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# AP<sup>®</sup> Seminar Performance Task 2

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

### **Inside:**

#### **Individual Written Argument**

- ☒ **Scoring Guidelines**
- ☒ **Student Samples**
- ☒ **Scoring Commentary**

**Individual Written Argument (IWA)****48 points****General Scoring Notes**

When applying the rubric for each individual row, you should award the score for that row based solely upon the criteria indicated for that row, according to the preponderance of evidence.

**0 (Zero) Scores**

- A score of 0 is assigned to a single row of the rubric when the response displays a below-minimum level of quality as identified in that row of the rubric.
- Scores of 0 are assigned to all rows of the rubric when the response is **off-topic**; a repetition of a prompt; entirely crossed-out; a drawing or other markings; a presentation (or other off-task format); or a response in a language other than English.

**Off-Topic Decision:**

For the purpose of the IWA, if the response is not in any way related to a theme connecting at least two of the stimulus materials it will be counted as off-topic and will receive a score of 0.

- Considering the student-oriented scoring approach of the College Board, readers should reward the student who derives their ideas from at least two of the stimulus materials, even if they wandered away from them as they pursued their topic.
- If you can infer any connection to a theme derived from two or more stimulus materials, the response should be scored. A failure to adequately incorporate the stimulus materials falls under rubric row 1, not here.
- A response that cites sources from a previous year's stimulus packet and does not cite stimulus material from the current year, should be considered off-topic.

A READER SHOULD NEVER SCORE A PAPER AS OFF-TOPIC. INSTEAD, DEFER THE RESPONSE TO YOUR TABLE LEADER.

**NR (No Response)**

A score of NR is assigned to responses that are blank.

Individual Written Argument (IWA)

48 points

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row 1  Understand and Analyze Context  (0 or 5 points)	<b>0 points</b> The response does not incorporate any of the stimulus material, or, at most, it is mentioned in only one sentence. OR The response includes a discussion of at least one of the stimulus materials; however, it does not contribute to the argument.	<b>5 points</b> The response demonstrates the relevance of at least one of the stimulus materials to the argument by integrating it as part of the response. (For example, as providing relevant context for the research question, or as evidence to support relevant claims.)
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>	
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points include a reference to the stimulus material that:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Is tangential.</li><li>May misrepresent what the sources are discussing/arguing or may use the source in such a way that ignores its context.</li><li>Is only used for a definition or facts that could be obtained from other, more relevant sources.</li><li>Is no more than a jumping-off point for the student’s argument, no more than a perfunctory mention.</li><li>Could be deleted with little to no effect on the response (i.e., it does not serve a purpose that enhances, forwards and/or directly supports the argument).</li></ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 5 points include a reference to the stimulus material that:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reflects an accurate understanding of the source and demonstrates an understanding of its context (e.g., date, region, topic).</li></ul> AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Performs a relevant and authentic function within the argument (i.e., it serves a purpose that enhances, forwards and/or directly supports the argument).</li></ul>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>References to stimulus materials may be included multiple times in the response; only one successful integration of stimulus material is required to earn points.</li></ul>	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row 2</b>  <b>Understand and Analyze Context</b>	<b>0 points</b> The response either provides no context. OR The response makes simplistic references to or general statements about the context of the research question.	<b>5 points</b> The response explains the significance or importance of the research question by situating it within a larger context.
<b>(0 or 5 points)</b>	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>	
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify too many aspects of the topic to address complexity (e.g. “air, water, and land pollution”).</li> <li>Provide unsubstantiated assertions without explanations (e.g., “this is important”).</li> <li>May provide contextual details, but they are tangential to the research question and/or argument</li> <li>Provide overly broad, generalized statements about context.</li> <li>Provide context for only part of the question or argument.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 5 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address an area of investigation that is narrow enough to address the complexity of the problem or issue (e.g. “water pollution in India”). The context, once established, remains relevant throughout the argument.</li> <li>Provide specific and relevant details (i.e., who, what, where, when) for all elements of the research question and/or argument.</li> </ul> AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a specific and compelling case for the urgency or the importance of the research question and/or argument.</li> </ul>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Context is usually (but not always) found in the first few paragraphs.</li> </ul>	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row 3</b>  <b>Understand and Analyze Perspective</b>  <b>(0, 6, or 9 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> The response provides only a single perspective. OR The response identifies and offers opinions or unsubstantiated statements about different perspectives that may be overly simplified.	<b>6 points</b> The response describes multiple perspectives and identifies some relevant similarities or differences between them.	<b>9 points</b> The response evaluates multiple perspectives (and synthesizes them) by drawing relevant connections between them, considering objections, implications, and limitations.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide only one perspective.</li> <li>• May use a lens or lenses that all work to convey the same point of view.</li> <li>• Convey perspectives as personal opinions or assertions without evidence (it is unclear whether or not they are from sources because of vague or missing attribution).</li> <li>• Provide perspectives that are isolated from each other without explicit comparison.</li> <li>• Provide perspectives that are oversimplified by treating many voices, stakeholders, or stances as one.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make general comparisons between perspectives describing only basic agreement or disagreement.</li> <li>• Explain that disagreement/agreement exists, but do not develop a nuanced, detailed discussion of how they relate.</li> <li>• At times present perspectives that are clearly derived from specific sources, but may lapse into opinions or stakeholder perspectives that are not clearly linked to specific sources.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 9 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate on the connections among different perspectives.</li> <li>• Use the details from different sources' arguments to explain specific relationships or connections among perspectives (i.e., evaluate comparative strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives by placing them in dialogue).</li> </ul> <b>Scoring note:</b> There must be clear attribution or citation linking perspectives to sources consistently to score high.
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perspective is “a point of view conveyed through an argument.” (This means the source’s argument). Facts, topics, lenses, and general stakeholder points of view are not perspectives.</li> <li>• Throughout the essay pay attention to organization of paragraphs and to headings (if present). Both may serve as common ways to group perspectives. However, note that presence of multiple perspectives in a single paragraph does not automatically imply a connection among them.</li> <li>• Readers should pay attention to transitions as effective transitions may signal connections among perspectives.</li> </ul>			

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row 4</b>  <b>Establish Argument</b>  <b>(0, 8, or 12 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> The response provides only unsubstantiated opinions or claims. OR The response summarizes information (no argument). The response employs inadequate reasoning due to minimal connections between claims and evidence.	<b>8 points</b> The argument presents a claim with some flaws in reasoning.  The response is logically organized, but the reasoning may be faulty or underdeveloped OR The response may be well-reasoned but illogical in its organization. The conclusion may be only partially related to the research question or thesis.	<b>12 points</b> The response is a clear and convincing argument.  The response is logically organized and well-reasoned by connecting claims and evidence, leading to a plausible, well-aligned conclusion.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>			
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Base the argument on opinion(s).</li> <li>Seek to explain a topic, rather than take a position (e.g., report, summary, chronicle, etc.).</li> <li>Completely lack a conclusion or offer an overly-general, vastly-simplified conclusion</li> <li>Provide an argument that is very difficult to discern, that contradicts itself, or is invalid.</li> <li>Provide an argument or claims that do not allow for alternate views.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 8 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize the argument well OR link evidence and claims well in discrete sections, but do not do both. In other words, the response may fail to explain how evidence supports a claim—i.e., it lacks commentary—OR the overall organization of the response is difficult to follow, even though it has done an adequate job of commenting on the evidence.</li> <li>Provide evidence that often drives the argument, rather than contributing to the response’s argument.</li> <li>Present an argument that simply repeats but does not develop.</li> <li>Present claims that lack cohesion. There is no single articulated controlling argument (i.e., claims appear as multiple vaguely-related arguments).</li> <li>Provide a conclusion* that lacks either enough detail to assess plausibility or is not fully aligned with the research question.</li> <li>At times lack clarity on what is student generated and what is derived from sources.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 12 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize the argument in a way that is often signposted or explicit.</li> <li>Provide commentary that explains fully how evidence supports claims (i.e., the commentary will engage with the content of the evidence to draw conclusions).</li> <li>Provide an argument that is driven by student voice (commentary).</li> <li>Integrate alternate views, perhaps by engaging with counterclaims or using them to demonstrate a nuanced understanding.</li> <li>Provide a conclusion* that is fully aligned with the research question.</li> <li>Present enough detail to assess the plausibility of the conclusion* (perhaps with an assessment of limitations and implications).</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring note:</b> To score high, there must be clear attribution for paraphrased material consistently (to make clear what is the student’s voice and what comes from sources).</p>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> *The conclusion of the argument may also take the form of a resolution or solution, depending upon the nature of the question/argument.			

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row 5</b>  <b>Select and Use Evidence (0, 6, or 9 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Any evidence presented in the response is predominantly irrelevant and/or lacks credibility.	<b>6 points</b> The response includes mostly relevant and credible evidence.	<b>9 points</b> The response includes relevant, credible and sufficient evidence to support its argument.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include many sources that are not credible for the context in which they are used.</li> <li>• Include no well-vetted sources (i.e., scholarly, peer-reviewed, credentialed authors, independently verified, or from government or other reputable organizations) beyond the stimulus materials.</li> <li>• May include a well-vetted source that is not used effectively (e.g., trivial selection, not aligned with claim, misrepresented).</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include research sources that are mostly relevant to the topic, only some of which are appropriate for an academic argument (e.g., may be overly reliant on journalistic sources).</li> <li>• Establish credibility of the sources of evidence (through effective citation, attribution or explanation) but do so inconsistently. At times the response may <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include many sources that are merely referenced when they require justification.</li> <li>• Draw upon outdated research without providing a rationale for using that older evidence.</li> <li>• Demonstrate consideration of the author or the evidence, but not the source (may treat all sources of evidence as equal when they are not).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• May cite several scholarly works, but select excerpts that only convey general or simplistic ideas OR include at least one piece of scholarly work that is used effectively.</li> <li>• Provide evidence that at times fully supports claims (e.g., there are sometimes gaps) or provides evidence that only generally supports claims.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 9 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include research sources that are relevant to the topic and appropriate for an academic argument on this topic.</li> <li>• Establish credibility of the sources of evidence (through effective citation, attribution or explanation) consistently.</li> <li>• Provide purposeful analysis and evaluation of evidence used.</li> <li>• Make effective use of well-chosen evidence from scholarly work.</li> <li>• Provide relevant and credible evidence that fully supports claims.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Bibliography or Works Cited.</li> <li>• Review individual instances of selected evidence throughout (commentary about the evidence).</li> <li>• General reference guides such as encyclopedias and dictionaries do not fulfill the requirement for a well-vetted source.</li> </ul>			

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row 6</b>  <b>Apply Conventions</b>  <b>(0, 3, or 5 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> The response is missing a bibliography/works cited OR the response is largely missing in-text citations/ footnotes.	<b>3 points</b> The response attributes or cites sources used through the use of in-text citations or footnotes, but not always accurately. The bibliography or works cited references sources using a generally consistent style with some errors.	<b>5 points</b> The response attributes, accurately cites and integrates the sources used through the use of in-text citations or footnotes. The bibliography or works cited accurately references sources using a consistent style.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include internal citations, but no bibliography (or vice versa).</li> <li>• Demonstrate no organizational principle in bibliography/works cited (e.g., alphabetical or numerical).</li> <li>• Provide little or no evidence of successful linking of in-text citations to bibliographic references (e.g., in-text references are to titles but bibliographic references are listed by author; titles are different in the text and in the works cited).</li> <li>• Include poor or no attributive phrasing with paraphrased material (e.g., “Studies show...”; “Research says...” with no additional in-text citation).</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide some uniformity in citation style.</li> <li>• Provide an organizational principle in bibliography/works cited (e.g., alphabetical or numerical) which may be uneven in some places.</li> <li>• Include unclear references or errors in citations, (e.g., citations with missing elements or essential elements that must be guessed from a url).</li> <li>• Provide some successful linking of citations to bibliographic references.</li> <li>• Provide some successful attributive phrasing for paraphrased material and/or in-text parenthetical citations.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 5 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contain few flaws.</li> <li>• Provide a clear organizational principle in bibliography/works cited.</li> <li>• Provide consistent evidence of linking internal citations to bibliographic references.</li> <li>• Include consistent and clear attributive phrasing for paraphrased material and/or in-text parenthetical citations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring note:</b> The response cannot score 5 points if essential elements of citations (i.e., author/organization, title, publication, date) are consistently missing.</p>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In AP Seminar, there is no requirement for using a particular style sheet; however, responses must use a style that is consistent and complete.</li> <li>• Check the bibliography for consistency in style and inclusion of essential elements.</li> <li>• Check for clarity/accuracy of in-text citations.</li> <li>• Check to make sure all in-text citations match the bibliography (without extensive search). In order for links to work in print, there must be a clear organizational principle arranging the elements on the bib/works cited.</li> </ul>		



Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<b>Row 7</b>  <b>Apply Conventions</b>  <b>(0, 2, or 3 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> The response has many grammatical flaws, is difficult to understand, or is written in a style inappropriate for an academic audience.	<b>2 points</b> The response is mostly clear but may contain some flaws in grammar or a few instances of a style inappropriate for an academic audience.	<b>3 points</b> The response creates variety, emphasis, and interest to the reader through the use of effective sentences and precision of word choice. The written style is consistently appropriate for an academic audience, although the response may have a few errors in grammar and style.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
	<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contain multiple grammatical errors that make reading difficult.</li> <li>Use an overall style that is colloquial or in other ways not appropriate for an academic paper.</li> <li>Provide too few sentences to evaluate or the student's own words are indistinguishable from paraphrases of sources.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contain some lapses in sentence control (e.g., run-ons, fragments, or awkward syntax when integrating quoted material).</li> <li>Lapse into colloquial language.</li> <li>Demonstrate imprecise word choice insufficient for communicating complex ideas.</li> <li>Use overly dense prose at the expense of coherence and clarity.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contain few flaws which do not impede clarity for understanding complex ideas.</li> <li>Demonstrate word choice sufficient to communicate complex ideas.</li> <li>Use clear prose that maintains an academic or scholarly tone.</li> </ul>
	<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readers should focus on the sentences written by the student, not those quoted or derived from sources.</li> </ul>		

To What Extent Will Educating Jurors on Memory Fallibility Improve Fairness in  
Legal Outcomes?

In partial fulfillment of AP Seminar Performance Task II

Individual Written Argument

Word Count: 2232

Memories are not objective recordings of the past—they are shaped by emotion, personal context, and belief systems. One of the most powerful emotional forces influencing memory is nostalgia: a bittersweet yearning for a past that often feels more vivid and meaningful than it truly was. Much like trauma, nostalgia creates emotionally intense memories that feel authentic and trustworthy, even when distorted. Norberg (2021), a scholar of over twenty publications on intellectual and cultural history, distinguishes between personal, historical, and collective nostalgia, emphasizing that “memory is emotional, cultural, and subjective” (p. 10). While often comforting, nostalgic memories can be deeply misleading. Norberg also notes that “each generation believes it faces uniquely difficult problems,” interpreting the present as a decline from an idealized “better past” (p. 12). In courtroom settings, where memory is often treated as reliable evidence, this emotional distortion can lead to confident misidentifications, inaccurate testimony, and wrongful convictions. This investigation examines how nostalgia distorts memory and explores the dangers it poses when emotionally influenced recollections are used as legal evidence.

Historically, eyewitness accounts have been regarded as among the most persuasive forms of legal evidence. This belief was seriously challenged in the 1990s with the advent of DNA testing, as organizations like the Innocence Project revealed that many wrongful convictions stemmed from inaccurate memory recall. According to Howe and Knott (2015), professors at City University of London, over 75% of wrongful convictions in the United States involved eyewitness misidentification, many of which were later overturned by DNA evidence (p. 650). These revelations exposed the inherent fallibility of memory’s psychologists to reconceptualize it as a reconstructive and highly suggestible process. Norberg (2021) explains that misplaced trust in memory may stem from the “reminiscence bump,” a cognitive bias that

causes people to recall vivid, emotionally charged memories from adolescence and early adulthood, which feel accurate due to their personal significance (p. 13). Such emotionally compelling recollections may seem credible in courtroom settings because they “feel” true. Even with the growing evidence of memory distortion, courts treat personal memory as fact, overlooking how deeply emotion and identity influence what is remembered—and how it is retold.

Despite increasing awareness, the justice system continues to rely heavily on memory-based testimony with little systemic reform. In a study by Dr. Shaw, a memory expert featured on TED and BBC, and Dr. Porter, professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia, participants developed false memories of committing crimes simply through repeated imagination exercises, and many “were surprised to learn the events never occurred,” and reported little to no suspicion of manipulation. Participants even recalled detailed but false memories of theft and assault—including officers, locations, and entire sequences of events (Shaw & Porter, 2015, pp. 296–299). These findings are particularly alarming given their resemblance to common police interrogation tactics that employ suggestion or pressure to “assist” suspects in recalling events. Reforms such as juror education on memory distortion, limiting coercive interrogation practices, and requiring corroborating evidence could reduce the legal impact of false memories in court. Such measures would enhance public trust by promoting a more modern and just legal system.

Nevertheless, some researchers argue that emotionally intense experiences—such as trauma or nostalgia—can sometimes enhance the accuracy of memory recall. Dr. Lau-Zhu et al. (2021), recipients of the British Psychological Society's Trainee Research Excellence Award, found that “recognition accuracy was above chance” for trauma-related cues, suggesting that

emotionally charged events may strengthen certain aspects of memory recall (p. 1137).

Supporting this, Clark et al. (2016), from the University of Oxford's Department of Psychiatry, observed "increased activity between Intrusive and Potential scenes... in areas tied to memory retrieval," including the left inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) and middle temporal gyrus (MTG) (p. 514). This suggests that emotionally charged memories engage distinct neural pathways, differing from the processing of neutral experiences. Investigators occasionally leverage this mechanism. In one case, psychologist and former police officer Reid (2008) used a visual cue—a bag of gum from the crime scene—that "was instrumental in persuading the suspect to eventually tell the truth" about theft committed to repay her brother's gang debt (para. 16). This supports the idea that emotion-based cues, including nostalgic triggers, can aid in retrieving emotional memories, though not necessarily with objective accuracy.

However, the same emotional intensity that makes nostalgic memories vivid makes them persuasive. Yang et al. (2022), from the Institute of Psychology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, found that nostalgia activates brain regions involved in memory, emotion, and reward—specifically the medial prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, and striatum—producing an experience that "feels more true than it is" (p. 1131). These memories activate neural circuits linked to reward and self-reflection, turning them into emotionally constructed narratives rather than objective recollections. As a result, individuals often exhibit high confidence in flawed memories, particularly when those memories are connected to personal identity or moral convictions. In legal settings, this misplaced confidence can mislead juries, reinforcing the urgent need to understand how nostalgia distorts memory and inflates belief in inaccurate recollections.

Understanding how nostalgia distorts memory is crucial to recognizing its potential to mislead both witnesses and jurors in high-stakes legal settings. Yang et al. (2022), further found

that nostalgia activates brain regions associated with memory, emotion, and reward—specifically the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and striatum—generating emotionally immersive experiences that feel accurate even when they are not (p. 1131). Nostalgic recall is deeply emotional and often shaped by identity rather than fact, meaning a witness may testify based on what feels accurate rather than objective reality. The emotional reward of nostalgia heightens confidence and susceptibility to distortion, making such memories unreliable as legal evidence. Norberg (2021) also explains that the brain encodes more memories during adolescence and early adulthood than at any other stage of life. This “reminiscence bump” corresponds to key moments of identity formation and emotionally significant “firsts,” making those memories vivid, not due to recency but because of their deep personal meaning (p. 13). In courtroom settings, nostalgia-based recollections are particularly risky because they are entwined with personal identity and belief systems, which increases perceived credibility. Furthermore,



Figure 1. photograph of a decaying amusement park—rusted rides, cracked pavement, lifeless attractions—viewers are drawn into memories of childhood wonder

Alakbarova et al. (2021), recipient of the Frank Yates Student Travel Award and Best Graduate Poster at Armadillo 2023, found that participants were more likely to form false memories when information felt emotionally or personally meaningful. Their experiments showed that structured, emotionally resonant material caused memory blending and distortion (pp.

1563–1564). The brain forms strong associations when content feels significant, increasing the likelihood of errors. For example, in Figure 1. Lawless’s emotionally evocative photograph of a decaying amusement park—rusted rides, cracked pavement, and lifeless attractions—invites

viewers to recall idealized memories of childhood wonder (Lawless, n.d.). When recalling such settings, individuals may unconsciously emphasize positive details while omitting or downplaying negative ones. Nostalgia functions as an emotional filter, idealizing experiences that were never as perfect as remembered. When retrieved—especially from formative years—such memories appear vivid and credible even when distorted, making nostalgia a powerful force in memory construction and misplaced confidence.

This heightened emotional vividness affects not only those recalling the memory but also shapes how others—particularly jurors—perceive its credibility. Clark et al. (2016), explain that “due to the association between the left inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) and language processing, verbal interventions following trauma can distort memory” (p. 516). The left IFG, which plays a critical role in narrative construction and language organization, helps reframe how emotional memories are encoded and recalled. Articulating emotional experiences can introduce bias or imagined details, producing compelling but inaccurate recollections. In the context of nostalgic recall, this distortion boosts eyewitness confidence in flawed memories, making emotionally vivid testimony appear credible to jurors despite its inaccuracy. The IFG's role in narrative formation helps explain why nostalgia-based memories feel true—even when they are objectively false. Additionally, Clark et al. (2016) found that the mean number of intrusive scenes per participant was 3.09 (S.D. = 1.46), compared to a mean of 16.91 (S.D. = 1.46) potential scenes, suggesting a selective and emotionally driven memory process (p. 509). These findings indicate that memory is inherently selective, with emotion effectively “locking in” specific scenes while allowing others to fade. These emotionally charged memories can feel especially meaningful and trustworthy, leading to false certainty in witnesses—and undue credibility in the eyes of jurors. Sims (2016), an Associate Professor in the Cognitive Science

Department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, argues that perception functions as a meaning-making system, extracting relevance from uncertain sensory input by selectively retaining or discarding information. He describes perceptual memory as a message to our future selves, emphasizing its communicative nature and link to information theory (p. 181). Nostalgic memories, shaped by emotional relevance, are frequently misinterpreted as factually accurate. In legal settings, this poses a serious risk. Emotionally vivid memories may seem coherent, consistent, and believable, leading jurors to place unjustified trust in selectively constructed accounts or emotionally biased narratives. A nostalgic tone can inflate confidence in flawed recollections, especially when reinforced by suggestive environments or leading questioning, thereby raising the risk of wrongful convictions.

This susceptibility becomes even more dangerous when combined with interrogation techniques and emotionally charged settings specifically designed to implant or reshape memory. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2024), common tactics include "baiting" suspects, delivering false statements, and using leading questions. These techniques manipulate perception and undermine trust, creating a false sense of shared understanding while emotionally priming individuals to generate inaccurate or fabricated details. Rather than simply gathering facts, these methods actively shape memory, nudging individuals to adopt narratives of never-occurring events. Emotional triggers, such as flattery, guilt, or criticism, reduce resistance and increase suggestibility by exploiting the brain's tendency to fill in memory gaps, making false recollections feel authentic even to the person remembering them. Further evidence comes from Garry and Gerrie (2005), recipients of the Neag Distinguished Alumni Research Award and affiliated with Victoria University of Wellington. They found that "while slightly fewer than half of the description-only subjects developed mental images of the Slime story or full memories,



over 70% of the photograph-exposed subjects did” (p. 323). This shows how photographs significantly increase the likelihood of forming false memories. In legal contexts, this is troubling—visual materials like crime scene photographs or mugshots can lead witnesses or suspects to develop detailed but inaccurate recollections that feel entirely real. Dr. Strange (2010), a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science and recipient of the 2025 APLS Award, explains that visual aids act as “cognitive scaffolds” –tools that help individuals build vivid, emotionally engaging narratives about events that never occurred (p. 3). Her findings suggest that photographs do more than-trigger memory—they actively shape how individuals construct coherent yet false narratives. Visual evidence is a double-edged sword in legal settings, where emotional vividness is often confused for factual accuracy. According to Rubin’s basic systems approach, photographs stimulate multiple memory subsystems—visual, auditory, and linguistic—thereby promoting fluent processing and increasing the perceived authenticity of fabricated memories (Strange, 2010, p. 3). Such imagery can prompt individuals to mentally fill in missing details during interrogations, reinforcing constructed false narratives. For example, in Figure 2. Lawless’s photograph evokes powerful associations with childhood, safety, and structure. In interrogation or witness settings, emotionally familiar environments like the one depicted can unconsciously trigger memory reconstruction, blurring the line between fact and



Figure 2. Photograph of an abandoned school is filled filled with broken desks and faded light.

emotional association. A witness might generate vivid imagery of events that never occurred simply because the environment feels emotionally significant or nostalgic.

These cues can implant false memories when combined with suggestion, turning emotionally familiar spaces into distortion tools. Because pressure, visuals, and emotional

context all shape memory, reform must extend beyond interrogation practices to include education for those who evaluate memory—especially jurors.

Legal systems should make juror education on memory distortion a top priority. Helm (2021), Professor of Law and Empirical Legal Studies, emphasizes that memory is inherently reconstructive—shaped by perception, belief, and emotion—rather than a fixed or reliable record of events (pp. 265–266). Jurors frequently equate a witness's confidence with accuracy, often unaware of the psychological processes that underlie false memories. Sims (2016) further highlights that visual memory relies on pattern recognition and breaks down when stimuli deviate from familiar expectations (p. 192). Even structured interviews cannot entirely eliminate memory errors, especially when emotionally charged content is involved. While Clark (2016) explores neuroscience-based interventions—like modulating left IFG activation to reduce intrusive memories—these methods remain largely speculative and impractical in real-world legal settings (p. 516). Given trauma's lasting impact on memory and the limited accessibility of neuroscience tools, educating jurors remains the most practical and immediate safeguard.

Nostalgia can offer comfort and a sense of continuity, but it introduces significant risks in legal contexts. Emotionally charged memories—particularly those tied to identity and formative experience—often feel vivid and trustworthy, even when deeply inaccurate. This emotional intensity enhances confidence and distorts perception, influencing those who recall and evaluate the memory. In courtroom settings, where credibility is often equated with confidence, nostalgia-driven recollections can lead to false testimony and increase the risk of wrongful convictions. Neuroscientific and psychological research confirms that memory is not an objective recording but a reconstructive process influenced by emotion, expectation, and context. Visual cues, suggestive questioning, and emotionally familiar environments compound this and

can further distort, making inaccuracies challenging to detect. To ensure fairness in legal proceedings, legal systems must acknowledge memory's fallibility and implement juror education as a critical safeguard. Recognizing nostalgia as a powerful source of distortion is essential to preserving the integrity and reliability of memory-based evidence in court.

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**The Power of Nostalgia**

Does nostalgia help improve mental well-being, or does it hold back personal growth?

Individual Written Argument

AP Seminar

February 2025

1737 words

## **Introduction**

Recently, rates of depression and anxiety have been rapidly increasing, and researchers are testing methods to improve mental well-being, with nostalgia as one of the positive means to lessen anxiety. After the COVID-19 pandemic, feelings of isolation and loneliness increased significantly, and studies proved that nostalgia could help people overcome post-pandemic, providing emotional support. Nostalgia improves an individual's mental well-being by providing comfort, giving individuals a sense of identity, and strengthening connections with others. Remembering memories and experiences relieves stress and anxiety, resulting in a more positive mood and increased self-esteem. Reminiscing memories can build stronger connections with others and lead to a sense of belonging, showing benefits for one's mental well-being.

## **Comfort in identity**

Nostalgia provides comfort by relieving stress and anxiety, which can improve an individual's mental well-being. In the article "The Surprising Way Nostalgia Can Help Us Cope with the Pandemic," published in the National Geographic article, Nicole Johnson discusses the effects of nostalgia on individuals during COVID-19. Johnson mentions how nostalgia positively affects mental well-being, as she writes how nostalgia can provide emotional comfort, especially during times of loss, anxiety, isolation, or uncertainty, allowing people to find peace and comfort in nostalgic thoughts of past events (Johnson). The author elaborates on the effect of nostalgia on emotions, demonstrating how it can help individuals deal with stress and anxiety. Ultimately, it supports the idea that nostalgia can improve an individual's mental well-being. Similarly, "Feeling Safe and Nostalgia in Healthy Aging," by Julie Fleury emphasizes how nostalgia can lead to positive mental states and resilience, specifically in aging populations. Julie Fleury is an

Arizona State University professor in Nursing and Health Innovation. She writes about how nostalgia can benefit the mind, as it helps individuals feel safe and supports healthy aging. Fleury writes how nostalgia can be seen as a source of “comfort,” especially when reminiscing about positive or happy times, leading to a sense of security. She quotes Hepper E.G., a researcher specializing in social and personality psychology, stating that nostalgia can be a precious resource for adults, as it can be “accessed” at any time as a comforting thought during times of stress or chaos (Fleury). The article highlights the effect of nostalgia on emotions and physical feelings, as well as behaviors during aging, which promote the mind and healthy aging. Fleury elaborates on how nostalgia can benefit the mind and create a sense of security through positive and happy memories. Fleury discusses how nostalgia provides a feeling of comfort, which relates to the source written by Nicole Johnson, which details the effects of nostalgia on emotions.

### **Finding one’s identity**

When individuals are reminded of their past, it can give a sense of identity as they are reminded of past achievements or accomplishments, ultimately increasing self-esteem. It can also be a motivation. The article “Feeling Nostalgic This Holiday Season? It Might Help Boost Your Mental Health” is written by Amy Novotney, a writer and editor at the American Psychological Association. In her article, Novotney describes nostalgia as an act that can benefit one’s mental health. She continues by writing about how people who look back on special occasions, celebrations, or memories can feel happier and more confident, getting them out of the depressive mode they are feeling. Novotney also includes how nostalgia can help some feel more connected to others, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. She discusses how it can remind individuals of their strengths and accomplishments, allowing them to feel a sense of



purpose and motivation in the present. She mentions a survey in which over 2,000 American adults participated, with the majority 84% agreeing that nostalgic memories help remind them of what truly matters in life. Additionally, most respondents felt that nostalgic memories provide comfort 77% and inspiration 72% during times of uncertainty or difficulty. Moreover, nearly 60% believe these memories offer guidance when unsure of which path to take in life. She finishes by mentioning how, although it can be a boost for mental health, it can also lead to someone who desires to stay in the past and be trapped, leading to depression about what they have lost (Novotney). It is important to balance nostalgia and the present to maintain a healthy state of mind. Novotney's research continues to show that when people are reminded of their past accomplishments and strengths, it boosts self-esteem, bringing more motivation to the present. With newfound confidence, individuals become motivated or more confident in themselves, leading to higher mental health and decreased rates of depression. Novotney's results prove the benefits of nostalgia on mental health by relieving stress and anxiety and encouraging better mental health. In the article "Five Ways Nostalgia Can Improve Your Well-Being," Jill Suttie, a psychologist at UC Berkeley, discusses how nostalgia can improve one's well-being. She includes five main points, claiming that nostalgia can boost moods and happiness, enhance social connections, increase self-esteem, reveal meaning and purpose, and show resilience (Suttie). This shows how nostalgia can positively impact mental well-being socially, as it boosts social connections and increases self-esteem. Suttie discusses that just a simple positive memory can be a strategy to improve mental well-being, showing the simplicity in the act of nostalgia and its effect on individuals. Similarly to Suttie, "The Psychology of Nostalgia" from the University of Florida mentions the common triggers of nostalgia, including experiences that can be

remembered through senses, transitions in life that cause hardships, and specific social interactions. These can cause an individual to feel nostalgic, leading to positive thoughts. This article also discusses the benefits of nostalgia, mentioning how it can build self-esteem, help one find meaning and purpose during difficult times, and enhance happiness (The Psychology of Nostalgia). This discusses how nostalgia can strengthen an individual's identity, leading to confidence and high self-esteem. The author also relates how nostalgia can boost motivation when people are reminded of their past achievements and successes, as it can lead to new goals based on old ones. Both articles describe how nostalgia can boost self-esteem, ultimately improving mental health.

### **Strengthening Connections**

Nostalgia helps individuals form connections with others because it can give them a sense of belonging, reduce loneliness, and strengthen relationships. Suttie's article emphasizes how these five items are associated with nostalgia, proving how it improves well-being. She also mentions how nostalgic reflections in everyday life can be a simple strategy to enhance an individual's well-being by reminiscing about a happy memory from the past (Suttie). The author proves how nostalgia benefits individuals' mental health by writing about how it allows people to feel more connected, ultimately reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation and forming a community of friends. In the short story *My Mother's House*, the main character explores her heritage and finds her old home in search of anything from her past. She reflects on her family's history and discovers the true meaning of "home" as a physical place and a space filled with cultural and emotional significance. Throughout her journey, she finds her family's legacy, personal backstory, and ways the past can shape the present, emphasizing how nostalgia can

connect individuals to their family history and culture, connecting valuable past and present perspectives (Ghansah). Ghansah demonstrates how nostalgia provides a sense of belonging and identity, which can improve one's mental well-being. This short story emphasizes the importance of nostalgia to finding identity and culture. In this, the main character feels less lonely as she can discover more about her past and culture by exploring her childhood home. This shows how nostalgia can help individuals feel connected to their past, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. Similar to the article written by Suttie, it proves the benefits of nostalgia, reducing loneliness and isolation, leading to good mental health.

### **Danger of False Nostalgia**

Despite the comfort nostalgia can provide for humans, it can also be dangerous, misleading individuals by giving an idealized image of the past, making reality seem harsher. In *False Nostalgia* by Johan Norberg, a Swedish author and historian, he discusses the ideas of nostalgia and how we tend to "romanticize" the past, ignoring its flaws. He claims that people tend to remember only the good memories, ignoring the bad ones, thus his definition of "false nostalgia." Norberg also continues by stating that society is better today than it was years ago, including evidence showing how life in the present is better than in the past. Norberg believes that people's minds trick them into thinking that the present is terrible and focusing only on the positivity of the past. The author's emphasis on the false "picture-perfect" feeling of the past is a bias that leads individuals not to see the greatness of the present time. Thus, people should not let nostalgia guide their decisions when solving problems in the present, highlighting his main point of "false nostalgia" (Norberg). Norberg stresses that love of the past can lead to dissatisfaction with the present, taking away all the possibilities that nostalgia can lead to mental well-being.

After all, it provides comfort and boosts self-esteem. Norberg further emphasizes the importance of balancing nostalgia with feelings of reality. Along with Norberg's argument, Novotney also discusses the positives of nostalgia before she continues to argue against her intro. She does this by claiming that nostalgia can lead people to want to return and stay in the past as the "perfect" makes the present and reality seem harsh (Novotney). This presents a counterargument because, based on this argument, it proves that even though nostalgia can benefit the mind positively, there must be a balance of reality along with it, as well as ensuring individuals focus on the positives without changing the past in their minds, similar to what Norberg mentions when he writes how people can "romanticize" the past.

### **Conclusion**

Several studies and articles highlight ways nostalgia can relieve stress and anxiety, boosting self-esteem and lowering feelings of loneliness. Through memories, individuals can get a sense of achievement and find a purpose and motivation in the present. By providing a sense of comfort for individuals, nostalgia also allows for feelings of identity, strengthening relationships and boosting self-esteem, ultimately improving one's mental health. However, it can also be dangerous if individuals only remember the positive memories. Finding the balance between reminiscing and tracking the present is essential to reap the benefits of nostalgia without falling into the traps of "False Nostalgia." Despite these issues, nostalgia can improve mental well-being when the right balance is practiced.

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## IWA: AP seminar

(1721 words)

Research question:

How to maintain a sense of stability and keep up in a world that's constantly evolving?

The world is always changing and adapting to trends, and inventions every day. There will never be a time where things always stay the same. Fluctuations are part of life, and it is necessary for us to grow as a society, but how do we maintain ourselves and hold on to our comforts and habits when everything around is everything but? Here are three ways, for example we could use nostalgia and all of its forms. There are three categories to nostalgia known as personal, historical, and collective. To start with the first type, it's called

personal. This is known as one's own memories and how they can contribute to our personalities and identity we resonate with. In the passage called Nostalgia from the sources given, it states, "Anchoring our identity in something enduring helps us when all that is solid seems to be melting into air. Everything changes, but we need a sense of stability and predictability. When things change too fast, we lose our sense of control."

Personal nostalgia allows you to dig deep within and remember your own story through the history and evolving surroundings you went through. This can give you something to ground yourself with, whether it's a good memory with a partner, or the first time you stepped foot onto your future college campus. Any memory that brings happiness and comfort can help you find balance and stability when feeling lost or as if you're being pulled through a time that's going faster than you can react. This occurs very often, when things happen around a person and move so fast that they don't have time to grasp and process what's really going on. When this happens, it's known as "being left in the past" which isn't something that positively affects one's personal growth. Grasping the best parts of life is what can keep us going in times of struggle and when all feels lost. Next is historical nostalgia, this is reminiscing about the past and what felt like "the good old days" or "way back when". To sum it up, nostalgia is something that can help one establish a sense of continuity in not only the rapid pace of their life but their own personalities. These memories create a sense of longing and a bittersweet feeling due to the realization that you can never go back to the best time of your life, except you never realize how good you have it till it's gone.

Unfortunately, that's the case with many things today, there's so many new creations, trends, and inventions now a days that it's easy to forget what the importance of

remembering our roots is. A fast pace of change in what we know as home or habit could cause us to lose control of ourselves and the basis of what makes us, us. This changes the entire foundation of who we are and what we have learned to rely on and be used to. All these new things such as AI, social media, technology, etc... can blind us and feed into a delusion world that only surrounds these new things. What about books, Newspapers, and playing football with kids outside? What happens to all the simple and sweet things of life once we evolve into the debatable questions of what is “better” or considered more “efficient”. An example could be a worker being laid off due to machines and technology taking their place, how is it fair? Easy answer, it's not. It's unjust to forcefully change the lives of workers and how they make the income to pay rent, mortgage, bills, and in most cases feed their families and care for their needs. So, how can one keep up? In the articles written by Forbes it states, “How is it possible to maintain this when the necessary skills for any given job will most likely change every 10 years or less? The race has become a marathon, and your sneakers are bound to break every five miles. So, what do we do? We adapt.” At the end of the quote, they mention an important thing to keep in mind, adapt. Yes, it's true that workers shouldn't be fired for things they have no control over, but many times we must think of things this way, “rejection is redirection”. Not to get confused, it doesn't apply to everyone, but if you adapt and mold your life to the hand you've been given you can preserve and maintain an even balance with your surroundings that keep changing and evolving. THIS is how one can maintain their identity in a society where it's a trend to constantly be immersed into the next trend and new thing, you must stay true to yourself and



know that if you maintain grit, have perseverance, and create a plan, almost anything can be achievable.

History is a big part of how we can carry out a balanced life. Many cultures practice traditional measures such as meditating, and something known as feng shui. Meditation is an extremely helpful way to take a moment and pause in an environment that may feel hectic and overwhelming. The art of just sitting in silence and quieting your mind to focus on nothing sounds simple but is quite challenging. Once a person is skilled and disciplined enough to successfully meditate, it can change their whole life. Life is tough and every moment could be your last or could be a new opportunity. This may sound quite intense but it's the truth, you never know what's going to happen next and if you're not caught up with the latest news you get left behind and it's hard to come back from it. Meditating can help you collect all your thoughts and create a space in your head that can be considered a break from life or even the creation of your own world inside your head. It allows you to analyze and organize your thoughts, feelings, emotions and thought process. A source called ([finding-stability-in-meditation](#)) mentions, "when we meditate, we come back to the bare experiences of what is happening from moment to moment. This has a marvelous freshness. It's an opportunity to take a rest from our obsessive habits and rigid assumptions... thoughts and emotions can arise and dissolve without disturbing the underlying stability". This is just one of the many practices a person could use to find their inner balance in a world that's constantly evolving.

You could always look at the changes and differences in what you know with what you will become familiar with as a gift. Many times, we don't know what we've got until it's stripped

away or we're shown what we missed out on. Taking the opportunity to make something out of what's new and fresh could very well change one's life for the best and uproot them in the best way they could imagine. Stability isn't what always what's believed to be true, the true meaning is adapting and adjusting to a surrounding that's constantly evolving. An example of this is explained in a source called (Meadow Report), "The paradox of stability is that it comes from movement: constantly, continuously, and consciously adjusting to what is evolving around us, rather than reacting to it."

A thought by many when wondering how to keep up with everyone else in society is, how do I do it? There's so many possibilities as to what we can do to stay relevant with all the new trends and creations, the question is which ones are most effective. One way could be to keep yourself educated by learning a new skill. As mentioned before, workers are being laid off due to technology taking their place, so why don't you learn a skill that's timeless and isn't able to be replaced by machines such as a doctor or a veterinarian? The list is grand, but these are just a few examples of how to not lose yourself and your place in society as a person when everything is being improved and unfortunately forgetting about the foundation on which everything began with. In the source called medium it says, "In today's world, skills are often the prerequisite to a beautiful career. Learning skills open doors to new career opportunities that you may never have considered before." A person can find a sense of comfort and stability in knowing that they have a skill that's timeless and could be used in society even when all is ever changing and evolving.

How can we remember the past when society's unwilling tries so hard to change and forget it? Without trying, we have made so many advancements that we tend to overlook where we began and the beginning of all the things we have worked so hard to improve and reshape. Due to this is why people get sucked into a haze of confusion and instability. The source, Māori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts, states, “The life of any good written history in Western European culture may itself be only ten to 15 years before its subject matter is liable to be reinterpreted by another generation of writers.

The life of an oral narrative may be much longer — generations — but all its verifying details, its participants, and even its central mythic cell (its symbolic intent, sometimes expressed through parable) may have been altered. It will continue changing, and be changed, as surely as textual history.” It reveals how things really are altered over time, and it goes to prove that we must try hard to maintain the originality that makes the foundation of all things. Stability is not something to just look over, its something to be lived, a way to think and carry out daily practices. Yes, it's difficult keeping in alignment with everything around us that is new and unfamiliar, but if we practice internal balance, we can achieve all the great things society is trying so hard for us to be a part of.

[6-ways-to-stay-relevant-in-a-rapidly-evolving-society-e2e225a0b956](#)

Jun 18, 2020,Ojukwu Emmanuel

[finding-stability-in-meditation](#) ( charles hastings)

[welcome-to-the-new-normal-seven-ways-to-improve-your-adaptability-in-an-ever-](#)

[changing-world](#)(Jul 08, 2021,[Brad Federman](#),)

[how-to-find-stability-when-everything-is-changing](#) (June 19, 2020, [Renée Fishman](#))

False Nostalgia (JOHAN NORBERG, JANUARY 2022)

Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts (New Zealand Journal of History, 38, 2 (2004))

## Performance Task 2

### Individual Written Argument

**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 A

**1 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 5**

**2 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 5**

**3 Understand and Analyze Perspective Score: 9**

**4 Establish Argument Score: 12**

**5 Select and Use Evidence Score: 9**

**6 Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution) Score: 5**

**7 Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style) Score: 3**

#### Row 1: Understand and Analyze Context

The response earned a score of **5** for this row because it establishes context for two of the stimulus sources (the Norberg article and the Seph Lawless photographs) and successfully integrates them into the writer's argument. On page 2, Norberg is used to establish context, noting that nostalgia can lead to memory distortion, which is a central concept of the response. On page 5, Lawless's photograph of a decaying amusement park is used as evidence to forward the idea that emotionally evocative material can cause memory distortion.

#### Row 2: Understand and Analyze Context

The response earned a score of **5** for this row because it narrows the topic of "memory distortion" by placing it in the specific context of US courtroom jury trials. The "when," as suggested by the bibliography, is within the last two decades. The response makes clear the urgency of the issue by highlighting ways in which memory used as courtroom evidence can be highly problematic.

#### Row 3: Understand and Analyze Argument

The response earned a score of **9** for this row because it evaluates multiple perspectives by drawing relevant connections between them. Throughout, the response features body paragraphs that smoothly integrate multiple perspectives from clearly identified sources. The response considers objections, implications, and limitations. On page 3, the response notes, "Nevertheless, some researchers argue that emotionally intense experiences—such as trauma or nostalgia—can sometimes enhance the accuracy of memory recall" citing Lau-Zhu et al., Clark et al., and Reid for that perspective. Then, on pages 4-6, the response weaves together Yang et al., Norberg, Alakbarova et al., and Lawless to illustrate the claim that nostalgia's memory-distorting effects can mislead witnesses and jurors in legal settings.

#### Row 4: Establish Argument

The response earned a score of **12** for this row because the argument is clear, logically organized, and convincing. Throughout, the writer's voice controls the argument, notably providing commentary that connects claims and evidence (about the problem of personal memory treated as fact, about the relationship between emotion and persuasiveness, about the manipulation of memory). Supported claims lead to a plausible conclusion in response to the research question. Ultimately, the response argues that juror education regarding nostalgia's memory-distorting effect is needed to ensure fairness in legal proceedings.

## Performance Task 2

### Individual Written Argument (continued)

#### Row 5: Select and Use Evidence

The response earned a score of **9** for this row because it draws from relevant and credible evidence sufficient to support its argument. Out of fifteen cited sources, ten are from scholarly journals, two from the stimulus packet, and two from government websites. (Only one is a dot com source). The response uses purposeful analysis and evaluation of evidence to enhance the writer’s argument.

#### Row 6: Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution)

The response earned a score of **5** for this row because it clearly attributes, accurately cites, and effectively integrates its research sources. The bibliography is organized and includes all elements of citation. With only two exceptions of one source cited in the text without a References page entry (Shaw & Porter) and one source listed on the References page that is not cited in the text (Corrigendum), the response clearly links in-text citations to corresponding entries in the bibliography. Attribution of paraphrased material is clear.

#### Row 7: Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style)

The response earned a score of **3** for this row because it maintains a tone appropriate for an academic audience and uses clear prose that effectively communicates complex ideas. For example, the response uses precise word choices and strong sentence control to explain several problems with the use of memory in the legal system: “In courtroom settings, where memory is often treated as reliable evidence, this emotional distortion can lead to confident misidentifications, inaccurate testimony, and wrongful convictions.” The response features notably clear writing throughout and has few errors.

### Sample B

**1 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 5**

**2 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 0**

**3 Understand and Analyze Perspective Score: 6**

**4 Establish Argument Score: 8**

**5 Select and Use Evidence Score: 6**

**6 Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution) Score: 5**

**7 Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style) Score: 3**

#### Row 1: Understand and Analyze Context

The response earned a score of **5** for this row because it integrates stimulus material accurately and purposefully, though with uneven success. On page 6, Norberg’s ideas about idealizing the past are used effectively to qualify the central claim that nostalgia can improve mental well-being when balanced with realism; this accurately conveys his caution against romanticizing the past and advances the reasoning. On page 5, the response also references the *My Mother’s House* source to illustrate how nostalgia can connect people to the past and culture, but this attempt is less successful and less accurate because it describes the narrator as returning to a childhood home rather than a family ancestral home, and it functions more descriptively than analytically. Because at least one integration is accurate, relevant, and purposeful in supporting the argument, the response meets the criteria for this row.

## Performance Task 2

### Individual Written Argument (continued)

#### Row 2: Understand and Analyze Context

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because, although it identifies a plausible larger context in the introduction—post-COVID-19 increases in isolation and loneliness—this remains general and does not explain the significance of the research question with specific, relevant detail. The response asserts that nostalgia could help people overcome post-pandemic loneliness and that nostalgia improves an individual’s mental well-being, without providing support to substantiate those claims; the response simply states that “studies proved that nostalgia -could help.” In the absence of a detailed explanation of significance or support for the “nostalgia helps” claim, the contextualization remains broad, and so the response does not meet the criteria for earning points in this row.

#### Row 3: Understand and Analyze Perspective

The response earned a score of **6** for this row because it presents multiple perspectives on the effects of nostalgia but stops short of evaluating or synthesizing them. In the section beginning on page 3 and continuing through page 6, the response juxtaposes several perspectives: Johnson and Fleury emphasize nostalgia’s emotional and psychological benefits; Novotney and Suttie describe its capacity to boost confidence and connection; and Norberg provides an opposing view that warns against “false nostalgia.” The discussion largely makes general comparisons rather than explaining specific relationships or connections among these perspectives—for example, on page 3, the response notes, “Fleury discusses how nostalgia provides a feeling of comfort, which relates to the source written by Nicole Johnson, which details the effects of nostalgia on emotions.” This illustrates descriptive linking of sources rather than analysis of their relationships or implications. While perspectives are mostly attributed accurately and their differences are clear, they are not evaluated or synthesized. Because the perspectives are correctly represented but not developed in conversation, the response meets the mid-level criteria for this row.

#### Row 4: Establish Argument

The response earned a score of **8** for this row because it presents a coherent and logically organized argument that is supported by relevant evidence, but the reasoning is repetitive and largely descriptive. The thesis—that nostalgia benefits mental health when balanced with awareness of its risks—is clear and consistent throughout, and the argument is effectively structured around the sub-sections Comfort in Identity, Finding One’s Identity, Strengthening Connections, and Danger of False Nostalgia. This structure provides a logical framework that supports cohesion and clarity. However, the commentary frequently summarizes or restates ideas rather than developing them analytically. For example, on page 4 the response concludes, “This shows how nostalgia can boost moods and happiness,” a statement that simply echoes Suttie’s claim without analyzing how this occurs or what it implies. Similarly, when discussing Novotney’s article, the response notes that nostalgia “can help some feel more connected to others, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation,” but again offers no explanation or evaluation. The argument remains coherent and student-driven, but these examples of descriptive commentary show a pattern of repeating rather than developing reasoning. Because the argument is logically structured and supported yet limited in analytical depth, the response fulfills the mid-level criteria for this row.



## Performance Task 2

### Individual Written Argument (continued)

#### Row 5: Select and Use Evidence

The response earned a score of **6** for this row because it includes sources that are relevant to the topic, but the credibility of those sources is not consistently established. Of the five non-stimulus sources listed in the Works Cited, one—*Frontiers in Psychology* (Fleury)—is a scholarly source with a complete citation. Two are university publications; however, while Suttie is introduced as “a psychologist at UC Berkeley,” indicating some authority, *Greater Good* is a newsletter rather than a scholarly journal. Other sources are more journalistic in nature and lack effective attribution to justify their inclusion in an academic argument. For instance, no information is provided about Johnson writing in *National Geographic*, and Novotney is described only as “a writer and editor at APA.” The response also treats the evidence within the Novotney article as her own research findings rather than identifying the original source of that evidence. The evidence is generally relevant to the topic of nostalgia’s effects on well-being, but it is frequently summarized without explaining how it supports the response’s specific claims, and examples occasionally repeat similar points across sources. With a limited number of total sources—and only one that is clearly scholarly—the argument draws on a narrow evidence base that adequately but not comprehensively supports its reasoning. Because the response includes relevant information but demonstrates inconsistent credibility, limited analysis, and only a single scholarly source, it meets the mid-level criteria for this row.

#### Row 6: Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution)

The response earned a score of **5** for this row because citations and attributions are accurate and consistent. In-text citations correspond precisely to entries in the complete Works Cited list, which is clearly organized alphabetically by the authors’ last names, demonstrating successful linkage. In the body of the response, clear attributive phrasing is used such as “Fleury writes,” “Novotney discusses,” and “Suttie emphasizes,” ensuring clarity of authorship. Because citation and attribution are both accurate and complete, the response meets the criteria for the high score in this row.

#### Row 7: Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style)

The response earned a score of **3** for this row because it maintains a clear, academic style throughout. Sentences are varied and controlled, and diction is precise and appropriate for an academic audience. For example, on page 5, at the beginning of the section titled Strengthening Connections, the writing demonstrates fluent syntax and effective transitions. While occasional repetition appears, it does not impede clarity. The writing communicates complex ideas effectively and meets the criteria for a high score in this row.

### Sample C

**1 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 0**

**2 Understand and Analyze Context Score: 0**

**3 Understand and Analyze Perspective Score: 0**

**4 Establish Argument Score: 0**

**5 Select and Use Evidence Score: 0**

**6 Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution) Score: 0**

**7 Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style) Score: 0**

#### Row 1: Understand and Analyze Context

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because it integrates a stimulus source (Norberg) and offers some discussion of it, but does not use it to contribute to the argument. The response summarizes information for no clear argumentative purpose. On page 6 the response also quotes the Binney source, but uses it to tangentially support vague assertions about things changing over time.

## Performance Task 2

### Individual Written Argument (continued)

**Row 2: Understand and Analyze Context**

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because it makes general and simplistic references to the context of the research question: “How to maintain a sense of stability and keep up in a world that’s constantly evolving?” While embedded in the response, there are some passing references to “new things such as AI, social media, technology, etc.,” these remain passing references. The context for the writer’s argument remains broad and overgeneralized.

**Row 3: Understand and Analyze Perspective**

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because it identifies and offers unsubstantiated statements about perspectives. For example, the first three pages summarize nostalgia according to a single stimulus package source. The response provides mostly summary and opinion and conveys only one point of view.

**Row 4: Establish Argument**

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because it summarizes information and employs inadequate reasoning. From start to finish, the response offers a summary of different types of nostalgia, recommends meditation, and then recommends keeping oneself educated by learning a new skill. Overall, the response offers an exploration of topics rather than an argument.

**Row 5: Select and Use Evidence**

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because, in addition to the stimulus material, the bibliography refers to four dot com websites. The evidence used in the response lacks credibility.

**Row 6: Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution)**

The response earned a score of **0** for this row because it demonstrates no organizational principle in the bibliography and only one instance of successful linking of an in-text citation to a bibliographic entry.

**Row 7: Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style)**

The response earned a score of **0** because it contains many examples of prose not appropriate for an academic audience. Multiple instances of colloquial language occur. For example: “Many times, we don’t know what we’ve got until tis stripped away or we’re shown what we missed out on.”