

# AP English Language and Composition Free-Response Questions

## Question 1: Synthesis Essay

**Directions:** The following prompt is based on the accompanying sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. Synthesis refers to combining the sources and your position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing sources. *Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument. Avoid merely summarizing sources.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

### **Introduction**

Today, citizenship requires that people be knowledgeable about public issues and possess the capacity to work toward solutions by acting together. History records voluntary actions by private citizens working together to right injustices, change directions, and pursue benefits for the common good. This list includes the abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, and the civil rights movement. In every case, people voluntarily came together with a shared sense of purpose for the common good and with the “I.” While a single act of violence or intolerance can affect communities of people, they can voice their opinions in nonviolent ways to produce positive results. On the otherhand, some people assert that Americans are caring less and less about civic duty because there is a loss of community. Because of this loss, civil responsibility and change is either diminishing or having intolerant outcomes.

### **Assignment**

Read the following sources carefully. **Then, write an essay in which you develop a position on individual rights and responsibility to the community.**

You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, etc.) or by the descriptions in parentheses.

- Source A (AARP Survey)
- Source B (Speech by Robert Kennedy)
- Source C (learningtogive.org)
- Source D (Putnam “Bowling Alone”)
- Source E (Journal for Democracy)
- Source F (randomquotes.com)
- Source G (article from Education Next)
- Source H (“Not Your Father’s Disobedience”)

Source A



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## AARP SURVEY OF CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

**Washington, D.C.** -- Is America's social fabric coming apart at the seams? Has America completely lost its sense of community? Despite the alarms raised in recent years about Americans becoming less involved, a new AARP study shows that the nation's social fabric appears to be in relatively good shape, and interesting patterns of public participation are reflected in communities around the country.

The study, *Maintaining America's Social Fabric: The AARP Survey of Civic Involvement*, identifies levels and forms of civic involvement from a large cross-section of age groups. It measures and assesses the extent to which Americans are involved in and attached to their communities, where their involvement is, and their attitudes toward one another and their government.

"Conventional wisdom would have us believe that we are a nation made up of disinterested, disengaged and uninvolved people. Our survey clearly shows that this is not the case. We found that people are engaged at a local level where they can feel the impact of their efforts. Ninety-eight percent of those surveyed reported being involved in at least one activity that connects them with people outside of their household," said Jane Baumgarten, a member of AARP's Volunteer National Board.

Membership in organizations is higher than previously reported. The average respondent has more than four memberships in more than three types of organizations. Religion is the leading type of organizational involvement for all age groups. Sixty-one percent of those surveyed belong to some type of religious organization. Health and sports clubs, professional trade groups, school groups, and neighborhood groups are other types of formal organizations that Americans are joining.

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In identifying what "community" means, 6 out of 10 people said "community" has geographical connotations. Yet the meaning of community varies with age. Respondents between the ages of 31 and 71 frequently thought in terms of places while those under 30 were more likely to speak in terms of informal groups.

Contrary to widespread fears, most Americans feel a sense of attachment to the communities in which they live. Seventy-two percent said they want to be living in the same geographical area five years from now. Ninety-six percent said they know at least one of their neighbors on a first-name basis, and eighty-five percent reported they have had a conversation with a neighbor in the past three months.

"Our survey clearly demonstrates that people are engaged in their local communities, and feel that they have a vested interest in being involved with their neighbors. One-third of the survey respondents reported that they have worked with others to solve local problems, and almost three-quarters of respondents spend time discussing a myriad of local issues. Eight out of ten people surveyed believe that they can solve local problems by acting in concert with others," said Constance Swank, AARP research director.

The role of religion in social and community involvement appears throughout the results of the survey. There is a strong correlation between individuals involvement in organized religion and their attachment to where they live, involvement with others, membership in associations, and willingness to help others through volunteer work. Those who attend a house of worship more than once a week are far more likely to be involved with their community than those who never attend religious services. Of those who do volunteer work, 56 percent report that at least some of their time is spent on work "sponsored or organized by religious organizations," and 34 percent say they volunteer "because of my religious commitment."

One big unknown is how these data may play out as the younger generation gets older. The survey found that those adults between 18 and 26 exhibited the most distrust and the least involvement in their communities. A full sixty percent of respondents in this youngest adult group are distrustful of others. Less than half of all other respondents, ages 37 through 76 plus, said they were distrustful of others.

Source B This is a speech by Robert Kennedy "Ripples of Hope" given to citizens of South Africa.

Our answer is the world's hope; it is to rely on youth. The cruelties and obstacles of this swiftly changing planet will not yield to obsolete dogmas and outworn slogans. It cannot be moved by those who cling to a present which is already dying, who prefer the illusion of security to the excitement and danger which comes with even the most peaceful progress.

This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease. It is a revolutionary world we live in, and thus, as I have said in Latin America and Asia, in Europe and in the United States, it is young people who must take the lead. Thus you, and your young compatriots everywhere, have had thrust upon you a greater burden of responsibility than any generation that has ever lived.

"There is," said an Italian philosopher, "nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things." Yet this is the measure of the task of your generation, and the road is strewn with many dangers.

First, is the danger of futility: the belief there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills—against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's greatest movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant Reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and the thirty-two-year-old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal.

"Give me a place to stand," said Archimedes, "and I will move the world." These men moved the world, and so can we all. Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. Thousands of Peace Corps volunteers are making a difference in isolated villages and city slums in dozens of countries. Thousands of unknown men and women in Europe resisted the occupation of the Nazis and many died, but all added to the ultimate strength and freedom of their countries. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

"If Athens shall appear great to you," said Pericles, "consider then that her glories were purchased by valiant men, and by men who learned their duty." That is the source of all greatness in all societies, and it is the key to progress in our time.

The second danger is that of expediency; of those who say that hopes and beliefs must

Source C This is a lesson intended to teach children more about civic duty from learningtogive.org.

#### Important People Related to the Topic

**President Thomas Jefferson:** President Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which proved to be the defining event in his life and legacy to the nation. Drawing on documents, such as the Virginia Declaration of Rights, state and local calls for independence and his own draft of a Virginia constitution, Jefferson wrote a stunning and eloquent statement of the colonists' right to rebel against the British government. It decreed the colonists' independence and right to self-government, based on the premise all men are created equal and have the unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Library of Congress 2002).

**President Abraham Lincoln:** President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, as the United States was embattled and divided by the start of the third year of the Civil War. The proclamation became effective on January 1, 1863. The historic document freed all slaves in the country, including slaves in rebelling confederate states that endorsed secession from the Union. Lincoln mandated enforcement of the proclamation by the Union military. Issuance and enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation nearly cost President Lincoln his presidency; it may have cost his life. His courage and wisdom paved the way for the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution (December 1865), which ended slavery in the United States.

**Elizabeth Cady Stanton** met **Susan B. Anthony** in 1851 and for the next fifty years worked in close collaboration; Stanton articulated arguments for the improvement of women's legal and traditional rights; Anthony organized and campaigned to achieve these goals (The Anthony Center 2002).

**Andrew Carnegie:** Carnegie was perhaps the first wealthy man to state publicly the rich have a moral obligation to give away their fortunes. In 1889 he wrote *The Gospel of Wealth*, in which he asserted all personal wealth beyond that required to supply the needs of one's family should be regarded as a trust fund to be administered for the benefit of the community (Carnegie Corporation of New York).

**Rosa Parks:** Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, an action regarded as the beginning of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. "When I declined to give up my seat, it was not that day or bus in particular," Parks later told a biographer. "I just wanted to be free, like everybody else" (Hamilton 2003).

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:** King led a mass struggle for racial equality that changed America. King's address "I Have a Dream" delivered on the occasion of the March on Washington for Civil Rights on August 28, 1963, is one of the best-known American speeches of the twentieth century. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation naming a federal holiday honoring King's birthday on the third Monday of every January.

**Cesar Chavez:** Chavez successfully represented the labor rights of farm workers, particularly Latino and Filipino, who suffered substandard wages and working conditions. In the 1960s and 1970s, his grassroots organization ballooned into a national movement; several campaigns, including a grape boycott, were observed by more than 17 million Americans (Cauldron 2002). Mr. Chavez had a powerful impact on the plight of hired and migrant agricultural workers and on public awareness of the workers. In the years following the boycotts, federal legislation and laws in many states were enacted to provide better wages, working conditions, education and housing.

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## **Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital**

*by Robert D. Putnam*

When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, it was the Americans' propensity for civic association that most impressed him as the key to their unprecedented ability to make democracy work. "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition," he observed, "are forever forming associations."

Recently, American social scientists of a neo-Tocquevillean bent have unearthed a wide range of empirical evidence that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement. Researchers in such fields as education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and even health have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities.

Social scientists in several fields have recently suggested a common framework for understanding these phenomena, a framework that rests on the concept of social capital. By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital--tools and training that enhance individual productivity--"social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

### **Whatever Happened to Civic Engagement?**

By almost every measure, Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation, despite the fact that average levels of education--the best individual-level predictor of political participation--have risen sharply throughout this period. Consider the well-known decline in turnout in national elections over the last three decades. From a relative high point in the early 1960s, voter turnout had by 2000 declined by nearly a quarter; tens of millions of Americans had forsaken their parents' habitual readiness to engage in the simplest act of citizenship.

It is not just the voting booth that has been increasingly deserted by Americans. A series of identical questions posed by the Roper Organization to national samples 10 times each year over the last two decades reveals that since 1973 the number of Americans who report that "in the past year" they have "attended a public meeting on town or school affairs" has fallen by more than a third (from 22 percent in 1973 to 13 percent in 1998).

The most whimsical yet discomfiting bit of evidence of social disengagement in contemporary America that I have discovered is this: more Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the last decade or so. Between 1980 and 1998, the total number of bowlers in America increased by 10 percent, while league bowling decreased by 40 percent. (Lest this be thought a wholly trivial example, I should note that nearly 80 million Americans went bowling at least once during 2001, *nearly a third more than voted in the 2002 congressional elections.*)

The rise of solo bowling threatens the livelihood of bowling-lane proprietors because those who bowl as members of leagues consume three times as much beer and pizza as solo bowlers, and the money in bowling is in the beer and pizza, not the balls and shoes. The broader social significance, however, lies in the social interaction and even the occasionally civic conversations over beer and pizza that solo bowlers forgo.

### **New Associations, New Patterns of Involvement**

At this point, however, we must confront a serious counterargument. Perhaps the traditional forms of civic organizations whose decay we have been tracing have been replaced by vibrant, new organizations. For example, national environmental organizations (like the Sierra Club) and feminist groups (like the National Organization for Women) grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s and now count hundreds of thousands of dues-paying members. An even more dramatic example is the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which grew exponentially from 400,000 card-carrying members in 1960 to 38 million in 1998, becoming (after the Catholic Church) the largest private organization in the world.

These new mass-membership organizations are plainly of great political importance. From the point of view of social connectedness, however, they are sufficiently different from classic "secondary

## Source E

security personnel were stagnant for most of this century - indeed, America had fewer lawyers per capita in 1970 than in 1900. In the last quarter century these occupations boomed, as people have increasingly turned to the courts and the police.

He went on to examine the possible reasons for this decline. Some familiar themes:

- Changes in family structure (i.e. with more and more people living alone), are a possible element as conventional avenues to civic involvement are not well-designed for single and childless people.
- Suburban sprawl has fractured the spatial integrity of people's. They travel much further to work, shop and enjoy leisure opportunities. As a result there is less time available (and less inclination) to become involved in groups. Suburban sprawl is a very significant contributor.
- Electronic entertainment, especially television, has profoundly privatized leisure time. The time we spend watching television is a direct drain upon involvement in groups and social capital building activities. It may contribute up to 40 per cent of the decline in involvement in groups.

However, generational change also came out as a very significant factor. A very civic-minded generation, born in the first third of the twentieth century, is now passing from the American scene. Their children and grandchildren (baby boomers and Generation X-ers) are much less engaged in most forms of community life. For example, the growth in volunteering over the last ten years is due almost entirely to increased volunteering by retirees from the "civic generation".

### **Social capital and social change**

The follow-up (2007) US study to *Bowling Alone* has also stimulated debate. The first findings from the study found that, in the short run, immigration and ethnic diversity tended to reduce social solidarity and social capital. In ethnically diverse neighborhoods residents of all races tend to 'hunker down'.

Diversity does *not* produce 'bad race relations' or ethnically-defined group hostility, rather, inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform *more*, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to watch more television. Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us.

Robert Putnam has also sought to track emerging, significant generators of social capital - and to examine some of the qualities that make them significant. Religion has been a particular focus - not surprising as (in his view) religious affiliations account for half of all US social capital. He cites U.S. mega-churches as 'the most interesting social invention of late 20th century'.

These churches have very low barriers to entry - the doors are open, there are folding chairs out on the patio - they make it very easy to come and go. But they also develop strong commitment from many members. On average, nearly half of all members are tithing [giving a tenth of their income]. What do they do that allows them to go from low to high commitment? According to Putnam, it is by creating a "honeycomb structure" of thousands of small groups: they have the mountain bikers for God group, the volleyball players for God, the breast cancer survivors for God, the spouses of the breast cancer survivors for God, and so on.

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## Source F

Human history begins with man's act of disobedience, which is at the very same time the beginning of his freedom and development of his reason. ~Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*

Integrity has no need of rules. ~Albert Camus

Every actual state is corrupt. Good men must not obey laws too well. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. ~Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," *Why We Can't Wait*, 1963

I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. ~Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, 1849

As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever. ~Clarence Darrow

It is not what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do. ~Edmund Burke, *Second Speech on Conciliation*, 1775

Ordinarily, a person leaving a courtroom with a conviction behind him would wear a somber face. But I left with a smile. I knew that I was a convicted criminal, but I was proud of my crime. ~Martin Luther King, Jr., March 22, 1956

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. ~Bishop Desmond Tutu

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he give it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. ~Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*



## Uncivil Disobedience: Violating the Rules for Breaking the Law (Excerpt) Education Next, Spring 2005/Vol.4, No. 2

By James J. Lopach and Jean A. Luckowski

A new kind of civil disobedience came to Missoula, Montana, recently. On a bridge over the Clark Fork River, a group from Wild Rockies Earth First! blocked a truck carrying logs from the Bitterroot Forest. Two of the protesters tied ropes to the rig, lowered themselves and their sign, "Globalization Kills Our Forests," to within a few feet of the torrent below, and refused to cooperate with rescuers who were dispatched from local fire stations to "rescue" them. The Earth Firsters were eventually coaxed to safety and charged with felony criminal endangerment. At their arraignment they denied that they had put the firefighters at risk, demanded to be set free, and ridiculed the conditions of their release on bail. One defendant brandished what a local newspaper called her "flame-and-monkey-wrench tattoos," an emblem, apparently, of her willingness to wreck rather than to respect government.

Earth First's brand of civil disobedience—frequently ill-tempered, not always nonviolent, and often coolly self-righteous—seems to be increasingly popular these days. Groups as diverse as ACT UP (gay rights), Critical Mass (environmental bicyclists), even the archconservative Catholic League are getting on the civil disobedience bandwagon. After the Ninth Circuit Court upheld a ban on "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance in 2003, the League's president wrote, "It is up to the teachers in the nine western states affected by this decision to break the law. They should instruct their students on the meaning of civil disobedience and then practice it." Some of the new breed of lawbreakers lay claim to the traditions of civil disobedience. ACT UP, for instance, says its "fusion of organized mass struggle and nonviolence—originated largely with Mohandas Gandhi." Appreciation of that past seems to be shockingly selective, however. Indeed, as even the Catholic League president insinuated, our schools, incubators of civic culture, play a significant role in instructing students about civil disobedience. But are American schools teaching the fundamentals of the social contract? Do our teachers appreciate that there is more to civil disobedience than mere self-expression or simple claims on conscience?



Many modern protests, like those against U.S. trade policy (above) feature anarchists, whose tactics are not always peaceful.

### **Not Your Father's Disobedience**

Traditional civil disobedience has usually combined deep spiritual beliefs with intense political ones. And while appreciating the differences in the two worlds-render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's-practitioners respected both. Gandhi, for instance, while leading a massive populist movement against British occupation of India (in the 1930s and 1940s), grew distrustful of mass demonstrations because participants were unwilling to go through the difficult process of purifying their actions; that is, grounding their activism in religious faith and human dignity. Martin Luther King, who warned that civil disobedience risked anarchy, went to jail "openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty."

While sometimes willful and defiant and sometimes passive to the point of self-extinction (Socrates did not protest his punishment), the heroes of civil disobedience believed in the need to obey a higher authority and to be cleansed of self-interestedness. For instance, King's words from an Alabama jail cell in 1963 (where he was being punished for marching in defiance of a court order): "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law." Compare those sentiments with the words written 40 years later by Craig Marshall, an Earth Liberation Front activist, from his Oregon jail cell (where he was serving a five-year term for setting fire to logging trucks): "There are necessary evils if we want to be effective in our struggles, such as the use of petro-fuels in igniting huge bonfires in which we can watch corporations go bankrupt. I hope I don't sound as if I'm condemning these activities-by all means, burn the [expletive deleted] to the ground."

Compare the reasoning of Gandhi and King, who presume harmony between a moral order and a rightly formed conscience, to the rationalizing of Earth First! and its political cousin the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). For Earth First! an ethic of "Deep Ecology" justifies "using all the tools in the tool box-ranging from grassroots organizing [to] monkey wrenching [which includes] ecotage, ecodefense, billboard bandits, desurveying, road reclamation, tree spiking."

Similarly, the Earth Liberation Front argues that "dependence on the substances in the natural environment" justifies "more and more step[ping] outside of this societal law to enforce natural law" and boasts that since late 1997 "there have been over two dozen major actions performed by the ELF in North America alone resulting in nearly \$40 million in damage."

In many respects Martin Luther King would seem to have more in common with the Supreme Court, which dismissed his Birmingham appeal, than with modern protesters. "In fair administration of justice no man can be judge in his own case," the Court wrote in 1967, "however exalted his station, however righteous his motives, and irrespective of his race, color, politics, or religion. Respect for judicial process is a small price to pay for the civilizing hand of law, which alone can give abiding meaning to constitutional freedom."

## Questions for thought:

1. What role does the individual play in a community?
2. What is civic responsibility?
3. What is the government's role?
4. Reflect on the characters, situations, settings, conflicts, themes, relationships and examine how communication plays a role in the relationship between the individual and the community.
5. Can any similarities be drawn between or among texts?
6. Connect the texts to real world people, experiences, or situations. Provide specific examples of how the individual plays a role in the community.
7. Pick one contemporary issue (from recent global news events, national news events) that you care deeply about to first understand what you think the world needs to improve upon.
8. Determine tolerance/empathy's role in creating positive outcomes in communities (literature and real world).
9. Evaluate the role of majority rule.
10. What are moral obligations of a citizen?
11. What is the true meaning of freedom?
12. How does literature reflect the human condition?

## Discussion Starters:

Text	Specific Quote from text that you could use to defend or challenge	What do you think about the quote?	What is another question you could ask about the text?
Source			
Source			
Source			
Dec. of Independence			
Dec. of Sentiments			
Crisis 1 Paine			
Self-Reliance			
Civil Disobedience			
Letter from Birmingham Jail			
Ghandi's text			
Gettysburg Address			
"Corn Pone Opinions"			
Douglass Autobiography			
Other Literary Example			
Other Historical Example			
Other Sources			

Overarching Seminar Question: What is the citizen's responsibility to the community?

Your thesis:

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Reason 1:

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Evidences:

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Reason 2:

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Evidences:

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Reason 3:

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Evidences:

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