CHELPS

Argument Essay: Where you do find evidence to support your claim? Think CHELPS.

C  current events
H  history
E  experience
L  literature
P  pop culture
S  sports/science

Sample issue: Should women be allowed to serve in military combat?
1. Decide your position
2. Find an example for every letter in CHELPS

C __________________________________________________________
                                                                

H __________________________________________________________
                                                                

E __________________________________________________________
                                                                

L __________________________________________________________
                                                                

P __________________________________________________________
                                                                

S __________________________________________________________
2012 AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Question 3

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Consider the distinct perspectives expressed in the following statements.

If you develop the absolute sense of certainty that powerful beliefs provide, then you can get yourself to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that other people are certain are impossible.

William Lyon Phelps, American educator, journalist, and professor (1865–1943)

I think we ought always to entertain our opinions with some measure of doubt. I shouldn’t wish people dogmatically to believe any philosophy, not even mine.

Bertrand Russell, British author, mathematician, and philosopher (1872–1970)

In a well-organized essay, take a position on the relationship between certainty and doubt. Support your argument with appropriate evidence and examples.

STOP

END OF EXAM
How to Approach the Argument Essay

Step 1: Carefully Read the prompt

Step 2: Pros and Cons (Remember CHELPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros: Support the Argument</th>
<th>Cons: Against the Argument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence 1</td>
<td>• Evidence 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence 2</td>
<td>• Evidence 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Decide your position

Step 4: Decide how to organize your paper

- Introduction: Make an assertion/claim
- Body Paragraph(s): Evidence
  - Provide specific evidence
- Body Paragraph: Concession
  - Topic sentence begins with transition (see “The Language of Concession”)
  - Topic sentence clearly signals to the reader that you are exploring the opposing view
  - Provide sufficient evidence
  - Commentary: show that you understand why someone would have this view
- Body Paragraph: Rebuttal
  - Topic sentence begins with transition (see “The Language of Concession”)
  - Topic sentence clearly signals to the reader that you are returning to your original claim
  - Provide evidence that refutes the concession in the previous paragraph
  - Commentary: make a convincing argument for your claim
- Conclusion
  - Summarize your thesis without copying it word for word
  - Explain why this is an important issue
  - Make a strong call to action

Step 5: Write!
The Language of Concession

To establish your own ETHICAL APPEAL—in other words, to show yourself as a reasonable thinker who is willing to entertain the possibility of differing points of view—it is important in your argument to RECOGNIZE THE OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS. You make a concession, noting and explaining the views, which oppose your own.

Certain words/phrases help you do this gracefully. These words are useful to introduce your concession argument:

However,
On the other hand,
It is also true,
Some argue that . . .
Admittedly,
While it is certainly true that . . .
I concede that . . .
Obviously,
Granted,
It seems clear that,
Some make a convincing argument that
Not everyone agrees with this position, however. Some argue that . . .

Then, when you have finished explaining the view of the other side, certain phrases and words will take you back to your own point of view. These words are useful when you rebut the points made in your concession.

More importantly, however,
But more evidence supports the argument that . . .
It is quite clear, however, that . . .
But we must remember . . .
These points do not satisfactorily refute the conclusion that . . .
We must remember, however,

*Thanks to
Becky Talk, Laying the Foundation.org
THEY SAY I SAY Graff and Birkenstein
Sample Essay (Score: 8)

Certainty and Doubt are coupled together by nature, and even more by thinking. Phelps believes that absolute certainty is necessary, while Russell believes that doubt is important to form true opinions. Doubt is truly necessary for Real learning and growth to occur, while believing only in certainty can be a hindrance.

There are many beliefs that some people hold to be certain that are not acceptable. Hitler, for example, believed that people of Jewish descent were horrible, and a disgrace. Many other people would be certain that it is “impossible” to murder six million people, but his certainty lead him to be able to do so. In a similar sense Christian crusaders in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries were certain that Rome had the right to Jerusalem. They killed thousands, and sparked a holy war, that is still not over. Americans were certain that they had the right to the entire North American continent, and that lead to terrible mistreatment and expulsion from lands for Natives. They had the trail of tears, and many countless massacres. In 1860, the Southern states believed beyond reasonable doubt, that slavery was acceptable, which lead to a war, and thousands of Americans being killed and killing each other. It is the certainty that leads to the violence. If Hitler had not been so certain that Jews were evil, then maybe six million more people could be alive today. If, a thousand years ago, the Pope hadn’t believed that Christians were entitled to the holy land, then maybe the twin towers would still be standing, and no soldiers would be dead in a second war in Iraq. However, no one can be certain about what has not happened.

Doubt, on the other hand, is a great learning and teaching tool. It is doubtful that Isaac Newton would have discovered the laws of gravity if he had not question what everyone else was certain of. It is hard to know whether or not Galileo and Copernicus could have created the heliocentric picture of the universe if they had not question the Church. If the founding fathers had not doubted the English monarchy, then today America could still have the Queen on its money. Doubt leads to questioning, questioning to testing, and testing to understanding. Without doubt many of the scientific discoveries that are enjoyed today would be lost. People would not be working on a cure for cancer, they would just be certain its deadly. Sometimes self-doubt is the greatest. In “Lord of the Rings” Aragon doubts himself, and yet becomes the greatest king in an age. The American—and many other—militaries are designed to make one doubt themselves and overcome it. The military academies—West Point, Anapolis—thrive on making students doubt themselves, because then they can build them up from the bottom. Doubt is apiece of growth that compels people to know more. The reason Athiests and Agnostics exist is because of doubt. The reason the legal system exists is because of doubting that all people are inherently good. The reason militaries exist is because our doubt in our ability to handle conflicts peacefully. Doubt is the tool that is invaluable to teaching, and more importantly, to learning.

Doubt is what sparks learning, creating, growing, all while certainty just creates a mental stagnancy. The greatest artists, thinkers, scientists of all time have had some deep doubt; where as those with certainty remained trappend in old thinking and old ways. Doubters are those who have shaped the past, the present, and will shape the future.
Certainty and doubt are inevitable parts of life. Some things, such as the sun coming up every morning, are absolutely certain and leave no room for doubt. Other things, like any given NFL team winning the Super Bowl in a specific year, are very uncertain and leave much room for doubt. Most things lie somewhere in between, however, and a mixture of the two is more practical than either by itself in most circumstances.

This necessity for balance between certainty and doubt comes into play very distinctly when a person is trying to achieve a difficult goal, perform a difficult task, or play a difficult game. Too much certainty which in this case translates to overconfidence and arrogance, is detrimental to the achievement of a goal. When someone is overconfident, he does not take the given task seriously enough, thinking it will be easy. This leads to underpreparation which often leads to failure in something that person could have succeeded in with the proper preparation.

Ironically, an overabundance of doubt can lead to the exact same thing: underpreparation. Too much doubt can make a person feel like there is no hope and that trying is useless. The person may give up prematurely. At this point there really is no hope; once one has given up, he can accomplish nothing.

A person must have some certainty but also some doubt in order to obtain optimal results. For me personally, I have the certainty that God has gifted me with the ability to excel in the classroom as a student and on the football field as a quarterback. Doubt, or in this case, the realization of the possibility of failure, is what motivates me to work hard, however. I know that if I do not study for a test, I will not do well on it; and that if I do not train myself during the offseason and watch film to prepare for each opponent, my performance on Friday nights will be subpar. This combination of certainty and doubt motivates me to work hard, which ensures that I perform to the best of my ability in the classroom, on the football field, and in countless other aspects of my life.

In any situation that is not totally certain or unalterably doubted, a blend of the two is best. The isolation of either in almost every situation leads to underpreparation and and mediocre results.