

**LANGUAGE AP 1998- Question 1**

**Suggested Time: 40 minutes**

The following letters constitute the complete correspondence between an executive of the Coca-Cola company and a representative of Grove Press. Read the letters carefully. Then write an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies each writer uses to achieve his purpose and explain which letter offers the more persuasive case.

Mr. R. W. Seaver March 25, 1970

Executive Vice President

Grove Press, Inc.

214 Mercer Street

New York, New York 10012

Dear Mr. Seaver:

Several people have called to our attention your advertisement for *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* by Jim Haskins, which appeared in the New York Times March 3, 1970. The theme of the ad is "This book is like a weapon...it's the real thing."

Since our company has made use of "It's the Real Thing" to advertise Coca-Cola long prior to the publication of the book, we are writing to ask you to stop using this theme or slogan in connection with the book.

We believe you will agree that it is undesirable for our companies to make simultaneous use of "the real thing" in connection with our respective products. There will always be likelihood of confusion as to the source or sponsorship of the goods, and the use by such prominent companies would dilute the distinctiveness of the trade slogan and diminish its effectiveness and value as an advertising and merchandising tool.

"It's the Real Thing" was first used in advertising for Coca-Cola over twenty-seven years ago to refer to our product. We first used it in print advertising in 1942 and extended it to outdoor advertising, including painted walls--some of which are still displayed throughout the country. The line has appeared in advertising for Coca-Cola during succeeding years. For example, in 1954 we used "There's this about Coke--You Can't Beat the "Real Thing" in national advertising. We resumed national use of "It's the Real Thing" in the summer of 1969 and it is our main thrust for 1970.

Please excuse my writing so fully, but I wanted to explain why we feel it necessary to ask you and your associates to use another line to advertise Mr. Haskin's book.

We appreciate your cooperation and your assurance that you will discontinue the use of "It's the real thing."

Sincerely,

Ira C. Herbert

Mr. Ira C Herbert March 31, 1970  
Coca-Cola USA  
P.O. Drawer 1734  
Atlanta, Georgia 30301

Dear Mr. Herbert:

Thank you for your letter of March 25th, which has just reached me, doubtless because of the mail strike.

We note with sympathy your feeling that you have a proprietary interest in the phrase "It's the real thing," and I can fully understand that the public might be confused by our use of the expression, and mistake a book by a Harlem schoolteacher for a six-pack of Coca-Cola. Accordingly, we have instructed all our salesmen to notify bookstores that whenever a customer comes in and asks for a copy of *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* they should request the sales personnel to make sure that what the customer wants is the book, rather than a Coke. This, we think, should protect your interest and in no way harm ours.

We would certainly not want to dilute the distinctiveness of your trade slogan nor diminish its effectiveness as an advertising and merchandising tool, but it did not occur to us that since the slogan is so closely identified with your product, those who read our ad may well tend to go out and buy a Coke rather than our book. We have discussed this problem in an executive committee meeting, and by a vote of seven to six decided that, even if this were the case, we would be happy to give Coke the residual benefit of our advertising.

Problems not dissimilar to the ones you raise in your letter have occurred to us in the past. You may recall that we published *Games People Play* which became one of the biggest nonfiction best-sellers of all time, and spawned conscious imitations (*Games Children Play*, *Games Psychiatrists Play*, *Games Ministers Play*, etc.). I am sure you will agree that this posed a far more direct and deadly threat to both the author and ourselves than our use of "It's the real thing." Further, *Games People Play* has become part of our language, and one sees it constantly in advertising, as a newspaper headline, etc. The same is true of another book which we published six or seven years ago, *One Hundred Dollar Misunderstanding*.

Given our strong sentiments concerning the First Amendment, we will defend to the death your right to use "It's the real thing" in any advertising you care to. We would hope you would do the same for us, especially when no one here in our advertising agency, I am sorry to say, realized that you owned the phrase. We were merely quoting in our ads Peter S. Prescott's review of *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* in *Look* which begins "*Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* is the real thing, a short, spare, honest book which will, I suspect, be read a generation hence as a classic...."

With all best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Richard Seaver

### LANGUAGE AP 1998- Question 3

#### Rubric

**9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet all the criteria for 8 papers and in addition are especially full or apt in their analysis or demonstrate particularly effective stylistic control.

**8** Essays earning a score of 8 effectively analyze how the rhetorical strategies in each letter achieve the author's purpose and explain convincingly which letter makes the more persuasive argument. They are likely to recognize how specific strategies (for example, syntax, tone, and diction) contribute to the writer's purpose. Their prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not flawless.

**7** Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but employ more complete analysis or more mature prose style.

**6** Essays earning a score of 6 adequately analyze how the rhetorical strategies of each letter achieve their author's purposes and evaluate which letter makes the more persuasive case. They may discuss rhetorical elements such as diction or tone that contribute to the letter's effect, but their discussion may be incomplete. A few lapses in diction or syntax may be present, but generally the prose of 6 essays conveys their writers' ideas clearly.

**5** Essays earning a score of 5 analyze strategies used in each letter to make their case but their development of these strategies is limited or inconsistent. Their focus may be unclear or their analysis insufficiently developed. A few lapses in diction or syntax may be present, but usually the prose in 5 essays conveys their writers' ideas more or less clearly.

**4** Essays earning a score of 4 inadequately respond to the task. Their analysis of rhetorical strategies and effectiveness is limited in accuracy or purpose. They may misunderstand purpose or paraphrase the letters more than analyze them, or they may focus on only one letter. The prose of 4 essays may convey their writers' ideas adequately, but may suggest immature control over organization, diction or syntax.

**3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but are less perceptive about how rhetorical strategies connect to purpose in these letters or less consistent in their control of elements of writing.

**2** Essays earning a score of 2 achieve little success in analyzing how rhetorical strategies contribute to relative effectiveness in the two letters. These essays may pay little attention to rhetorical features and generalize about, or seriously misread, tone or purpose. They may simply paraphrase or comment on the letters without analyzing their strategies. The prose of 2 papers often reveals consistent weaknesses in writing: a lack of development or organization, grammatical problems, or a lack of control.

**1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but in addition are especially simplistic in their discussion or weak in controlling elements of language.

**0** Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt. Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 3**

I think we should not have a limit on the words we use to describe different advertisements such as "it's the real thing" because when people buy the merchandise they know whether they want a coke or a book. I don't think having the same slogan will interfere with any of the sales because people are not buying the slogan they are paying for the merchandise in this certain situation. I would understand if they named the book "Coca-Cola Classic" that would make different because there would be questioning on what the book is about and in business many say "Anything Goes", I also feel it was a sign of ignorance of the person complaining on what the slogan is being used on because he felt ownership towards the slogan "it's the real thing" this has become part of the English language so it really shouldn't be affected. Mr. R. W. Seaver.

[TOP](#)

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 5**

The rhetorical strategies of these two letters represent the differences between both the manners of the writers and the companies they work for. As a beverage producing company and a printing press are nothing alike, so Mr. Seaver and Mr. Herbert are very much two totally different individuals. Mr. Herbert, the Coca-Cola employee of unknown status, puts up a weak and selfish argument. True Coca-Cola may have owned the slogan first, by business standards of course. The fact of the matter is, however, that no one can truly own words, phrases, sentences and so forth. Statements come and go all the time. They are repeated daily by hundreds of people in multiple languages discussing a wide variety of topics. Past possession is generally a good argument, but in this case it is very, very weak. However, Mr. Herbert was polite and to the point, which are very commendable qualities.

Now on to the opposition, Mr. Seaver. Mr. Seaver being the Executive Vice President of a well-reknown printing press certainly has the right to argue his case with our mean Mr. Herbert, but he really does go about it in a rather vicious manner.

Although the letter is written in a formal syntax it is full of sarcasm and undesirable insults to his receiver's intelligence. Obviously no one would ever mistake a book for a beverage and it was entirely rude for Seaver to imply that Mr. Herbert might be thinking that.

Overlooking these faults, however, Mr. Seaver does carry the stronger argument. He goes about it in a much more aggressive way and has more backing in the fact that words cannot truly be owned. Also seeing as how they are two very different companies it can be undeniably assumed that their products will not be confused. I guess this is one of those cases where the loud obnoxious man just happens to get the better hand and thus wins the game.

[TOP](#)

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 6**

Mr. Seaver and Mr. Herbert both pose convincing arguments concerning the subject. Their approaches are found to be quite different. Both address the problem with people using other people's or something similar to other people's ideas to sell their product. Although not always intentional, it does at times occur. Mr. Herbert's approach was kind, courteous and considerate throughout. He informed Mr. Seaver of Coca-Cola's claim on the slogan and asked that they dismiss it from their ad campaign. Mr. Herbert went into the history of the slogan and how it dated back 27 years. Mr. Herbert seemed genuinely concerned that the two products carrying the same slogan might get confused. Mr. Seaver saw the congruence in a very different light. His reply was very playful, cunning, vindictive, and slightly rude. In the first paragraph he pokes fun at Mr. Herbert's concern for the confusion the two products would cause by carrying the same slogan. In the second paragraph he says that he believes that it will help Coke sales and that his company has no problem with that. Next, he goes into how the same situation has happened to them in the past and that they fully understand. Lastly Mr. Seaver describes his loyalty to the Coke company and the backing of their slogan. In turn he asks for their loyalty as well. Mr. Seaver's explained where the slogan originated from and that it was not to spite them at all but from a review of the book.

I believe that they should both be able to use the phrase. Unless Coke patented it, it is fair game. Mr. Seaver's article contained harsh and informal (childlike) undertones but was a truly compelling argument at explaining just how neurotic Mr. Herbert appeared for even bringing up the subject. The two should be able to coexist using the same slogan. A person should hardly confuse a novel and a drink. The two are very distinct and can stand proudly on their own and without worry about a confusion. If the two companies have faith in their products, then the people will too and not by association to a catchy phrase.

[TOP](#)

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 7**

Coca-Cola certainly is "the real thing," and who would ever guess that one could ever use this slogan in relation to another product, especially when the two products differ so much in composition. One product is obviously a beverage meant to quench one's thirst; while the other product is a book, meant to be read for pleasure or to gain information. The connection between these two items is almost non-existent, except for one little phrase, "it's the real thing." (In a correspondence between the Coca-Cola company and Grove Press, the dilemma concerning these four little words, "it's the real thing," is apparent; however, it is the Coca-Cola Company who succeeds in presenting a more sound argument for the discontinued use of the slogan on Grove Press' account.)

In addressing the Grove Press on the issue of this slogan, the Coca-Cola Company writes a letter to the executive vice-president of Grove Press. In this letter, Ira C. Herbert addresses the Grove Press in a polite manner, requesting that they discontinue the use of the slogan that Coca-Cola has possessed for so many years. Coca-Cola states that "It's the real Thing" was first used in advertising for Coca-Cola over twenty-seven years ago to refer to our product." They continue to give historical data concerning the slogan and its end endorsement of their product. They also say that "we believe you will agree that it is undesirable for our companies to make simultaneous use of "the real thing" in connection with our respective products." In making this assumption, they then proceed in telling about the confusion that could result. Then, in the end, they thank the Grove Press for their cooperation and their discontinued use of this slogan. Therefore, the rhetorical devices are used to support assumptions and provide factual data to support their claim.

However, on the flip side of the coin, Grove Press was not so respectful when responding to Coca-Cola's letter and request. Grove Press' vice-president Richard Seaver made such sarcastic comments as "...I can fully understand that the public might be confused by our use of the expression and mistake a book by a Harlem school-teacher for a six pack of Coca-Cola." "Remarks such as this one decorate his letter, and he fails to provide factual data to support his assumption. This he relies on sarcasms to support his point. However, he does address the first Amendment claiming that "we will defend to the death your right to use 'It's the real thing' in any advertising you care to. We would hope you would do the same for us..."

It quickly becomes evident to the reader who the more persuasive writer is. It is the Coca-Cola Company for their effective use of rhetorical devices to support their claims. They not only provide a factual base for their request, but they also use a courteous tone when addressing the Grove Press Company. The Coca-Cola Company didn't rely on false and sarcastic remarks. In also looking at the organization the letter from Ira C. Herbert was much more uniform, presenting an argument and then supporting it. On the other hand, Richard Seaver was repetitive at times claiming that the stealing of another's slogan is no big deal and will serve beneficial in the long run.

In conclusion, a well thought out and argued letter, lacking rude sarcasm, will always prove the best in the end. If one wants to achieve a goal or respond to someone's request, they shouldn't rely on bitter tones. They, instead, should rely on good, strong, sound arguments to achieve their goal. So, it is evident that by using these techniques, the Coca-Cola Company's letter offered a more persuasive case than the Grove Press' letter.

[TOP](#)

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 8**

The violation of copyright law is a serious offense in society, but free speech is still an institution, the opinions of Coca-Cola executives notwithstanding.

The first letter written by Mr. Herbert of Coca-Cola uses historical anecdotes to strengthen Coke's claim on the phrase "It's the real thing." After a lengthy (and pedantic) recitation of the merits of Coke and its advertising, Mr. Herbert concludes that Grove Press will, as a foregone conclusion, acquiesce to Coca-Cola's demands and thanks the publishers in advance for their cooperation and assurance.

Mr. Seaver's reply though much less "professional," is far more effective. The reply is written as soon as the original letter is received, a certain assurance of the importance of Coca-Cola's concerns to Grove Press. Mr. Seaver then adopts a heavily sarcastic tone and expresses his concern for the public's confusion (alluding to the

final letter), and the possibility of their mistaking a “book by a Harlem school teacher for a six-pack of Coca-Cola.” Salesmen have been instructed, apparently, to ensure prospective buyers of the book really want the book, not Coke—the absurdity of which statement serves to highlight the absurdity of Coke’s claim. Since the Slogan is “closely identified” with Coke (this despite the fact that no one in a presumably quite large publishing institution knew of Coke’s claim on the phrase.) Coke is, according to Seaver, welcome to any “residual benefit” of Grove advertising—not quite as “undesirable” as Herbert said. Seaver goes through Herbert’s letter and refutes it piece by piece. There is first an almost direct quote stating that Grove “would certainly not want to dispute the distinctiveness of Coke’s trade slogan nor diminish its effectiveness.” Seaver even uses Herbert’s strategy of historical anecdote to explain a situation with spinoff’s from a famous book, the possible repercussion of which cause Coca-Cola’s worries to pale in comparison. Freedom of speech for Coke is defended by Seaver with an allusion to Voltaire’s famous “I will defend to the death your right to say it” statement. Surely, then, common citizens such as Peter S. Prescott may have the same luxury, and Grove Press can quote his opinion without fear of repercussions. Seaver concludes despite trials of unenlightened Coca-Cola executives on an upbeat note with “best wishes” to the author of what must be one of the most absurd arguments of history.

[TOP](#)

**1998 Question Three Sample Response: Rated 9**

Irony and cynicism have often assumed a dual role throughout literature, both degrading an opponent when used rhetorically and supporting one’s own argument. By elevating the petty and insignificant points of the opposition’s argument to a universally consequent status, an author can lead his audience to an unconscious identification with his cause by convincing them of the ridiculous and often unnecessary nature of the other’s complaint. Through insidious mockery and blatant insincerity, a previously sound and cordial argument can appear inconsequential or fallacious.

Such is the case concerning the correspondance between the Coca-Cola company and Grover Press; although one may initially assume Coca-Cola’s conclusions and be in accordance with the legitimacy of their complaint—in this case, the usurpation of an advertising slogan—all sympathies are dispelled by the cynicism and sarcasm of the Grove rebuttal. Coca-Cola speaks amiably and respectfully, never lowering to the level of mockery or debasement, and outlines two main arguments concerning the dual use of the slogan in question, each of which is disdainfully refuted in an ironic, witty response.

The Coca-Cola Company initially asserts that the simultaneous usage of their slogan will engender public confusion regarding the identification with a particular product; the corporation also states that the catchphrase’s effectiveness will be diluted as a merchandising tool. They argue logically solely on the basis of historical precedent; their main weapon is a simple appeal to reason. Although not strictly limited to the traditional western “modus ponens” logical form, the argument follows in general traditional debate form: an assertion supported by concrete evidence (for examples the writer insinuates that his corporation should use the slogan in question simply because it has done so prior to Grove Press’ usage; he supports his claim with a detailed history of that particular advertising campaign.) His case seems objective, unbiased, and entirely rational.

All trappings of reason are annulled, however, by Grove Press’ bitingly ironic rejoinder. Coca-Cola’s primary argument concerning public confusion and disassociation with the motto is attacked, bearing the full brunt of the author’s sarcasm. Phrases such as, “I can fully understand that the public might be confused by our use of the expression and mistake a book...for a six-pack of Coca-Cola” and “we have instructed all sales personnel to make sure that what the customer wants is a book and not a Coke” mock the previously seemingly logical argument and demonstrate the frivolity of the complaint. Although illogical and vituperative, the author’s “ad homineum” style of rhetoric exerts a more lasting and convincing sway on the reader. By duplicating exactly phrases from the Coca-Cola letter, the very cordiality of the style is made a target of ridicule as well, undermining the credence and effectiveness of the first letter. The Groves Press’ more familiar tone and ease of expression the formal, respectful adornment of the Coca-Cola letter is scorned as well—also supports their argument in the eyes of the reader. Although obstreperous and critical, irony and sarcasm—when liberally applied—can often emotionally undermine the arguments of an opponent to such an extent as to cause the reader to favor it over simple logic. Occasionally, it pays to be rude.