

AP English Language Exam prompt—1994

(Suggested time—40 minutes.)

In *The March of Folly*, historian Barbara Tuchman writes:

Wooden-headedness, the source of self-deception, is a factor that plays a remarkably large role in government. It consists of assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs. It is acting according to wish while not allowing oneself to be deflected by the facts.

Some people would claim that what Tuchman calls wooden-headedness plays a remarkably large role in all organizations and, indeed, in all human affairs.

Write a carefully reasoned persuasive essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies this idea about the prevalence of wooden-headedness in human actions and decisions. Use evidence from your reading and/or observation to develop your position.