
AP[®] African American Studies

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Short-Answer Question 3

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Question 3: Short Answer**3 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 way the rights of free African Americans were limited prior to 1865.** **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The enslavement of African Americans was legal in much of the United States from the colonial era through 1865.
- Some free states barred entry of free Black people into their state.
- Some states enacted restrictions to keep free Black men from voting and testifying against white people in court.
- Before the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, only Wisconsin and Iowa had given Black men the right to vote.
- The **Dred Scott** suit held that no African American was or could ever be a citizen of the United States.
- Free African American men were not allowed to enlist in the United States military at the start of the Civil War.
- In most cases, African Americans lacked the ability to move freely within their state or within the United States.

B **Describe an example of a maroon society that contributed to Black and African American autonomy in the eighteenth and/or nineteenth centuries.** **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Many maroon freedom fighters in Haiti had been soldiers before being enslaved in Kongo, so they were able to fend off and coordinate attacks on those attempting to recapture them.
- Charles Deslondes enlisted maroon communities in an attempt to take New Orleans in the German Coast Uprising of 1811.

- Maroon communities—such as the one in the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia and North Carolina—were established in isolated areas where their African-based languages and cultural practices could survive and flourish.
- The Brazilian maroon community of Palmares existed autonomously for nearly 100 years, allowing thousands of enslaved Africans to practice their native traditions.
- Some maroon communities entered into treaties with colonial governments to retain their autonomy.

C **Using a specific example, explain how African Americans advocated for change in the first half of the twentieth century.** **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- African Americans started newspapers and magazines to help organize resistance to oppression. For example, the Pittsburgh Courier played a key role in organizing the “Double Victory” Campaign against racism and fascism during World War Two.
 - Writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance created works that explored topics to help unite African Americans and expand their voice. Novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, for example, wrote extensively about being Black in America in early twentieth century America.
 - A push was made during the New Negro movement to research and develop Black history to help educate future generations of Black Americans. Writers and intellectuals such as Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. DuBois worked to refute the idea that African Americans were a people without a history or culture.
 - The Great Migration began in the early twentieth century and resulted in new Black communities being established in areas of the country in which segregation was much less common. In many cases, this allowed Black businesses, schools, and culture to thrive.
 - Marcus Garvey championed ideals of Black advancement through self-determination and separatist institutions. His Back-to-Africa movement was an attempt to allow African Americans to emigrate to Africa to escape discrimination in the United States.
 - The *Négritude* and *Negrismo* movements united groups of Afro-descendants with themes that stressed cultural pride and political liberation. The movements, though based in different colonial influences, showed that while Blackness was not the same across all Africans their goal of political liberation helped to unite their efforts.
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A. One way the rights of free African Americans were limited prior to 1865 is the institution of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. Although these African Americans were rightfully free, the Fugitive Slave Act's theoretical due process of law was extremely flawed. Free African Americans would be accused of being escaped from slavery, and were wrongfully taken back to the south to become slaves. This inspired a lot of fear in the free African American population, since the government and process of law that was supposed to protect them usually sided with the false accusations of slave holders, so freed African Americans could be kidnapped and taken into bondage wrongfully.

B. An example of a maroon society that contributed to Black and African American autonomy is the maroon society that defended the fort near the border of Mexico. They were escaped slaves and had strength and military strategy, and were able to defend themselves from white oppressors.

C. African Americans advocated for change in the first half of the twentieth century through the establishment of HBCUs, or historically black colleges and universities. Jim Crow laws established "separate but equal" doctrine, but it was never truly equal. The schools designated for black communities always received less funding and resources. To advocate for change, there was a rise in historically black colleges, so that African Americans could receive the education they deserved and therefore be better equipped to advocate for themselves, have a community to help them and get employment. This is especially important because the wealth gap was increasing and so was redlining, and a big factor of this was that the lack of education African Americans had access to made it harder for them to get employment and thus housing, so the HBCUs, while not perfectly reversing it, helped combat that cycle.

A. Slave codes, such as the Slave codes of 1740, limited the rights of free African Americans as they required all black people to prove their freedom and banned any form of resistance by black people against the whites, including self defense. This led to the limiting of free Black people's right to travel freely and defend themselves.

B. The Haitian revolution contributed to Black autonomy as the enslaved Hatians successfully overthrew the colonial rule and obtained freedom. This inspired the enslaved and free Black people to rise up and gain their own independence, leading to many slave revolts across America. Although many did not lead to independence, the ones that did enabled the enslaved to escape to the North, gaining their freedom and autonomy.

C. African Americans advocated for change through music, with people like Billie Holiday who sang songs that protested the unjust treatment of Black people and rallied supporters in the fight for equality and civil rights. Black people also advocated for change through the Harlem Renaissance, where black artists partook in racial uplift strategies that sought to rewrite the lies and narratives told about African Americans.

Prior to 1865 freed African Americans were free but they were not recognized as citizens, meaning that that were not subjected to equal protection from the government. Freed Black Americans also were not given voting right as they were not considered citizens. This led to African Americans to not be able to create an impact on laws and such that directly impacted them.

A maroon society that contributed to Black and African American Autonomy would be the Haitian Rebellion which was the only revolution that made a European colony into a free Black society.

In the first half of the twentieth century African Americans advocated for change by creating protesting and advocating to be seen as citizens of the United States and to gain right to have an equal American society.

Short-Answer Question 3

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 Identifier: 3A

Score: 3

SAQ Part A Score: 1

SAQ Part B Score: 1

SAQ Part C Score: 1

The response earned 1 point in part A for describing how the Fugitive Slave Act limited the rights of free African Americans because they could be accused of “being escaped from slavery” or could be wrongfully abducted and taken into “bondage.”

The response earned 1 in point in part B for describing the maroon society “near the border of Mexico,” one whose numbers included formerly enslaved people who had escaped via the Underground Railroad. It explains that their existence provided greater autonomy in being able to defend themselves.

The response earned 1 point in part C for explaining how the establishment of HBCUs advocated for change by providing greater opportunities for education and employment.

Short-Answer Question 3 (continued)**Sample Identifier: 3B****Score: 2****SAQ Part A Score: 1****SAQ Part B Score: 0****SAQ Part C Score: 1**

The response earned 1 point for part A for providing a valid example of how the rights of free African Americans were limited prior to 1865. The response identifies the Slave Codes and describes the limitations on freedom of travel for free African Americans.

The response did not earn a point for part B. Although the response mentions the Haitian Revolution, it does not provide an example of a maroon society that contributed to Black autonomy.

The response earned 1 point for part C by explaining that artists in the Harlem Renaissance advocated for change by creating uplift and challenging false narratives about the African American community. The response additionally explains how artists like Billie Holiday specifically used their platform to highlight “unjust treatment” of the African American community.

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

The response earned 1 point for part A for describing that free African Americans were not recognized as citizens and not provided with the right to vote.

The response did not earn a point for part B. While the response addresses the “Haitian Rebellion,” it does not explain how maroon societies contributed to greater autonomy for Black and African American individuals.

The response did not earn a point for part C because it lacks a specific example. The response mentions “protesting and advocating,” but to earn credit it should include additional information to explain how this brought about change for African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century.