

AP English Language and Composition
Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis
2020 Scoring Commentaries
(Applied to 2018 Student Responses)

Sample H

6/6 Points (A1 - B4 - C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it clearly articulates a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices the writer makes: “By contrasting hypotheticals and reality, providing examples and personal anecdote, and strong repetition of the word ‘persevere’, Albright successfully conveys her message to these graduates that they must continue the fight for rights in the face of opposition and that they will succeed.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned 4 points for Row B because it successfully integrates evidence throughout the to support the student’s analysis and the commentary that explains those connections is consistent and well-developed. In paragraph 2, the response addresses Albright’s choice to evoke the past – in this case, “the Berlin Wall” – but then examines her use of a hypothetical to challenge that past, “we could be satisfied with that.” This becomes the focus of the response’s analysis at this point as it explicitly connects these choices to the thesis and Albright’s message “her message that perseverance can make a difference”: “This powerful form of presenting what has been accomplished then a hypothetical paired with reality is a powerful way to allude to the idea that accomplishing is not enough, we must never stop trying to get better.” Paragraph 3 then goes on to examine how Albright’s use of “person[al] anecdotes of what women across the world are doing” convey her message. Addressing “Women in Sarajevo,” “Women in Burundi,” and “Women in Guatemala,” the response then comments on how Albright uses these examples as examples of “unforgettable encounters and experiences of a strong woman” and explain how each of these examples “sends a message to her audience that this is real, a movement is happening women are stepping across the globe.” Again, the response recognizes and explains how these examples demonstrate Albright’s message. Paragraph 4 then becomes a general commentary on the choices Albright made throughout her speech and how they combine to develop and convey her message. Looking specifically at choices related the organization of her speech, the response skillfully examines her repetition of “perseverance” coupled with her repeated “if you aim high enough” followed by description of an opposition challenging her audience to aim higher.

Row C: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row C because there are several instances where it situates the text in a broader context. For example, in paragraph 1 the response presents a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation: “The glass ceiling remains unbroken and women continue to fight on all fronts for rights they deserve, rights that should be inherent.” In paragraph 4, the response recognizes the implications of the text in recognizing Albright’s call for action: “She knows that these graduates, in their struggle for equality, will face resistance, ridicule, distraction...Walking away from college, they will remember to persevere in the face of

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opposition, that perseverance is the key to continued struggle.” Also, the prose style consistently persuasive, convincing, and appropriate. Also, the response never waivers from its close analysis of the text and never gets lost in the labelling and definition of Albright’s choices, instead focusing on the how each choice develops and conveys her message and the relationship of those choices, specifically how those choices work together as a cohesive message.

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Sample F

6/6 Points (A1 - B4 - C1)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it provides a defensible thesis relative to the choices Albright made to convey her message. In paragraph 1, the response identifies “referencing the efforts of marginalized women who are fighting to make a difference, utilizing powerful diction and repetition, and illustrating American efforts to improve the world even further” as the key rhetorical choices Albright makes. While not necessary to earn the point, the thesis then links these decisions to its own commentary on Albright’s message, “Albright inspires a young generation of graduate students on the brink of adulthood with the future in their hands to never settle, always persevere and fight to elevate the status of women around the world.”

Row B: 4/4

The response earned 4 points for Row B because it provides commentary that engages specific details of the text to draw conclusions about rhetorical choices then effectively and explicitly explains how those choices – both independently and collectively – contribute to Albright’s message. . In paragraph 2, the response provides examples from the text that it labels “powerful stories of women fighting challenges they face” and then provides commentary explaining that “Albright uses the stories of these women to illustrate how many problems still exist and to inspire her audience into helping fight those problems. In paragraph 3, the response specifically examines Albright’s repetition of “have courage still and persevere” at the end of several paragraphs, then provides commentary explaining how Albright “repeats these words to emphasize the need to continue fighting for what you believe in even in the face of doubt and criticism.” Again, the commentary then links these choices directly back to the message of the speech to persevere and “push through in face of these challenges.” In paragraph 4, the response examines the text’s structure: “The structure of the opening paragraphs is built the illustrate the importance of constantly pushing forward. This extends from a discussion of political issues into a discussion of issues faced by women.” Then explains how the choice to organize the speech in this way furthers Albright’s argument “that women should not settle for their current status after years of progress.”

Row C: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row C because it provides several examples of sophistication in its argument. In paragraph 1, the response frames the speech within an historical context and then positions the message of the speech within that context as “she urges her audience to seek out problems that still exist in the world and to help fix them.” Having established the broader context for the message in paragraph 1 and returned to it consistently throughout, the response comes to a close recalling Albright’s focus on “the power women have to elevate their

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status around the world even further and the importance of never settling” as it relates to perseverance.

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Sample A

4/6 Points (A1 - B3 - C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it provides a one-sentence, defensible thesis that establishes analytical categories for Albright’s rhetorical choices: “...Secretary [sic] of State Madeleine Albright connect [sic] with her audience through parallel syntax, repetition, assertions and other tactics to convince her audience that they have an opportunity to change the world and break through the glass ceilings around them.”

Row B: 3/4

The response earned 3 points for Row B because all of the evidence provided relates to the thesis, but the commentary is uneven, limited, or incomplete. In paragraph 2, the response examines how Albright’s creates a comparison between her audience and the rest of America, “comparing how ‘they’ as individuals ‘must choose how to lead their life,’ to the larger America who ‘as a nation’ must choose ‘how to shape history.’” Though this is an insightful observation that is connected to the thesis and the message of the text, once it is established the response goes on attempt to explain how “parallel syntax” helps to develop this comparison, but with little explanation. The result is commentary that lapses into description of the text with little commentary about parallel structure: “Albright’s echoing syntax rings out in the manner of King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech, each repetition relating her claims back to her central statement of unity and opportunity, each ring drawing in her listeners.” The response then makes comments on how Albright’s choice to follow a “verse-refrain form” affects her audience, but then lapses into description of that “form” in an attempt to explain how it causes her audience “to chant on their heads.” Paragraph 4 examines comparison of her audience to “women ‘in Burundi’ or ‘in Guatemala’ or ‘in Burma’” and also looks at choices in diction for the passage. With so much to examine, there is little room for the commentary necessary to connect these appropriate pieces of the text to its message. The result is limited commentary that does little to explain how the choices being examined contribute to the message, stating only that they do: “Through this quote and repetition, she has touched the hearts of her listeners and cemented an idea, the idea of perseverance.” Successfully, the commentary does consistently connect back to Albright’s message about perseverance, making it clear that the response is focused on analysis of her choices relative to that message.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C because, though it attempts to provide some larger context, it does not present a complex understanding of the possible contexts of the speech or of the rhetorical situation. In paragraph 4, the response attempts contextualize Albright herself as “an authority on the subject” to elevate her as a speaker “so when she tells her audience to ‘persevere,’ they act without questioning.” However, it is neither explained

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how these choices create that authority, nor is that idea of authority carried throughout the response to contextualize the message or Albright herself. Also, while the response does focus on examination of specific rhetorical choices, it does not approach the relationships among different choices throughout the speech.

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Sample D

3/6 Points (A1 - B2 - C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it provides a defensible thesis focusing on analysis of Albright’s choice of “using...historical events and encounters with women in other countries” and “what occurred after important historical events” to convey her message to “never settle” (paragraphs 1 and 2). Although paragraph 1 largely consists of summary, the bridge between paragraphs 1 and 2 does present the thesis that the message of the speech is to motivate the audience using historical events as well as their aftermath.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned 2 points for Row B because the evidence provided relates to the thesis but the commentary that explains those connections remains unconvincing in that it makes assertions that are not necessarily supported by the text. While the examination of the historical example of the Berlin wall in paragraph 2 does extend from and support the thesis, the commentary does not further the analysis and oversimplifies the effects of the example. The example used by Albright to demonstrate American perseverance is oversimplified and misinterpreted as an example of “being threatened by dangerous weapons” which, in turn, “motivates the audience to always look out for themselves.” Though this could connect to the idea of perseverance that is the message of the text, the response does not make that connection. In paragraph 3, the response simply describes information and repeats from the speech and oversimplifies their effect. After listing and describing the different sets of women to whom Albright refers in her speech, the commentary simply states, “[t]hose women are mentioned in Albright’s speech to motivate her audience to always fight for what may even seem impossible.” Again, while this assertion could relate to the message of perseverance, no connection is attempted, relying only on the assumptions of the reader.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C. It does focus on examination of specific rhetorical choices, but does not consider the relationships among different choices throughout the speech.

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Sample I

3/6 Points (A1 - B2 - C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it does provide a defensible thesis that explain that: “Throughout the essay, the most effective devices employed were parallel structure, allusions, and metaphors” (paragraph 1). Though not necessary, it is also effective to consider the previous sentence as part of the that thesis, explaining that “Albright was able to successfully employ different rhetorical devices, each of which helped Albright convey her message to the audience.” Though not one contiguous sentence, taken as a whole these sentences clearly connect the choices to be analyzed to the message they develop.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned 2 points for Row B because, though it does provide relevant examples, the commentary oversimplifies and misinterprets them. In paragraph 2, the commentary on “we could” oversimplifies its effect and loses focus, concentrating instead on the United States. That the commentary does not bring the cited example around to a message about perseverance for the audience means that the it is failing to link the evidence to the thesis. “The commentary on “allusions” in paragraph 3 does not connect the apt examples of women around the world to the message of perseverance, instead resorting to explaining the example and then making what amounts to an oversimplified assertion about it, ““The allusions also motivate the audience to continue to seek peace, prosperity, and equality around the world.” Likewise, in paragraph 4, the commentary on metaphor misinterprets the text and fails to connect the evidence to the thesis. While it is not completely clear how the example used is a metaphor, the commentary also makes a broad assertion that the “metaphor draws a comparison between the audience’s actions and the boundaries of what is thought as achievable on this Earth.” Even if this were the case, the commentary again makes no connection to the message of the speech. It is not a one in this row because it does include specific textual references that relate to the thesis and provides commentary – the response avoids summary and ambiguity as it focuses on analysis of the choices.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C. It does attempt to explain the significance of the text’s message within a broader context, in paragraph 5, explaining that Albright uses her choices ‘to motivate the audience, push them towards greatness, and show how the smallest of actions can change the world,’ but this is neither connected to perseverance nor is it maintained throughout the response – which is the condition of the additional notes for this row.

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Sample G

3/6 Points (A1 - B2 - C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it does provide a minimally acceptable thesis: “Madeline Albright uses multiple convincing rhetorical devices to prove her point and convince the reader. Her speech is passionate and urging; it helps the reader to analyze and appreciate the productive and beneficial changes made by U.S. leadership. Albright uses logos and pathos to convince the audience.” While the response alludes to a foundational rhetorical framework, it fails to offer specificity. It vaguely identifies logos and pathos, but fails to clarify the function or effect of either.

Row B: 2/4

The response earned 2 points for Row B because it does provide specific examples relevant to the thesis, but the commentary that explains them merely repeats and oversimplifies. In paragraph 2, the response oversimplifies and misrepresents logos as “stating a fact that [many] would agree with and accept,” replacing the necessity for reasoning and logic with the idea that statements of fact are themselves always logical. Having made the focused comment on logos and included specific examples, the commentary does not then explain how these examples convey the message, stating that Albright “uses logos in her speech to present facts and evidence that is difficult to deny, and therefore, is quite convincing” – never explaining how they are convincing. A similar treatment of pathos comes then in paragraph 3. Focusing on the mention of rape in the speech, the response then makes a point that the “mention of rape likely appeals to the emotions of many rape victims who desire justice, and the emotions of those who know rape victims.” While true, the commentary then proceeds to ignore the audience of the speech – who would have likely cared deeply about rape – and demonstrates a misunderstanding about pathos, that it relies on the emotions of the audience. The response then moves on to a weaker point about “those entrapped by poverty and discrimination [*sic*]” before wrapping up with commentary relying on the broad and oversimplified assertion that “Albright uses pathos as a technique to convince the audience that the government is doing its best and has made significant progress....”

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C. While the final statement may attempt to broaden the context and implications of the message, it is neither consistent through different parts of the response nor does it demonstrate sophistication of thought, relying instead on a broad comment about how “Her speech uses well-developed rhetoric and techniques to convince the audience of the government’s positive impact on society and how U.S. leaders are benefitting the world”, misinterpreting the overall message of the text.

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Sample B

2/6 Points (A1 - B1 - C0)

Row A: 1/1

The response earned the point for Row A because it provides a minimally defensible thesis focused on analysis of “strategies [sic] used like emotion, history, and cause and effect”. The first paragraph articulation of the thesis lacks specificity, but subsequent paragraphs articulate a progressive, fuller argument, a common feature of many responses. Paragraph two, for example, observes, “Albright starts out by using history to appeal to the audience, great accomplishments [sic] performed as a country.” While the essay relies on generic “five paragraph” structure, it does harness that structure to progress an argument over the course of the response.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned 1 point for Row B because it provides examples relevant to the subject, but little to no commentary is provided. In paragraph 2, there is no explanation about the history example. Instead, the response provides restatement of the example as explanation: “These events were all great things that happened in America in the college graduates lifetimes.” While this is all true and the examples cited do fit the description, the commentary falls way short of explaining how these examples convey the message of the text, leaving it all on the reader to make those connections. While the response again correctly identifies a significant choice in the speech in paragraph 3 – the cause-and-effect example of women standing up for themselves and the resulting “advances in the status of women” – the response only restates these things with very little commentary that does nothing to explain how the targeted choices convey the message: “The effect is women are ready to take their role in every society on Earth.” Paragraph 4, then, presents a statement about how “Albright used emotion to make the audience think of everything they have while some people have nothing at all,” but does nothing to examine or explain how the choices related to emotion have that effect, much less how they convey the message of the speech.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C.

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Sample E

1/6 Points (A0 - B1 - C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row A because it does not present a defensible thesis about the rhetorical strategies or choices made. The response instead repeats provided information: “Madeline Albright reads the commencement letter to the graduating class.” It then goes on to provides a barely coherent misinterpretation of the context and message of the speech.

Row B: 1/4

The response earned one point for Row B; without a thesis, this response cannot earn more than one point for Row B. Also, while it does contain some references to specific points in the text – “the Berlin Wall,” the “growing world economy,” and “different types of women” – the presence of very little commentary means that these examples remain only vaguely relevant to the subject of the prompt. While paragraph 4 could be read as nodding toward the provided message of the speech as it comments that her audience “can do what they set their mind to just the children graduating,” this statement is too close to a misinterpretation of both the provided context and the provided message.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C.

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Sample C

0/6 Points (A0 - B0 - C0)

Row A: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row A because there is no discernable thesis. There seems to be an attempt to develop a thesis in the last sentence of paragraph 1 but it relies on a misinterpretation of the text and of the provided context: "...her speech gave clear evidence that war is coming to an end."

Row B: 0/4

Reliant on a misinterpretation of the speech and the provided context, the response did not earn any points for Row B. The examples it provides are not relevant to the subject of the prompt and do not contribute to the provided message of the speech as misinterpreted here. Excerpts from throughout the speech – In paragraph 2, the reference that "America is making the right choice" and in paragraph 3 the reference to "uncommon women" – remain vague as they are neither connected to analysis of the speech nor does any commentary explain how they might support the interpretation being made by the response.

Row C: 0/1

The response did not earn the point for Row C.