2018 AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SECTION II
Total Time - 2 hours

Question 1

Everywhere you look these days, whether it's waiting in line at the grocery store or sitting at the dinner table, you see people on their cell phones. Some people call today's teenage generation iGen and lament the fact that they are on the brink of "the worst mental health crisis in decades." Many parents and teachers see cell phones as a problem because they inhibit social interactions and create a distraction from homework. However, given recent events like the mass shooting in Parkland and the subsequent marches and walkouts organized by social media, many people see today's teenagers as more connected than ever.

Carefully read the sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of these sources and incorporate them into a coherent, well-developed argument for **your position on the extent to which cell phones, and by extension social media, present a significant problem for teenagers today.**

Make sure your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Turkle)
Source B (Fischer)
Source C (Oppenheimer)
Source D (Samuel)
Source E (Twenge)
Source F (Bromwich)
Source G (Heller)

Source A

Turkle, Sherry. "Stop Googling. Let's Talk." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 26 Sept. 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/opinion/sunday/stop-googling-lets-talk.html.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

College students tell me they know how to look someone in the eye and type on their phones at the same time, their split attention undetected. They say it's a skill they mastered in middle school when they wanted to text in class without getting caught. Now they use it when they want to be both with their friends and, as some put it, "elsewhere."

These days, we feel less of a need to hide the fact that we are dividing our attention. In a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, 89 percent of cellphone owners said they had used their phones during the last social gathering they attended. But they weren't happy about it; 82 percent of adults felt that the way they used their phones in social settings hurt the conversation.

I've been studying the psychology of online connectivity for more than 30 years. For the past five, I've had a special focus: What has happened to face-to-face conversation in a world where so many people say they would rather text than talk? I've looked at families, friendships and romance. I've studied schools, universities and workplaces. When college students explain to me how dividing their attention plays out in the dining hall, some refer to a "rule of three." In a conversation among five or six people at dinner, you have to check that three people are paying attention — heads up — before you give yourself permission to look down at your phone. So conversation proceeds, but with different people having their heads up at different times. The effect is what you would expect: Conversation is kept relatively light, on topics where people feel they can drop in and out.

Young people spoke to me enthusiastically about the good things that flow from a life lived by the rule of three, which you can follow not only during meals but all the time. First of all, there is the magic of the always available elsewhere. You can put your attention wherever you want it to be. You can always be heard. You never have to be bored. When you sense that a lull in the conversation is coming, you can shift your attention from the people in the room to the world you can find on your phone. But the students also described a sense of loss.

One 15-year-old I interviewed at a summer camp talked about her reaction when she went out to dinner with her father and he took out his phone to add "facts" to their conversation. "Daddy," she said, "stop Googling. I want to talk to you." A 15-year-old boy told me that someday he wanted to raise a family, not the way his parents are raising him (with phones out during meals and in the park and during his school sports events) but the way his parents think they are raising him — with no phones at meals and plentiful family conversation. One college junior tried to capture what is wrong about life in his generation. "Our texts are fine," he said. "It's what texting does to our conversations when we are together that's the problem."

It's a powerful insight. Studies of conversation both in the laboratory and in natural settings show that when two people are talking, the mere presence of a phone on a table between them or in the periphery of their vision changes both what they talk about and the degree of connection they feel. People keep the conversation on topics where they won't mind being interrupted. They don't feel as invested in each other. Even a silent phone disconnects us.

Source B

Fischer, Claude S. "Smartphones Aren't Anti-Social." *Boston Review*, 6 Oct. 2015, bostonreview.net/blog/claude-fischer-sherry-turkle-smart-phone-social-communication.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

...The thesis [Sherry Turkle] posits: People are not having human conversations with one another anymore because they are escaping into their virtual communications. Now, almost everybody—including me—is grumpy about people eyeing their smartphones rather than the person in front of them. And there may well be something to this assertion. But we want some systematic, reliable evidence that Americans converse less in person than before, attend to one another less, and suffer more as a consequence. It is hard to find such evidence.

Much of the "data" in Turkle's essay (and I presume the new book) is anecdotal. As in *Alone Together*, the documentation is mainly people here and there, especially unhappy people, with whom she talks. These reports may all be totally truthful and still the thesis be wrong. Fifty years ago, Turkle might have well have heard similar grousing about people eating together silently, or burying their noses in the newspaper, or, heaven knows, turning away to watch the always-on TV set.

In addition, Turkle cherry picks studies. For example, early in her essay, she cites a Pew survey this way: "In a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, 89 percent of cellphone owners said they had used their phones during the last social gathering they attended. But they weren't happy about it; 82 percent of adults felt that the way they used their phones in social settings hurt the conversation." Here is how the Pew researchers summarized their *2014* findings (published 2015) about phones and social gatherings:

> When asked about some specific ways they might have used their cellphone during their most recent social gathering . . . . a share [of respondents] are trying to avoid or disengage from the people they are physically present with: 16% used their phone because they are no longer interested in what the group was doing; 15% wanted to connect with other people who are strangers to the group; and 10% used their phone to avoid participating in what the group was discussing.
>
> However, it was more often the case that people used their cellphone in a manner tied to the gathering: 45% used their phone to post a picture or video they had taken of the

> gathering; 41% used their phone to share something that had occurred in the group by text, email or social networking site; 38% used their phone to get information they thought would be interesting to the group; 31% used their phone to connect with other people who are known to the group.
>
> In all, 78% cited at least one of these four "group-contributing" reasons, compared with 30% who used their phone for one of the three "retreating-from-the-group" reasons.
>
> When using their cellphones in public spaces, most users do so for information gathering and social purposes, rather than explicitly anti-social purposes.

And compare the Pew authors' summary to Turkle's summary (above) about people's feelings in such cases. The Pew report: "82% of all adults (not just cell owners) say that when people use their cellphones at social gatherings, it at least occasionally hurts the conversation and atmosphere of the gathering" (not, as Turkle wrote, that "the way they [themselves] used their phones in social settings [generally] hurt the conversation"). Moreover, among those who did use their phones, the Pew report states, "75% said their phone use took none (32%) or only "a little" (43%) of their attention away from the group. . ."

Turkle could say these folks were fooling themselves about their phone use, that it really was distracting. Maybe. But you cannot draw on the survey for one (inaccurate) point and ignore the rest.

To be sure, the ubiquity of smartphones *must* be making a difference in Americans' personal relations, as their use is making a difference in, for example, how farmers and fishermen in the global South are handling their businesses. But that social difference is likely to be a complex mix of new habits—many only now jelling—and a complex mix of the good, the bad, and the just different. We need to focus on close, systematic, and comparative study of what is changing—and then inform the public.

Source C

Oppenheimer, Mark. "Technology Is Not Driving Us Apart After All." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 17 Jan. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/magazine/technology-is-not-driving-us-apart-after-all.html.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

For his dissertation at the University of Toronto, [Keith] Hampton studied an extraordinary early experiment in wired living. In the mid-1990s, a consortium that included IBM and Apple helped raise more than $100 million to turn a new suburban development in Newmarket, Ontario, a Toronto suburb, into the neighborhood of the future. As houses went up, more than half of them got high-speed Internet (this in the age of dial-up), advanced browser software for their computers, a tool for videoconferencing between houses and a Napster-like tool for music

sharing. He treated the other homes as a control group. From October 1997 through August 1999, Hampton lived in a basement apartment in the new development, observing and interviewing his neighbors.

Hampton found that, rather than isolating people, technology made them more connected. “It turns out the wired folk — they recognized like three times as many of their neighbors when asked,” Hampton said. Not only that, he said, they spoke with neighbors on the phone five times as often and attended more community events. Altogether, they were much more successful at addressing local problems, like speeding cars and a small spate of burglaries. They also used their Listserv to coordinate offline events, even sign-ups for a bowling league. Hampton was one of the first scholars to marshal evidence that the web might make people less atomized rather than more. Not only were people not opting out of bowling leagues — Robert Putnam’s famous metric for community engagement — for more screen time; they were also using their computers to opt in.

After a brief stint as an assistant professor at M.I.T., Hampton left in 2005 for the University of Pennsylvania, where he stayed until moving to Rutgers in 2012. During his time at Penn, his relatively sunny take on the web, wireless and mobile technology inserted him in the polarizing debate between techno-utopians and techno-skeptics. What was still missing from the research, he decided, was historical perspective.

“We’re really bad at looking back in time,” Hampton said, speaking of his fellow sociologists. “You overly idealize the past. It happens today when we talk about technology. We say: ‘Oh, technology, making us isolated. We’re disengaged.’ Compared to what? You know, this kind of idealized notion of what community and social interactions were like.” He crudely summarized his former M.I.T. colleague Sherry Turkle’s book “Alone Together.” “She said: ‘You know, today, people standing at a train station, they’re all talking on their cellphones. Public spaces aren’t communal anymore. No one interacts in public spaces.’ I’m like: ‘How do you know that? We don’t know that. Compared to what? Like, three years ago?’ ”

Turkle said that her decades of observation are pretty conclusive: “When you watch a mother texting as she pushes a stroller — and I follow that mother for blocks, I walk alongside — you know it. You know that the streetscape used to include mothers who spoke to their children.”

Source D

Samuel, Alexandra. “Yes, Smartphones Are Destroying a Generation, But Not of Kids.”*JSTOR*, 8 Aug. 2017, daily.jstor.org/yes-smartphones-are-destroying-a-generation-but-not-of-kids/.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

Quickly, now: Go rip a smartphone out of the hands of the nearest teen. If you have a teen child of your own, you can start there—or if you have kids under 13, you can take away whatever

device they're presently using. Feel free to just tear your TV off of the wall, if that's all you've got to turn off. And if you don't have kids, snatch a phone from any teenager who happens to walk by.

If that level of panic feels overblown, then perhaps you missed the latest story to spread a message of tech alarm to the world's online parents. Writing in *The Atlantic,* Jean Twenge warns that "the twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we've not seen in a very long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we've placed in young people's hands are having profound effects on their lives—and making them seriously unhappy."

Beginning with its provocative title, "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?", the article sets us up to feel hopeless about the way mobile and social media has turned Kids These Days into lonely, depressed screen addicts who are failing to advance along the established path to adulthood.

It's not that Twenge's got her story wrong; on the contrary, it's precisely because she's onto something that we need to be so careful about drawing the right conclusions from the evidence she cites. Even more crucial—and missing not just from Twenge's work, but so many of these alarmist pieces—is the *so what*: what, exactly, are parents supposed to do about the problem?

But first, let's look at whether things are really as dire as Twenge would have us believe. Her argument hinges on an apparent discontinuity in the generational trends she has observed across decades. "The arrival of the smartphone has radically changed every aspect of teenagers' lives," Twenge argues, "[f]rom the nature of their social interactions to their mental health."

Twenge drives much of her argument with data from the *Monitoring the Future survey* series, even though she and a co-author argued in a 2010 paper that "the MTF dataset does not measure anxiety and depression, so it is not possible to test changes in mental health using these data." Her alarm about teens being "seriously unhappy" is even more recent: Just two years ago, she and her colleagues made headlines with an academic paper finding that "recent adolescents reported greater happiness and life satisfaction than their predecessors."

I don't have anything like her level of familiarity with that data, but I couldn't resist taking a peek at the data that paints a picture of teens in a screen-generated crisis. And what I saw looks quite different from the depression-fest that Twenge describes: on the contrary, levels of happiness and unhappiness are largely constant, though we may be heading into a very modest (though not unprecedented) dip .

This hardly looks like the picture of adolescence in crisis: compared with the time series charts in Twenge's piece (which do show some interesting discontinuities in adolescent lifestyles), there's nothing here that screams "crisis." I didn't do as deep a dive into the data on teen loneliness, but a preliminary glance suggested a similar pattern (or rather, lack thereof).

[…]

The fastest growth during 2007-2010 was among young adults (18-29) and 30-to-49-year-olds. One year before the iPhone, only 6% of people aged 30-to-49 were on social networks. By 2009, that had leapt up to 44%: that's absolutely explosive growth.

What does that have to do with teens? Well, let me give you another name for 18-to-49-year-olds: *parents.* While teens were old hands at social networking by that point, they were still stuck texting on their feature phones. Meanwhile, their parents started catching up on the social networking front—with the added opportunity of accessing LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter on their shiny new iPhones and Androids.

I'd love to tell you we used this shiny new tech to look up educational resources for our children, or play them classical music in utero. And sure, there was a bit of that. But you know what smartphones and social media are *really* great at? Tuning out your children.

I know, we all really enjoy reading articles about how it's those evil smartphones that are destroying our children's brains and souls. It lets us justify locking their devices up with parental monitoring tools, or cutting off their mobile plan when they fail to make the grade.

Fellow parents, it's time for us to consider another possible explanation for why our kids are increasingly disengaged. It's because we've disengaged ourselves; we're too busy looking down at our screens to look up at our kids.

Source E

Twenge, Jean M. "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?" *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 19 Mar. 2018, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

One day last summer, around noon, I called Athena, a 13-year-old who lives in Houston, Texas. She answered her phone—she's had an iPhone since she was 11—sounding as if she'd just woken up. We chatted about her favorite songs and TV shows, and I asked her what she likes to do with her friends. "We go to the mall," she said. "Do your parents drop you off?," I asked, recalling my own middle-school days, in the 1980s, when I'd enjoy a few parent-free hours shopping with my friends. "No—I go with my family," she replied. "We'll go with my mom and brothers and walk a little behind them. I just have to tell my mom where we're going. I have to check in every hour or every 30 minutes."

Those mall trips are infrequent—about once a month. More often, Athena and her friends spend time together on their phones, unchaperoned. Unlike the teens of my generation, who might have spent an evening tying up the family landline with gossip, they talk on Snapchat, the smartphone app that allows users to send pictures and videos that quickly disappear. They make sure to keep up their Snapstreaks, which show how many days in a row they have Snapchatted with each other. Sometimes they save screenshots of particularly ridiculous pictures of friends. "It's good blackmail," Athena said. (Because she's a minor, I'm not using her real name.) She told me she'd spent most of the summer hanging out alone in her room with her phone. That's just the way her generation is, she said. "We didn't have a choice to know any life without iPads or iPhones. I think we like our phones more than we like actual people."

I've been researching generational differences for 25 years, starting when I was a 22-year-old doctoral student in psychology. Typically, the characteristics that come to define a generation appear gradually, and along a continuum. Beliefs and behaviors that were already rising simply continue to do so. Millennials, for instance, are a highly individualistic generation, but individualism had been increasing since the Baby Boomers turned on, tuned in, and dropped out. I had grown accustomed to line graphs of trends that looked like modest hills and valleys. Then I began studying Athena's generation.

Around 2012, I noticed abrupt shifts in teen behaviors and emotional states. The gentle slopes of the line graphs became steep mountains and sheer cliffs, and many of the distinctive characteristics of the Millennial generation began to disappear. In all my analyses of generational data—some reaching back to the 1930s—I had never seen anything like it.

At first I presumed these might be blips, but the trends persisted, across several years and a series of national surveys. The changes weren't just in degree, but in kind. The biggest difference between the Millennials and their predecessors was in how they viewed the world; teens today differ from the Millennials not just in their views but in how they spend their time. The experiences they have every day are radically different from those of the generation that came of age just a few years before them.

What happened in 2012 to cause such dramatic shifts in behavior? It was after the Great Recession, which officially lasted from 2007 to 2009 and had a starker effect on Millennials trying to find a place in a sputtering economy. But it was exactly the moment when the proportion of Americans who owned a smartphone surpassed 50 percent.

The more I pored over yearly surveys of teen attitudes and behaviors, and the more I talked with young people like Athena, the clearer it became that theirs is a generation shaped by the smartphone and by the concomitant rise of social media. I call them iGen. Born between 1995 and 2012, members of this generation are growing up with smartphones, have an Instagram account before they start high school, and do not remember a time before the internet. The Millennials grew up with the web as well, but it wasn't ever-present in their lives, at hand at all times, day and night. iGen's oldest members were early adolescents when the iPhone was

introduced, in 2007, and high-school students when the iPad entered the scene, in 2010. A 2017 survey of more than 5,000 American teens found that three out of four owned an iPhone.

The advent of the smartphone and its cousin the tablet was followed quickly by hand-wringing about the deleterious effects of "screen time." But the impact of these devices has not been fully appreciated, and goes far beyond the usual concerns about curtailed attention spans. The arrival of the smartphone has radically changed every aspect of teenagers' lives, from the nature of their social interactions to their mental health. These changes have affected young people in every corner of the nation and in every type of household. The trends appear among teens poor and rich; of every ethnic background; in cities, suburbs, and small towns. Where there are cell towers, there are teens living their lives on their smartphone.

To those of us who fondly recall a more analog adolescence, this may seem foreign and troubling. The aim of generational study, however, is not to succumb to nostalgia for the way things used to be; it's to understand how they are now. Some generational changes are positive, some are negative, and many are both. More comfortable in their bedrooms than in a car or at a party, today's teens are physically safer than teens have ever been. They're markedly less likely to get into a car accident and, having less of a taste for alcohol than their predecessors, are less susceptible to drinking's attendant ills.

Psychologically, however, they are more vulnerable than Millennials were: Rates of teen depression and suicide have skyrocketed since 2011. It's not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades. Much of this deterioration can be traced to their phones.

Even when a seismic event—a war, a technological leap, a free concert in the mud—plays an outsize role in shaping a group of young people, no single factor ever defines a generation. Parenting styles continue to change, as do school curricula and culture, and these things matter. But the twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we've not seen in a very long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we've placed in young people's hands are having profound effects on their lives—and making them seriously unhappy.

Source F

Bromwich, Jonah Engel. "How the Parkland Students Got So Good at Social Media." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 7 Mar. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/us/parkland-students-social-media.html.

This selection is an excerpt of a longer article.

The secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, had only just announced that she would visit Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School when the students began to react.

“Good thing I was already planning on sleeping in tomorrow,” Emma González tweeted out to her 1.2 million followers Tuesday evening.

“Literally no one asked for this,” said her classmate, Sarah Chadwick, to an additional 269,000 followers.

And with a handful of tweets, the students had overtaken another adult official’s narrative. They were in command of their own story once again.

It has become obvious that many of the most well-known students at Stoneman Douglas in Parkland, Fla., are adept at using social media, and Twitter in particular, where many journalists spend much of their time talking to one another.

With their consistent tweeting of stories, memes, jokes and video clips, the students have managed to keep the tragedy that their school experienced — and their plan to stop such shootings from happening elsewhere — in the news for weeks, long after past mass shootings have faded from the headlines.

Many observers have simply assumed that, like fish in water, the students are skilled simply because they have been using the platforms for most of their lives. That is not entirely true.

Ms. González became one of the most well-known of the shooting survivors after giving a passionate speech about gun control the Saturday after the attack. But when her name began to trend on Twitter, she did not know how to use it.

“You know that meme where it’s a picture of a grandma in front of a computer?” she said in a recent interview. “That was me. In the early days, someone DM’d me and I was like, ‘O.K., so how do I respond? Where does the keyboard go?’’’ (A DM is a private message.)

Ms. González, 18, had been more of a Tumblr fan. She was also a fan of Instagram, but, before the shooting, had begun to use the platform less frequently after realizing she was wasting her time on it.

And Facebook? “Facebook is not really used by the people in my community.”

Ms. González was surrounded by classmates who were familiar with Twitter’s ever-evolving dialect of memes, wisecracks and news stories. Within a week, she said, they had taught her the basics. How to make a thread. How to follow a thread. And, perhaps most importantly, the difference between a retweet, which reposts someone else’s tweet, and a quote tweet, which allows a user to retweet with a comment above the original.

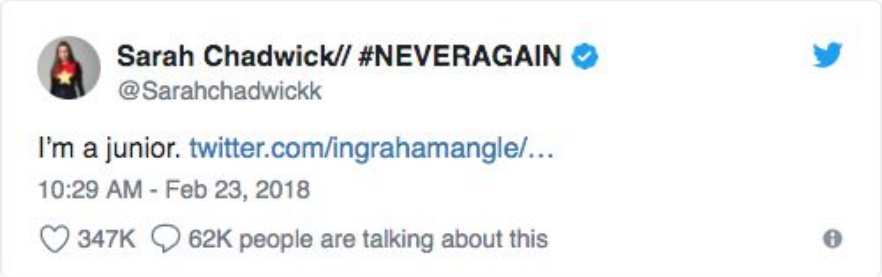
The Parkland students’ use of quote tweets is one of their most effective tools. Ms. Chadwick, in particular, has used the technique, as well as other memes to mock the students’ ideological opponents.

In one memorable exchange, Ms. Chadwick was scrolling through her Twitter feed last month when she saw someone remark that politicians were “easy to buy.” She and her classmates had

spent the last week educating themselves on how easy the AR-15 was to purchase. She made the obvious connection, and tweeted:

The Fox News host Laura Ingraham chided Ms. Chadwick, 16, for her tone, and attributed the quote to "Stoneman Douglas sophomore Sarah Chadwick."

Ms. Chadwick's response?



[...]

Quote tweeting may allow Twitter users some small window into the other sides of a debate. Delaney Tarr, who had about 500 followers before the shooting and now has close to 97,000, said she believed the tool breaks through the filter bubbles that keep ideological opponents from hearing each other.

"Even if people maybe side with the other people a little bit more, they understand both sides," she said, of the benefits of quote tweeting. "We want people to be educated."

The social media activism has come with a cost for the high schoolers, who before the shooting just used these platforms to keep up with friends, make jokes and pass the time. Ms. Tarr was one of several students interviewed who said that she no longer felt comfortable using her Twitter account to express her opinions on pop culture, or the other lighter subjects she used to tweet about.

"The fact is that I have to represent our movement," she said. "It's not just me tweeting whatever I want to tweet about. It has to be drawn back to who I am to the media, to who I am to the country."

Source G

Heller, Joe. "Top Vacation Sites of 2013." *The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists*, 10 July 2013, editorialcartoonists.com/cartoon/display.cfm/123991/.