

Question 3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

3A,

In The Medusa and the Snail, Lewis Thomas makes the case that most human discoveries are not precipitated by any sort of precision but by our human tendency to be wrong. Correctly claiming that if ~~we~~ we never had the "knack of being wrong, we would never get ~~anything~~ anything useful done," Thomas has historical and literary evidence behind him.

In the past century, two events in particular back up Thomas' claim of useful human discovery by serendipity. Take for example the discovery of penicillin, the antibiotic that in one single stroke revolutionized all of medical science and saved millions of lives. It was discovered not by careful experiment, but a "lucky laboratory" where samples were contaminated with the ~~the~~ fungus that produces ~~penicillin~~ the antibiotic. It was only then that the existence of the chemical was even realized; had something not "obviously screwed up" in that lab, ~~if ~~there~~~~ we would be ~~at~~ still burned by the scourge of hundreds of unchecked bacterial diseases. Clearly, ~~it was~~ it was the error that created the benefit. More recently, an outbreak of a strange intestinal disease in Milwaukee was only identified by ~~a~~ going outside of the bounds of precise testing. A nonstandard test on stool samples turned up ~~a~~ hard evidence where all previous tests had turned in results that led to "predicted sums" of absolutely nothing detected. The evidence, as it turned out, ~~was~~ pointed to the stealthy parasite *cryptosporidium*, which ~~again~~ would



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were run rampant were it not for its detection by a deviation from established "protocol." Again, it was the "knack" of doing something the wrong way that saved the day.

Similar examples can be found in reading by Kafka's "The Trial", the massive bureaucracy of the court functions like a well oiled machine, with each ~~part~~ ~~on~~ fringe parasite, intern, or judge in his place. Yet, as the protagonist desperately tries to redeem himself, he does not even know what crime he has committed, and the bureaucracy functions so well that, as we may expect, nothing productive ever gets done. The insuperable coils of a "good" institution literally entrap men in Kafka's world, where everything is so flawless that ironically nothing gets done because of the lack of "the move based on error."

Thus it is man's natural spontaneity that must be recognized as the driving force behind our innovation. The hundreds of ways "not to make a light bulb" discovered by Thomas Edison eventually yielded the right one; ~~it is that~~ ~~an~~ innovation and invention is, "in real life," done by ~~also~~ a true "trial and error" method. Through the years, the greatest achievements were made not with precision but with "the move based on error" and so it is not only beneficial but necessary for all aspiring greats of the world to perceive that "the hope" of the future "is in the faculty of wrongness."

But does this mean that the ^{every} man in the world should immediately abandon his or her



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standard of perfection to explore the unknown?
No. To explore the unknown is to apply our abilities to rationalize ~~it~~ and regulate it; it is ~~the~~ the error that must come to us, not us who must seek out the error. In the end, the "root nodules" of discovery rest in what we already have. Though we should realize that they are there, the strands of human investigation will never find them until they of their own volition choose to reveal themselves, and all of their encapsulated progress and wonders, to us.

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Sample: 3A

Score: 9

This essay is a highly effective treatment of the prompt. In support of Lewis Thomas's proposition, it presents a full, informed, stylistically mature argument that "most human discoveries are not precipitated by any sort of precision but by our human tendency to be wrong." The essay uses particularly appropriate and convincing examples to support its position. The essay's second paragraph points out that penicillin was discovered, "not by careful experiment, but a 'lucky laboratory' where samples were contaminated with the fungus that produces the antibiotic." It then supplements that sound support of its argument with a similarly "nonstandard" discovery that a recent "outbreak of a strange intestinal disease in Milwaukee" was caused by "the stealthy parasite cryptosporidium, which would have run rampant were it not for its detection by a deviation from established 'protocol.'" After these well-phrased descriptions (note the mature control of sentence structure in the examples above) from biology, the essay turns to a contrasting example from literature. Paragraph three argues conversely from Kafka's *The Trial*, in another nicely crafted sentence, that "the insuperable coils of a 'good' institution literally entrap men in Kafka's world, where everything is so flawless that ironically nothing gets done because of the lack of 'the move based on error.'" The essay's fourth paragraph uses an effective transitional sentence ("Thus it is man's natural spontaneity that must be recognized as the driving force behind our innovation") to introduce yet another supporting example, here from technology: "the hundreds of ways 'not to make a light bulb' discovered by Thomas Edison." In its final paragraph, the essay displays the sophistication of its insights by reversing direction to ask, "But does this mean that the [sic] every man in the world should immediately abandon his or her standard of perfection to explore the unknown?" (note that we overlook the minor pronoun error here in favor of the larger control of language and logic displayed). The student's concluding answer that "it is the error that must come to us, not us who must seek out the error" reveals the sophistication of both reasoning and expression that places the essay among the highest levels of response to the prompt.

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3 3B,

In a passage from his book The medusa and the snail, biologist Lewis Thomas argued that ^{our} mistakes are at the very base of human thought. He ~~also~~ claimed that an error-prone part of human nature is needed to open the way to progress. Thomas's conclusion is supported by my own personal experiences and ^{my} historical examples. These examples, by showing the human process of making mistakes (often huge ones) and then correcting them, back up Thomas's argument.

Personally, I have dealt ^{with} most with my mistakes ^{in relationships with people}. ~~Schoolwork~~ For example, saying something that might be offensive to someone or being impolite have been mistakes I have made in the past. ~~Later~~ After growing with my parents, for example, I often realize that I should apologize for something I said or did. This realization is key to ^{for me in order} avoid saying or doing a similar thing next time. ~~From learning from my mistakes~~, I have learned that I can remedy my errors ~~by~~ learning from them. In doing so, I can not only make my parents or other people happy but also avoid the pangs of conscience after repeating a mistake. Like Thomas, I believe that "what is needed, for progress to be made, is the move based on the error."

A more concrete example of the human capacity for mistake-making was the United States' international failures both before and during World War II. Before the war, the U.S. failed to join the League of Nations, an organization that might have helped prevent a second catastrophic world war. After the war, the U.S. realized that its rejection of the League of Nations was a major mistake, and remedied this by helping create a global body for collective peace and security, the United Nations. The nation realized that its isolationism, seeking to preserve its own welfare in a time of crisis, was a mistake which must never be repeated. Likewise, the nation failed to do enough to save Jews from the Holocaust during World War II,



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either ignoring it or ~~the~~ failing to use its military to help halt the UN's mistake, caused ~~partly~~ by focus on ~~the~~ issues that directly involved the country, caused the UN to realize the importance it must play in international affairs. The nation atoned for ~~its~~ its error by being instrumental in the creation of Israel, a ~~the~~ home for the Jewish people.

Thomas argues that mistakes big and small are a central part of human nature and are necessary for progress. Historical events such as the UN's role in World War II and my own personal experiences in arguing with my parents, while completely different things, both illustrate Thomas's message about the centrality of mistakes in our lives.



Sample: 3B

Score: 6

This essay presents an adequate midlevel response to the prompt. It develops a structured argument around two sets of appropriate examples, one set from personal experience and the other from history. The essay's first paragraph sets up the argument with a clear thesis statement. The second paragraph then provides a thoughtful, if general, discussion of how mistakes in the student's "relationships with other people," such as "saying something that might be offensive" or "arguing with my parents," has led the student to "realize that I should apologize," and has thus given rise to what the essay implies but doesn't explicitly say is a form of moral growth. In its third paragraph, the essay becomes stronger and more precise by offering two concrete, appropriate historical examples to support Lewis Thomas's point. The student argues that "international failures" by the United States "both before and during World War II" led to corrections of these mistakes after the war. First, "the U.S. realized that its rejection of the League of Nations was a major mistake, and remedied this by helping create a global body for collective peace and security, the United Nations." Second, the failure "to save Jews from the Holocaust" led the U.S. to atone "for its error by being instrumental in the creation of Israel, a home for the Jewish people." The essay's presentation of these two sets of examples in clear prose, organized around a unifying thesis, warrants its being scored as an adequate response in the middle range of scores.

View is Thomas's statement "we learn, as we say, by 'trial and error.'" hits the nail on the head in the fact that ~~no~~ ~~man/women~~ ~~can~~ ~~truly~~ ~~ever~~ learn what to do if they never know what not to do. Knowing what ~~is~~ ~~wrong~~ places a person on the right path to realizing what works and what doesn't. Never making a mistake puts a strain on the thought process of creating something in the future that ~~is~~ ~~absolutely~~ ~~flawless~~ ~~and~~ ~~has~~ ~~no~~ ~~possibility~~ ~~of~~ ~~breaking~~. Sure, never making mistakes or errors will rid the world of imperfections, but that is just the way things were suppose to be, ~~the~~ "normal." The problem, however, is that they will and can never be "great" or straight and "magnificent."

We wouldn't ~~contain~~ the unawareness that it has because nothing will be different. Perfections and imperfections allow a person, object, or thing to be what it is. A tree with a shorter leg, a person with a ~~or~~ ~~bad~~ smile, a research paper with a persons own thoughts. People only knowing what is ~~the~~ ~~right~~ allows for my one sided arguments, structures, ~~and~~ beliefs. It prevents someone from putting their ^{own} cents of taste, values, or standards in another's views.

Trial and error pushes a person to be something greater, something more than what they were when they made a mistake. So, why,



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people might ask, can't a person be great if they never made a mistake? If a person was never merely wrong than exactly what would be the definition of great? If that was simply the ~~definition~~^{case} then there would be no definition of great because nothing would be great. The fact that everything was great because it was perfect with no mistakes erodes the true value of what it really is.

~~There~~ The ~~line~~ in a world of "trial and error" nothing would be real. The fact is that reality isn't perfect which allows us to make our own decisions, our own rights, ~~our~~ our own wrongs, and our personal life.

~~XX~~

Sample: 3C
Score: 3

This essay inadequately responds to the prompt. Despite its length and its attempt to support Lewis Thomas's claims, it makes use of evidence that is especially insufficient and, in some places, inappropriate. The quick listing of "a table with a shorter leg, a person with a crukid [*sic*] smile, a research paper with a persons [*sic*] own thoughts," leaves the essay's argument undeveloped and unclearly supported. In addition, the vague, colloquial quality of the essay's prose makes for a particularly immature control of writing, as evidenced in the following sentences from the first paragraph: "Never making a mistake puts a strain on the thought process of creating something in the future that has a possibility of becoming absolutely flawless. Sure, never making mistakes or errors will rid the world of impercections [*sic*], but that is just the jist [*sic*] of what it will do. Things will be just the way they were suppose [*sic*] to be, 'normal.'"