

AP Language Essay Welfare & Poverty

Prompt

Writing for the conservative Heritage Foundation, Robert Rector argues that government welfare programs make poverty worse. He writes:

“Conventional Welfare programs were based on the assumption that material poverty or low family income is the principal cause of social and behavioral problems. Thus, Welfare seeks to artificially boost household income. But the simple historical record calls into question this basic assumption. In 1950 around one third of Americans were poor; back in the 1920's more than half of Americans were poor by today's standards. If having a low income were the key cause of crime, illegitimacy, drugs, or child abuse, for example, then earlier periods should have been simply awash in those problems. Instead the opposite is the case, most social problems seem to have gotten worse as incomes rose.

Clearly poverty is not the cause behind the growth of these social problems. Instead, it is the ethos within families that is critical; the norms and values imparted to children concerning: marriage, work, education, and self-control. Conventional Welfare, by undermining this ethos (especially with regard to work and marriage), has increased rather than diminished most social problems.”



In a well-developed essay, defend, refute or qualify Rector’s argument that government assistance to the poor has increased social problems and/or behavioral problems in the United States.

Requirements

- Please submit a typed response that uses a legible 12 point font, 1” margins, a double spaced body, and a simple single spaced header.
- Your response should include both an introduction and conclusion, both of which should be short and direct.
- Your response should be between 800-1400 words.
- Make sure to engage the prompt’s quote in some way.
- NO COMMA SPLICES!

Tips

- One of the great things about the AP persuasive argument is that you can use a wide variety of information and ideas to construct your argument. The downside is that you can use a wide variety of information and ideas. ☺ Stick with your best academic argument, limiting personal references and examples.
- **Make sure your topic sentences are masterful.**
- Have a well-developed thesis that you stick with. Organization is paramount.
- Don’t be afraid to break the five paragraph mold. Use an organic structure that suits your argument, not some antiquated idea of what an essay looks like.
- Limit your use of outside quotations. Because you won’t be able to use outside sources on the AP exam, it’s important to practice writing without them.
- For this essay, remember some of the specific tips we’ve discussed: developing a clear, argumentative thesis, weaving in examples rather than overdeveloping one or under-developing others, and engaging the reader with a STAMPY introduction.