



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:  
2023 AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government and Politics Set 2  
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	329,132		
• Number of Readers	1,174		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	42,081	12.79
	4	37,352	11.35
	3	82,586	25.09
	2	78,839	23.95
	1	88,274	26.82
• Global Mean	2.59		

The following comments on the 2023 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government and Politics were written by the Chief Reader, Chief Reader, Stella Rouse, Arizona State University. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

## Question 1

**Task:** Concept Application

**Topic:** Voters and Checks on the President

**Max Score:** 3

**Mean Score:** 1.32

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The Concept Application question required students to apply course concepts to a provided real-world scenario. The focus of the scenario was the recall election of California Governor Gray Davis. The scenario explains the steps in the recall process and, specifically, how Arnold Schwarzenegger was able to use his celebrity status to replace Davis in the recall election. It concludes by stating that in exit polls, people cited Davis's "recent performance" as the basis for their vote. First, students needed to demonstrate an understanding of Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD) by describing the voting behavior that reflected most voters' choice to recall the governor. This required students to understand how retrospective voting considers past actions. Students were required to use the scenario to describe the economic failings of Davis and the presence of an energy crisis as the motivation to remove the governor. Following this, students were asked to consider how the media's coverage of Davis's failures led the citizens of California to vote retrospectively and remove the governor from office.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

In part A most responses demonstrated the skill of concept application by connecting the scenario to a description of the retrospective voting model reflecting voters' choice. Some responses incorrectly described prospective voting and focused on how voters wanted a new governor. Others described rational choice voting as voters preferring a governor that would better represent their interests. Additionally, some responses failed to describe retrospective voting and simply identified the retrospective voting model.

In part B responses often reflected a lack of an explanation as to how the media, as a linkage institution, influenced retrospective voting through negative coverage of Davis's shortcomings as governor. Responses often referred to how the media focused on the celebrity of Arnold Schwarzenegger or explained how Arnold Schwarzenegger used the media to highlight the failures of the Davis administration. These responses did not earn a point as they did not connect back to the retrospective voting model, nor did responses demonstrate an understanding of how the media's widespread coverage of Davis's poor performance led voters to vote retrospectively to remove Davis from office in a recall election. Some responses stated that the media's coverage of Davis highlighted his failures, but the responses did not earn a point because they did not indicate that the coverage led to a recall vote. In general, if the response mentioned Schwarzenegger, the student would focus on the prospective voter model.

In part C responses needed to explain the difference in the process for the governor and the president. The scoring guidelines focused on three paths to earn this point: comparing how the process was initiated, comparing the thresholds or margins needed to remove each office holder, and/or comparing the actors responsible for removing each official. Most responses incorporated aspects of all three paths, but the point was most often earned for explaining that the recall process was controlled by the voters, while the impeachment process was controlled by elected representatives or Congress. Some responses failed to earn the point for not addressing the processes for both officials. Minor factual errors regarding the impeachment process were not necessarily seen as fatal flaws if the totality of the response showed an understanding of the

inherent differences in each process. A response did not earn points if it indicated that other branches or government officials were included in the impeachment process.

**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part A: Incorrectly describing the voter model as prospective, rational choice, or party line voting model.</li> <li>Identifying instead of describing retrospective voting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part A: “Californians were incredibly upset with Davis’s budget shortfall ... Retrospective voting involves each voter thinking about what the leader has done for them, and that is why they voted for a recall.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part B: Focusing the response on how Arnold Schwarzenegger used the media to highlight Governor Davis’s failures.</li> <li>Focusing the response on how the media focused on Arnold Schwarzenegger’s celebrity status.</li> <li>Failing to explain how media coverage led to a voter action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part B: “the media created widespread coverage of the budget shortfall and energy crisis ... which allowed voters to form the decision to recall him based on his past failures as governor.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part C: Failing to explain that the voters can initiate a petition for a recall election as compared to the House initiating impeachment charges.</li> <li>The response only covers the recall process or the impeachment process, but not both.</li> <li>The response fails to specify the recall process is controlled by the voters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part C: “When removing the president, the house must put the evidence of the president’s wrongdoings ... and impeach the President. If this impeachment occurs, then it is sent to trial and conviction in the Senate. This is much different than what happens to Davis ... removal by the citizens through a petition ... the recall gets put on a ballot. Davis’s removal is due to the citizens whereas the President’s removal is from Congress.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Some responses would simply identify instead of describing the model of voting behavior. Responses also indicated that the prompt was not read carefully, as answers to the question included how Arnold Schwarzenegger used the media to win the election instead of how the media influenced the recall process. With those issues in mind, teachers could have students practice how to respond to certain task verbs and thoroughly read exactly what the prompt is asking them to do.

Teachers could provide regular opportunities for students to use the task verbs that are found in the free-response portion of the exam (identify, describe, compare, explain how, explain why) through bellringers, in-class activities, homework, or exit tickets, so that students will understand the expectations for the writing portion more clearly. This would allow students to develop their reasoning and writing skills more fully in response to this type of question. Activities could include discussions where students are expected to fully describe or explain a concept in relation to the prompt teachers provide or students write themselves.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?***

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question.

- The Course and Exam Description (CED), which includes the Course Framework (CF), was updated in July 2023. Please download the newest version of this resource for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. For Part A, Topic 2.13 in the CED addresses Discretionary and Rulemaking Authority of the bureaucracy. For Part B, Topic 2.5 Checks on the Presidency provides information about how the president may use executive orders and directives toward the bureaucracy to address the presidential agenda items which might impact how the bureaucracy uses its discretionary power. Topic 2.14 Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable includes content about Congressional oversight of the bureaucracy. An accurate understanding of these topics is important for responding accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year, and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course. AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos that provide content related to this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content of the topics in the Review Sessions may be different than the topics on this exam, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the different types of FRQs found on this exam.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the concept application FRQ, Unit 2-Data Analysis and Concept Application.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

## Question 2

**Task:** Quantitative Analysis

**Topic:** Eligible Voters by Generation

**Max Score:** 4

**Mean Score:** 2.41

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The Quantitative Analysis question called on students to read and interpret data related to eligible voters categorized by generation, from 2016 to 2036. Students were expected to describe relationships through analysis of data related to generational voter eligibility. They were asked to describe a trend over time presented in the data. Students were also expected to draw a conclusion from the data to explain the potential generational effect on voter eligibility. Finally, the question asked students to explain how life cycle effects could influence candidates' policy platforms.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

Student performance in both analyzing data from and applying their knowledge of course content to the provided bar graph was very strong. In part A the majority of responses correctly identified the Silent Generation as the generation that would have the lowest percentage of eligible voters in 2028.

In part B most responses were also able to identify the trend over time in the data. They mentioned that there was either an increase in voter eligibility in Generation Z (or younger voters) or a decrease in the percentage of eligible voters in the Silent Generation (or older voters).

Part C required students to draw a conclusion about the trend in the data that could affect the 2032 presidential election strategy to mobilize eligible voters. Responses needed to be able to either draw the conclusion that as voter eligibility increased in Generation Z, candidate campaigns would shift to platforms that Generation Z uses more (e.g., social media) or promote issues Generation Z cares about (e.g., the environment or student loans) or that the decreased eligibility of older voters would cause a candidate to shift away from the issues that Baby Boomers care about the most (e.g., Social Security).

Part D asked students to use the data in the chart to explain how life cycle effects could influence a candidate's policy platform. This required both knowledge of life cycle effects and skillful reading of the data.

### ***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?***

In part C many responses did not identify a specific strategy when drawing a conclusion. Responses used generic verbs such as mobilize, target, or focus on eligible voters, without addressing how the candidate would carry out the specific strategy.

Many responses confused life cycle effect with generational effect. Responses struggled to demonstrate an understanding that individuals in the same generation may change policy preferences over time; they seemed to think that the life cycle effect meant what current generations prefer now. Some responses suggested that candidates would just focus campaign strategies on the generation with the largest voting bloc.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not interpreting a trend in the data and then correctly predicting how candidates might mobilize eligible voters in 2032.</li> <li>• Many student responses failed to draw a conclusion as to how a specific campaign strategy could be used by candidates to mobilize eligible voters, based on trends in the data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Given the data ... a 2032 presidential candidate would likely aim to appeal to younger generations such as Gen Z ... may utilize social media more ... to mobilize eligible voters.”</li> <li>• “Generation Z will have increasing percentages of eligible voters emphasizing issues in their platform such as college debt or maternity leave” and that millennial voters “are passionate about the environment, so a candidate might emphasize that in their platform.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applying the life cycle effect and explaining its impact on campaign policy platforms correctly.</li> <li>• Not addressing how the life cycle effect could influence a candidate’s campaign.</li> <li>• Many responses interpreted life cycle to mean that generations shared policy preferences, but those preferences never change over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The life cycle effect is the effect aging has on people’s views. As people age, their concerns on political issues could shift ... candidates policy platform would have to shift with these changing views.”</li> <li>• “various policies are important in different stages of our lives” and explaining that “The candidate will appeal to the generational needs of the voting population. If there is a larger quantity of younger voters, the platform will appeal to their ideals.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers could emphasize the application of political concepts and processes from the course to data provided in graphs and charts pertaining to eligible voter groups. Students should be able to recall relevant course concepts and apply them to the data provided.

They could also emphasize examining entire datasets and identifying trends within all the data, as opposed to describing isolated data points. Students should also be able to differentiate between a trend and a data point when answering the quantitative analysis question. For example, stating, “Generation Z was 3% in 2016 and was predicted to be 38% in 2028” is simply identifying two data points, whereas stating, “Generation Z voting eligibility increased over time” is a trend.

Teachers should emphasize that campaigns employ specific strategies, based upon the generation they are trying to mobilize. The difference between life cycle effects and generational effects needs to be emphasized.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?***

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question.

- The Course and Exam Description (CED), which includes the Course Framework (CF), was updated in July 2023. Please download the newest version of this resource for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. An understanding of the information provided in Topic 2.2 Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress as well as Topic 5.6 Interest Groups Influencing Policymaking is important for responding accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year, and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course. AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos that provide content related to this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content of the topics in the Review Sessions may be different than the topics on this exam, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the different types of FRQs found on this exam.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the Quantitative Analysis FRQ, Unit 2-Data Analysis and Concept Application.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

### Question 3

**Task:** SCOTUS Comparison

**Topic:** First Amendment: Establishment Clause

**Max Score:** 4

**Mean Score:** 1.65

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This SCOTUS Comparison question asked students to read a summary of a nonrequired case (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*) and compare it to a course required case (*Engel v. Vitale*). Students were given several tasks, including identifying the clause in the First Amendment that is common to both cases. Additionally, they were asked to explain how the facts in *Engel v. Vitale* and *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* led to different holdings in the two cases. Lastly students were required to explain how the holding in *Zelman* might affect educational policy in states with legislatures that support the ruling.

These increasingly challenging tasks required a thorough understanding of the facts in *Engel v. Vitale*, as well as proficiency in the skill of comparison between the required and nonrequired case. Additionally, students were asked to integrate relevant course concepts into the Supreme Court case comparison.

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

Responses were generally proficient at identifying a clause of the First Amendment that relates to religion (the establishment clause and free exercise clause) but had difficulty in identifying which of these two clauses was common to both *Engel* and the nonrequired case (*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*), which is the establishment clause. Some responses identified both clauses, but the prompt specifically asks to identify “the clause.” Most responses proficiently explained a fact that is both relevant and factual about the required case of *Engel*, earning them a singular point for part B. However, responses were only somewhat proficient at the higher-order task of explaining how the facts of both cases led to different holdings in the two cases. Therefore, responses did not adequately display an understanding of the different holdings and how the differences relate to the idea of choice in education with respect to the establishment clause. Many responses struggled to explain how the holding in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* might affect educational policy in states with legislatures that support the ruling. This illustrates the general difficulty students had with fully grasping the essence of the holding in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* and how it relates to parental choice in the use of publicly funded vouchers.



**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the free exercise clause of the First Amendment as the common clause between the two cases. Many responses were unable to correctly identify the establishment clause. Some responses identified both clauses or combined the clauses together (the free establishment clause), or they misidentified the clause with the due process clause, the supremacy clause, or the commerce clause.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The clause in the First Amendment that is common in both <i>Engle v. Vitale</i> and <i>Zelman v. Simmon-Harris</i> is the Establishment Clause.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most responses provided accurate facts about <i>Engle</i> but did not demonstrate how the facts of the two cases led to different holdings in the two cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“In <i>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</i>, low-income families are given the opportunity to receive education at a private school, whether religiously-affiliated or not. Since the low-income families are given a choice of sending their children to a secular or religious school, religion is not forced upon them. That’s why public funding of a school voucher program that includes religious schools is constitutional, and school-led prayer is unconstitutional.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many responses struggled to explain how the holding in <i>Zelman v. Simmons-Harris</i> might affect educational policy in states with legislatures that support the ruling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The holding in <i>Zelman</i> that the public funding of a school voucher program was constitutional might encourage states with legislators who support the ruling to change their educational policy to incorporate the same funding program.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers can help students improve their performance by emphasizing that students carefully read the tasks in the prompt to understand specifically what the prompt is asking students to identify, describe, or explain.

Teachers should stress to students that they should pay particular attention to specific words in the prompt. For example, when students are asked to identify the clause, students should only identify one clause. Additionally, when students are asked to explain how the facts in the two cases led to different holdings, students need to compare or contrast the holdings of the two cases. Teachers should have students practice this skill, paying particular attention to how these decisions are impacted by the Court’s interpretation of the Constitution.

Teachers should emphasize that students know factual and relevant information about the required cases, including the holdings and reasonings of these cases.

Teachers should emphasize the differences among the clauses of the First Amendment.

When teachers are discussing the nonrequired case, they should direct students to avoid lengthy descriptions of the case from the prompt, rather than using it as a starting point. Students need to go beyond the material provided by the prompt to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the prompt.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?***

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question.

- The Course and Exam Description (CED), which includes the Course Framework (CF), was updated in July 2023. Please download the newest version of this resource for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. For Part A, Topic 3.2 in the CED addresses the First Amendment: Freedom of Religion, including the Establishment Clause. For Part B, students need to understand the facts, issue, holding, reasoning, and decision of the required Supreme Court case *Engel v. Vitale*. For Part C, Topic 1.5 Ratification of the U.S. Constitution and Topic 1.7 Relationship Between the States and National Government provide information about the role of the government in education and the powers of the states in a federal system. An accurate understanding of these topics is important for responding accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year, and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course. AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos that provide content related to this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content of the topics in the Review Sessions may be different than the topics on this exam, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the different types of FRQs found on this exam.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the SCOTUS Comparison FRQ, Unit 3-Supreme Court Case Analysis.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

## Question 4

**Task:** Argument Essay

**Topic:** The Will of the People

**Max Score:** 6

**Mean Score:** 3.09

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The Argument Essay question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of whether the will of the people in a democratic republic is better ensured by either constitutional checks and balances or social movements. The question required an understanding of relevant foundational documents that could be used to support an argument: Article I of the United States Constitution, *The Federalist* 10, and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

Responses were expected to articulate a defensible claim that could establish a line of reasoning; support the thesis with evidence from a foundational document(s) and/or the course concepts; use reasoning to explain why at least one piece of evidence provided supported the thesis; and respond to an alternative perspective and then use refutation, rebuttal, or concession to further support their original claim. Responses were expected to be written in the form of an argumentative essay, demonstrating each of the skills mentioned to earn points.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The different tasks within the question required students to demonstrate several higher-order thinking-skills, applying their knowledge about policymaking, particularly how institutional checks protect against policies that would hinder the will of the people or how social movements pressure the government to react with outcomes to best ensure the will of the people. This type of question requires the content knowledge from the course, for example how the President can veto a law passed by Congress, or how the Civil Rights Movement pushed for legal equality to be integrated with practices. For example, describing institutional checks and balances, as laid out in Article I of the Constitution, or describing the argument in “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” can be used to demonstrate how the will of the people is best ensured.

Most responses were successful in providing a correct piece of specific and relevant evidence related to the prompt.

Many responses demonstrated an understanding of constitutional checks and balances. Responses that did not demonstrate this understanding inaccurately interpreted ideas about representative democracy as checks and balances (e.g., the election process as a check from citizens to elected officials.) The prompt describes constitutional checks and balances, which infers interbranch relations or checks across the branches of government.

Many responses demonstrated an understanding of social movements and how they generated awareness, with some students being able to articulate how social movements connect to policymaking actions by the government. However, many responses struggled with making the connection between awareness being generated by social movements and actual action being taken by policymaker in response to that awareness. Instead, these responses focused on social and/or cultural awareness and change, never bringing the argument back to policy outcomes from social movements. Many assumed that participation in social

movements was enough to ensure the will of the people; however, this was not accepted as a line of reasoning or reasoning point on the scoring guidelines.

Many responses were able to provide at least one accurate piece of evidence that supported their claim, with most being able to provide a correct piece of evidence from one of the foundational documents provided.

Most responses were able to successfully describe a variety of social movements (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Suffrage Movement, LGBTQIA+ Movement, Black Lives Matter) and outcomes they sought to achieve (Civil Rights Act of 1964, ending segregation, Nineteenth Amendment). When responses interpreted constitutional checks and balances accurately, they were able to provide appropriate examples of constitutional checks and balances (e.g., Congress overriding a presidential veto, the Senate confirming presidential appointees) and explain how those checks ensured the will of the people by limiting another branch of the federal government.

Responses were least successful at articulating a line of reasoning when the claim was at the beginning of their response. However, many responses were able to provide reasoning to demonstrate how their evidence supported their claim. Responses also showed that students struggled with the alternative perspective. Instead of stating the argument against their original claim and refuting or rebutting it, they stated the alternative perspective with no development or developed the alternative perspective but never refuted or rebutted the claim.

More responses understood the prompt in the context of social movements than constitutional checks and balances, but they did not connect that constitutional checks and balances were an avenue to ensure that the will of the people would be represented by one branch limiting another.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?***

The most common misconceptions for the thesis point included the following:

Many responses simply restated the prompt, taking a position from the two provided, or they listed documents they would use as an attempt for the line of reasoning.

Many responses did not provide a line of reasoning with their stated claim at the beginning of the response. However, most were able to establish the line of reasoning when they attempted to earn the part C point for reasoning to connect their evidence. This completed the thesis, rewarding the part A point; however, it negated the part C point, unless other attempts at reasoning were present in the response. With social movements, students knew that movements would garner attention, but they failed to articulate the target audience as policymakers or policymaking institutions. They were able to demonstrate an outcome of the social movement when attempting the part C point, completing their line of reasoning.

Most responses argued the value of social movements, but often their line of reasoning did not target a government audience, instead focusing on ideas of participatory democracy: the action of taking part in social movements was ensuring the will of the people instead of attempting to change policy outcomes. When students chose the position of constitutional checks and balances, they often made a representative democracy argument, using elections as a tool to check officials instead of focusing on one branch limiting another’s ability to pass policies that do not ensure the will of the people. Neither participatory democracy nor representative democracy pathways were valid lines of reasoning for this response.

Some responses failed to take a position, and instead argued both positions were effective. The response required that the student take one position.

For the evidence portion of the question, the most frequent errors included the following:

Many responses misinterpreted Article I of the Constitution, which outlines checks and balances in the lawmaking process, with Amendment 1 describing rights of speech, petition, and assembly.

Many students misinterpreted *The Federalist* 10, thinking that since the prompt was asking about constitutional checks and balances that *The Federalist* 10 must be about checks and balances, and wrote about it as if it were *The Federalist* 51. Responses were able to accurately describe the contents of *The Federalist* 51. While this was not one of the required documents listed, it could be used as an outside piece of evidence. Most responses could describe the contents or context of “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” Some responses, however, never described the document and, instead, just listed the name of the document.

Some responses attempted to use mandated court cases as evidence (e.g., *Tinker v. Des Moines*) for both the social movements and constitutional checks and balances lines of reasoning. However, these cases were not examples of historic social movements, nor were they examples of judicial review to demonstrate constitutional checks and balances. In a few instances responses correctly applied nonrequired court cases (e.g., *U.S. v. Lopez*) that illustrated constitutional checks and balances.

For the reasoning portion of the question, the most frequent errors included the following:

Some responses did not clearly articulate a line of reasoning adjacent to a claim. In these instances, the readers were directed to consider the nonadjacent reasoning as a completion of the thesis.

Many responses stated that social movements raised awareness of their cause, but they never addressed how the awareness could influence a policy outcome. Responses needed to connect awareness to a target, such as policymakers, in order to offer a sufficient line of reasoning.

For the alternative perspective portion of the question, common issues included:

Some responses did not provide a description of the alternative perspective before responding to it, or they did not attempt an alternative perspective at all.

Many responses used language like “Some may argue that A is true, but it’s not because ...”) as their attempt at the alternative perspective. This attempt provided no argument advanced by the alternative perspective.

Many responses did not take the alternative perspective, but instead argued against the claim they originally took. The response simply refuted the argument, without ever recognizing the alternative perspective.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A claim was made either without a clear line of reasoning or without a clear line of reasoning adjacent to the claim (i.e., the line of reasoning was found later in the essay, often attached to a piece of evidence).</li> <li>• A clear claim with a value judgement was not made and/or there was not a line of reasoning. Instead, documents were listed as an attempt at a line of reasoning.</li> <li>• Students use the wrong document to support a claim.</li> <li>• Many students misinterpreted Article I of the Constitution, which outlines checks and balances in the lawmaking process, with Amendment 1, describing rights of speech, petition, and assembly.</li> <li>• Students described documents or examples of course concepts without providing reasoning to support their thesis.</li> <li>• Students attempted an explanation of the effectiveness of social movements without connecting the reasoning to actions of policymakers.</li> <li>• Stating an alternative perspective without providing a description of the alternative perspective or simply attempting to refute their own argument without a response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Citizen participation in social movements is key to ensuring the will of the people is represented ... because citizens must participate in social movements ... to pressure the government to make change.”</li> <li>• “Citizen participation is more effective in ensuring people’s will.” The line of reasoning appears later: “from a result of this letter, more people started to fight nonviolently in order to bring change ... shown as laws &amp; acts like the civil rights act being passed show citizen participation is more effective.”</li> <li>• “In Federalist 10, James Madison argues that we need more factions to dilute the potential power of one faction to become too powerful and oppress the people.”</li> <li>• “This letter incited people to rally in groups ... At the end of the movement (Civil Rights Movement), the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, and it protected Black people from racial discrimination.”</li> <li>• “Some may say citizen participation in social movements is more effective ... because social movements put pressure on the government to pass legislation in favor of the people’s will. However, this is not true because social movements do not have power to enact legislation on their own and have no ability to motivate lawmakers to act if checks and balances did not keep ... branches under control and accountable to the people.”</li> </ul>

***Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?***

Teachers should emphasize the benefit of beginning the response with a clear line of reasoning that goes beyond restating the prompt, taking a clear position that establishes a line of reasoning. Students could plan out the possible claims that are presented in the prompt to determine how to structure their argument before beginning their response.

Teachers should spend time conducting structured, minilessons that break down each section of the argumentative essay: design exercises based around thesis creation, with a heavy emphasis on crafting thesis

statements that take a clear position and establish a line of reasoning; create a lesson centered around how to accurately describe the information contained within the foundational documents; and provide practices designed to help students analyze by explaining how the information found in these documents relate to both course concepts and more current events.

Each section of the essay should be addressed as a separate skill that students should work toward mastering. After students become comfortable with each section, then classroom practices and assessments can be designed to integrate the various elements of a successful argumentative essay.

Teachers should spend time on the nine foundational documents to ensure that students can recall specific, descriptive information about each document that is relevant to major course concepts.

Teachers should provide students with opportunities to connect course concepts from one unit to another unit, so they can use those concepts as evidence to support a prompt.

Teachers should consider providing students with a template for writing the argument essay that begins with a thesis statement, continues with two pieces of evidence and reasoning, and concludes with an alternative perspective that includes having to respond to the other position in the prompt and then refuting/rebutting or conceding to it.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?***

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question.

- The Course and Exam Description (CED), which includes the Course Framework (CF), was updated in July 2023. Please download the newest version of this resource for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. An understanding of the information provided in Topic 1.6 Principles of American Government as well as Topic 3.10 Social Movements and Equal Protection is important for responding accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year, and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course. AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos that provide content related to this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content of the topics in the Review Sessions may be different than the topics on this exam, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the different types of FRQs found on this exam.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the Argument Essay FRQ, Unit 5-Argumentation.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.