

2019 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

Suggested time—40 minutes.

(This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The term “overrated” is often used to diminish concepts, places, roles, etc. that the speaker believes do not deserve the prestige they commonly enjoy; for example, many writers have argued that success is overrated, a character in a novel by Anthony Burgess famously describes Rome as a “vastly overrated city,” and Queen Rania of Jordan herself has asserted that “[b]eing queen is overrated.”

Select a concept, place, role, etc. to which you believe that the term “overrated” should be applied. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you explain your judgment. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.

Argument Prompt

STOP

END OF EXAM

*Sample
Scores
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AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
2019 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Sample Identifier: M

Score: 9

- Using appropriate and convincing evidence, the student argues effectively that conventional ideas of success—fame, ivy league education—are overrated.
- The writer’s supporting examples (Bourdain, college admission scandal, the student’s own yearning to be an “Ivy League” admit) are especially thoroughly developed.
- The student furthers the argument in a sophisticated way by moving from the collective example of celebrity to a personal example, showing the writer is not exempt from these ideas about success.
- The student goes beyond restating the thesis, exploring the idea that social media amplifies such ideas about success (“The filters, the lighting—it all makes those experiences, those achievements, that lifestyle, look so great”) which leads to a thoughtful conclusion that success must be measured in a deeper way and that happiness should not be linked not to conventional notions of success but to “Joy and Love. People, not things.”
- The writer shows sophistication in their control of writing, making effective use of fragments and rhetorical questions.

Sample Identifier: D

Score: 8

- The student argues effectively that because people overlook the racism that Thomas Jefferson showed in his writings and his life, they overrate his positive contributions to the nation.
- The writer employs appropriate and convincing evidence through a series of well-developed examples: racism expressed in “Notes on the State of Virginia,” his founding of the University of Virginia to counter Northern abolitionism, and the way he led his life—his relationship with his slave Sally Hemings, his failure to free any slave except the children resulting from that relationship, and freeing them only after his death.
- The writer makes an especially coherent, if one-sided, argument despite some lapses (“Notes” is not a novel, and Social Darwinism emerged well after Jefferson’s time).
- Generally, the student demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the effective elements of prose—e.g., note how convincingly the student marshals evidence to reveal the questionable motives behind Jefferson’s founding of UVA: “The very structure of the school supports slavery, as the buildings include rooms intended as slave quarters, and areas where slaves could work without the white students seeing them.”

Sample Identifier: Q

Score: 7

- The student argues that “grades are overrated because they cause unnecessary amounts of stress and do not dictate your success.”
- The writer uses appropriate and sufficient examples to support the argument that the emphasis on high grades not only leads to stress (suicides at home and abroad resulting from grade pressure, girls in lunchroom talking constantly about being stressed over Bs) but also that this emphasis is misguided because grades do not ultimately determine success
- The writer offers counterexamples that experience, internships, or a portfolio showcasing hobbies or talents beyond school are much better indicators of achievement than a “misleading letter or a number.”
- The writer demonstrates a more thorough development and a more complete explanation of the argument than an essay that would score a 6.

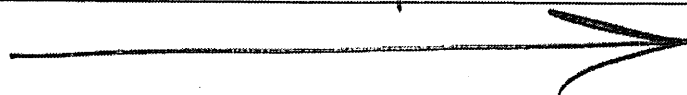
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~~"I see it, I want it, I like it, I got it"~~ "I see it, I want it, I like it, I ^{bought} got it"

Singer Arianna Grande declares in her boujee anthem, "T rings" a ^{pop ballad hit} ~~hit~~ inspired by her buying 7 diamond rings from Tiffany and Co. for herself and her 6 best friends. Because she could. In our ~~consumerism~~ capitalist society where consumensim is both encouraged and the norm, ~~having~~ wealth has a certain allure. And to be wealthier, we think we need to be wildly successful. To us, weath = success - a simple equation, no variables involved. But in the end, does wealth make us happier? Does success fill our souls and satisfy us? Does fame? ~~Our~~ Once ^{Success is achieved,} ~~we achieve~~ ^{we} ~~get~~ fame secured, whether through national celebrity or admission into the Ivy League, it pales in comparison to our preconceived notions of it. Success and fame, celebrity and Ivy League education, are overrated.

Chef Anthony Bourdain is a prime example of success and national fame falling short. Starting his career in the kitchen washing dishes, Bourdain rose up to become one of the most beloved chefs America was home to. Publishing cookbooks, opening restaurants, and eventually becoming a CNN resident - Anthony Bourdain's "Parts Unknown". He ate with Obama in Chicago, with Michelin ~~starred~~ star-ed chefs in France, and families in South Africa. He was a star, he made it, he had the money, the connections and the coveted weekly timeslot on national television.



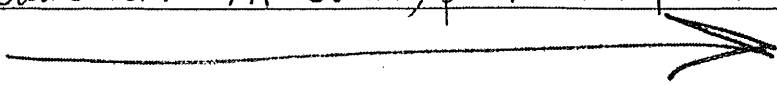
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But success and fame, ~~for~~ for Bourdain, like so many others, was overrated. Bourdain struggled with addiction - to alcohol, to drugs - and felt alienated. Watched by millions, loved by millions. But he felt alone. Fame and success and money and national approval did not suffice - it ~~couldn't~~ could not. ~~He~~ lost his battle with addiction. He could get to have lunch or dinner with anyone he wanted, anywhere he wanted. But he couldn't get the help he needed. Success did not compensate. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Outside of our obsession with celebrity, we idealize Ivy League education. I know I do; I have the Harvard pennant and college sweatshirts to prove it. And so we work tirelessly. The 2 A.M. nights, the sacrifices - lost time with friends, with family - all for that illusive chance at admission to one of those 8 schools, which very much symbolize greatness and achievement. When it is 2:30 in the morning and I feel deliriously tired, I push through. If I can make it to Harvard, to Princeton, to Yale, to Cornell, to Brown, to Columbia, to UPenn, to Dartmouth, I will have made it. But are these institutions as prestigious, as elite, as they're made out to be? Lori Loughlin and Felicity Hoffman just used their millions to ~~buy~~ BUY admission into Yale and USC. Operation Varsity Blues - their daughters posed as recruits for rowing teams, had their SAT and ACT scores improved to get into top tier colleges while I am stressed out over my 34 and 1530, taking AP class after AP class, performing at Carnegie Hall,



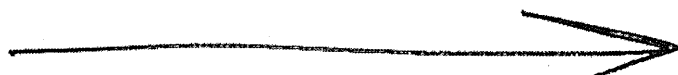
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going to Model UN conferences, and intermenting for internships, all so I can maybe, just maybe, have a chance. Those schools that I idolized, that I held as the pinnacle of learning, the stepping stone to success, the key to bringing my goals, my hopes, my dreams to fruition, are flawed. Overrated. They aren't great centers of learning but businesses. Money runs them. Not knowledge. They're overrated, prone to moral fallacy and corruption like anyone or anywhere else. ~~You~~ The only difference is you pay a rough fifty thousand to experience it. In the end, it's not actually the educational institution that matters, or what will make you happy. ~~It's the~~ It is the way you got there, it is who you are, that will bring true satisfaction. I worked extremely hard and I will be happy knowing I did my part, Ivy League admit or not.

Beyond the many celebrity ~~story~~ stones whose fame went wrong and the corruption and scandal surrounding America's oldest educational institutions, we can see that for every person who achieved and acquired success, it was often overrated, or at the very least, not as great as they envisioned. The use of social media has greatly increased how overrated things are. The filters, the lighting - it all makes those experiences, those achievements, that lifestyle, look so great. But that's the problem. It looks great. But is it really? We have come to associate fame and success with wealth, and wealth with joy. But this is not the case. True happiness is intrinsic and comes from an appreciation of

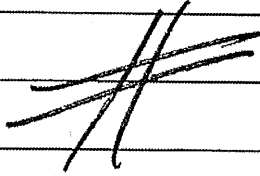


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M4

yourself and of others. Joy and love. People, not things. Fame and success are over-idealized and subsequently, they have become overrated. But happiness is not universal - to each his own.



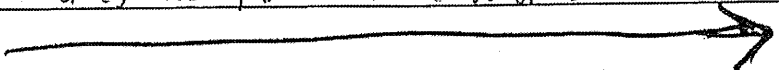
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D1

Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers of our country, is mostly known for the good that he did for American society: He wrote the Declaration of Independence, was the third President of the United States, and published numerous books and papers about his life and experiences. However, what many people fail to recognize is all of the questionable-at-best parts of his life, and choose instead to praise him for the positives. Thomas Jefferson's good actions are "overrated," because people choose either to only look at his positive contributions, or use them to justify or forgive his inexcusable negative actions, such as his racist views.

Jefferson published a novel, titled "Notes on the State of Virginia," which described why he believed black people were naturally inferior to white people. He justified his argument with Social Darwinism, and pointed to characteristics of black people such as their dark skin, as well as African cultural traditions, as the reason why they will always be below white people. However, some people overlook the blatant racism in Notes on the State of Virginia, and instead point to the part of the book where Jefferson states that he believes Native Americans have the potential for equality as evidence that he was not racist. This view of Notes on the State of Virginia is not only an example of cherry-picking (a logical fallacy), but also gives Jefferson credit for progressive views that he does not deserve, and makes his legacy "overrated." Jefferson is receiving positive support that he does not, and should not, deserve.

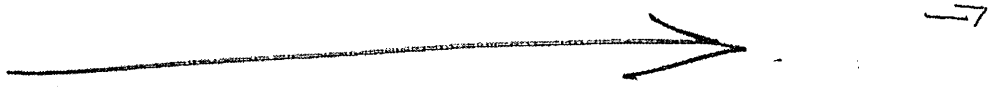


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3 D2

Jefferson is also commonly praised for founding the University of Virginia (UVA). He and other founding fathers are commonly believed to have been avid supporters of education, which is why they founded the University. While Jefferson did believe in and support education for Americans, the real reason why he founded UVA was in order to provide education for Southerners that would not include Northern abolitionist views. Jefferson even described the school as a "sanctuary" of sorts for Southern ideas about slavery. The very architecture of the school supported slavery, as the buildings include rooms intended as slave quarters, and areas where slaves could work without the white students seeing them. This school is another example of why Jefferson is "overrated": He received praise for supporting education, but in reality, he was supporting slavery and racism and attempting to preserve these practices in America.

Americans also praise Jefferson for freeing some of his slaves, and claim that he did so because he did not support slavery. However, Jefferson only freed a few of his slaves, who were also his children. Jefferson had a relationship with Sally Hemmings, who was his dead wife's half-sister, as well as a slave. This relationship is questionable at best, because Jefferson had a lot of power over Hemmings (because he was her master), but the two had multiple children together. These children also became Jefferson's slaves and lived on his plantation. While Jefferson did not make his children



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D3

do field labor, and rather than own slaves, he still kept his wife and children as slaves for the majority of his life, and freed them in his will. Jefferson did not have to keep his children, or anyone for that matter, as a slave but chose to do so anyway, which shows that he did in fact support slavery, and that any praise he receives for being against slavery & for social progressivism is undeserved. ~~Jefferson~~

Jefferson's reputation as a moral figure in American society is "overrated," because people fail to see his racism, both in his writing and in his actions. While Jefferson did do a lot of good for America, his bad actions also deserve to be known and acknowledged, along with the good.

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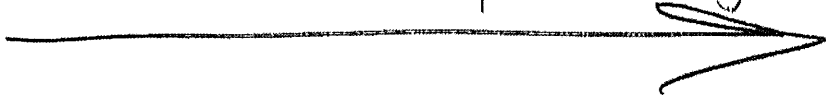
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Q 1

Why am I writing this? What do I do this for? Are two questions going through my ^{sub}conscience at the time of writing this. Why? Because ~~it's~~ a one-digit number dictates if colleges will accept my score. One. And a ~~it's~~ ^{four}-digit number dictates whether certain colleges bother to look at me. Enter the world of grades, a vastly overrated concept that does more harm than good to students. Grades are overrated because they cause unnecessary amounts of stress and do not dictate your success.

Grades cause stress because of the pressure that is often associated with it. In top Ivy league schools like Cornell, suicide rates are among the highest because of students' desires to maintain a high GPA. In countries like Japan and Korea, suicide is also common because of pressure to maintain good grades. Every single day at my lunch period, the same group of girls talk about how they are "stressed" and "depressed" because of the B grade they received in an AP course. The fact of the matter is that grades aren't everything. They are supremely overrated because students can explore other areas and be more happy ~~as~~ as a result. For example, playing guitar in a band and starting a cover channel has made me the happiest I have been in years. Finding a passion or hobby that will stick with you forever is far more valuable than the highly coveted A ^{plus}. Grades also discourage people because of the ~~the~~ common misconception that grades define who



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Q2

you are as a person. They do not deserve to have such a high prestige because they mislead people and ~~the~~ cause insane amounts of stress.

~~the~~ Along with stress, grades and the grading system are flawed and should ultimately not dictate your success. Countless people, such as the host of the Youtube channel "Engineered Truth", state that internships and experience are much more valuable to an employer than grades. While it is ~~the~~ important to have goals in terms of grades, they should not be given excessive amounts of prestige. Experience in the real world is far more beneficial than a misleading letter or number. Additionally, the grading system is incredibly flawed. The "weighted" scale inflates people's averages and makes ~~the~~ the school seem incredibly artificial. However, creating a portfolio of your interests and hobbies and out-of-school work is the actual aspect that separates you from your peers. The most successful people such as ^{the} rapper Logic and Bill Gates did not even finish high school and are making 7-figure salaries.

~~the~~ Essentially, grades should be taken less seriously because they do not dictate your success. One can live life lavishly without the constant pressures of grades. They simply cause unhealthy levels of stress and cause people to end up in bouts of frustration for seemingly no reason. ~~the~~ The ~~the~~ use of grades as a device to measure your intelligence has no place in this world because everyone has potential that can be unlocked without them.

Grades are overrated since they cause unnecessary



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Q3

amounts of stress and ~~it~~ mislead people into thinking it defines them. ~~Grades are highly controversial for a reason, and that's because they are flawed. ~~They say money is~~ the root of all evil. But because grades mislead people. Because the system is flawed. Because they cause suicides. It is safe to say that grades are overrated since they are the root of evil (at least in highschool).~~

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