
AP[®] African American Studies

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Short-Answer Question 1

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Question 1: Short Answer**4 points****General Scoring Notes**

- Each point is earned independently.
- **Accuracy:** These scoring guidelines require that students demonstrate historically defensible, or discipline specific, content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, responses may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical or disciplinary content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam responses should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.
- **Describe:** Provide the relevant characteristics of a specified topic. Description requires more than simply mentioning an isolated term.
- **Explain:** Provide information about how or why a historical development or process occurs or how or why a relationship exists.

A	Describe one example of African American art, literature, or music that challenged racial barriers or stereotypes.	1 point
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Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Freedom songs—such as “We Shall Overcome”—inspired African Americans, many of whom risked their lives as they pressed for equality and freedom.
 - James Van Der Zee’s portraits and photographs during the Harlem Renaissance showed the complex and successful lives of African Americans.
 - African American poets, such as James Weldon Johnson and Maya Angelou, wrote pieces that inspired unity, celebrated Black culture, and inspired hope in millions of people.
 - Musicians, such as jazz bassist Charles Mingus, composed protest songs built on African American musical traditions like call and response.
 - Hip-hop blended elements such as Afrocentric fashion, Black nationalism, jazz, and poetry to give a voice to African American experiences and identities.
 - Graffiti art grew into a major form of expression, incorporating the complex realities of daily life into a public artform.
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B	Explain how the author’s opinions reflect the principles of the New Negro movement.	1 point
	Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Johnson states “It depends more upon what the Negro himself does than upon what someone else does for him.” This reflects the principle of the New Negro movement that says African Americans need to define their own identity and pursue political change despite the discrimination they faced.The New Negro movement wanted Black artists to create their own artistic style by incorporating more of a Black aesthetic into their work. Johnson agrees with this: “It is the approach along the line of intellectual and artistic achievement by Negroes and may be called the art approach. ...”Johnson asserts that artistic contributions by African Americans is nothing new, but that the public has failed to recognize them. Similarly, the New Negro movement believed that American schools have always portrayed Black culture as having nothing to offer, and that African Americans had to show them otherwise.	
C	Using a specific example, explain how an African American leader or activist advocated for racial uplift in the nineteenth century.	1 point
	Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Booker T. Washington advocated for industrial education and training as a means of economic advancement and independence. His founding of Tuskegee Institute helped African American students get a vocational education.W.E.B. Du Bois advocated for African American uplift through a liberal arts and civil rights agenda. Through education and improved civil rights, African Americans could become empowered.Before the Civil War, Frederick Douglass spoke often about how Black people should use nonviolent methods to end slavery. His actions, speeches, and written works inspired countless people to become involved in the abolition movement for over two decades.	
D	Describe one way the Black Arts movement or the Black is Beautiful movement contributed to racial uplift for African Americans in the twentieth or twenty-first century.	1 point
	Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Black Arts movement inspired racial uplift by emphasizing the long history of important Black artists and linking them with the work of the artists of the day.While there were different styles within the Black Arts movement, all participants were unified by the belief that Black art was a unique form of expression.By stressing the importance of Black artists, the Black Arts movement was an early advocate of the development of African American Studies programs.The Black is Beautiful movement contributed to racial uplift by embracing forms of beauty that had previously been categorized as inferior or nonconformist in mainstream society.	

- The Black is Beautiful movement inspired racial uplift by urging Black people to learn about and celebrate their own rich cultural heritage.
 - The Black is Beautiful movement led to the establishment of multicultural and ethnic studies programs in the United States, which contributed to racial uplift in the twentieth century and beyond.
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A) One African American artist who challenged racial barriers through their art would be James Van Der Zee. This is because Van Der Zee primarily photographed Black middle class families to show their greatness and ability to thrive in a society that openly advocated against them. He did this to challenge the racial stereotypes that white communities put onto black families and did so by photographing them in their soldiers uniforms, best outfits, and in their prospering houses to show them through the point of view that many white people hadn't seen them in. Instead of listening to what white people wanted and not showing black communities in their own greatness and ability to thrive, he showed their good qualities and their successes outside of the black stereotype of the mid 20th century time period.

B) The authors opinions on how Black communities should thrive reflects the ideals of the New Negro movement because he identifies the need for the public to recognize Black artistry and Black greatness. This shows that the rise of the New Negro Movement was about African American communities expressing their unseen individuality and resistance from adhering to white opinions on how Black people should live and express themselves.

C) In the 19th century, one African American activist who advocated for racial uplift would be Sojourner Truth. Truth was a frontrunner in the fight for emancipation and equal rights for all American citizens not excluding the ignored Black citizens of America. She went to court to sue for her children back after they were separated from her former enslaver, in doing so she raised awareness towards the struggles Black Americans faced and got her child returned to her. Sojourner Truth would even go on tours across the US to Free Northern States and Enslaving Southern States with other speakers such as Frederick Douglass. In doing so she would advocate against Black inferiority and towards a future where she could freely raise her children and live a life outside of control of the US government or a violent enslaver.

D) The Black is Beautiful and Black arts movements heavily contributed to the uplift of African Americans in the 20th and 21st centuries by embracing black culture and uniqueness in a way it hadn't been embraced before. In the late 20th and early 21st century many black people created black owned business' and even makeup brands that celebrated black individuality and beauty. The Black is Beautiful movement saw new ways of embracing black beauty that were ignored previously. One black founded and owned makeup brand specialized in embracing black beauty and creating makeup that was tailored to Black skin tones in a makeup community that would only cater to white beauty standards. This led to new love and attention for African American's that gave them new opportunities for self expression and self love.

A. One example of African American art that challenged racial barriers or stereotypes was the upbringing of music during the Harlem Renaissance. African Americans popularized music such as jazz and blues which changed the perspective on black artists at this time. They popularized this genre or honestly made the music genre and helped go against black stereotypes of them not being talented or capable of making names for themselves.

B. The author talks about how in this new era, it's more about what negroes do for themselves rather than what others do for them. "African American artist is not an entirely new thing--What is new about him is chiefly the evaluation and public recognition of his work." This passage reflects the new principle of the New Negro movement because it helps recognize that black people have always been talented, but it's more about the recognition they are not receiving. The talent has always been within themselves, but it was time that they were noticed and were valued.

C. An African American activist who advocated for racial uplift was Rosa Parks. Sitting in the front of the bus helped challenge the norms that in their society, white people were still superior. She helped challenge this idea and even went to jail for what she did. But that didn't stop her at all, she still went on to advocate for equal rights and help unify one another. She helped to remind that everyone is equal regardless of color and anyone should be able to do what they want.

D. The Black Is Beautiful movement helped contribute to racial uplift because it helped recognize the worth in black people. How beautiful and capable they were of being just as successful as anyone else. Their hair, color, and culture was always seen as indifferent but this movement helped challenge those thoughts and ideas. This helped bring to terms that who they are and their culture is just as beautiful as any others. The movement helped black people take pride in their culture and who they are and racially uplifted them as people to advance their people even further than they already are.

- A. One example of african american art, literature, or music, would be someone like duke ellington.
- B. The author believes that the negro himself should do something and not wait for someone else to do it for him.
- C. Martin Luther King Jr is an example of a leader who contributed to the racial uplift of the 19th century, by giving his, " I have a dream " speach and multiple others.
- D. Black is beautiful contributed to racial uplift because now instead of african americans hiding themselves and trying to be someone they aren't they are now proud of who they are, and that led to african americans being on newspapers, magazines, the news, promoting different kinds of hairstyles (particularly afros) the way they dressed, etc...

Short-Answer Question 1

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 1A

Score: 4

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 1

SAQ Part C Score: 1

SAQ Part D Score: 1

The response earned 1 point for part A for describing how the photography of James Van Der Zee challenged racial stereotypes by “primarily photograph[ing] Black middle class families to show their greatness and ability to thrive in a society that openly advocated against them.”

The response earned 1 point for part B for explaining how the New Negro movement’s focus on “the need for the public to recognize Black artistry and Black greatness” is reflected in the quote.

The response earned 1 point for part C for explaining how a nineteenth century activist, Sojourner Truth, advocated for racial uplift by fighting for “emancipation and equal rights for all American citizens not excluding the ignored Black citizens of America.” The response also explains that she did this through her work as an orator.

The response earned 1 point for part D for describing how both the Black is Beautiful and Black Arts movement contributed to racial uplift by “embracing black culture and uniqueness in a way it hadn’t been embraced before.” It goes on to describe that these movements resulted in “new love and attention for African American’s that gave them new opportunities for self expression and self love.”

Short-Answer Question 1 (continued)**Sample Identifier: 1B****Score: 3****SAQ Part A Score: 1****SAQ Part B Score: 1****SAQ Part C Score: 0****SAQ Part D Score: 1**

The response earned 1 point for part A for describing how the music of the Harlem Renaissance “such as jazz and blues” challenged racial stereotypes because it “helped go against black stereotypes of them not being talented or capable of making names for themselves.”

The response earned 1 point for part B for explaining how Johnson’s assertion that the “African American artist is not an entirely new thing--What is new about him is chiefly the evaluation and public recognition of his work.” This assertion reflects the New Negro movement’s principle “that black people have always been talented, but its more about the recognition they are not recieving.”

The response did not earn a point for part C. While the response details the advocacy of Rosa Parks, the prompt asks how a nineteenth, not a twentieth century leader or activist, advocated for racial uplift.

The response earned 1 point for part D for because it describes how the Black is Beautiful movement contributed to racial uplift by challenging the beliefs that “[t]heir hair, color, and culture” was looked down upon. This resulted in Black people taking “pride in their culture and who they are and racially uplifted them.”

Short-Answer Question 1 (continued)**Sample Identifier: 1C****Score: 1****SAQ Part A Score: 0****SAQ Part B Score: 0****SAQ Part C Score: 0****SAQ Part D Score: 1**

The response did not earn a point for part A. It did not describe how Duke Ellington challenged racial stereotypes and barriers.

The response did not earn a point for part B. It did not explain how the author's belief that "the negro himself should do something and not wait for someone else" was connected to the New Negro movement.

The response did not earn a point for part C. It did not explain how a nineteenth century activist contributed to racial uplift. Instead, it uses Martin Luther King, Jr., a twentieth century activist, as an example.

The response earned 1 point for part D for describing how the Black is Beautiful movement contributed to racial uplift by "[leading] to african americans being on newspapers, magazines, the news, promoting different kinds of hairstyles (particularly afros) the way they dressed, etc."