



Skill-building Free-Response Question

AP[®] English Language and Composition

Prompt #1

On April 4, 1968, before boarding a plane to attend a presidential campaign rally in Indianapolis, Senator Robert F. Kennedy learned of the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Despite fears that rioting may put his safety at risk, Kennedy attended the largely African American rally as planned and gave the following speech responding to King’s death and urging peace.

Read the following passage carefully and list the following:

- Kennedy’s central claim or purpose
- Two rhetorical choices Kennedy makes and:
 - a summarized or directly quoted example of each
 - a brief explanation of how each of those choices helps support his claim/purpose
- A thesis statement that communicates Kennedy’s central claim or purpose and a description of the rhetorical choices he uses to support his claim or achieve his purpose

Line Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m only going to
talk to you just for a minute or so this evening,
because I have some—some very sad news
for all of you—Could you lower those signs,
5 please?—I have some very sad news for all of
you, and, I think, sad news for all of our fellow
citizens, and people who love peace all over
the world; and that is that Martin Luther King
was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis,
10 Tennessee.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to
love and to justice between fellow human
beings. He died in the cause of that effort.
In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the
15 United States, it’s perhaps well to ask what
kind of a nation we are and what direction
we want to move in. For those of you who
are black—considering the evidence evidently

20 is that there were white people who were
responsible—you can be filled with bitterness,
and with hatred, and a desire for revenge.

We can move in that direction as a
country, in greater polarization—black people
amongst blacks, and white amongst whites,
25 filled with hatred toward one another. Or
we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King
did, to understand, and to comprehend, and
replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed
that has spread across our land, with an effort
30 to understand, compassion, and love.

For those of you who are black and are
tempted to fill with—be filled with hatred
and mistrust of the injustice of such an act,
against all white people, I would only say
35 that I can also feel in my own heart the same
kind of feeling. I had a member of my family



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killed, but he was killed by a white man.

40 But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poem, my—my favorite poet was Aeschylus¹. And he once wrote:

45 *Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget
falls drop by drop upon the heart,
until, in our own despair,
against our will,
comes wisdom
50 through the awful grace of God.*

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but
55 is love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another; and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.

60 So I ask you tonight to return home, to

say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King—yeah, it's true—but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of
65 us love—a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past, but we—and we will have
70 difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it's not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in
75 this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that abide in our land.

80 And let's dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.

Thank you very much.



Rubric

Thesis

- 0 points** Does not present a defensible thesis
- 1 point** Identifies the author’s central claim or purpose AND his rhetorical choices

Evidence and Commentary

- 0 points** Does not offer information relevant to the prompt or repeats information in the prompt
- 1 point** The response meets ONE of the following criteria:
 - Summarizes the text AND provides little or no commentary
 - Provides vague information from the text AND provides little or no commentary
 - Provides minimally relevant information from the text AND provides little or no commentary
- 2 points** The response meets BOTH of the following criteria:
 - Discusses at least two rhetorical choices and corresponding evidence from the text
 - Provides some commentary that explains how the evidence supports the thesis (may repeat, oversimplify, or misinterpret cited evidence)

Exemplar Prompt #1

Purpose

Kennedy’s central purpose is to promote peace after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

Rhetorical choice 1

Kennedy repeatedly uses the pronoun “we.” In paragraph 2, Kennedy explains that people could be filled with bitterness about King’s murder, but instead, they should consider “what kind of nation we are and what direction we want to move in.” Later, in paragraph 5, he says that “we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand.” He uses “we” to call people together, emphasize the importance of unity, and urge Americans to move beyond violence, as King would have wanted.

Rhetorical choice 2

Kennedy refers to his favorite poem, written by Aeschylus. He quotes the part of the poem that acknowledges that people may be hurt but that they should allow for “grace” instead of pain, encouraging the audience to embrace “wisdom” instead of violence, again as King would have wanted. Kennedy wants to convey that violence isn’t the answer and will only lead to further division among Americans.



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Thesis

In his 1968 speech after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy gave a speech to encourage Americans to be more like Martin Luther King and replace violence with understanding, compassion, and love. He communicates that purpose through his repeated use of “we” as well as using a quotation from Aeschylus.

Scoring commentary: 3/3

Thesis: 1/1

Provides a sentence that identifies the author’s purpose and another that identifies two rhetorical choices:

- States that Kennedy’s purpose is to encourage his audience to imitate King and “replace violence with understanding”; identifies Kennedy’s choice to repeatedly use “we” and to quote Aeschylus

Evidence and commentary: 2/2

Includes examples and evidence of two rhetorical choices as well as some commentary that connects each choice to the student’s thesis:

- Examines Kennedy’s “repeated use of ‘we’” in P2 and P5 and how he uses this repetition to “emphasize the importance of unity”
- Explains how Kennedy’s quotation from Aeschylus helps encourage those who were upset by King’s murder “to embrace ‘wisdom’ instead of violence,” which will help to prevent further “division among Americans”



Prompt #2

Over the last few decades, the American population has seen dramatic increases in the rates of health problems related to excess sugar intake. These concerns have prompted many state and local governments to consider ways to reduce sugary soda consumption across the population. One measure, in particular, has been gaining traction: discouraging soda consumption by imposing a heavy sales tax on these products.

Carefully read sources A through D (listed below), including the introductory information for each source, to develop your position on whether local or state governments should place heavy sales taxes on soda in the interest of public health. Then, write a brief introduction that states your thesis and provide a paragraph of support that synthesizes material from at least two sources.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that makes a defensible claim.
- Provide evidence from at least two sources using a direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.



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Rubric

Thesis

0 points Does not present a defensible thesis

1 point Presents a defensible thesis

Evidence and Commentary

0 points Does not offer information relevant to the prompt or repeats information in the prompt

1 point The response meets the following criteria:

- Provides relevant evidence from one source (summarized or quoted)
- Provides little to no commentary about how that evidence connects to the thesis

2 points The response meets the following criteria:

- Provides relevant evidence from two sources (summarized or quoted)
- Provides some basic commentary about how the evidence connects to the thesis (may repeat, oversimplify, or misinterpret cited evidence)

Exemplar Prompt #2

We all know that drinking sugary soda is bad for our health. It rots our teeth, adds empty calories, and it's not very hydrating. Clearly, we should all drink less of it. However, taxing soda is not the best way to change people's behavior. We should try other approaches first, like educating the public.

Before imposing a heavy tax on people regardless of their health, why not try more of what Los Angeles County is doing to educate people through its Choose Health LA campaign (Source A)? The image shocks people by showing how much sugar they are actually drinking every day—not just in soda but also in other common sugary drinks like sports and energy drinks. This image is likely to have a bigger effect than a tax on soda because it could make people more aware of all the unhealthy drink choices they make. Will a campaign like this work, though? Most likely, it will. The sugar industry has had success with “advertising sugary products to children,” and they “create campaigns that promote purchasing high-sugar foods” (Source B). So, it makes sense that messages about healthy choices like Source A could also convince people to drink less sugar. Before taxing everyone who wants a soda, governments should try public health campaigns like the one in LA County because people usually respond better to persuasion than they do to force.



Scoring commentary: 3/3

Thesis: 1/1

Presents a clear and defensible thesis:

- Takes the clear position that “taxing soda is not the best way to change people’s behavior” and claims that a better approach is “educating the public,” which can be supported with examples of efforts to do so

Evidence and commentary: 2/2

Presents details about an alternative way to discourage consumption of sugary drinks using evidence and reasoning from two sources:

- Describes how the Choose Health LA campaign image (Source A) educates people by shocking them with “how much sugar they are actually drinking” and comments that it would “have a bigger effect than a tax on soda” by causing “people to be more aware of all the unhealthy drink choices they make”
- Uses information from Source B about the sugar industry’s use of “advertising...to children” and other “campaigns” that encourage sugar consumption to argue that messages like Source A would work in a similar way to discourage sugary drink consumption



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Source A:

“You Wouldn’t Eat 22 Packs of Sugar.” Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.
<https://choosehealthla.com>



Source B:

Schutt, Mary Katherine A. and Monnat, Shannon M., “The Sugar Industry Gets Rich and We Get Sick” (2021). Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion: Population Health Research Brief Series. 109. <https://surface.syr.edu/lerner/109>

The excerpt below is from a recent issue brief published by a research institute within the Syracuse University system.

The Souring Effects of Sugar

Although scientists and nutritionists have debated the “best” diets for decades, nutritionists, dieticians, and diet “gurus” agree on one thing: excess sugar is damaging to our health. Nearly half of U.S. cardiometabolic deaths (deaths from heart disease and diabetes) each year are due to diet, and sugar is a major culprit. Americans consume about three times more added sugar than the maximum amount recommended by nutritional experts in a given day, which totals 57 pounds of added sugar each year, on average. Too much sugar can overload our organs, leading to disease and dysfunction. Excess sugar consumption causes obesity, diabetes, heart disease, premature aging, irritable bowel syndrome, and has even been tied to depression. Have you ever wondered why something that is so bad for our health is so abundantly available? Our country’s obesity problem is due in large part to the influence of the sugar industry.



The Sugar Industry – A Commercial Determinant of Health and Manufacturer of Illness

Commercial determinants of health (CDoH) are “strategies and approaches used by the private sector to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health.” Corporations and associations like soda and candy companies, the Sugar Association, and the American Sugar Refining Group have a unifying goal: to make money from our sugar consumption. Their bottom line depends on us consuming their products so much that we become sick. In short, the sugar industry is a “manufacturer of illness.” Their strategies include advertising sugary products to children, adding sugar to everyday products that we do not think of as sweets (e.g., bread, granola bars, low-fat yogurt, and milk), using the media and health organizations to create campaigns that promote purchasing high-sugar foods, and lobbying policymakers to enact policies that subsidize the sugar industry and promote the consumption of high-sugar foods. Their strategies are widespread but often invisible to the public.

Freedom of Choice?

The sugar industry and its advocates have been crafty in convincing Americans that any type of regulation or taxation represents a danger to individual freedom of choice. Some argue that we should be able to make our own personal dietary decisions and that the government should not interfere in such choices. However, the reality is that the government is already interfering through its billions of dollars in subsidies to U.S. sugar growers every year. Second, sickness and premature death are not freedom. Real freedom would mean knowing what ingredients are in the foods we buy, not being bombarded with advertisements for unhealthy products, and having policymakers who worry about protecting public health more than corporate profits.

Source C:

Smith, Travis A., Biing-Hwan Lin, and Jonq-Ying Lee. Taxing Caloric Sweetened Beverages: Potential Effects on Beverage Consumption, Calorie Intake, and Obesity, ERR-100, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2010.
https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/44732/8311_err100_1_.pdf?v=0

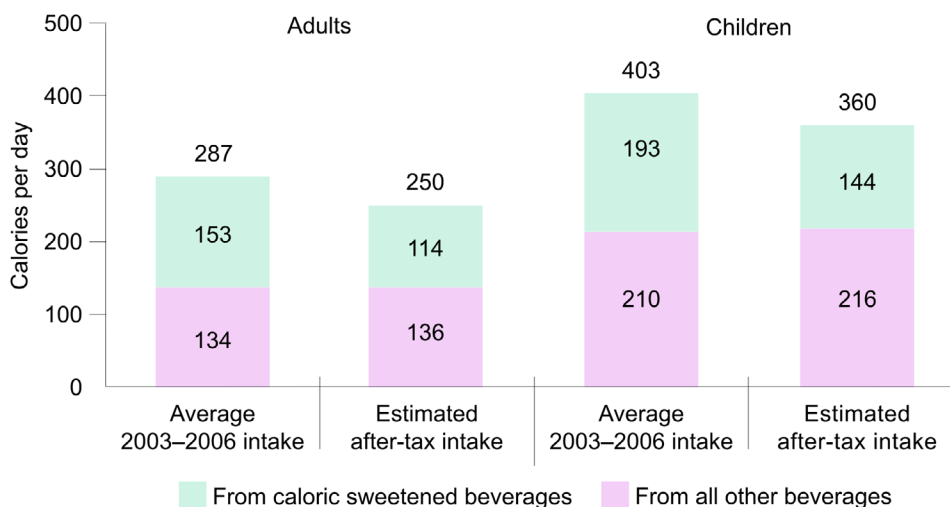
The excerpt below is from a study conducted by the US Department of Agriculture.

This study analyzed the effects of a hypothetical tax on caloric sweetened sodas, fruit drinks, sports and energy drinks, and powdered mixes. The study found that consumers facing a higher price induced by a tax would react by adjusting their choices among alternative beverages, such as diet drinks, bottled water, juice, coffee/tea, or milk.



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A 20 percent price increase from a tax on caloric sweetened beverages is estimated to reduce total calorie intake from beverages by 13 percent for adults and 11 percent for children



Source: Economic Research Service calculations based on the National Health and Examination Survey data, 2003-2006

Results suggest that:

- By assuming that 1 pound of body fat has about 3,500 calories, and assuming all else remains equal, the daily calorie reductions would translate into an average reduction of 3.8 pounds over a year for adults and 4.5 pounds over a year for children.
- The weight loss induced by the tax could reduce the overweight prevalence among adults from 66.9 to 62.4 percent and the prevalence of obesity from 33.4 to 30.4 percent.
- For children, the at-risk-of-overweight prevalence would decline from 32.3 to 27.0 percent and the overweight prevalence would decline from 16.6 to 13.7 percent.
- The tax-induced reduction in calorie intake could not only reduce obesity rates but also help keep certain borderline individuals from joining the ranks of the obese or overweight.

The use of economic incentives or disincentives to encourage healthful food choices has received heightened attention among policymakers in an effort to improve the American diet. Our results in the present study suggest that consumers are relatively responsive to price changes—a 10 percent price increase is estimated to reduce purchases by 12.6 percent.

To promote healthier food choices, alternative strategies to taxing caloric sweetened beverages exist—subsidizing healthier beverage choices, restricting supply of unhealthy beverages, or improving informational campaigns. Many of these types of policies have been implemented for children in schools. For example, 31 States had policies limiting access to and/or setting nutrition standards for competitive foods in schools in 2009, including caloric sweetened beverages (Trust for America's Health, 2009). If the objective is to reduce the obesity prevalence, however, it is important to note that some juices and reduced-fat milk contain more calories than sodas. Children have also responded positively to lowering the price of healthy snacks and raising the price of less healthy snacks in school settings (French et al., 2001; Jeffrey et al., 1994). The same pricing strategy could be considered to encourage healthier beverage choices at school.



Source D:

Laughlin, Lynda. "Soda Tax Would Boost Public Health." Greater Greater Washington. 18 May, 2010. <https://ggwash.org/view/5164/soda-tax-would-boost-public-health>

The passage below is from an article published on the website of a nonprofit civic organization.

Proposals to tax soda are looking likely to fail in Pennsylvania and New York. Will one pass in Washington DC? Mary Cheh's DC Healthy Schools Act proposes a tax of 1 cent per fluid ounce of sugary soft drinks. A 1 cent tax would add about \$1.44 to the cost of a 12 pack of soda. Such a tax would generate about \$16 million annually and provide the \$6 million Cheh needs to implement school programs that promote healthy eating behaviors as well as healthier breakfast and lunch options.

While a small tax can generate millions, will it actually have the effect of reducing soda consumption? Most likely not. Studies indicate that a tax of at least 18 percent would be needed. Experts at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity argue that the tax needs to be high if we want to change Americans' addiction to sugary drinks. However, city council members and the voting public may be less willing to accept a tax much higher than 1 cent. Only those who truly think that obesity is a major problem for the district would be willing to pay a higher soda tax.

Opponents of a soda tax argue that a tax would disproportionately hurt the poor who spend a larger proportion of their income on food. This may be true, but only for poor people who consume more soft drinks. The bigger problem for low-income households is having access to grocery stores that offer healthy, affordable food options. It is no coincidence that areas of the District that lack access to grocery stores (mainly in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8) tend to have higher rates of obesity than wards in the upper Northwest. Hopefully Cheh's program could be extended to provide food subsidies to families living in areas with few healthy food options.

The beverage industry is fiercely opposing the proposed tax. The Maryland-Delaware-D.C. beverage association and more than three dozen city grocers and restaurants have formed a group called No D.C. Beverage Tax. The group has run full-page ads in the Metro along with other local papers and radio spots.

While much of the debate regarding the soda tax is focused on the "tax" itself, proponents of the tax need to focus more on the public health message. The purpose behind the Healthy Schools act is to fund nutrition programs and reduce consumption of unhealthy products. Hopefully it will be the public health message, and not the industry message, that will resonate with city council members when the act is up for a final vote later this month. Pass the soda tax, it's good public health policy.



Prompt #3

To conform means to follow the standards and expectations of a group. We often conform because we want to be accepted by the people or organizations that are important to us and avoid the pain of rejection and isolation. However, some claim that the cost of conforming—abandoning one’s individuality or principles—is not worth the benefits that come with fitting in.

Consider what you know about conformity from your reading, experience, and observations. Write a brief introduction and include a thesis that states your position on whether, or under what conditions, a person should conform. Then, write a supporting paragraph that provides two pieces of evidence and explains how each supports your argument.

In your response you should do the following:

- Write an introduction with a thesis that makes a defensible claim.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Explain the relationship between your evidence and your thesis.



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Rubric

Thesis

0 points Does not present a defensible position

1 point Presents a defensible position

Evidence and Commentary

0 points Does not offer information relevant to the prompt or repeats information in the prompt

1 point The response meets BOTH of the following criteria:

- Provides one piece of relevant evidence or example
- Provides little or no relevant commentary

2 points The response meets BOTH of the following criteria:

- Provides at least two pieces of relevant evidence or examples
- Provides some basic commentary connecting the evidence/examples to the thesis (may repeat, oversimplify, or misinterpret cited evidence)

Exemplar Prompt #3

In order to be part of a group, individuals must conform from time to time. However, individuals can still find ways to belong to a group without abandoning their identity.

Many schools today require students to wear uniforms. In order to be allowed into these schools, students must show up in the same outfit as everybody else. However, students still find ways to be themselves. They show off their style and sense of fashion in their hairstyles, piercings, backpacks, and shoes. They follow the rules but still make unique choices about the things they can in order to show their personality. The military, however, doesn't allow even those personal choices because every detail of a soldier's appearance is set by a list of strict rules. Belonging to the military means conforming to those standards. Recently, I read a news article about Black women in the military who felt the rules about hairstyles didn't consider the nature of their hair, and in many cases they had to straighten their hair to conform. These women were forced to choose between being who they are and being in the military. Some Black female soldiers decided to take the issue up the chain of command, and eventually they were able to get all branches of the military to revise their dress codes. These women were able to stand up for their culture and individuality, and they ended up having a positive influence on the whole system.



Scoring commentary: 3/3

Thesis: 1/1

Presents a clear, defensible thesis that responds to the prompt:

- Concedes that “individuals must conform from time to time” but takes the stance that they “can still find ways to belong to a group without abandoning their identity”

Evidence and commentary: 2/2

Provides relevant examples from observation and reading and explains how the evidence relates to the thesis:

- Provides the example of students who conform by wearing school uniforms but who still “show off their style and sense of fashion in their hairstyles, piercings, backpacks, and shoes”; includes commentary that students can follow the rules yet still “show their personality”
- Describes the story of Black women who wanted military careers and protested restrictions on their natural hairstyles; includes commentary that shows how they stayed within the system and stood up for “their culture and individuality”