

2021

AP[®]

 CollegeBoard

AP[®] Seminar

Free-Response Questions

© 2021 College Board. College Board, Advanced Placement, AP, AP Central, and the acorn logo are registered trademarks of College Board. AP Capstone is a trademark owned by College Board. Visit College Board on the web: collegeboard.org.

AP Central is the official online home for the AP Program: apcentral.collegeboard.org.

AP SEMINAR

Part A

Suggested time — 30 minutes

Directions: Read the passage below and then respond to the following three questions.

1. Identify the author’s argument, main idea, or thesis. (3 points)
2. Explain the author’s line of reasoning by identifying the claims used to build the argument and the connections between them. (6 points)
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence the author uses to support the claims made in the argument. (6 points)

Write your responses to Part A only on the designated pages in the separate Free Response booklet.

From “Why Public Libraries Matter”

by Katrina vanden Heuvel (*The Nation*, June 4, 2015)

There are more public libraries in America—some 9,000 central buildings and 7,500 branch locations—than McDonald’s restaurants, making them one of the most ubiquitous institutions in the nation. Far from serving as obsolescent repositories for dead wood, libraries are integral, yet threatened, parts of the American social fabric. Libraries, after all, are truly democratic spaces where all are welcome and where everything inside is available to everyone. Few American institutions strive for “equity of access,” a core principle of the American Library Association, and even fewer pay more than lip service to the idea that services like the Internet are necessary aspects of life that simply must be made available to all members of society. But despite their impact and import—much of it hidden from people of means who can independently (and often expensively) secure for themselves those services provided by the library—America is starving its libraries, cutting off millions of people from the stream of information that, like oxygen, powers the development and basic functions of society.

In response to a 2010 story by Chicago’s Fox affiliate, “Are Libraries Necessary, or a Waste of Tax Money?”, Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library Mary A. Dempsey explained, “There continues to exist in this country a vast digital divide. It exists along lines of race and class and is only bridged consistently and equitably through the free access provided by the Chicago Public Library and all public libraries in this nation. Some 60 percent of the individuals who use public computers at Chicago’s libraries are searching for and applying for jobs.” It might be amusing to quip about musty, 19th-century-era card catalogs and smudgy, analog newspapers racked on giant spindles, but the access to contemporary society that public libraries provide is deadly serious.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

In New York City, library funding is down \$65 million since 2008, even though demand for library services is surging. At the 217 local library branches across the city, there are waiting lists for English-language classes and computer-coding classes. One-third of city residents—about 2.8 million people, more than the entire population of Chicago—has no home Internet access and must rely on services available at the public library. Indeed, the Queens Library, which serves the most ethnically and economically diverse communities in the United States and which loaned out 15.7 million items during the 2014 fiscal year, has the highest circulation rate of any public library in the country. Yet despite their popularity, City libraries are literally falling apart, and some branches in Brooklyn and the Bronx more resemble subway stations than literary oases. New York’s three library systems are requesting \$1.4 billion in city funding to upgrade infrastructure over the next ten years, and Mayor De Blasio—whose administration says it’s “made a clear commitment to libraries”—needs to listen. After all, you can’t get more populist than the public library.

While it would be wonderful to assume that all media are available to all New Yorkers at all times—and that the only thing standing between us and the world is a sticky connection or a malfunctioning server—this simply isn’t so. And if you spend a morning observing a job-search program at the public library—where recent immigrants, perhaps, and parolees and recovering addicts sign up for their first email addresses and struggle with a QWERTY keyboard for the first time—you recognize such a sentiment as woefully naïve. As *The New York Times* editorialized last month, “The libraries are where poor children learn to read and love literature, where immigrants learn English, where job-seekers hone résumés and cover letters, and where those who lack ready access to the Internet can cross the digital divide.” Imagine everything you did today that utilized the Internet—checked your checking-account balance, ordered a birthday present for a friend, read your hometown newspaper—and now imagine having to go to the library, during library hours, to do it. Can’t make it to your local branch between 10 and 6 (between 1 and 6 at many Queens locations)? Tough luck. Hop on the bus and try again tomorrow during your 20-minute lunch break.

Beyond mere fairness, there are viable economic reasons for sustaining New York City’s public libraries. In 2010, the City of Philadelphia spent \$33 million on its public libraries; private donations contributed \$12 million more. Subsequent to the funding, the value of an average home located within one quarter-mile of one of the city’s 54 public library branches rose \$9,630. In the aggregate, the public libraries contributed \$698 million to home values in Philadelphia, which translated into an additional \$18.5 million in property taxes for the city and school district. Other studies have demonstrated that for every tax dollar that libraries take in, communities receive anywhere between \$2.38 and \$6.54 in return. Simply put, it’s not just cruel to starve our libraries—and the communities that utilize them. It’s bad for business, and bad for America.

“From *The Nation*. © 2015 The Nation Company. All rights reserved. Used under license.”

END OF PART A
GO ON TO PART B.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

© 2021 College Board.
Visit College Board on the web: collegeboard.org.

Part B**Suggested time — 1 hour and 30 minutes**

Directions: Read the four sources carefully, focusing on a theme or issue that connects them and the different perspective each represents. Then, write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue you identified. You must incorporate at least two of the sources provided and link the claims in your argument to supporting evidence. You may also use the other provided sources or draw upon your own knowledge. In your response, refer to the provided sources as Source A, Source B, Source C, or Source D, or by the author’s name.

Write your response to Part B only on the designated pages in the separate Free Response booklet.

Source A

From “What Motivates Employees More: Rewards or Punishments?”
by Tali Sharot (*Harvard Business Review*, September 26, 2017)

. . . When we attempt to motivate people, we try to elicit an anticipation of pleasure by promising rewards (for example, a bonus, a promotion, positive feedback, public recognition), or we try to warn of the pain of punishment (a demotion, negative feedback, public humiliation). But what’s not always clear is: Which should we be using — the promise of carrots or the threat of sticks? And when?

A study conducted at a New York state hospital provides some answers. The goal of the study was to increase the frequency by which medical staff washed their hands, as sanitization in medical settings is extremely important for preventing the spread of disease. The medical staff is repeatedly made aware of this, and warning signs about the consequences of unsanitized hands are often placed alongside sanitization gel dispensers. Yet cameras installed to monitor every sink and hand sanitizer dispenser in the hospital’s intensive care unit revealed that only 10% of medical staff sanitized their hands before and after entering a patient’s room. This was despite the fact that the employees knew they were being recorded.

Then an intervention was introduced: An electronic board was placed in the hallway of the unit that gave employees instant feedback. Every time they washed their hands the board displayed a positive message (such as “Good job!”) and the current shift’s hand-hygiene score would go up. Compliance rates rose sharply and reached almost 90% within four weeks, a result that was replicated in another division in the hospital.

. . . The brilliance of the electronic board was that, instead of using the threat of spreading disease, the common approach in this situation, the researchers chose a positive strategy. Positive feedback triggers a reward signal in the brain, reinforcing the action that caused it, and making it more likely to be repeated in the future.

. . . Neuroscience suggests that when it comes to motivating action (for example, getting people to work longer hours or producing star reports), rewards may be more effective than punishments. And the inverse is true when trying to deter people from acting (for example, discouraging people from sharing privileged information or using the organization’s resources for private purposes)—in this case, punishments are more effective. The reason relates to the characteristics of the world we live in.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

To reap rewards in life, whether it is a piece of cherry pie, a loved one, or a promotion, we usually need to act, to approach. So our brain has evolved to accommodate an environment in which often the best way to gain rewards is to take action. When we expect something good, our brain initiates a “go” signal. This signal is triggered by dopaminergic neurons deep in the mid-brain that move up through the brain to the motor cortex, which controls action.

In contrast, to avoid bad things—poison, deep waters, untrustworthy people — we usually simply need to stay put, to not reach out. So our brain has evolved to accommodate an environment in which often (though not always) the best way to not get hurt is to avoid action altogether. When we anticipate something bad, our brain triggers a “no go” signal. These signals also originate in the mid-brain and move up to the cortex, but unlike “go” signals, they *inhibit* action, sometimes causing us to freeze altogether. (Even in situations where real danger is imminent, the freeze response often precedes the fight-or-flight response that may follow it, like a deer in the headlights.)

This asymmetry partially explains why electronic positive feedback was more successful at motivating the medical staff to wash their hands than the threat of illness to themselves and others. . . .

. . . Fear and anxiety can cause us to withdraw and give up rather than take action and improve. In line with this notion, studies have shown that giving people small monetary rewards for exercising or eating healthily was more effective at changing behavior than warning of obesity and disease.

. . . What the research here suggests is that we need to consciously overcome our habit of trying to scare people into action, and instead highlight the rewards that come with reaching our goals.

Used with permission.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Source B

From Matthew 6: 1-6
(*The Bible*)

Take care not to perform your religious duties in public in order to be seen by others; if you do, your Father who is in heaven has no reward for you. Therefore, when you do acts of charity, do not have a trumpet blown in front of you, as hypocrites do in the temples and in the streets so that people will praise them. There, I tell you, is their reward! But, when you do acts of charity, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charity may be secret; and your Father, who sees what is in secret, will reward you.

And, when you pray, you are not to behave as hypocrites do. They like to pray standing in the temples and at the corners of the streets, so that people will see them. There, I tell you, is their reward! But, when one of you prays, they should go into their own room, shut the door, and pray to their Father who dwells in secret; and their Father, who sees what is secret, will reward them.

Public Domain

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Source C

From *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Painting Fence excerpt
by Mark Twain (1884)

Tom went on whitewashing—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: “Hi-Yi! You’re up a stump, ain’t you!”

No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him. Tom’s mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said:

“Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?”

Tom wheeled suddenly and said:

“Why, it’s you, Ben! I warn’t noticing.”

“Say—I’m going in a-swimming, I am. Don’t you wish you could? But of course you’d druther work—wouldn’t you? Course you would!”

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said:

“What do you call work?”

“Why, ain’t that work?”

Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly:

“Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain’t. All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer.”

“Oh come, now, you don’t mean to let on that you like it?”

The brush continued to move.

“Like it? Well, I don’t see why I oughtn’t to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?”

That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticised the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

“Say, Tom, let me whitewash a little.”

Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind:

“No—no—I reckon it wouldn’t hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly’s awful particular about this fence—right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn’t mind and she wouldn’t. Yes, she’s awful particular about this fence; it’s got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain’t one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it’s got to be done.”

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

“No—is that so? Oh come, now—lemme just try. Only just a little—I’d let you, if you was me, Tom.”

“Ben, I’d like to, . . . but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn’t let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn’t let Sid. Now don’t you see how I’m fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—”

“Oh, shucks, I’ll be just as careful. Now lemme try. Say—I’ll give you the core of my apple.”

“Well, here—No, Ben, now don’t. I’m afeard—”

“I’ll give you all of it!”

Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash. By the time Ben was fagged out, Tom had traded the next chance to Billy Fisher for a kite, in good repair; and when he played out, Johnny Miller bought in for a dead rat and a string to swing it with—and so on, and so on, hour after hour. And when the middle of the afternoon came, from being a poor poverty-stricken boy in the morning, Tom was literally rolling in wealth. . . .

. . . Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do. And this would help him to understand why constructing artificial flowers or performing on a tread-mill is work, while rolling ten-pins or climbing Mont Blanc is only amusement. There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.

The boy mused awhile over the substantial change which had taken place in his worldly circumstances, and then wended toward headquarters to report.

Public Domain

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Source D

From “Three charts that show the gender gap among Nobel Prize winners”
by Valentina Zarya (Fortune.com, October 12, 2015)

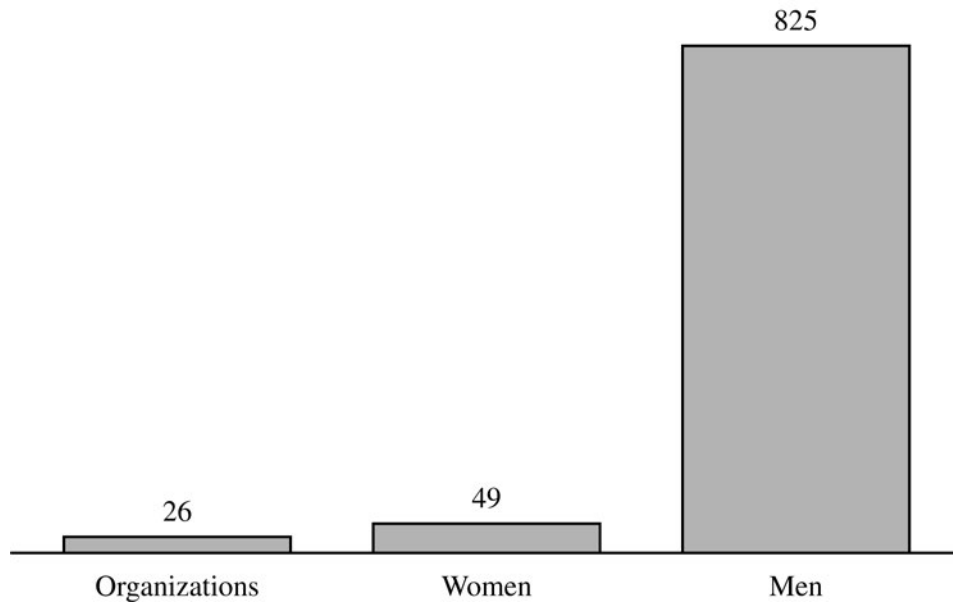
There are few greater honors than winning the Nobel Prize. The Prize is given “to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to mankind,” as Alfred Nobel, the founder of the prize, wrote in his last will in 1895.

This year, two women have received the award: China’s Tu Youyou received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for her work on finding a malaria cure, while Belarus’ Svetlana Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for capturing the voice of the individual during the Soviet era.

On one hand, two women getting the top honor is incredible. Yet when you compare the number to the eight men that received the Prize, it shows that there is still more work to be done to close the gender gap.

Since the first Prize was awarded in 1901, women have won it 49 times, men 825 times, and organizations 26 times. Comparing just women to men, the former has received the honor 5.6% of the time.

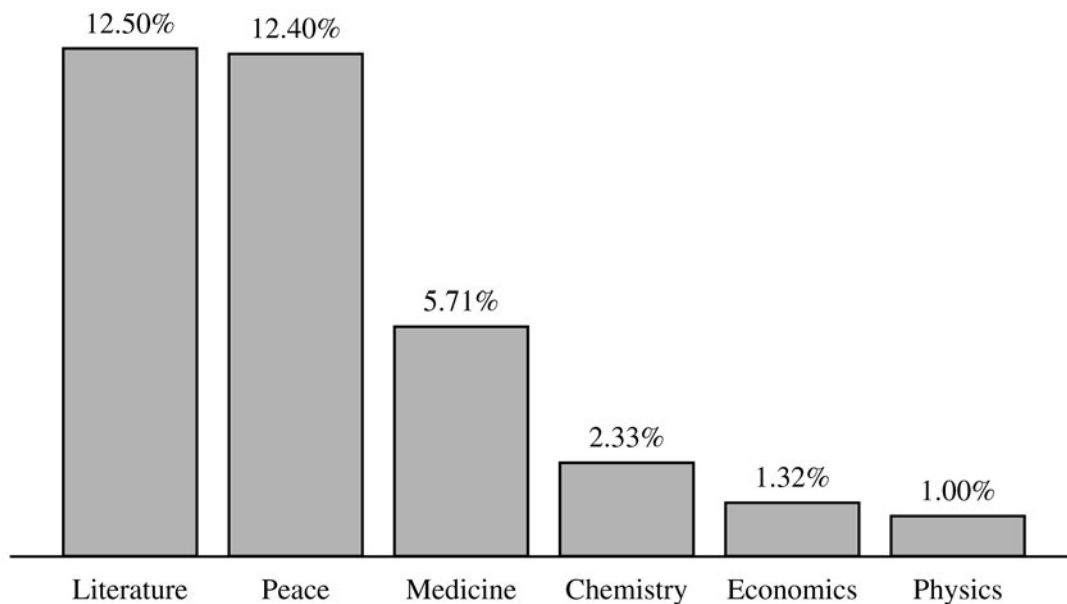
NUMBER OF NOBEL PRIZES AWARDED BETWEEN 1901 AND 2015,
BY RECIPIENT CATEGORY



GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Not all categories of the Prize are created equal, however. Of the six categories, the Nobel Prize for literature has had the most female representation (12.5%), with the Nobel Peace Prize following closely behind (12.4%). Physics has had the least female recipients (around 1%).

PERCENTAGE OF NOBEL PRIZES AWARDED TO WOMEN BETWEEN 1901 AND 2015

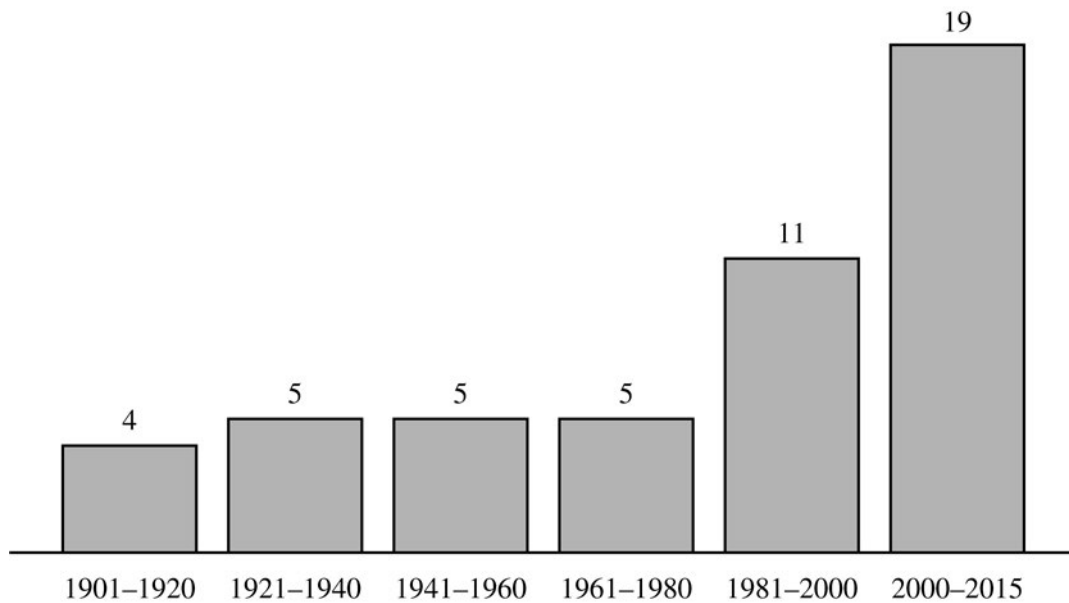


While this is indeed low, there have been drastic improvements. In the first twenty years of the Prize's existence, women only received the honor on four occasions—and Marie Curie accounted for two of those times.

The next 60 years were only slightly better: five women received the Prize during each 20-year period. It was only in the last two decades of the 20th century that progress was palpable: From 1981 through 2000, women were honored 11 times. Now, in the 21st century, women are truly making progress. Over the last 15 years, 19 women have received the honor.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

NUMBER OF NOBEL PRIZES AWARDED TO WOMEN BETWEEN 1901 AND 2015



“From FORTUNE.com. © 2015 FORTUNE Media IP Limited All rights reserved. Used under license.”

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

© 2021 College Board.
Visit College Board on the web: collegeboard.org.

STOP
END OF EXAM

Third-party-owned trademarks McDonald's®, American Library Association®, Fox Networks®, Chicago Public Library®, The New York Times®, The Nation®, Harvard Business Review® and Nobel Prize® were used in these testing materials.