

2011 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.)

Florence Kelley (1859-1932) was a United States social worker and reformer who fought successfully for child labor laws and improved conditions for working women. She delivered the following speech before the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Philadelphia on July 22, 1905. Read the speech carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies Kelley uses to convey her message about child labor to her audience. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

Line We have, in this country, two million children
under the age of sixteen years who are earning their
bread. They vary in age from six and seven years
5 (in the cotton mills of Georgia) and eight, nine and
10 ten years (in the coal-breakers of Pennsylvania), to
fifteen, sixteen and seventeen years in more
enlightened states.

No other portion of the wage earning class
increased so rapidly from decade to decade as the
10 young girls from fourteen to twenty years. Men
increase, women increase, youth increase, boys
increase in the ranks of the breadwinners; but no
contingent so doubles from census period to census
15 period (both by percent and by count of heads), as
does the contingent of girls between twelve and
twenty years of age. They are in commerce, in offices,
in manufacturing.

Tonight while we sleep, several thousand little girls
will be working in textile mills, all the night through,
20 in the deafening noise of the spindles and the looms
spinning and weaving cotton and wool, silks and
ribbons for us to buy.

In Alabama the law provides that a child under
sixteen years of age shall not work in a cotton mill at
25 night longer than eight hours, and Alabama does
better in this respect than any other southern state.
North and South Carolina and Georgia place no
restriction upon the work of children at night; and
while we sleep little white girls will be working
30 tonight in the mills in those states, working
eleven hours at night.

In Georgia there is no restriction whatever! A girl
of six or seven years, just tall enough to reach the
bobbins, may work eleven hours by day or by night.
35 And they will do so tonight, while we sleep.

Nor is it only in the South that these things occur.
Alabama does better than New Jersey. For Alabama
limits the children's work at night to eight hours,
while New Jersey permits it all night long. Last year
40 New Jersey took a long backward step. A good law
was repealed which had required women and

[children] to stop work at six in the evening and at
noon on Friday. Now, therefore, in New Jersey, boys
and girls, after their 14th birthday, enjoy the pitiful
45 privilege of working all night long.

In Pennsylvania, until last May it was lawful for
children, 13 years of age, to work twelve hours at
night. A little girl, on her thirteenth birthday, could
start away from her home at half past five in the
50 afternoon, carrying her pail of midnight luncheon as
happier people carry their midday luncheon, and
could work in the mill from six at night until six in
the morning, without violating any law of the
Commonwealth.

If the mothers and the teachers in Georgia could
vote, would the Georgia Legislature have refused at
every session for the last three years to stop the work
in the mills of children under twelve years of age?

Would the New Jersey Legislature have passed that
shameful repeal bill enabling girls of fourteen years to
work all night, if the mothers in New Jersey were
enfranchised? Until the mothers in the great industrial
60 states are enfranchised, we shall none of us be able to
free our consciences from participation in this great
evil. No one in this room tonight can feel free from
such participation. The children make our shoes in the
shoe factories; they knit our stockings, our knitted
underwear in the knitting factories. They spin and
weave our cotton underwear in the cotton mills.

Children braid straw for our hats, they spin and weave
the silk and velvet wherewith we trim our hats. They
stamp buckles and metal ornaments of all kinds, as
well as pins and hat-pins. Under the sweating system,
70 tiny children make artificial flowers and neckwear for
us to buy. They carry bundles of garments from the
factories to the tenements, little beasts of burden,
robbed of school life that they may work for us.

We do not wish this. We prefer to have our work
done by men and women. But we are almost
80 powerless. Not wholly powerless, however, are
citizens who enjoy the right of petition. For myself, I

2011 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

shall use this power in every possible way until the right to the ballot is granted, and then I shall continue to use both.

85 What can we do to free our consciences? There is one line of action by which we can do much. We can enlist the workingmen on behalf of our enfranchisement just in proportion as we strive with them to free the children. No labor organization in
90 this country ever fails to respond to an appeal for help in the freeing of the children.

For the sake of the children, for the Republic in which these children will vote after we are dead, and for the sake of our cause, we should enlist the
95 workingmen voters, with us, in this task of freeing the children from toil!