

2008 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (Form B)

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Read the following passage from “America Needs Its Nerds” by Leonid Fridman. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Fridman develops his argument.

Line There is something very wrong with the system
of values in a society that has only derogatory terms
like nerd and geek for the intellectually curious and
academically serious.

5 A geek, according to *Webster’s New World
Dictionary*, is a street performer who shocks the
public by biting off heads of live chickens. It is a
telling fact about our language and our culture that
someone dedicated to pursuit of knowledge is
10 compared to a freak biting the head off a live chicken.

Even at a prestigious academic institution like
Harvard, anti-intellectualism is rampant: Many
students are ashamed to admit, even to their friends,
how much they study. Although most students try
15 to keep up their grades, there is a minority of
undergraduates for whom pursuing knowledge is
the top priority during their years at Harvard. Nerds
are ostracized while athletes are idolized.

The same thing happens in U.S. elementary and
20 high schools. Children who prefer to read books
rather than play football, prefer to build model
airplanes rather than get wasted at parties with their
classmates, become social outcasts. Ostracized for
their intelligence and refusal to conform to society’s
25 anti-intellectual values, many are deprived of a
chance to learn adequate social skills and acquire
good communication tools.

Enough is enough.

Nerds and geeks must stop being ashamed of
30 who they are. It is high time to face the persecutors
who haunt the bright kid with thick glasses from

kindergarten to the grave. For America’s sake,
the anti-intellectual values that pervade our society
must be fought.

35 There are very few countries in the world where
anti-intellectualism runs as high in popular culture as
it does in the U.S. In most industrialized nations, not
least of all our economic rivals in East Asia, a kid
who studies hard is lauded and held up as an example
40 to other students.

In many parts of the world, university
professorships are the most prestigious and materially
rewarding positions. But not in America, where
average professional ballplayers are much more
45 respected and better paid than faculty members
of the best universities.

How can a country where typical parents are
ashamed of their daughter studying mathematics
instead of going dancing, or of their son reading
50 Weber* while his friends play baseball, be expected to
compete in the technology race with Japan or remain
a leading political and cultural force in Europe?
How long can America remain a world-class power
if we constantly emphasize social skills and physical
55 prowess over academic achievement and intellectual
ability?

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* Maximilian Weber (1864–1920), German political economist and
sociologist

AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2008 SCORING GUIDELINES (Form B)

Question 2

The score should reflect a judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write; therefore, the essay is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards that are appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

- 9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for 8 essays and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their explanation or demonstrate particularly impressive control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** analyze* how Fridman develops his argument. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

- 7 Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but provide a more complete explanation or demonstrate a more mature prose style.

6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** analyze how Fridman develops his argument. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5 Essays earning a score of 5 analyze how Fridman develops his argument. These essays may, however, provide uneven, inconsistent, or limited explanations. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** analyze how Fridman develops his argument. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may suggest immature control of writing.

- 3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in analyzing how Fridman develops his argument. The essays may show less control of writing.

*For the purposes of scoring, analysis refers to identifying features of a text and explaining how the author uses these to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

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2008 SCORING GUIDELINES (Form B)

Question 2 (continued)

2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in analyzing how Fridman develops his argument. These essays may misunderstand the prompt; fail to analyze how Fridman develops his argument; or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing.

- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, and/or weak in their control of language.
- 0** Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt.
- Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

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The Return of the Nerd

In the end, it will not be the basketball player or wrestler that allows America to maintain its position of technological and ~~scholarly~~ scholarly achievement in the world, but, as Friedman tells us, the nerd. Indeed, the great society which allows for the tremendous fame of athletes and other pop-culture icons to be perpetuated is built upon the backs of nerds. How would we see a game without television? How would we ~~be~~ listen to a new hit-single without radio? We would not, and now, because of the achievements of the geek, they are being discriminated against. The term "geek" in itself is derogatory, as we now equate a drive and determination to learn with an outcast street-performer. "Enough is enough." Friedman develops his argument for the return to the geek through description and general exemplar, making a very persuasive article against anti-intellectualism.

Starting with a definition of the term "geek", Friedman exemplifies his ~~first~~ opening statement of discrimination against intellectuals and a passion for academics. He conveys the message further by taking Harvard, among the most prominent educational institutions in the world, as a prime example of anti-intellectualism. Even at an institution at the forefront of education and advancement, the athlete is still held higher than the academic. ^{creating a striking example for the reader} It is also of interest that the first ever football team was first created at Harvard. Friedman then expands his example to social experiences of childhood, of the ostracizing of intellectuals that many of my fellow test-takers

and I can relate to to some degree.

The author, after presenting examples to make the anti-intellectual sentiment in society understood, rallies to his point: "Enough is enough". From here, Friedman presents his ^{strongly worded} argument against the pervading feeling in society, an argument to restore the nerd, the geek, the ostracized academic, to their rightful positions in society. Taking the fight to the global level, the author references "our economic rivals in East Asia," where intellectualism is celebrated by the society as a whole. ^{a thought that many Americans currently concerned with outsourcing jobs can relate to.} These sentiments carry Friedman into his next thought - the wage gap between athletes and educators and researchers that is omni-present in America. Finally, the author makes his last point: the prominence of the nation itself is at jeopardy on a global scale because of the anti-intellectualism in society. ^{which shocks the readers into taking another look at how they themselves view intellectualism - who could promote anti-intellectualism if it threatens the well-being of the nation?} Society has turned its back on the intellectuals - reaping ~~has~~ their produce and leaving them behind. Against social and public feeling, these academics have continued their drive for scholarly glory. Indeed, it is the same reward of achievement that satiates an intellectual as the reward of a massive pay-check to a layperson talented in hitting a ball with a stick. Friedman tells us that our technological lead is finite and the possibility of falling behind globally, both economically and socially, a very real one. Friedman, through his broad examples and concise and effective argument, leaves but one taste in the reader's mouth: bring back the geek.

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~~Fridman~~ When reading Fridman's article, the reader is truly convinced that "America Needs Its Nerds." The way in which Fridman structures his argument, uses descriptive examples, and ~~employment~~^{employs} of rhetorical strategies ~~all contribute~~ ~~to the ultimately convince the reader~~ all contribute to the strength of his argument.

Fridman first introduces his argument by making a profound statement that reflects his strong opinion. In the first sentence, Fridman states "There is . . . academically serious," which gives ~~him~~ him an authoritative tone, ~~so~~ so that his argument becomes more assertive. To back up his claim that there is "something very ~~bad~~ wrong with the system" of America's he defines the definition of "geek" which has been relentlessly used on ~~the~~ those dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. While a geek, in dictionary terms - is a ~~chicken~~ chicken head-biting freak, "geeks" in modern-day terms are not and ~~it is~~ ~~that~~ he wants to clarify the difference between these two in order to make the reader realize how insulting it is ~~to label~~ ~~the~~ academically motivated people "as "geeks." ~~It~~

Fridman then ~~goes on to~~ gives a more specific example as to why American society ~~is~~ has such strong anti-~~intellectualism~~ Intellectualism: fear of being ostracized by society's elites, which consist of athletes and popular students. Fridman makes a ~~sharp~~^{sharp} contrast between students who party/play football and students who build airplanes/read. He makes this

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2B
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Contrast to allow the reader to see the injustice ~~of~~ "nerds" and "geeks" face in society. While nerds ~~are~~ ~~not~~ concern themselves with useful, time-productive, intellectually stimulating activities, party people and football players waste their time; yet, nerds and geeks are still oppressed by others. To illustrate his intolerant attitude of ~~this~~ the situation "nerds" face, he states a telegraphic sentence in line 28. "~~Enough is enough~~" By stating "Enough is enough," Fridman is standing up for these wrongly oppressed "nerds" and is demanding that they no longer be oppressed by society—he has had all he can take with American society. This telegraphic ~~is~~ reinforces his authoritative tone and creates a shift in attitude from one that was feeling ~~wrongly~~ wrongly oppressed to one that is more ~~and~~ forceful and determined to receive justice.

The following paragraph displays his authoritative tone and it sounds as if Fridman is ~~calling~~ uniting all nerds throughout America to rally against their oppressors. It is the climax or the heart of the essay in which he states his long-~~time~~ hoped-for desire of "facing the persecutors who haunt the bright kid." He believes that anti-intellectualism must be fought for America, ~~and~~ for America's SAKE and the following statement gives an explanation as to why this battle must be fought.

While other parts of the world highly respect intellectuals and educators, America does not; rather, America esteems

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2 B

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their baseball players over university professors, and this failure to respect ~~intelle~~ the intellectually motivated will lead to America's downfall.

In order to ~~put emphasis~~ make the reader realize the ~~the~~ drastic change in attitude that needs to be taken, Friedman asks a series of rhetorical questions. The questions serve as thought-provokers, which help the reader understand that more "nerds" and "geeks" are needed in America if America is to retain their influence throughout the world. Both questions also use anaphora as a means to emphasize the ~~the~~ need for "academic achievement and intellectual ability" in America.

Friedman's argument is highly convincing in the way that he structurally organizes his essay ~~for~~ by stating his opinion, using factual evidence, and reinforcing his argument with ~~a~~ a conclusion ~~consisting~~ consisting of rhetorical questions. His use of rhetorical strategies such as questions, contrasts, definition, anaphora, and diction ~~such as it is as these lines~~ (presented in line 30-32) ^{enhance} his argument, ~~the~~ making it more convincing so that the reader understands "America's Need for Nerds."

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Question 2

2C

1 of 2

"America Needs its Nerds" by Leonid Fridman is a powerfully crafted argument on the social status of so called geeks. The hard hitting imagery Fridman uses carries the words on the paper into a motion picture playing in ones mind.

Nerds, where would we be without them? "nerds and geeks must stop being ashamed of who they are." People must admit that being called a nerd or a geek in today's society is basically an insult. Why? People of this stature should not be ashamed ~~and~~ or be a peasant on the social triangle. Fridman in his first paragraph states that even the ~~name~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ label of nerd or geek should not be placed on people that are "academically serious" or "intellectually curious". Then with that he actually tells the world what a true geek is, a street performer who bites off ~~and~~ chickens heads. Shocking that our society would actually connect the two together. He takes a very defensive approach towards society and how they placed the academically elite as outcast.

This message was an oad to the student who are fully dedicated to their work and not friends or sports. Fridman supports them in all



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on this page as it is designated in the exam.

endeavors saying that it is okay to be who one
is and to not let society tell you who you are
are before you can tell them. He also points out
the flaws that America has made. "Average ballplayers
are much more respected and better paid than faculty
members of the best universities." With that
America needs to change their ways and award
those who have given their gift of knowledge
to us.

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AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2008 SCORING COMMENTARY (Form B)

Question 2

Sample: 2A
Score: 8

This effective essay begins by noting a basic irony: “the great society which allows for the tremendous fame of athletes and other pop-culture icons to be perpetuated is built upon the backs of nerds.” Although occasionally the essay comes close to slipping into summary, the student keeps an eye to analysis by explaining the devices (such as definition and exemplification) that Fridman uses. The student recognizes Fridman’s cause-and-effect organization and uses examples to show its effectiveness. The language of the essay is varied and appropriate, and its organization is controlled and focused.

Sample: 2B
Score: 6

This adequate essay works its way to a score of 6 by its fullness and occasional insightfulness. The organization follows a linear reading of Fridman’s text, but the student does manage to provide analysis in each section. The student recognizes the function (not just the presence, a lower-half trait) of literary devices such as rhetorical questions, use of evidence, and contrast. Although the diction can at times be clunky (“The questions serve as thought-provokers”), the language is generally adequate and conveys the student’s ideas clearly.

Sample: 2C
Score: 2

This lower-half essay demonstrates limited success in its analysis. The student tends to drop in quotations from the passage without providing any meaningful commentary or explanation. The essay, for the most part, consists of paraphrase with personal asides about the content of the passage. The language (diction, syntax, sentence variety) is limited. Sentences like “This message was an oad to the student who are fully dedicated to their work and not friends or sports” indicate consistent weakness in writing.