

Question 3: The Argument

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- ◎ Teacher in Gwinnett County Schools for 24 years; AP Teacher for 11 years; AP Reader for 5 years
- ◎ “So this is more of a thinking test than a writing test.” (post-exam observation by a tablemate’s student)
- ◎ First and foremost: Reading and understanding the prompt is key.

Prompt

In 1891, Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) observed, “Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.”

Wilde claims that disobedience is a valuable human trait *and* that it promotes social progress. Write an essay that argues your position on *the extent to which Wilde’s claims are valid*. Use appropriate examples from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument. (italics mine)

Definition of Argument

From a footnote on the scoring guide:

“For the purposes of scoring, argument means asserting a claim justified by evidence and reasoning.”

◎ Upper range essays generally:

- Organize by arguments NOT examples (i.e., disobedience as instigator of global change, rebellion against unjust laws, rejecting of social norms)
- Employ tools of argument and sophisticated reasoning (i.e., warrants, backing, rebuttal)
- Enhance coherence with transitions connecting one idea to the next
- Present EFFECTIVE and appropriate examples (avoiding the personal unless tied to SOCIAL progress). Overused: Rosa Parks, MLK, American Revolution. Fresh: Gandhi, Haitian slave rebellion, LGBT fight for equal rights, instances where NOT being disobedient was a disaster such as Nazi Germany. Recommend having students brainstorm and then discard most frequently cited examples. Reader will take notice. Regardless of examples used, connections to social progress need to be shown.
- Offer convincing and thorough explanations of how examples connect to progress
- Acknowledge counterclaims (understand complexity of argument)
- Control elements of writing with effective, varied syntax, strong vocabulary, few errors, and economy of language

- ⦿ “Disobedience is endemic to humanity in that it ensures humanity; without it, morality is tossed away in favor of Big Brother’s [sic].”