

2026



AP[®] English Language and Composition

Scoring Guidelines

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Synthesis Essay**6 points**

Napping, or getting brief intervals of sleep during the day, is practiced by many people who are unable to get the recommended number of hours of sleep per night. In some countries, stores and restaurants customarily close during midday hours to allow citizens to take a nap. Some argue that napping encourages productivity and provides health benefits. However, others argue that naps might actually limit productivity or leave individuals still feeling sleep-deprived.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the value, if any, of napping.

Source A (Guy article)

Source B (graph from Sommer)

Source C (Basu article)

Source D (Michigan State University article)

Source E (Cassidy article)

Source F (Tullo photo)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: - There is no defensible thesis. - The intended thesis only restates the prompt. - The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. - There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Only restate the prompt. - Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. - Equivocate or summarize other’s arguments but not the student’s (e.g., some people say it’s good, some people say it’s bad). - State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense.	Responses that earn this point: Respond to the prompt by developing a position on the value, if any, of napping, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating there are pros/cons.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <i>“Some people argue for napping because of the increased health benefits.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but do not take a position <i>“Recently, companies are allowing employees to nap, and studies showing effects related to napping are just coming to light.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but state an obvious fact as a claim <i>“Everyone needs sleep, and the recommended number of hours is 8 hours every night.”</i>	Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt <i>“The main value of napping is the health benefits.”</i> <i>“Napping during the day is important for many adults who have difficulty sleeping through the night, but napping can also increase worker productivity and should therefore be more widely practiced.”</i> <i>“There is no value to napping. Although it might seem reasonable to equate better health and productivity with napping, the research on napping is inconclusive. There is more scientific evidence to show that a good night’s sleep is the key to health and a productive lifestyle.”</i>
	Additional Notes: - The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. - The thesis may be anywhere within the response. - For a thesis to be defensible, the sources must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. - The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. - A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or references fewer than two of the provided sources.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence from or references at least two of the provided sources. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides evidence from or references at least three of the provided sources. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: - Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. - May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant.	Typical responses that earn 1 point: Tend to focus on summary or description of sources rather than specific details.	Typical responses that earn 2 points: - Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. - May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. - May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. - Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.	Typical responses that earn 3 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. - Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. - Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.	Typical responses that earn 4 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the sources to build an argument. - Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
Additional Notes: Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). - Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that...</i>” OR “<i>Some people say...</i>”). - Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument.	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: - Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions across the sources. - Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or arguments conveyed in the sources) by situating it within a broader context. - Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument throughout the response. - Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference.	

Rhetorical Analysis**6 points**

Laura Amy Schlitz is a librarian and author. In 2008 she was the recipient of the Newbery Medal, which is awarded annually by the American Library Association (ALA) for distinguished children’s literature. Upon receiving the award for her book *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village*, she delivered an acceptance speech at the ALA Annual Conference. The following is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Schlitz makes to achieve her purpose of communicating what it is to be a writer.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: - There is no defensible thesis. - The intended thesis only restates the prompt. - The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. - There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Only restate the prompt. - Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes. - Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense.	Responses that earn this point: Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt <u>and</u> clearly articulate a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices Schlitz makes to achieve her purpose of communicating what it is to be a writer.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <i>“Schlitz is a librarian who won the Newberry Medal for her book: Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village.”</i> Make a claim but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices <i>“Schlitz argues that writing is a challenging but worthwhile endeavor.”</i> Repeat provided information from the passage <i>“In the passage, Schlitz reveals that she decided to buy a kite when she turned 50 years old.”</i>	Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices <i>“Schlitz relies on personal anecdotes to achieve her purpose of communicating that being a writer can be like flying a kite.”</i> <i>“In her speech, Schlitz skillfully uses vivid language and imagery in order to communicate what it is to be a writer.”</i> <i>“Librarian and children’s author Laura Amy Schlitz tells a story from her past about her attempt to fly a kite. Highlighting both the challenge and eventual success of this activity, Schlitz uses her story to make an apt comparison to her experience as a writer, one who persevered and was rewarded with a Newberry Medal.”</i>
Additional Notes: - The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. - The thesis may be anywhere within the response. - For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. - The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. - A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: - Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. - May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant.	Typical responses that earn 1 point: - Tend to focus on summary or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques. - Mention rhetorical choices with little or no explanation.	Typical responses that earn 2 points: - Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. - May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. - May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. - Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.	Typical responses that earn 3 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument. - Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. - Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.	Typical responses that earn 4 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument. - Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. - Explain how the writer’s use of rhetorical choices contributes to the student’s interpretation of the passage.
Additional Notes: - Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. - To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same rhetorical choice if each instance further contributes to the argument, purpose, or message of the passage.					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: • Attempt to contextualize the text, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). • Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that...</i>” OR “<i>Some people say...</i>”). • Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text. • Oversimplify complexities in the text. • Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance their analysis.	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: 1. Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation). 2. Explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions. 3. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: • This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference.	

Argument Essay**6 points**

In the 2009 keynote address for the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, physician, engineer, and former astronaut Mae Jemison—the first African American woman in space—stated: “Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations. If you adopt their attitudes, then the possibility won’t exist because you’ll have already shut it out.... You can hear other people’s wisdom, but you’ve got to re-evaluate the world for yourself.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Jemison’s claim about considering others’ opinions is valid.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: - There is no defensible thesis. - The intended thesis only restates the prompt. - The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. - There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Only restate the prompt. - Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. - State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense.	Responses that earn this point: Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Jemison’s claim about considering others’ opinions is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Do not take a position <i>“Jemison explains that we should not rely on the thoughts of others.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim <i>“Everyone has an imagination.”</i>	Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt. <i>“Mae Jemison makes a valid point. We should experience the world through our own lens and not conform to the beliefs of others.”</i> <i>“Considering other people’s opinions can be good when you want to seek advice or need help with something, but when people give unsolicited advice just to tell you what to do, it is better to stay listening to yourself.”</i> <i>“I disagree with Jemison’s idea that we limit ourselves if we rely on the wisdom of others. Early in life we need to internalize the wisdom and experience of adults, especially teachers and scholars, who can guide us to deeper realms of knowledge that we couldn’t attain on our own.”</i>
Additional Notes: - The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. - The thesis may be anywhere within the response. - The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. - A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: - Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. - May be just opinion with no evidence or evidence that is irrelevant.	Typical responses that earn 1 point: Tend to focus on summary of evidence rather than specific details.	Typical responses that earn 2 points: - Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. - May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. - May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. - Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.	Typical responses that earn 3 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. - Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. - Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.	Typical responses that earn 4 points: - Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. - Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. - Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
Additional Notes: Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where...</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time...</i>”). - Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that...</i>” OR “<i>Some people say...</i>”). - Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument.	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: - Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions. - Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or an argument related to the prompt) by situating it within a broader context. - Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument. - Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference.	