**AP® Language and Composition: Assertion Journal #1**

**Directions:** In a polished response of 1-2 typed pages, identify the author’s claim and relate the quote to similar personal experiences, refute the author’s claim, or explain how the quote pertains to the world in general.

**Quote:**

Many societies believe that the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human right but it is also true that attainment of happiness remains allusive. Perhaps Bertrand Russell had it right when he said, “To be without some of the things you want is an indispensible part of happiness.”

**AP® Language and Composition: Assertion Journal #2**

**Directions:** In a polished response of 1-2 typed pages, identify the author’s claim and relate the quote to similar personal experiences, refute the author’s claim, or explain how the quote pertains to the world in general.

**Quote:**


One does not necessarily have to cluck in disapproval to admit that entertainment is all the things its detractors say it is: fun, effortless, sensational, mindless, formulaic, predictable, and subversive. In fact, one might argue that those are the very reasons so many people love it.

At the same time, it is not hard to see why cultural aristocrats in the nineteenth century and intellectuals in the twentieth hated entertainment and why they predicted, as one typical nineteenth century critic railed, that its eventual effect would be “to overturn all morality, to poison the springs of domestic happiness, to dissolve the ties of our social order, and to involved our country in ruin.”
Directions: In a polished response of 1-2 typed pages, identify the author’s claim and relate the quote to similar personal experiences, refute the author’s claim, or explain how the quote pertains to the world in general.

Quote:

The passage below is from *The Medusa and the Snail* by biologist Lewis Thomas. Read the passage carefully. Then, drawing on your own reading and experience, write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Thomas’s claims.

Mistakes are at the very base of human thought, embedded there, feeding the structure like root nodules. If we were not provided with the knack of being wrong, we could never get anything useful done. We think our way along by choosing between right and wrong alternatives, and the wrong choices have to be made as frequently as the right ones. We are built to make mistakes, coded for error.

We learn, as we say, by “trial and error.” Why do we always say that? Why not “trial and rightness” or “trial and triumph”? The old phrase puts it that way because it is, in real life, the way it is done.

A good laboratory, like a good bank or corporation or government, has to run like a computer. Almost every is done flawlessly, by the book, and all the numbers add up to the predicted sums. The laboratory, somebody makes a mistake: the wrong buffer, something in one of the blanks, a decimal misplaced in reading counts, the warm room off by a degree and a half, a mouse out of his box, or just a results come in, something is obviously screwed up, and then the action can begin.

The misreading is not the important error; it opens the way. The next step is the crucial one. If the investigator can bring himself to say, “But even so, look at that!” then the new finding, whatever it is, is ready for snatching. What is needed, for progress to be made, is the move based on the error.

Whenever new kinds of thinking are about to be accomplished, or new varieties of music, there has to be an argument beforehand. With two sides debating in the same mind, haranguing, there is an amiable understanding that one is right and the other is wrong. Sooner or later the thing is settled, but there can be no action at all if there are not the two sides, and the argument. The hope is in the facility of wrongness, the tendency toward error. The capacity to leap across mountains of information to land lightly on the wrong side represents the highest of human endowments. (1979)