reading his letter.

[2] Gandhi establishes an equal relationship between Britain and India to convince Lord Irwin that if he would not use the law on his people then he should not place it on the Indian people. Gandhi wants to convince Lord Irwin that India is not inferior to Britain and should not be treated as if they are. Gandhi states, “Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient, and no less cultured than itself...” (lines 5-8). Gandhi uses an analogy to compare British history to Indian history. Gandhi’s point is that not only are the nations equal, but that India actually is superior to Britain in their history, population, and culture. Since India has even been around longer than Britain they are at least equal on the world stage and should be treated as such. Gandhi explains that the nations are equal, and even the people are equal. Gandhi states the word “serve” multiple times in lines 13-18. The repetition of the word “serve” is used to express that the actions Gandhi is taking are intended to help both British and Indian citizens. Gandhi’s point is that both nations and people should be treated equally, and Gandhi’s actions are intended to help people in both nations. Both nations, and citizens are equal and should be treated that way. If Lord Irwin would not place the Salt Act on the British people then he should not place it on the Indian people.

[3] Gandhi uses threats to British power to motivate Lord Irwin to remove the Salt Act. As Gandhi believed in non-violence he never would have violently threatened Lord Irwin, however Gandhi saw no issue with threatening British ties with India. Gandhi states, “If we want to sever the British connection it is because of the evils. When they are removed, the path becomes easy” (lines 29-31). Gandhi uses the words “sever” and “removed” to discuss British ties to India. Both words have a negative connotation and are usually associated with ending a relationship. Gandhi’s purpose in using these words is to threaten an ending of relations between Britain and India completely if the Salt Act and conditions in general do not change. After informing Lord Irwin of his plan Gandhi is aware that actions could be taken to stop them. Gandhi states, “It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me...” (lines 54-59). Gandhi juxtaposes “me” with “tens of thousands” to demonstrate to Lord Irwin that this will not end with Gandhi. Gandhi’s point is that this civil disobedience will expand from Gandhi’s one letter to a nationwide resistance. Even if Gandhi is arrested there will be many others moving the protests forward. Gandhi attempts to scare Lord Irwin that India could completely become independent if he does not take actions to improve conditions, starting with the removal of the Salt Act.

[4] Gandhi presents his case in a way designed to make Lord Irwin remove the Salt Act without needing to march and risk the lives of those who march with him. Gandhi does this by showing how India and Britain are not that different, and that if the Indian people are not treated better then they will simply end all ties with Britain. Gandhi balances fear of losing a resource and thoughts of gaining an ally

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

in his letter. Fear of one and hope for another, better, relationship was Gandhi's goal to convince Lord Irwin to end the Salt Law.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample J

[1] In Gandhi's letter to viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi is able to effectively use specific diction, his appeal to his logical reasoning, and his tone of the letter to strengthen his case.

[2] By using specific diction Gandhi is able to strengthen his case of the independence India seeks. Gandhi uses the word "evil" repetitively. By using the word evil in his letter he wishes not to degrade Lord Irwin, but to open his eyes on what the people of India feel towards Britain's actions. By using civil disobedience to fight evils India wants to show that they themselves will not succumb to it as well. In addition to the word "evil" Gandhi wants "friendly" negotiation. Gandhi could have just written negotiation, however, it would not be able to create a harsher impact than intended to. By adding "friendly" he wishes to juxtapose the actions of the Britain who have wronged India to the actions India is willing to take to negotiate with Britain. India and Gandhi wishes to have a future positive friendly relationship with Britain. Gandhi's use of diction create a stronger meaning that can impact and change Lord Irwin's point of view and eventually persuade him.

[3] Using logical reasoning to strengthen his action Gandhi is able to strengthen his case. While stating the evils of Britain he ensure logic as any country would want to be freed from it. Gandhi claims that first the evils of British need to be removed for future relationships to be ensured. Gandhi ensures that he does not want harm the people of Britain, but by unnecessarily laying stress upon communal problems that unhappily affect the land and people of India it is reasonable to act the way they should have. By implementing civil disobedience we see the resolve that India does not want to harm Britain, but wants to have freedom and just freedom.

[4] In the letter the overall tone is resolve. Gandhi is determined for only one true answer from Lord Irwin which is the negotiation of India's freedom. From lines 46-50 we see the transition from his previous paragraph which includes reasoning from wanting independence to the claim that he will not take no for an answer. Gandhi states that if they cannot get independence from Britain there will be continued action from India. In the end of the paragraph Gandhi wrote, "this letter is not in any way intended as a threat, but is a simple and scared duty..." Gandhi believes that he has a godly duty to the people of India to gain independence. There is not stronger resolve than to work with your religion. The overall organization of Gandhi's letter works together with his tone as they both work in harmony to explain what Gandhi feels to Lord Irwin. We know that Gandhi and the people of India have a strong resolve to stick to civil disobedience and non-violent actions committed to help gain independence from Britain.

[5] Overall, Gandhi's letter was not intended to further disconnect Britain and India, but to maintain future relationship while India is an independent country. Using specific rhetorical devices such as diction, using his logical reasoning, and having a firm tone throughout his letter he is able to strengthen his letter and commit to his resolve.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample T

[1] Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi is a non violent protestor whos goal was to lead India into Independence. When Britain added a colonial monopoly on and taxation of their essential resource of salt, Gandhi was ready to do a Salt March. However before doing so, Gandhi wrote Viceroy Lord Irwin, the representative of the British crown in India, to present his case and opinion. Ghandi, throughout the conclusion of his letter, describes what the British is doing with his diction, uses ethos, and gives reasoning for an intended discussion.

[2] Gandhi views many things thouroughly to decide wheather or not something is a good or bad thing. In his letter, Ghandi describes how the British doings are “evil” as he constantly describes the “British connection” evil. He asks the British to “[remove] of those evils’ (36). He describes them this way as they are seen as greedy. Gandhi believes that describing this way is appropriate as the British are evil in the sense that they are taxing the salt when there are a lot of poor people. This would make Irwin realize that what he is doing might be considered wrong.

[3] In addition, Gandhi also uses an appeal to emotion/ethos to show the “evil” effect of the British. Gandhi states in his letter, “You have unnecessarily laid stress upon communal problems that unhappily affect this land” (41-42). Gandhi is explaining how because of the British, they are causing problems. This appeal to emotion shows how Irwin is the cause of this problem. This can give him the implication that he is doing wrong things.

[4] Lastly, Gandhi also gives Irwin the reasoning of why there should be a discussion. He claims that “This letter is not in any way intended as a threat” (73). Although Gandhi is against the British, he is trying to give Irwin a reason to negotiate because he wants to discuss the current situation and help the people of India.

[5] In conclusion, Gandhi presents his case to Viceroy Lord Irwin to describe how his doings are evil, to show how it is effecting India by using ethos to show the effects and he gives a reasoning to why they should negotiate because he is applying no threat to them.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample E

[1] In the letter to Lord Irwin by Gandhi, the author expresses his desire for a nonviolent end to the Salt Laws Britain has imposed on India. Through the use of his impeccable word choice, flash back to the year of 1919, and the use of a metaphorical weapon, Gandhi wishes to move his audience to understand that what he is proposing is not a threat, but a duty he must fulfill.

[2] First, Gandhi states in lines 9 to 11 “I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert British people through non-violence”. This shows that the author is carefully choosing his words, as it helps his letter flow, and get across the certain point he would like Irwin to understand. Also, later in the passage as he uses words such as sacred, disciplined, and movement to express why and how the things he mentions in the letter will be done. Instead of a threat he uses these words to signify a promise.

[3] Next, the author uses a flashback in line 16 stating, “I served them up to 1919, blindly”. This is used to explain a difference in what he did in the past, compared to what he stands for now. In the previous paragraph, Gandhi mentions how he will serve Britains people as he does his own, only now it will be with purpose instead of the blind leadership he previously fell under.

[4] Lastly, Gandhi uses a metaphorical weapon, humility, to lead his people to get what they want, lower taxes, so all may have access to the salt coming from their own land. The use of humility is a powerful message to Lord Irwin that Gandhi is not doing this for himself, which leaves him with a lot of peaceful protestors joining him to fight for what they believe in, without even having to draw a weapon.

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (2019)
Sample Student Responses

Sample LL

[1] In this letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, I believe that a rhetorical tool Gandhi has used while writing it is conflicting ideas.

[2] In this letter, Gandhi speaks on how he does not want any violence and does not “seek to harm you people”, seemingly wanting to be civil and peaceful, but throughout the essay I believe that Gandhi has an angry intolerant tone.

[3] Gandhi uses phrases such as “I employed the same weapon that I have,” and “the plan through civil disobedience will be to combat such evils.”

[4] With words such as weapons and combat, I feel as though they directly violate what Gandhi had wanted with not wanting violence or to be causing any harm to the British people. While he is not directly saying that, I feel like that is the underlying tone.

[5] At the end of letter, Gandhi also has restate, “this letter is not in any way intended as threat.” I feel as though that line supports the idea that a part of his letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin could be perceived as a potential threat to him and Britain, and Gandhi has to make sure it is not a threat, if Irwin agree to Gandhi’s terms; then Gandhi will remain civil, like he suspects he will.

Sample TT

[1] Gandhi’s non-violent personality is a rhetorical device all unto itself. It makes him look far more approachable to the receiver of the letter. One example starts on line 64. Gandhi states, “If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you.” Gandhi doesn’t threaten the British government, he offers to not publish the letter so that they can sit down and have a civil talk about it. On top of that, he has it hand-delivered by an English friend. He is definitely far more inviting than the Americans were in their Declaration of Independence.