

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

The concept of “home” is fundamental to our understanding of who we are, as individuals and as a society. Some argue that our physical location is what dictates “home,” and we should actively foster geographic continuity and a sense of “place.” Others argue that “home” is, rather, a state of mind, and that we are better served when we move and migrate to situations that are more advantageous to us and our families.

Assignment

Read the following sources (including the introductory information) carefully. **Then, write an essay in which you develop a position on whether it is more advantageous (for the individual and/or the community) to physically relocate frequently or to remain for long periods in one place.**

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

Source A (Sanders)

Source B (Homeward)

Source C (The Great Migration Map)

Source D (Motley)

Source E (Rogers and Brooks)

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Source A

Sanders, Scott R. *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*.
Beacon Press., 1994. Print.

In the passage below from Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World, Scott Russell Sanders responds to an essay by Salman Rushdie, a writer who left his native India for England. Rushdie describes the “effect of mass migrations” as being “the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places.”

Claims for the virtues of shifting ground are familiar and seductive to Americans, this nation of restless movers. From the beginning, our heroes have been sailors, explorers, cowboys, prospectors, speculators, backwoods rambler, rainbow-chasers, vagabonds of every stripe. Our Promised Land has always been over the next ridge or at the end of the trail, never under our feet. One hundred years after the official closing of the frontier, we have still not shaken off the romance of unlimited space. If we fish out a stream or wear out a field, or if the smoke from a neighbor’s chimney begins to crowd the sky, why, off we go to a new stream, a fresh field, a clean sky. In our national mythology, the worst fate is to be trapped on a farm, in a village, in the sticks, in some dead-end job or unglamorous marriage or played-out game. Stand still, we are warned, and you die.

Americans have dug the most canals, laid the most rails, built the most roads and airports of any nation. In the newspaper I read that, even though our sprawling system of interstate highways is crumbling, the president has decided that we should triple it in size, and all without raising our taxes a nickel. Only a populace drunk on driving, a populace infatuated with the myth of the open road, could hear such a proposal without hooting.

So Americans are likely to share Rushdie’s enthusiasm for migration, for the “hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs.” Everything about us is mongrel, from race to language, and we are stronger for it. Yet we might respond more skeptically when Rushdie says that “to be a migrant is, perhaps, to be the only species of human being free of the shackles of nationalism (to say nothing of its ugly sister, patriotism).” Lord knows we could do with less nationalism (to say nothing of its ugly siblings, racism, religious sectarianism, or class snobbery). But who would pretend that a history of migration has immunized the United States against bigotry? And even if, by uprooting ourselves, we shed our chauvinism, is that all we lose?

In this hemisphere, many of the worst abuses — of land, forests, animals, and communities — have been carried out by “people who root themselves in ideas rather than places.” Rushdie claims that “migrants

must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats.” But migrants often pack up their visions and values with the rest of their baggage and carry them along. The Spaniards devastated Central and South America by imposing on this New World the religion, economics, and politics of the Old. Colonists brought slavery with them to North America, along with smallpox and Norway rats. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s was caused not by drought but by the transfer onto the Great Plains of farming methods that were suitable to wetter regions. The habit of our industry and commerce has been to force identical schemes onto differing locales, as though the mind were a cookie-cutter and the land were dough.

I quarrel with Rushdie because he articulates as eloquently as anyone the orthodoxy that I wish to counter: the belief that movement is inherently good, staying put is bad; that uprooting brings tolerance, while rootedness breeds intolerance; that imaginary homelands are preferable to geographical ones; that to be modern, enlightened, fully of our time is to be displaced. Wholesale displacement may be inevitable; but we should not suppose that it occurs without disastrous consequences for the earth and for ourselves. People who root themselves in places are likelier to know and care for those places than are people who root themselves in ideas. When we cease to be migrants and become inhabitants, we might begin to pay enough heed and respect to where we are. By settling in, we have a chance of making a durable home for ourselves, our fellow creatures, and our descendants.

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Source B

"Homeward Bound." *The Official Paul Simon Site*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 July 2015.

The following are the lyrics for a song entitled "Homeward Bound" by Paul Simon in 1966.

I'm sittin' in the railway station
Got a ticket for my destination
On a tour of one-night stands
My suitcase and guitar in hand
And every stop is neatly planned
For a poet and a one-man band

Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home, where my thought's escaping
Home, where my music's playing
Home, where my love lies waiting
Silently for me

Every day's an endless stream
Of cigarettes and magazines
And each town looks the same to me
The movies and the factories
And every stranger's face I see
Remind me that I long to be

Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home, where my thought's escaping
Home, where my music's playing
Home, where my love lies waiting
Silently for me

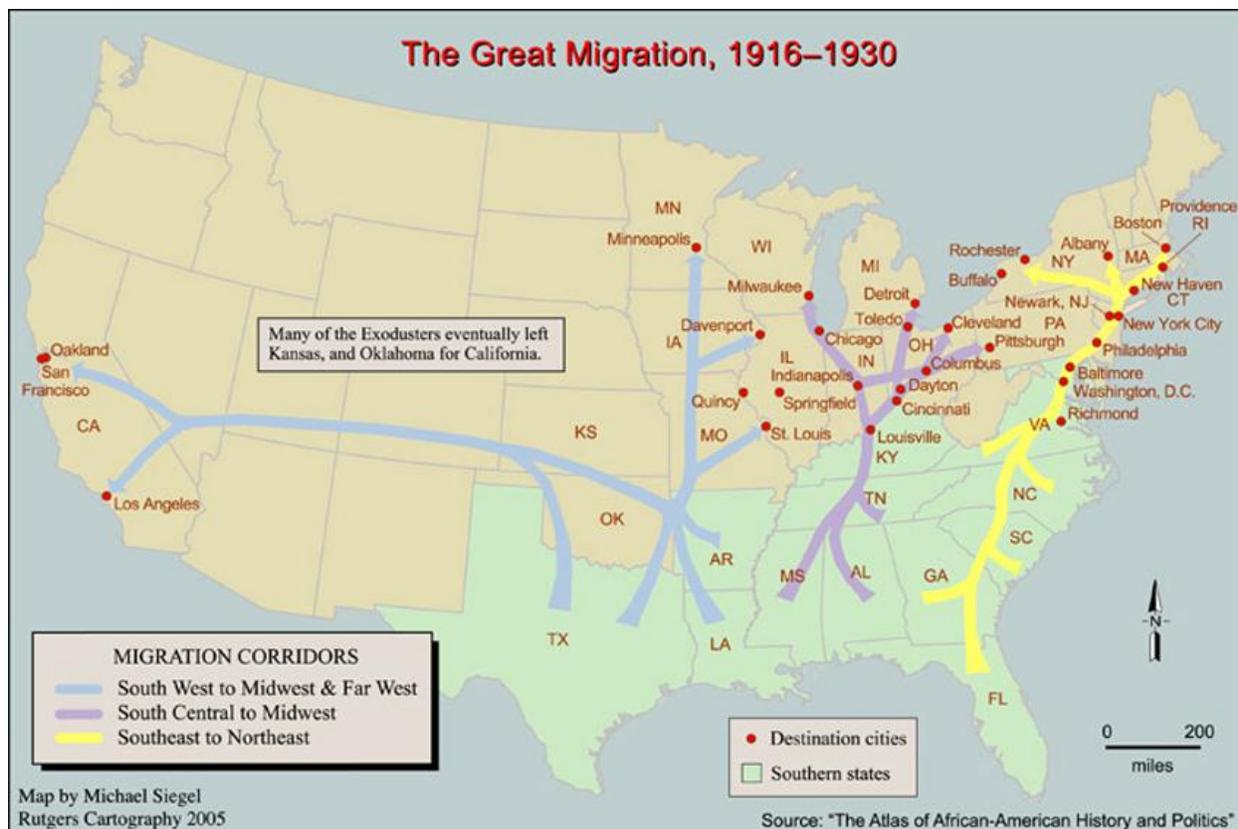
Tonight I'll sing my songs again
I'll play the game and pretend
But all my words come back to me
In shades of mediocrity
Like emptiness in harmony
I need someone to comfort me
Homeward bound
I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home, where my thought's escaping
Home, where my music's playing
Home, where my love lies waiting
Silently for me

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Source C

The Great Migration, 1916-1930. Centerstage: Baltimore. 23 July 2015.
<https://www.centerstage.org/marainey/DigitalDramaturgy/TheGreatMigration/TheGreatMigrationMap.aspx>

The map below illustrates the migration of African Americans from the South to other parts of the country in large numbers between 1916 and 1930.



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Source D

Archibald J. Motley Jr.,
“Bronzeville at Night”
Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby Jr. ©
Valerie Gerrard Browne.

This 1949 painting depicts activity in “Bronzeville,” a Chicago neighborhood constituted primarily of African-Americans who left the American South.



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Source E

Rogers, Kim Lacey and Owen Brooks. Interview with Mae Bertha Carter. 15 September 1995.

The following is an excerpt from an oral history of Mae Bertha Carter's experiences desegregating the public schools of Drew, Mississippi. Despite opportunities to move North, she chose to live in Mississippi for the rest of her life.

Rogers [interviewer]: In the last forty years, a whole lot of people have left the Delta. Have you noticed the change that this has brought? Have you seen people moving away, young people?

Carter: Well, the young people, now back, the young people got to get going. When they finished high school or something, they would leave Mississippi and go someplace else. But now, most of the people, they get out of school and college they stay in Mississippi. They're not going north. I think they found out the North ain't no better than the South, so they started staying in the South. Mostly for the weather and everything, they finally did stay here. I know my children do. I have five children in the state.

Rogers: They like it better than up north?

Carter: Oh, my God, yes. My children go up there and say, Mama, thank you for not bringing us up here. Thank you.