

2015 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 the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., labor union organizer and civil rights leader Cesar Chavez published an article in the magazine of a religious organization devoted to helping those in need. Read the following excerpt from the article carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the rhetorical choices Chavez makes to develop his argument about nonviolent resistance.

Line Dr. King's entire life was an example of power that
nonviolence brings to bear in the real world. It is an
example that inspired much of the philosophy and
strategy of the farm workers' movement. This
5 observance of Dr. King's death gives us the best
possible opportunity to recall the principles with
which our struggle has grown and matured.

Our conviction is that human life is a very special
possession given by God to man and that no one has
10 the right to take it for any reason or for any cause,
however just it may be.

We are also convinced that nonviolence is more
powerful than violence. Nonviolence supports you if
you have a just and moral cause. Nonviolence
15 provides the opportunity to stay on the offensive, and
that is of crucial importance to win any contest.

If we resort to violence then one of two things will
happen: either the violence will be escalated and there
will be many injuries and perhaps deaths on both
20 sides, or there will be total demoralization of the
workers.

Nonviolence has exactly the opposite effect. If, for
every violent act committed against us, we respond
with nonviolence, we attract people's support. We can
25 gather the support of millions who have a conscience
and would rather see a nonviolent resolution to
problems. We are convinced that when people are
faced with a direct appeal from the poor struggling
nonviolently against great odds, they will react
30 positively. The American people and people
everywhere still yearn for justice. It is to that
yearning that we appeal.

But if we are committed to nonviolence only as a
strategy or tactic, then if it fails our only alternative is
35 to turn to violence. So we must balance the strategy
with a clear understanding of what we are doing.
However important the struggle is and however much
misery, poverty and exploitation exist, we know that
it cannot be more important than one human life. We
40 work on the theory that men and women who are truly
concerned about people are nonviolent by nature.
These people become violent when the deep concern
they have for people is frustrated and when they are
faced with seemingly insurmountable odds.

45 We advocate militant nonviolence as our means of
achieving justice for our people, but we are not blind
to the feelings of frustration, impatience and anger

which seethe inside every farm worker. The burdens
of generations of poverty and powerlessness lie heavy
50 in the fields of America. If we fail, there are those
who will see violence as the shortcut to change.

It is precisely to overcome these frustrations that
we have involved masses of people in their own
struggle throughout the movement. Freedom is
55 best experienced through participation and self-
determination, and free men and women instinctively
prefer democratic change to any other means.

Thus, demonstrations and marches, strikes and
boycotts are not only weapons against the growers,
60 but our way of avoiding the senseless violence that
brings no honor to any class or community. The
boycott, as Gandhi taught, is the most nearly perfect
instrument of nonviolent change, allowing masses of
people to participate actively in a cause.

65 When victory comes through violence, it is a
victory with strings attached. If we beat the growers at
the expense of violence, victory would come at the
expense of injury and perhaps death. Such a thing
would have a tremendous impact on us. We would
70 lose regard for human beings. Then the struggle
would become a mechanical thing. When you lose
your sense of life and justice, you lose your strength.

The greater the oppression, the more leverage
nonviolence holds. Violence does not work in the
75 long run and if it is temporarily successful, it replaces
one violent form of power with another just as
violent. People suffer from violence.

Examine history. Who gets killed in the case of
violent revolution? The poor, the workers. The people
80 of the land are the ones who give their bodies and
don't really gain that much for it. We believe it is too
big a price to pay for not getting anything. Those who
espouse violence exploit people. To call men to arms
with many promises, to ask them to give up their lives
85 for a cause and then not produce for them afterwards,
is the most vicious type of oppression.

We know that most likely we are not going to do
anything else the rest of our lives except build our
union. For us there is nowhere else to go. Although
90 we would like to see victory come soon, we are
willing to wait. In this sense, time is our ally. We
learned many years ago that the rich may have
money, but the poor have time.