

2016 AP[®] ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 2

Suggested time—40 minutes.

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

On June 11, 2004, Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of Great Britain, delivered the following eulogy to the American people in honor of former United States president Ronald Reagan, with whom she had worked closely. Read the eulogy carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies that Thatcher uses to convey her message.

We have lost a great president, a great American, and a great man, and I have lost a dear friend.

Line In his lifetime, Ronald Reagan was such a cheerful
5 and invigorating presence that it was easy to forget
what daunting historic tasks he set himself. He sought
to mend America’s wounded spirit, to restore the
strength of the free world, and to free the slaves of
communism. These were causes hard to accomplish
10 and heavy with risk, yet they were pursued with
almost a lightness of spirit, for Ronald Reagan also
embodied another great cause, what Arnold Bennett
once called “the great cause of cheering us all up.”
His policies had a freshness and optimism that won
15 converts from every class and every nation, and
ultimately, from the very heart of the “evil empire.”¹

Yet his humour often had a purpose beyond
humour. In the terrible hours after the attempt on his
life, his easy jokes gave reassurance to an anxious
world. They were evidence that in the aftermath of
20 terror and in the midst of hysteria one great heart at
least remained sane and jocular. They were truly
grace under pressure. And perhaps they signified
grace of a deeper kind. Ronnie himself certainly
believed that he had been given back his life for a
25 purpose. As he told a priest after his recovery,
“Whatever time I’ve got left now belongs to the big
fella upstairs.” And surely, it is hard to deny that
Ronald Reagan’s life was providential when we look
at what he achieved in the eight years that followed.

30 Others prophesied the decline of the West. He
inspired America and its allies with renewed faith in
their mission of freedom.

Others saw only limits to growth. He transformed a
stagnant economy into an engine of opportunity.

35 Others hoped, at best, for an uneasy cohabitation
with the Soviet Union. He won the Cold War, not
only without firing a shot, but also by inviting
enemies out of their fortress and turning them into
friends.

40 I cannot imagine how any diplomat or any
dramatist could improve on his words to
Mikhail Gorbachev² at the Geneva summit. “Let me

tell you why it is we distrust you.” Those words are
candid and tough, and they cannot have been easy to
45 hear. But they are also a clear invitation to a new
beginning and a new relationship that would be rooted
in trust.

We live today in the world that Ronald Reagan
began to reshape with those words. It is a very
50 different world, with different challenges and new
dangers. All in all, however, it is one of greater
freedom and prosperity, one more hopeful than the
world he inherited on becoming president.

As Prime Minister, I worked closely with
55 Ronald Reagan for eight of the most important years
of all our lives. We talked regularly, both before and
after his presidency, and I’ve had time and cause to
reflect on what made him a great president.

Ronald Reagan knew his own mind. He had firm
60 principles and, I believe, right ones. He expounded
them clearly. He acted upon them decisively. When
the world threw problems at the White House, he was
not baffled or disorientated or overwhelmed.

He knew almost instinctively what to do.
65 When his aides were preparing option papers for
his decision, they were able to cut out entire rafts of
proposals that they knew the old man would never
wear. When his allies came under Soviet or domestic
pressure, they could look confidently to Washington
70 for firm leadership, and when his enemies tested
American resolve, they soon discovered that his
resolve was firm and unyielding.

Yet his ideas, so clear, were never simplistic. He
saw the many sides of truth. Yes, he warned that the
75 Soviet Union had an insatiable drive for military
power and territorial expansion, but he also sensed
that it was being eaten away by systemic failures
impossible to reform. Yes, he did not shrink from
denouncing Moscow’s evil empire, but he realized
80 that a man of good will might nonetheless emerge
from within its dark corridors.

So the president resisted Soviet expansion and
pressed down on Soviet weakness at every point until
the day came when communism began to collapse

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85 beneath the combined weight of those pressures and
its own failures. And when a man of good will did
emerge from the ruins, President Reagan stepped
forward to shake his hand and to offer sincere
cooperation.

90 Nothing was more typical of Ronald Reagan than
that large-hearted magnanimity, and nothing was
more American.

Therein lies perhaps the final explanation of his
achievements. Ronald Reagan carried the American
95 people with him in his great endeavours because there
was perfect sympathy between them. He and they
loved America and what it stands for: freedom and
opportunity for ordinary people.

¹ A phrase used by Reagan to describe the Soviet Union

² The leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985
to 1991