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AP<sup>®</sup>



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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

### **Inside:**

#### **Free-Response Question 3**

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

**Argument Essay**

**6 points**

In a 2016 interview published in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Maxine Hong Kingston, an award-winning writer famous for her novels depicting the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the United States, stated: “I think that individual voices are not as strong as a community of voices. If we can make a community of voices, then we can speak more truth.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Kingston’s claim about the importance of creating a community of voices 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	
<b>Row A</b> <b>Thesis</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<b>1 point</b> Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>• Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred.</li> <li>• State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense.</li> </ul>		<b>Responses that earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Kingston’s claim about the importance of creating a community of voices is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <b>Do not take a position</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Communities are a part of people’s daily lives.”</i></li> </ul> <b>Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“As Kingston notes, it is important for people in society to have a voice.”</i></li> </ul>		<b>Examples that earn this point:</b> <b>Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Kingston’s belief in the strength of a community of voices is completely valid.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“While a community of voices is powerful, the individual voice should not be overlooked. Kingston’s claim is valid only to a certain extent.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“A community of voices is more powerful than individual voices because people are more inclined to listen to others and speak in a unified way, rather than starting individual yelling matches.”</i></li> </ul>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
<p><b>Row B</b></p> <p><b>Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b></p> <p>Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.</p>	<p><b>1 point</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides evidence that is mostly general.</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides some specific, relevant evidence.</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>3 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTARY:</b> Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>					
<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are incoherent or do not address the prompt.</li> <li>• May be just opinion with no evidence or evidence that is irrelevant.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tend to focus on summary of evidence rather than specific details.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities.</li> <li>• May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument.</li> <li>• May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim.</li> <li>• Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>• Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument.</li> <li>• Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims.</li> <li>• Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>• Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument.</li> <li>• Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Additional Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.</li> </ul>					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row C</b> <b>Sophistication</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>	
	<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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>”).</li> <li>• Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”).</li> <li>• Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument.</li> </ul>	<b>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:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions.</li> <li>2. 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.</li> <li>3. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument.</li> <li>4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

## Sample 3A (1 of 2)

What will people hear? A whisper or a song? The voice of the one or the voice of the many, united? One alone can mean very little until that one voice gains the power of many. Humans are creatures that crave validation and to fit in, so will they be one alone or be one of many? Will a person be Moses or the Jews? A community of voices can hold more power than one voice alone, but one voice can be used to inspire many, as shown throughout history through civil rights protests, Hitler, and the United States.

The United States did not listen to the small protests throughout the nineteenth century regarding people's rights. It wasn't until the twentieth century when the voices of many drowned out the voices of few within Washington. Posters didn't matter until held by millions. Black was bad until millions said it wasn't. And only then when more were involved than not, did Congress hear and respond. It took an entire Civil War to see the problem the first time and it took march after march, protest after protest to bring more change in the 1960s. But eventually, with the voice of millions behind the movement, the government listened and changed. The million voices said black isn't bad, something people now realize is true, and got the world to change because of it. The truth was free and more believed than not. But what became millions started as few. Friends protesting in a group of three. It wasn't until voices, figureheads of the Civil Rights movement, like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. inspired the millions, that others listened. It took those few brave voices—barely a whisper in the crowd—to turn into the song of revolution. The few were inspirations, but it didn't matter until the millions followed in pursuit. It didn't matter until the million's whispers combined to a song of great strength and perseverance. That's what brought the truth forward.

At first, no one feared Hitler alone. Not even when the Nazis began growing in numbers did the rest of the world turn more than a glance to Germany. It wasn't until Germany gained communistic allies, also power-hungry, that the world turned its head to notice. Hitler held power, yes, but did people fear him or what his millions of followers could do? Hitler was the sergeant who called out orders—that is scary that his one whispering voice could shout so loud to be heard by all of Germany—but people feared being killed or imprisoned by his army-men followers. How many were killed personally by Hitler? Versus, how many were killed by his people, his camps, and his plans? The world stayed ignorant to Hitler when he was alone. It wasn't until he had millions protecting him and his truth that people cared. And it was too late. Ignorance is a bliss. Until it leads to a world war with affects still devastating today, eighty years later. The world should've listened for when his whisper became a voice because that voice became a shouting song of pain, hate, and destruction.

The United States. Key word: united. It wasn't until all 13 colonies came together to fight back against Britain's royal crown, that Britain did worry. Massachusetts and the people of Boston throwing some tea in a harbor did nothing but anger Britain. It wasn't until the colonists across the entire 13 colonies—with allies in France—that Britain held concern about losing its royal subjects. The truth that colonists wanted freedom and would stop at nothing to get it, wasn't realized until it slapped Britain in the face. One colony alone held no power, only united under one government did the colonists hold any power. It's why the United States is called the United States, not the fifty separate states. And the truth of strength in numbered has reigned true throughout history when allies together beat the strongest lone power. When a country divided became United once more. When people across a continent came together. That's where power to spread the truth becomes reality: in unity.

Figureheads and movements can inspire millions. But alone, they lack power to spread their message globally. They needed to make their voice heard to hundreds before the hundreds' voices became millions. One alone couldn't spread their truth, unless they had the backup of many supporting and believing that same truth. It was proved that truth and change didn't occur until voices like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. inspired millions to spread their truth. It wasn't until Hitler convinced other countries and

## Sample 3A (2 of 2)

all the people of Germany, that the world heard their voices shouting their truth. And it wasn't until the colonies became one nation under God, that Britain heard their cries for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Truth is relative, but people will believe anything if enough people are shouting at them. One voice can inspire a whisper of truth, but a million voices shouting one truth will hold more power every time.

# Sample 3B (1 of 1)

In a 2016 interview, Maxine Hong Kingston stated "I think that individual voices are not as strong as a community of voices. If we can make a community of voices, then we can speak more truths." Although stated very harshly, I do believe this to be true. As sad as it is, if you are not extremely wealthy or well known, it is likely that your voice will not be heard. A community of voices is stronger than one and has plentiful power to make change.

One example of a community of voices speaking their truth to make change is the Civil Rights Movement. People came together from all around the United States to overturn the Jim Crow laws and give African American people the freedom and rights that they deserved. This movement was made up of protests, acts of bravery, and more by a very large group of American people. If there was only one voice being used to make these changes, they most likely would've never been made. A community of voices is certainly stronger than one.

Walkouts and protests have been held to show solidarity to victims of gun violence and raise awareness about the commonality of shootings in the United States to eventually reach the goal of ending gun violence. When walkouts are held at schools, news organizations publicize them, spreading the message of all these people. We don't know what is to come, but these groups of millions of Americans are causing our voices to be heard by people in positions of power than can help us. This would not be possible with only one voice.

Overall, I believe that Maxine Kingston's claim "I think that individual voices are not as strong as a community of voices. If we can make a community of voices, then we can speak more truths" is valid. I agree with this claim because of the historical event, the Civil rights movement, and the ongoing attempt to end gun violence.

# Sample 3C (1 of 1)

The idea of a "community of voices" sound as though it would work on paper but is rather imperfect when you delve into the different implications it can hold for the community and just what it means to have a.

While yes it's a very nice idea that we should have something such as a community of voices where peoples opinions can be expressed as a whole, you have to take a closer look at what that really means. To have a community of voices, that would mean many people whose back-rounds can vary. With this variation comes the problem of simply bad opinions. Now I'm not not saying that people shouldn't have the ability to express their opinions at all, it's a basic human right after all. But there are, to put it simply incorrect opinions out there, ones that defy what the general mass of people would normally find it wrong. For example, there is already a place where you can find communities that have a collective voice online; this community of voices can be seen as website and company called "Twitter". This site actually holds power because of the sheer number people that use it to express their opinions, as well as the ability for other people to judge these opinions. There is nothing wrong with this, but a problem arises that can be seen very often in this place where people's lives are ruined from this power though number, because the mass as a whole believed it the person deserved it or were convinced into believing it.

So yes people deserve to have an opinion and the ability to express it. The implications that can show themselves when people are given a communitive voice can become quite cruel. While a person may deserve being ridiculed or judged online because of something they said, they don't deserve having their lives ruined even with a bad opinion. So if an that can happen in a place that isn't even physically real, there could be a lot of suffering to people who are just disagreeable if there is an actual physical outlet for that kind of behavior.

### Question 3

**Note:** Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

#### Overview

Students responding to this question were expected to read a Maxine Hong Kingston quote on the impact of a community of voices and write an essay that argued their position on the extent to which Kingston’s claim about the importance of creating a community of voices is valid. Students were expected to respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position; provide evidence to support their line of reasoning; explain how the evidence supported their line of reasoning; and use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating their argument.

As per the Course and Exam Description, students were expected to be able to select evidence to develop and refine their claims, use appropriate approaches of organization and reasoning to support their arguments, and make stylistic choices that advance the argument.

#### Sample: 3A

**Score: 1-4-1**

#### Thesis (0–1) points: 1

The defensible thesis is at the end of paragraph 1: “A community of voices can hold more power than one voice alone, but one voice can be used to inspire many, as shown throughout history through civil rights protests, Hitler, and the United States.”

#### Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4

The response uniformly offers specific and wide-ranging evidence (e.g., civil rights being achieved in the U.S. in paragraph 1, Hitler’s rise to power in paragraph 2, and the creation of the United States in paragraph 3) in support of a nuanced argument about individual voices (e.g., Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks) inspiring the community of voices “to turn into the song of revolution.” The response consistently explains how the evidence supports a clear line of reasoning, making use of historical examples to support the claim that “[f]igureheads . . . can inspire millions” (paragraph 5). It further identifies the complexity of a single voice (e.g., Hitler or Martin Luther King, Jr.) inspiring “pain, hate and destruction” or “great strength and “perseverance.”

The apt and varied examples used in the response serve to uniformly organize and illustrate multiple claims, and the commentary accompanying each example consistently and clearly explains how the evidence supports the response’s line of reasoning, e.g., “The few [brave voices] were inspirations, but it didn’t matter until the millions followed in pursuit. It didn’t matter until the million’s whispers combined to a song of great strength and perseverance. That’s what brought the truth forward” (paragraph 2).

#### Sophistication (0–1 points): 1

The response crafts a nuanced argument by identifying the complexities of the “whisper” of a single voice in comparison to the “song” of a community of voices. Further, it articulates the implications and limitations of the task by discussing a community of voices failing to act: “The world stayed ignorant to Hitler when he was alone. It wasn’t until he had millions protecting him and his truth that

**Question 3 (continued)**

people cared” (paragraph 3). The response employs a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive, as shown in the final paragraph: “[It] wasn’t until the colonies became one nation under God, that Britain heard their cries for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The repetition of “It wasn’t until” throughout the response demonstrates an effective rhetorical choice that strengthens the impact of the student’s argument.

**Sample: 3B****Score: 1-2-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The defensible thesis is found at the end of paragraph 1: “A community of voices is stronger than one and has plentiful power to make change.”

**Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 2**

The response provides some specific, relevant evidence by citing Jim Crow laws in the United States being overturned in paragraph 2 and protests against gun violence in paragraph 3. The commentary explains how some of the evidence relates to the argument, e.g., “This movement was made up of protests, acts of bravery, and more by a very large group of American people. If there was only one voice being used to make these changes, they most likely would’ve never been made” (paragraph 2). However, the commentary tends to be minimal and simplistic (e.g., “We don’t know what is to come, but these groups of millions of Americans are causing our voices to be heard by people in positions of power that can help us” in paragraph 3) and does not explain the connection between the response’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.

**Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

The response presents examples that suggest an exploration of complexities and tensions (Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights movement, and protests against gun violence); however, there is inadequate commentary and development of these ideas. The response attempts to situate the argument in a broader context in paragraph 1 by stating that individual voices are unlikely to be heard unless one is “extremely wealthy or well known.” However, there is no articulation of the implications or limitations of the response’s argument or those of another argument. The style is neither consistently vivid nor persuasive.

**Sample: 3C****Score: 1-1-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The defensible thesis is the first sentence of the response: “The idea of a ‘community of voices’ sounds as though it would work on paper but is rather imperfect when you delve into the different implications it can hold for the community . . . .”

**Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 1**

The response provides mostly general evidence regarding the “community of voices” by stating that “there is already a place where you can find communities that have a collective voice online; this community of voices can be seen as website and company called “Twitter”” (paragraph 2). The evidence circles back to the point that Twitter is the “place where people’s lives are ruined from this power though number” (paragraph 2). The little evidence that is provided is not developed through

### Question 3 (continued)

any commentary that clearly explains how it supports the argument; instead, the response offers vague claims without any supporting details or explanations: “While a person may deserve being ridiculed or judged online because of something they said, they don’t deserve having their lives ruined even with a bad opinion” (paragraph 3).

#### **Sophistication (0–1 points): 0**

Although the response acknowledges differences of opinion, stating “Now I’m not saying that people shouldn’t have the ability to express their opinions at all” (paragraph 2), it generally takes a simplistic approach that does not explore any complexities and tensions. The response does not use effective rhetorical choices to develop the argument or situate the argument within a broader context, and the style is not consistently vivid or persuasive.