Overview of the American Literature and Composition EOC Assessment

### Example Item 4

**DOK Level 4:** This is a DOK level 4 item because it requires students to synthesize information and analyze multiple sources.

**Genre:** Informational

**American Literature and Composition Content Domain:** Writing and Language

**Standard:** ELAGSE11-12W1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient details.

**WRITING TASK**

Certain American leaders have their images on this nation’s currency—both coins and bills. Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson are on the penny and the nickel, respectively. George Washington is on the $1 bill and older quarters. Some currency features leaders who were not presidents, such as Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin. The rationale for the selection of leaders can cause quite a debate, as in a proposal to replace Ulysses S. Grant with Ronald Reagan on the $50 bill.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay in your own words, supporting one side of the debate in which you argue EITHER that the portraits on United States currency should remain as they are now OR that they should be replaced.

Be sure to use information from BOTH passages in your argumentative essay.

##### Before you begin planning and writing, you will read two passages. As you read the passages, think about what details from the passages you might use in your argumentative essay. These are the titles of the texts you will read:

##### Time to Change the $50 Bill

##### Leave Grant Alone

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### Time to Change the $50 Bill

On February 25, 2010, Representative Patrick McHenry (R-NC) filed bill HR 4705 in the House of Representatives. The text of the bill reads, “A bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to redesign the face of $50 Federal Reserve notes so as to include a likeness of President Ronald Wilson Reagan, and for other purposes.”

The bill had thirteen co-sponsors, who argued that Reagan was a transformative figure in the twentieth century and that his presidency’s benefits would be felt for generations to come. Had I been a congressman on that day, my name would have appeared as the fourteenth co-sponsor. We proponents would argue that

Reagan ended the Cold War and threats from the Soviet Union. It takes a minimal research effort to find Reagan’s historic June 12, 1987, speech in front of the Berlin Wall, in which he said, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

We proponents would also cite the changes he made to the tax codes as yet another example of the man’s greatness. Lowering taxes puts people’s own money back into their pockets. Explaining his proposal while just a candidate for election, he coined the term “trickle-down economics,” meaning that when more money flows to the top of the economic pyramid, it does not stay there. Some, or most, of it flows down and enriches those at lower economic levels.

In 2005, the *Wall Street Journal* commissioned a survey to assess presidential greatness. They polled scholars, both left- and right-leaning, and the result put Reagan at sixth and Grant (currently on the $50 bill) at twenty-ninth among the 40 presidents. This was not a popularity contest; it was an analysis by people who study history for a living.

Opponents of the change cite the relatively short time since Reagan’s presidency, saying that the historical verdict has not yet had time to shape itself. We proponents use the time factor differently. “Every generation needs its own heroes,” counters McHenry.

Besides being from the far distant past, Grant, according to his critics, had two sluggish and scandal-ridden terms in the White House. In the minds of Americans, he certainly lacks the luster of George Washington, also a general, who is found on the $1 bill, or Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most revered president, who appears on the $5 bill. Grant is not revered, because he accomplished nothing lasting.

While McHenry’s bill did not make it out of the Finance Committee in 2010, one must remember that nothing can stop an idea whose time has come. Now is that time. Now is the time to pass legislation that would put Ronald Wilson Reagan’s image on the $50 bill.

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### Leave Grant Alone

In 2010, HR 4705, a bill to replace Ulysses S. Grant’s picture on the $50 dollar bill with that of Ronald Reagan, never made it out of the Finance Committee and to the floor for a vote by all of Congress. The committee was wise to table this measure.

We like to think that our currency puts us in touch with and reminds us of our greatness as a nation. Certainly we are familiar with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, but less so with Alexander Hamilton (not even a president), Andrew Jackson, and sadly, Ulysses S. Grant. However, not only does Grant deserve to be on our currency, he deserves the recognition that goes with it.

Reagan proponents point to the scandals that rocked Grant’s second term, such as those involving railroad construction and finance. However, they do so by turning a blind eye to scandals attributed to Reagan’s administration—Iran–Contra and

Arms for Hostages. Grant was wildly popular when he left office, and he would surely have been elected to a third term had he chosen to run. While in office, he got the tenuous post–Civil War economy back on a solid footing. Some argue that Reagan’s handling of the economy is to blame for the difficulties of today. Time will tell, but for now, it’s too soon.

As president, Grant worked on behalf of freed slaves and Native Americans. Even his post-presidency was one of accomplishment, negotiating a settlement between Japan and China.

We will have to wait to see if Reagan’s efforts bear lasting fruit. Reagan fans are everywhere. But this is an issue that should not be decided by a fan base. For now, I would encourage Reagan fans to take comfort in the many airports, schools, hospitals, and federal buildings that bear the name of their hero.

Just leave Grant alone.

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##### Now that you have read “Time to Change the $50 Bill” and “Leave Grant Alone,” create a plan for and write your argumentative essay.

**WRITING TASK**

Certain American leaders have their images on this nation’s currency—both coins and bills. Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson are on the penny and the nickel, respectively. George Washington is on the $1 bill and older quarters. Some currency features leaders who were not presidents, such as Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin. The rationale for the selection of leaders can cause quite a debate, as in a proposal to replace Ulysses S. Grant with Ronald Reagan on the $50 bill.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay in your own words, supporting one side of the debate in which you argue EITHER that the portraits on United States currency should remain as they are now OR that they should be replaced.

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**Write your answer on the lines on your answer document.**

##### Before you write, be sure to:

* + Think about ideas, facts, definitions, details, and other information and examples you want to use.
  + Think about how you will introduce your topic and what the main topic will be for each paragraph.
  + Develop your ideas clearly and use your own words, except when quoting directly from source passages.
  + Be sure to identify the passages by title or number when using details or facts directly from the passages.

##### Now write your argumentative essay. Be sure to:

* + Introduce your claim.
  + Support your claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence from the passages.
  + Acknowledge and address alternate or opposing claims.
  + Organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  + Use words, phrases, and clauses to connect your ideas and to clarify the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  + Establish and maintain a formal style.
  + Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
  + Check your work for correct grammar, usage, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.

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##### The following is an example of a seven-point response. See the seven-point, two-trait rubric for a text-based argumentative response on pages 84 and 85 to see why this example would earn the maximum number of points.

*It is curious that a controversy should surround the $50 bill because it is used so little. I seldom have anything in my pocket but 1s, 5s, or 10s. ATM machines dispense 20s. And the 100s actually have a nickname—Benjamins. But the 50 seems to be used much less often.*

*A group does want it, though, and they want Ronald Reagan to adorn it. They clearly remember Reagan fondly. Another group opposes the idea, and they are not fond of Reagan’s memory. And herein lies the problem—memory. We as a nation should make our decisions based on reflection, analysis, and objectivity, three traits that do not apply to memory.*

*I do not remember Ronald Reagan, but my parents do, and they are the two smartest people I know. My father remembers him well, having voted for him twice. My mother remembers him well, having voted against him twice. And I, thanks to my U.S. history class, know more about Ulysses S. Grant than either of my parents. I have considered his role in our country’s development with reflection, analysis, and objectivity. If having one’s image on currency is a recognition of excellence, then Grant should remain on the bill.*

*As a general, he played a pivotal role in a critical event, the Civil War. He presided in the aftermath, a truly chaotic time. Resentments remained, and yet he led the healing of the nation. Our lives and our nation would be far different without him.*

*History may well show Ronald Reagan to have been of similar stature and importance, but that will take time. In some unknown number of years, scholars will use reflection, analysis, and objectivity to give us the real Ronald Reagan. To decide this matter through the memories of partisans is to engage in a popularity contest. As a nation we deserve better, and changing the $50 bill in this way would be a disservice to all Americans.*

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## DESCRIPTION OF TEST FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION

The American Literature and Composition EOC assessment consists of a total of 60 items. You will be asked to respond to selected-response (multiple-choice), constructed-response, extended-response, and extended writing-response items.

The test will be given in three sections.

* You may have up to 75 minutes per section to complete Sections 1 and 2.
* You may have up to 90 minutes to complete Section 3, which includes the writing prompt.
* The total estimated testing time for the American Literature and Composition EOC assessment ranges from approximately 190 to 240 minutes. Total testing time describes the amount of time you have to complete the assessment. It does not take into account the time required for the test examiner to complete pre-

administration and post-administration activities (such as reading the standardized directions to students).

* Sections 1 and 2 may be administered on the same day or across two consecutive days, based on the district’s testing protocols for the EOC measures (in keeping with state guidance).
* Section 3, which focuses on writing, must be administered on a separate day following the completion of Sections 1 and 2.