

CHAPTER 14

About the SAT Essay

The SAT Essay is a lot like a typical writing assignment in which you're asked to analyze a text. To do well on the SAT Essay, you'll want to have a good sense of what the test asks of you as well as the reading, analysis, and writing knowledge and skills required to compose a response to the Essay prompt. This chapter is intended primarily to get you more familiar with the Essay. After we discuss the test in general, we'll turn to some sample prompts as well as examples of student responses and what scores they would receive.

Important Features of the SAT Essay

The Essay on the SAT is optional, which means that—unless you're required to take the test by your school or some other institution—you need to make an informed, personal choice about whether to take the Essay. You should figure out whether any of the postsecondary institutions that you're applying to require Essay scores; if so, your decision is pretty simple. If that's not the case and you're not otherwise required to take the Essay, you'll have to make up your own mind about it. Note that some postsecondary institutions that don't require Essay scores still recommend that you submit them. Look carefully at the admission requirements and preferences of the schools you're thinking of applying to.

We recommend that you seriously consider taking the Essay. The task the Essay asks you to complete—analyzing how an argument works—is an interesting and engaging one. The Essay also gives you an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your reading, analysis, and writing knowledge and skills—which are critical to readiness for and success in college and career—and the scores you'll get back will give you insight into your strengths in these areas as well as indications of any areas that you may still need to work on.

Position Within the SAT Test

The Essay is administered after the multiple-choice sections of the SAT. This makes it easier to give the test to some students and not to others, since the Essay isn't required.



REMEMBER

The Essay is optional for students. If your school or the postsecondary institutions you're applying to don't require Essay scores, you'll have to make an informed, personal decision as to whether to take the Essay.

Test Length

The SAT Essay is 50 minutes in length. The passage you'll read and analyze is about the same length as the longest passage you'll see on the SAT Reading Test, and you'll need to spend a fair amount of time reading, selectively rereading, analyzing, and drawing evidence from it in order to do well.



REMEMBER

You'll have 50 minutes to complete the Essay task. While you'll want to pace yourself, this should be enough time for you to produce your best work, especially if you've practiced with some sample passages.



REMEMBER

The Essay *won't* ask you to take a stance on an issue. Rather, your task will be to analyze an argument presented in a passage in order to explain how the author builds the argument to persuade an audience.



REMEMBER

The Essay task will be the same every time. What *will* change is the reading selection you'll be asked to analyze. Familiarizing yourself with the Essay prompt ahead of time and understanding exactly what your task is will save you time on test day and will likely result in your writing a stronger essay.

You may find it reassuring to know that the College Board decided to allot 50 minutes for the test only after careful study and review. This process included examining responses from thousands of students who took the Essay as part of our research. From this process, we learned that 50 minutes provided enough time for most students to complete the Essay task without rushing. Although you'll still have to pace yourself and pay attention to the time available, you should have enough time to do your best work on the Essay.

Number of Prompts and Responses

The Essay includes only one prompt, or question. You'll produce a single essay in response to that prompt.

The Essay Task

The SAT Essay asks you to analyze a provided argument in order to explain how the author builds the argument to persuade an audience. The support you provide for your analysis won't come primarily from your own prior knowledge, opinions, or experiences. Instead, you'll be drawing on information and ideas found in the accompanying passage and using those to develop your analysis. In other words, you'll be making extensive use of textual evidence to flesh out your response to the question of how the author builds the argument in the passage to persuade an audience.

The SAT Essay uses virtually the same prompt on every single test given to students. The passage and a sentence describing that passage change each time the test is given, but you'll always know what you're going to be asked to write about. This has huge advantages for you over how most essay tests are administered. You'll be able to focus your preparation on developing important reading, analysis, and writing knowledge and skills instead of on trying to guess what question we'll ask, and on test day you can get right to work.

We'll come back to that prompt after a brief discussion of how the Essay is evaluated.

Scores

When you take the Essay, you'll receive three scores:

- **Reading:** How well you demonstrated your understanding of the passage

- **Analysis:** How well you analyzed the passage and carried out the task of explaining how the author builds the argument to persuade an audience
- **Writing:** How skillfully you crafted your response

Each score will be on a 2–8 scale, the combined result of two raters scoring each dimension independently on a 1–4 scale. These three scores aren't combined with each other or with scores on any other part of the SAT.

By evaluating your performance in three main areas, we're able to better pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps your response shows that you understood the passage very well and were able to produce a clear and cohesive essay but that you struggled some with the analytical aspect of the task. If we combined that information into a single score, that score might be indistinguishable from the score of a student who did very well in analysis and in demonstrating reading comprehension but less well in putting thoughts into words. By giving you three separate scores, we make it easier for you to know where you did well and where you might have struggled. This, in turn, will help you find ways to improve on specific shortcomings.

More details about how the Essay is scored, along with the complete scoring rubric, appear later in this chapter.

The Essay Prompt in Detail

Now let's examine the prompt for the SAT Essay. And we do mean *the* prompt, because, as we noted earlier, the prompt is nearly identical on every single administration of the SAT.

As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Write an essay in which you explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author's claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author's] claims, but rather explain how the author builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.



REMEMBER

The three scores you'll receive reflect the three main criteria your Essay will be evaluated on. As you practice for the Essay, focus on each of these three areas and try to assess your performance in each.



REMEMBER

The prompt provided here will be nearly identical to the prompt you'll see on test day. Read it carefully now and make sure you understand what it's asking you to do.

**REMEMBER**

The Essay’s passage will change with each test administration, but it will always take the form of an argument of about 650 to 750 words in length written for a broad audience. You won’t need to bring in any specialized background knowledge; everything you’ll need to write a strong response will be in the passage.

**REMEMBER**

The primary focus of your response should *not* be on what the author says. Rather, your essay should focus on how the author develops an argument that’s persuasive.

**REMEMBER**

Evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements are three main ways authors can develop their arguments. A strong SAT Essay response will analyze the author’s use of one or more of these components.

The Passage

Your response to the Essay prompt will be firmly rooted in a passage of between 650 and 750 words—about the length of one of the longer passages on the Reading Test. All of your work on the Essay will center on your ability to understand, analyze, and explain your analysis of this passage. While the passage will come from any one of a wide range of high-quality sources and will differ on each administration of the test, all Essay passages take the form of an argument written for a broad audience. By this we mean that the form of the writing will always be argumentative (i.e., the author will always be making a claim, or assertion, and trying to convince an audience to agree with that claim) and that the subject will be generally accessible to a wide readership. You won’t see a highly technical argument on a specialized subject that requires background knowledge. All of the relevant information needed to understand the topic will be included in the passage itself.

Building an Argument to Persuade an Audience

By asking you to focus on how the author of the passage “builds an argument to persuade an audience,” the Essay prompt is encouraging what may be called rhetorical analysis. In this rhetorical analysis, you’re paying attention to how the author uses particular techniques and elements to make the argument more convincing, persuasive, and powerful; your discussion should focus on what the author does, why the author does it, and what effect this is likely to have on readers. You’ll definitely want to capture some of the main ideas and key details of the passage in your analysis, but your main task is *not* to summarize that information but rather to assess its contribution to the argument.

Evidence, Reasoning, and Stylistic and Persuasive Elements

The Essay directions advise you to think about how the author uses evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements to develop the argument. These are cornerstones to much argumentative writing, so we should examine briefly what we mean by each of these.

Evidence is information and ideas that the author uses to support a claim. Evidence takes many forms, and the forms vary depending on the kind of argument the author is writing and the nature of the point the author is trying to make. Evidence can come in the form of facts, statistics, examples, quotations from (other) experts, the results of experiments or other research, and the like. The author of any given passage may use some of these or rely on other kinds of sources entirely. It’ll be up to you to figure out what constitutes evidence in a particular passage and how the author uses it to support particular claims.

Your analysis of an author’s use of evidence can take many forms, depending on the particular passage in question. You may point to specific cases in which the author’s choice of evidence was

particularly effective in supporting a claim. You may instead or in addition point out that the author relies (perhaps too much) on one kind of evidence or another—or on little or no evidence at all, likely weakening the argument’s effectiveness. Other approaches are possible as well.

Reasoning is the connective tissue that holds an argument together. It’s the “thinking”—the logic, the analysis—that develops the argument and ties the claim and evidence together. Reasoning plays a stronger role in some texts than in others. Some authors are very careful about making their thought processes clear so that readers can follow and critique them. In other cases, texts rely less heavily on logic.

Your analysis of an author’s use of reasoning can take a number of different approaches. You may decide to discuss how the author uses (or fails to use) clear, logical reasoning to draw a connection between a claim and the evidence supporting that claim. You may also or instead choose to evaluate the impact that particular aspects of the author’s reasoning (e.g., unstated assumptions) have on how convincing the argument is. Other approaches are possible as well.

Stylistic and persuasive elements are rhetorical techniques that an author might bring to bear in order to enhance the power of an argument. An author could make use of appeals, such as to the audience’s fears or sense of honor, or employ particularly vivid descriptive language to create a mood of anticipation or anxiety, or use one or more of any number of other such devices. There’s no definitive list of these techniques, and you don’t have to know them all by heart or by name to be able to get good scores on the Essay. The key thing here is to be on the lookout for ways in which the author attempts to influence the audience, sometimes by using something other than a strictly logical, rational approach.

Your analysis of the author’s use of stylistic and persuasive elements can follow a number of paths. You may point out instances in which the author uses such devices and evaluate their role or their effectiveness in motivating an audience to action. You may also analyze and evaluate the varying extent to which logic and emotion contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Other approaches are possible as well.

We’ve listed some examples of how evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements might be analyzed in a passage, but these are by no means the only ways. For some passages, evidence may be less important than reasoning and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, so it makes sense to devote less attention to evidence in such a case. Indeed, successful responses do *not* need to cover each of these three categories. In fact, it’s generally better to focus your essay on a few points that are well made than attempt to check off a long list of rhetorical elements. You can also choose to discuss some aspect of the passage that doesn’t fit neatly into one of the three categories but that plays an important part in how the author builds the argument.



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Your analysis does *not* have to focus exclusively on how the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements makes the argument stronger or more persuasive. Instead, you may choose to point out ways in which the author’s use (or lack of use) of one or more of these elements weakens the effectiveness of the argument.



REMEMBER

Your Essay response does *not* have to address the author’s use of all three components discussed here (evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements) in order to earn high scores. A response that provides strong analysis of fewer but well-chosen points will likely score better than a response that provides little analysis of a long list of points.

The Most Relevant Aspects of the Passage

As the preceding discussion suggests, your analysis should be selective. That is, you should focus your attention on those features of the passage that you feel make the biggest contribution to its persuasive power. While 50 minutes is a fair amount of time, it's not enough to write about everything that's going on in the passage. Pick and choose what you analyze.

Not Explaining Whether You Agree with the Author's Claims

Remember that when we talked about the concept of “building an argument to persuade an audience,” we noted that your main purpose in the Essay is rhetorical. That is, you should focus your analysis on how the author attempts to persuade an audience through such techniques as citing evidence, using reasoning, and employing various stylistic and persuasive techniques. Your main goal is *not* to show why or whether you agree or disagree with the points the author makes.

This can be hard. We all have opinions and the urge to share them. You've also probably done a lot of writing in which you've argued for one position or another. What's more, it can be tough to stay emotionally detached if you read something that you either strongly agree or strongly disagree with. Nevertheless, such detachment is something we all have to demonstrate at times, and it's a skill that postsecondary instructors will expect you to be able to make use of routinely. It's also an important general reading skill. If you make your own judgments too early while reading, you're likely to miss something that the author says and maybe even distort the text's message to fit your own preconceptions. Being able to differentiate your own views from those of others is a critical academic, career, and life skill, and it's something that the SAT Essay will—indirectly—call on you to do.

It's a slightly different case, though, when you feel that the passage on the Essay isn't particularly effective or persuasive. Here, you're on somewhat safer ground, as you're still thinking and analyzing rhetorically—still focusing on the art and craft of writing—only this time on one or more ways that you feel the author is failing to make a strong point. It's okay to fault the author in this sense, but be sure to make clear what you think the author's intent probably was. You could point out, for instance, that the author's description seems too idealized to be truly believable or that the author gives too much attention to anecdotes instead of solid evidence, but you should still devote your main effort to what the author *does* do and what the author *intends* to accomplish (even if the author sometimes misses the mark).

SAT Essay Scoring Rubric

Reproduced in this section is the rubric that two raters will use to assess your essay. Each rater will assign a score of 1 to 4 in each of three categories: Reading, Analysis, and Writing. These scores will be added together to give you a 2 to 8 score on each of the three dimensions. Recall that these scores aren't combined with each other or with other scores on the SAT.



REMEMBER

While it's tempting to state your opinion on the topic discussed in the Essay passage, remember that this is *not* your task. Your task is to analyze how the author attempts to persuade an audience through the use of evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements and/or other features you identify.



REMEMBER

Your essay will be scored by two raters, each of whom will assign a score of 1 to 4 on the Reading, Analysis, and Writing dimensions. The two raters' scores for each dimension will be added together. Thus, you'll receive three scores on your essay, each ranging from 2 to 8.

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
4 Advanced	<p>The response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and of most important details and how they interrelate, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the text.</p> <p>The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response offers a thorough, well-considered evaluation of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.</p> <p>The response contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p>The response is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.</p> <p>The response includes a precise central claim.</p> <p>The response includes a skillful introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response has wide variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates a consistent use of precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is free or virtually free of errors.</p>
3 Proficient	<p>The response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and important details.</p> <p>The response is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response competently evaluates the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.</p> <p>The response contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p>The response is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.</p> <p>The response includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.</p> <p>The response includes an effective introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a good control of the conventions of standard written English and is free of significant errors that detract from the quality of writing.</p>
2 Partial	<p>The response demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) but not of important details.</p> <p>The response may contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response identifies and attempts to describe the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing, but merely asserts rather than explains their importance.</p> <p>Or one or more aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea or may deviate from the claim or idea over the course of the response.</p> <p>The response may include an ineffective introduction and/or conclusion. The response may demonstrate some progression of ideas within paragraphs but not throughout the response.</p> <p>The response has limited variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive.</p> <p>The response demonstrates general or vague word choice; word choice may be repetitive. The response may deviate noticeably from a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a limited control of the conventions of standard written English and contains errors that detract from the quality of writing and may impede understanding.</p>

(continued)

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
1 Inadequate	<p>The response demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response fails to show an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) and may include only details without reference to central idea(s).</p> <p>The response may contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.</p> <p>The response identifies without explanation some aspects of the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student’s choosing.</p> <p>Or numerous aspects of the response’s analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.</p> <p>The response may not focus on features of the text that are relevant to addressing the task.</p> <p>Or the response offers no discernible analysis (e.g., is largely or exclusively summary).</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.</p> <p>The response lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The response does not have a discernible progression of ideas.</p> <p>The response lacks variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive. The response demonstrates general and vague word choice; word choice may be poor or inaccurate. The response may lack a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a weak control of the conventions of standard written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.</p>



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Take some time to read the sample passages and student responses below. As you read each response, consider how well the student does in each of the three scoring dimensions (Reading, Analysis, and Writing), using the scoring rubric as a guide. Compare your evaluation of each response to the evaluation provided.

We’ve provided two samples that illustrate the sorts of passages you can expect to find on the Essay. After you read each passage, you can review samples of the essays that actual students wrote in response to that passage.

Each student response has received a separate score for each of the three dimensions assessed: Reading, Analysis, and Writing. The scores are presented directly preceding each sample essay and in order, meaning that a “1/2/1” would refer to a score of 1 in Reading, 2 in Analysis, and 1 in Writing. Scores for the samples were assigned on a 1–4 scale according to the scoring rubric. It’s important to note that although these samples are representative of student achievement, neither set comprehensively illustrates the many ways in which students can earn a particular score on a particular dimension.

Although all of the sample essays were handwritten by students, they’re shown typed here for ease of reading. Each essay has been transcribed exactly as the student wrote it, without alterations to spelling, punctuation, or paragraph breaks.

Sample Passage 1

As you read the passage below, consider how Peter S. Goodman uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Adapted from Peter S. Goodman, “Foreign News at a Crisis Point.” ©2013 by TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. Originally published September 25, 2013. Peter Goodman is the executive business and global news editor at TheHuffingtonPost.com.

- 1 Back in 2003, American Journalism Review produced a census of foreign correspondents then employed by newspapers based in the United States, and found 307 full-time people. When AJR repeated the exercise in the summer of 2011, the count had dropped to 234. And even that number was significantly inflated by the inclusion of contract writers who had replaced full-time staffers.
- 2 In the intervening eight years, 20 American news organizations had entirely eliminated their foreign bureaus.
- 3 The same AJR survey zeroed in on a representative sampling of American papers from across the country and found that the space devoted to foreign news had shrunk by 53 percent over the previous quarter-century.
- 4 All of this decline was playing out at a time when the U.S. was embroiled in two overseas wars, with hundreds of thousands of Americans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was happening as domestic politics grappled with the merits and consequences of a global war on terror, as a Great Recession was blamed in part on global imbalances in savings, and as world leaders debated a global trade treaty and pacts aimed at addressing climate change. It unfolded as American workers heard increasingly that their wages and job security were under assault by competition from counterparts on the other side of oceans.
- 5 In short, news of the world is becoming palpably more relevant to the day-to-day experiences of American readers, and it is rapidly disappearing.
- 6 Yet the same forces that have assailed print media, eroding foreign news along the way, may be fashioning a useful response. Several nonprofit outlets have popped up to finance foreign reporting, and a for-profit outfit, GlobalPost, has dispatched a team of 18 senior correspondents into the field, supplemented by dozens of stringers and freelancers. . . .
- 7 We are intent on forging fresh platforms for user-generated content: testimonials, snapshots and video clips from readers documenting issues in need of attention. Too often these sorts of efforts wind up feeling marginal or even patronizing: “Dear peasant, here’s your chance



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As you read the passage, be on the lookout for the author’s use of these three elements (evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements). You may find it helpful to take brief notes in the margins.



REMEMBER

The Essay passage is lengthy. Spend sufficient time reading, and selectively rereading, the passage to ensure you understand it well. You’ll need a strong understanding of the passage in order to analyze how the author builds the argument to persuade an audience.

to speak to the pros about what’s happening in your tiny little corner of the world.” We see user-generated content as a genuine reporting tool, one that operates on the premise that we can only be in so many places at once. Crowd-sourcing is a fundamental advantage of the web, so why not embrace it as a means of piecing together a broader and more textured understanding of events?

- 8 We all know the power of Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media to connect readers in one place with images and impressions from situations unfolding far away. We know the force of social media during the Arab Spring, as activists convened and reacted to changing circumstances. . . . Facts and insights reside on social media, waiting to be harvested by the digitally literate contemporary correspondent.
- 9 And yet those of us who have been engaged in foreign reporting for many years will confess to unease over many of the developments unfolding online, even as we recognize the trends are as unstoppable as globalization or the weather. Too often it seems as if professional foreign correspondents, the people paid to use their expertise while serving as informational filters, are being replaced by citizen journalists who function largely as funnels, pouring insight along with speculation, propaganda and other white noise into the mix.
- 10 We can celebrate the democratization of media, the breakdown of monopolies, the rise of innovative means of telling stories, and the inclusion of a diversity of voices, and still ask whether the results are making us better informed. Indeed, we have a professional responsibility to continually ask that question while seeking to engineer new models that can channel the web in the interest of better informing readers. . . .
- 11 We need to embrace the present and gear for the future. These are days in which newsrooms simply must be entrepreneurial and creative in pursuit of new means of reporting and paying for it. That makes this a particularly interesting time to be doing the work, but it also requires forthright attention to a central demand: We need to put back what the Internet has taken away. We need to turn the void into something fresh and compelling. We need to re-examine and update how we gather information and how we engage readers, while retaining the core values of serious-minded journalism.
- 12 This will not be easy. . . . But the alternative—accepting ignorance and parochialism—is simply not an option.



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If you decide to practice for the SAT Essay, select a passage to use for your analysis. Take several minutes to brainstorm some of the points you may choose to focus on. Next, create an outline in which you decide on the structure and progression of your essay. An outline will help ensure your essay is well organized and cohesive. This strategy may also be useful on test day.

Write an essay in which you explain how Peter S. Goodman builds an argument to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to people in the United States. In your essay, analyze how Goodman uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Sample Student Essays

Student Sample 1—Scores: 1/1/1

In the Article, “Foreign News at a Crisis Point” by Peter S. Goodman ©2013 by TheHuffingtonPost.com, the author builds up an argument to persuade his audience. He provided information about American Journalism Review to let people in the community know how it started.

“we need to embrace the present and gear for the future.” This means that the author wants to find new ways of communicating with the community now, that will help later on in the future. This is important because the author wants better media to transmit to the public.

“We all know the Power of Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of Social media to connect leaders in one Place with images and
[unfinished]

Sample 1 Scoring Explanation: This response scored a 1/1/1.

Reading—1: This response demonstrates little comprehension of Goodman’s text. Although the inclusion of two quotations from the text (“we need to embrace the present . . .”; “We all know the power of Twitter, Facebook . . .”) suggests that the writer has read the passage, the writer does not provide any actual indication of an understanding of the text. The writer fails to show a clear understanding of Goodman’s central claim, saying vaguely that *the author wants better media to transmit to the public*. The response is further limited by vague references to details from the passage that are largely unconnected to the passage’s central idea, such as when the writer states that Goodman *provided information about American Journalism Review to let people in the community know how it started*. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate reading comprehension.

Analysis—1: This response demonstrates little understanding of the analytical task. The writer makes few attempts to analyze the source text. What attempts are offered either repeat the prompt without elaboration (*the author builds up an argument to persuade his audience*) or merely paraphrase the text in a general way (*This means that the author wants to find new ways of communicating*). The brief response consists mostly of quotations taken from the passage, with very few of the writer’s own ideas included. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

Writing—1: This response demonstrates little cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language. While the writer does include a very basic central claim (*the author builds up an argument to persuade his audience*), the response does not have a discernible progression of ideas. Much of the brief response is comprised of quotations from Goodman’s text, and the language that is the writer’s own is repetitive and vague. For example, the writer states that Goodman shares information with his readers to *let people in the community know how it started*, with no clear indication of what “it” refers to. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate writing.

Student Sample 2—Scores: 2/1/2

In the article “Foreign News At a Crisis Point”, Peter S. Goodman argues that the news organizations should increase the amount of Foreign news coverage offered to the Americans.

Peter S. Goodman offers many explanations of why the American public needs more professional Foreign news coverage. He appeals to our emotions when he states that it’s seen very often that when news organization ask for a review by a reader/viewer they might end up to feel marginal. Goodman gives an idea to fix that problem and says, “Crowd-Sourcing is a fundamental advantage of the web, so why not embrace it as means of piecing together a broader and more textual understanding of events?” He talks about this because he believes that the news should add what the people want to hear and not what the reporters want to talk about.

He also states a fact from the American Journalism Review, the AJR sampled many news papers from across the country and they observed that the space of which belonged to foreign news had shrunk by 53% over the previous quarter-century. Goodman took this into consideration and noticed that the decline was taking place around the time in which America was in the middle of two wars overseas. It was also around the time the government viewed the consequences and merits of global war on terrorism.

Peter S. Goodman offered many reason for which Foreign news should be increased so the American public could view it and they all have great support and add relevance to the viewer.

Sample 2 Scoring Explanation: This response scored a 2/1/2.

Reading—2: This response demonstrates some comprehension of Goodman’s text. The writer shows an understanding of Goodman’s central idea, stating that *news organizations should increase the amount of Foreign news coverage offered to the Americans*. While the writer includes some details from the source text (*it’s seen very often that when news organization ask for a review by a reader/viewer they might end up to feel marginal*); Goodman . . . noticed that the decline was talking place around the time in which America was in the middle of two wars overseas), these details are, for the most part, unconnected to the central idea. The use of textual evidence is limited, and therefore it is unclear whether the writer understands how important details relate to the central idea. Further, the writer demonstrates some evidence of having misinterpreted the argument, stating that Goodman *talks about this because he believes that the news should add what the people want to hear and not what the reporters want to talk about*. Overall, the response demonstrates partially successful reading comprehension.

Analysis—1: This response demonstrates very little understanding of the analytical task. The writer does identify an argumentative strategy in Goodman’s text when the writer says Goodman *appeals to our emotions*; however, the writer does not analyze this moment further or provide elaboration about how the example appeals to the audience’s emotions. Instead, the writer reverts to summary and writes that *Goodman gives an idea to fix that problem*. Throughout the rest of the response, the writer only describes Goodman’s use of evidence by summarizing parts of the text rather than providing analysis. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

Writing—2: This response demonstrates limited cohesion and writing skill. The writer includes a central claim, but the introductory paragraph is not effective. Individual paragraphs display some progression of ideas, but there is little to connect ideas between paragraphs or in the response as a whole. The writer’s word choice is general, and sentence structures follow a simple, repetitive subject-verb structure (*Peter S. Goodman offers; He appeals; Goodman gives; He talks*). Some language errors (*emdrace; talking place*) detract from the quality of writing throughout the essay but do not seriously impede understanding. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful writing.



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Unlike the previous two responses, this response utilizes a clearer organizational structure. The introductory paragraph summarizes Goodman’s primary claim and previews the persuasive elements that will be discussed later in the response.

Student Sample 3—Scores: 3/2/3

Peter Goodman’s purpose in writing “Foreign News at a Crisis Point” was to persuade his audience that the news should include more information about the world as a whole. Goodman’s argument becomes powerful through the use of pathos, using evidence, and also embracing reasoning.

Goodman is extremely persuasive in his argument when he brings pathos into effect. He uses pathos to appeal to the emotions of the readers. He plays out the hard times of the U.S. by saying “American workers heard increasingly that their ways and job security were under assault” and “hundreds of thousands of Americans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.” This information is used to show the reader why the news coverage in foreign countries is diminishing. Goodman wants the reader to know that he understands why coverage is focusing more on the United States but not that it’s a good thing.

Goodman uses evidence to support his claims that coverage of foreign news is dwindling. Goodman says “20 American news organizations had entirely eliminated their foreign bureaus.” He also explains “in the summer of 2011, the count (of full time foreign correspondents) had dropped to 234.” This factual information is used so that Goodman can prove that he knows what he’s talking about. These facts prove that Goodman had researched the information and persuades readers to believe Goodman’s argument.

Goodman also uses reasoning to show readers that there can always be improvement. He says, “these are days in which newsrooms simply must be entrepreneurial and creative in pursuit of new means of reporting and paying for it.” Goodman uses the argument that we have to take matters into our own hands to prepare and change the future. Goodman’s advice to change now internet focused journalism is comes from a strong skill of reasoning.

Goodman uses pathos evidence and reasoning to persuade readers that foreign news coverage needs to be increased. He plays on the reader’s emotions by talking about issues that matter to them. He provides facts to show that his argument is valid. He also uses reasoning to come up with a solution to the issue. Goodman uses these features to successfully make a persuasive argument about the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to Americans.

Sample 3 Scoring Explanation: This response scored a 3/2/3.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text in terms of both the central idea and important details. The writer accurately paraphrases the central claim of Goodman’s text (*Peter Goodman’s purpose in writing “Foreign News at a Crisis Point” was to persuade his audience that the news should include more information about the world as a whole*). The writer also makes use of appropriate textual evidence to demonstrate an understanding of key details (*He plays out the hard times of the U.S. by saying “American workers heard increasingly that their ways and job security were under assault” and “hundreds of thousands of Americans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan”*; *Goodman uses evidence to support his claims that coverage of foreign news is dwindling. Goodman says “20 American*

news organizations had entirely eliminated their foreign bureaus”). The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—2: This response demonstrates a limited understanding of the analytical task and offers an incomplete analysis of how Goodman builds his argument. The writer identifies some important pieces of evidence in Goodman’s text and attempts to describe their use (*This factual information is used so that Goodman can prove that he knows what he’s talking about. These facts prove that Goodman had researched the information and persuades readers to believe Goodman’s argument*), but the writer’s reliance on assertions leads only to limited analysis. For example, in the third body paragraph, which discusses Goodman’s use of reasoning, the writer merely paraphrases a selected quotation from the text (*He says, “these are days in which newsrooms simply must be entrepreneurial and creative in pursuit of new means of reporting and paying for it.” Goodman uses the argument that we have to take matters into our own hands to prepare and change the future*) and then asserts circularly that Goodman’s advice *comes from a strong skill of reasoning*. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful analysis.

Writing—3: The writer demonstrates effective use and command of language in this response, and the response as a whole is cohesive. The response includes a precise central claim (*Goodmans argument becomes powerful through the use of pathos, using evidence, and also embracing reasoning*). The brief but focused introduction establishes the framework for the writer’s organizational structure, which the writer follows faithfully in the body of the response, progressing from idea to idea and ending with a competent conclusion that summarizes the response. The response displays variety in sentence structure (*He uses pathos to appeal to the emotion of the readers; coverage of foreign news is dwindling; Goodman uses these features to successfully make a persuasive argument about the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to Americans*) and generally good control of the conventions of standard written English. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient writing.

Student Sample 4—Scores: 3/3/3

Logic, reason, and rhetoric create a strong persuasive argument. Peter S. Goodman utilizes these tools in his article “Foreign News At a Crisis Point”. Goodman presents a cause and effect argument as well, by presenting the facts and revealing their consequences. What truly persuades his audience is his use of logic, reason, and rhetoric. These occur in forms of examples, explanations and conclusions, and persuasive and rhetorical statements.

Goodman’s use of logic occurs throughout his article, but is most prevalent in the beginning. Examples and statistical presentations initially draw interest from readers. Goodman begins with a census from year 2003 and year 2011 that reveals the major decline of foreign correspondents employed

by newspapers based in the United States. The numbers themselves raise a concern in the audience's mind, but may not capture their attention. Goodman then presents more appalling examples, including the sharp decrease of space devoted to foreign news over a quarter century, in order to further capture the reader's attention and raise concern. The connection between the decline in foreign news and increased American involvement overseas heightens curiosity for the reader. Goodman employs logic, basic reasoning and evidence presentation in order to raise concern, curiosity, and questions from the reader. Goodman's use of reason is present throughout the entire article. After Goodman's presentation of his statistics and facts, he raises more concern about how to increase these statistics and factual numbers. Goodman uses reason to recognize that it would be more "genuine" and better informing for readers to hear of first hand experiences. The reader of his article begins to wonder how Goodman plans to increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage for Americans, and Goodman utilizes reason to draw a simple solution. Social media sites provide an outlet for individuals to have a voice "electronically" speaking. Goodman uses reason to reveal to the reader that first-hand knowledge is best and social media sites provide easy access, so why not create an outlet for people who know more to say more? Goodman also utilizes reason to present the problem of inaccurate information on social media sites. He further builds and enhances his argument when he states that there must be a way to "engage readers, while retaining the core values of journalism." Goodman also uses reason to evoke agreement within the reader's mind when he draws simple conclusions and presents simple solutions. Reason allows Goodman to construct upon his solid foundation of evidence that creates his argument.

Rhetoric seals the deal in Goodman's argument. After presenting the facts using logic, and making connections using reason, Goodman utilizes rhetoric to place the cherry on the top of his argument. Rhetoric is crucial in an argument because it determines how the reader feels after reading an article. Goodman utilizes rhetoric after he presents the fundamental advantage of crowd-sourcing on the web, when he asks a rhetorical question. Goodman presents obvious and exciting information that seems more than reasonable, and asks whether this great idea should be practiced or not. A rhetorical question is meant to evoke either disagreement or agreement of the author's purpose. In this case, Goodman's use of rhetoric evokes agreement from the reader. In his final stanza, after presenting all methods of reform, Goodman utilizes rhetoric to once again state the obvious. Goodman presents his solutions, then asks if it is better to stay ignorant and parochial; the answer to his statement is obvious, and causes the reader to agree with him.

Great persuasive essays utilize the tools of persuasion. Goodman began his argument with logic, combined in reason, and finalized with rhetoric. A flow of examples to connections, to solutions, and consequences propels the reader into agreement with the author. Goodman solidifies his argument and builds his argument with logic, reason, and rhetoric, allowing for a reader to be in more agreement and satisfaction of his argument.

Sample 4 Scoring Explanation: This response scored a 3/3/3.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text. Although the central idea is never explicitly stated in the introduction, the writer accurately captures the main focus of Goodman’s argument: his *concern for the major decline of foreign correspondents employed by newspapers based in the United States*. The writer also accurately paraphrases (*Goodman begins with a census from year 2003 and year 2011*) and directly quotes important details from the source text, demonstrating effective comprehension. In the second body paragraph, for example, the writer demonstrates understanding of Goodman’s discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of social media, effectively tracing Goodman’s argument from the value of *first-hand knowledge to the problem of inaccurate information on social media sites*. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task and offers an effective analysis of the source text. The writer discusses how various elements of the text are used to build Goodman’s argument and how they contribute to the text’s persuasiveness. For example, the writer discusses Goodman’s use of statistical evidence as well as Goodman’s use of reasoning in the analysis of the social media argument (*He further builds and enhances his argument when he states that there must be a way to “engage readers, while retaining the core values of journalism”*). The writer then discusses how Goodman makes effective use of rhetoric toward the end of paragraph 7 of the passage by posing a rhetorical question (*Goodman utilizes rhetoric after he presents the fundamental advantage of crowd-sourcing on the web, when he asks a rhetorical question*). Although the response occasionally relies upon assertions about the elements of persuasive arguments (*Goodman’s use of logic occurs throughout his article; Goodman employs logic, basic reasoning and evidence presentation in order to raise concern, curiosity, and questions from the reader; Reason allows Goodman to construct upon his solid foundation of evidence; Rhetoric seals the deal*), the writer provides effective support in other places (for example in the discussion of Goodman’s use of rhetoric in the third body paragraph). Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—3: This response is generally cohesive and demonstrates effective use of language. The writer provides an effective introduction that lays out in broad strokes the ways in which Goodman builds his argument (*What truly persuades his audience is his use of logic, reason, and rhetoric. These occur in forms of examples, explanations and conclusions, and persuasive and rhetorical statements*). The response also includes a summarizing conclusion. The three body paragraphs are structured around the three features the writer has chosen to focus on: *logic, reason, and rhetoric*. Within each paragraph, there is a clear progression of ideas, though there are few transitions between paragraphs. Although the response sometimes demonstrates awkwardness and repetitive phrasing (*Goodman’s use of reason;*

Goodman uses reason; Goodman also uses reason), the writer’s word choice is generally effective. The response demonstrates some variety in sentence structure and also maintains a formal style and objective tone. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient writing.

Student Sample 5—Scores: 3/3/4

Peter S. Goodman builds a solid argument for the growing need for foreign news coverage and utilizes concrete evidence, logical reasoning and persuasive appeals to not only expose the paucity of international news feeds, but also convince his audience that it is crucial that news organizations increase the amount of foreign news coverage provided to Americans.

Goodman begins by clearly laying out the raw statistics from a census produced by the American Journalism Review to show the dramatic decline of foreign correspondents and bureaus that had been “entirely eliminated” by American news organizations over the past decades. In an attempt to point out the incredulous absurdity of these facts, Goodman goes on to discuss the context of the decrease in foreign coverage by providing examples of real world events that affected all Americans. Goodman uses this irony—that in the wake of pivotal global changes like war, global trade treaties and the war on terror, the foreign coverage in the U.S. was diminishing rather than growing—to try to show the American audience that this argument is very much relevant to their everyday lives. He hones in on examples that resonate with many Americans, like the threat to their wages and job security posed by international counterparts, in order to grab the reader’s attention and connect his claims to their “day-to-day experiences”. This also serves as a way to persuade leaders of the increasing importance of the need for a stronger stream of foreign news coverage by appealing to the audience’s emotions and insinuating that they are missing out on critical information that pertains directly to their lives.

Goodman employs stylistic elements through his careful choice of words that strengthen the argument and make a more powerful impression on the reader. He alludes to the “forces” that have destructively “eroded foreign news”, but also remains intent on solving this issue by boldly “forging fresh platforms” that will relay a wider range of news to the American people. He appeals to the individual, always referencing the practical need for “user-generated” content available to all people.

Goldman closes his argument by condemning ignorance and calling for action in an exigency.

[unfinished]



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Keep track of pacing during the Essay to ensure you can complete your response in the allotted time. An unfinished response won’t allow you to demonstrate your full reading, analysis, and writing knowledge and skills.

Scoring Explanation Sample 5: This response scored a 3/3/4.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text, citing both the central idea and important details in Goodman’s piece. The writer accurately paraphrases the central claim of Goodman’s text (*Goodman builds a solid argument for the growing need for foreign news coverage . . . [to] convince his audience that it is crucial that news organizations increase the amount of foreign news coverage provided to Americans*). The writer also demonstrates an understanding of the details of Goodman’s text: Goodman’s use of *raw statistics; the context for the decrease in foreign coverage; that Goodman condemn[s] ignorance and call[s] for action*. The response is also free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: The response demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task and offers an effective analysis of the source text. The writer discusses how various elements of the text are used to build Goodman’s argument and how they contribute to the text’s persuasiveness: *Goodman begins by clearly laying out the raw statistics . . . to show the dramatic decline of foreign correspondents and bureaus; Goodman uses this irony—that in the wake of pivotal global changes like war, global trade treaties and the war on terror, the foreign coverage . . . was diminishing rather than growing—to try to show . . . that this argument is very much relevant to their everyday lives*. The writer then discusses how Goodman *employs stylistic elements* to further the argument, competently selecting textual evidence of the author’s strong, deliberate language, namely *the “forces” that have destructively “eroded foreign news.”* Had the writer elaborated more on this discussion, perhaps by explaining how these words *make a powerful impression on the reader*, this response might have moved from a competent evaluation into a more advanced analysis. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—4: This response is cohesive and demonstrates highly effective use and control of language. The writer presents a generally skillful, concise introduction, which is also the response’s central claim: *Peter S. Goodman builds a solid argument for the growing need for foreign news coverage and utilizes concrete evidence, logical reasoning and persuasive appeals to not only expose the paucity of international news feeds, but also convince his audience that it is crucial that news organizations increase the amount of foreign news coverage provided to Americans*. The writer employs precise word choice throughout the response (*dramatic decline, discuss the context of the decrease, uses this irony, hones in on examples, make a more powerful impression on the reader, appeals to the individual, always referencing the practical need*). Although the writer was not able to finish the response, the two existing body paragraphs are tightly focused and deliberately structured to advance the writer’s analysis of Goodman’s use of *concrete evidence and stylistic elements* (mainly *choice of words and persuasive appeals*). The response maintains a formal style and

objective tone and contains clear transitions (*Goodman begins by clearly laying out; Goldman [sic] closes his argument*) to guide the reader. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced writing skill.

Student Sample 6—Scores: 4/3/3

Over the years what is going on in the outside world has started to affect us more. Whether it is a war that is going to effect us physically or even an oil disaster that will effect us economically. However, this news is not always covered. The U.S. news focuses more on what is going on in our own country then outside of it we are not well informed to the world around us. Peter S. Goodman uses many different types of evidence to support his claims and persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to Americans.

Within the first three paragraphs of this article the author offers many statistical evidence. He throws out numbers. As a reader this appeals to a logical thinking audience. Also, many people will start to believe that this author is a credible source. He appears to know what he is talking about. Peter S. Goodman appears to have done some research on this topic and proves this within his first three paragraphs. The author uses the numbers “307” and “234” in the first paragraph. He wanted to illustrate to this audience the decreasing amount of foreign correspondents that are employed by news companies within the U.S. Right away goodman shows the audience the subject of the article. He establishes his purpose. He wants to call for a change. The author never comes out and says this in the first paragraph, but he subtly hints at it. Next he shows how many news organizations no longer have “foreign bureaus.” Again he throws out a number, “53 percent” to show how much foreign news has decreased within the United States. All these facts are to support his claim that foreign news has shrunk within the United States over the years. He feels as if this should change so people are better informed. Peter S. Goodman then shifts from using statistical evidence to historical evidence.

Peter S. Goodman talks about things that are going on in the world around us today. He brings up many issues that have just recently occurred. As a reader I now start to question whether I know what these issues are all about. Did I ever hear about them or even read about them? These are all questions the author has put into the readers’ mind. First, he starts off with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan which almost every reader would know about. There are issues that many of them had to deal with personally. Some of their family members may be serving overseas. The author makes a personal connection with the audience. They know the feeling of not knowing exactly what is going on overseas. They constantly question what is happening and whether their loved ones are safe. The author then claims that world news has started to have an affect on our day to day lives in the US. He illustrates how our wages and economy depend on what is going on outside of the United States. Peter S. Goodman transitions from historical evidence to things that we use for news such as social media to make a connection to his audience.

The author starts to talk about how we now rely on social media for our world news. He again backs up his claim that we need more “professional” foreign coverage in the United States. He explains how common people are providing the news. This may make for “speculation, propaganda, and other white noise into the mix.” These people are not professional writers. Also, most of them are not neutral on an issue. He shows that common people are biased. They all have an opinion and share it. Instead of saying what is actually going on; they may say what they think is going on. The author uses the example of bias saying there was not new organization reporting on this. All of our news came from social media. People talk these accounts as truth. They do not realize that they are not filtered. He compares “professional foreign correspondents” to “informational filters” while he compares “citizen journalists” to “funnels”. Professional reporters that would investigate foreign issues would only report back what they know is true. Only facts would be included. However, every day people that are writing on the web would say anything and everything they could think of. He uses this comparison to show his audience the different ways they are given information. He wants to show them that right now they are depending on opinions when in fact they should be depending on facts. The author goes from how people are obtaining their information to how he thinks people should obtain their information.

Peter S. Goodman uses his last few paragraphs to state his claims once again. He reinforces the idea that we need to take back “what the Internet has taken away.” He supports this earlier in his article when he [shows] how we do not also receive the full story when we rely on day to day people to report the world news. The author wants to journalists to change the way they write. He believes that they will be much more successful in providing information to the public. They need to “engage” their readers. The author’s last few paragraphs are used to restate his claims that he supported with evidence through out his article.

The author uses many different types of evidence to back up his claims. He shows that he has researched his topic by providing statistical evidence that agrees with his opinions. He shows the decrease in the amount of foreign correspondents with this evidence. Then he shifts to historical evidence. This evidence is used to show how much the world around us has an impact on our society. Then he transitions to how we obtain information today. He shows we do not always receive the full story. He uses this to claim how we should gain our information. The author believes in more foreign correspondents. Throughout “Foreign News At a Crisis Point” Peter S. Goodman uses evidence to portray why we need to increase the amount of foreign news we receive instead the United States. In using the evidence he shows how and why the world around us constantly has an impact on us; this is why it is so important that the United States citizens have an accurate description of issues and situations that are developing in foreign nations.

Scoring Explanation Sample 6: This response scored a 4/3/3.

Reading—4: This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text and illustrates an understanding of the interrelation between the central idea and the important details of Goodman’s article. The writer paraphrases Goodman’s central claim (*news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to Americans*) and then accurately describes the statistical evidence that undergirds that claim (the decrease of foreign correspondents as well as the decrease of foreign bureaus). The writer goes on to discuss how Goodman ties the central claim to important details such as *the war in Iraq and Afghanistan* and the reliance on *social media for our world news*, thereby showing an understanding of these details. The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response demonstrates good understanding of the analytical task and offers an effective analysis of the source text. The writer effectively analyzes how Goodman uses various elements of his text to build a persuasive argument. For example, the writer discusses two statistical pieces of evidence at the beginning of Goodman’s argument (*The author uses the numbers “307” and “234” . . . to illustrate . . . the decreasing amount of foreign correspondents; he throws out a number, “53 percent” to show how much foreign news has decreased*). The writer then discusses how Goodman shifts from *statistical evidence to historical evidence* to further his argument. Although the example then given is not historical but current, the writer competently evaluates the effect of this element of Goodman’s text (*he starts off with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan which almost every reader would know about. . . . The author makes a personal connection with the audience*). Finally, the writer makes good analytical use of textual evidence, saying that Goodman *compares “professional foreign correspondents” to “informational filters” while he compares “citizen journalists” to “funnels.”* The writer then explains what using this comparison illustrates (*“filters” present facts, while “funnels” convey anything and everything they could think of*) for Goodman’s audience. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—3: The response demonstrates effective use and command of language and as a whole is cohesive. The response includes a precise central claim (*Goodman uses many different types of evidence to support his claims and persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage*). The effective introduction provides context for the analysis that follows and the conclusion effectively encapsulates that analysis. In addition, the writer progresses smoothly from idea to idea within and between paragraphs. Although the response displays a consistently formal and objective tone and good control of the conventions of standard written English, the writer sometimes relies on choppy sentence structure and awkward or repetitive phrasing (*. . . the author offers many statistical evidence. He throws out numbers; He shows that common people are bias. They all have an opinion and share it*). Overall, this response demonstrates proficient writing.

Student Sample 7—Scores: 4/3/3

Media presentation from across the globe is vital to the upkeep and maintenance of our society. How this information is obtained and presented, if presented at all, is a different story, however. Goodman builds an argument to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage to the Americas through the presentation of statistics, connections to social media as well as using specific diction to establish his argument.

Goodman uses statistics and facts, as presented by the AJR, in order to show the loss of foreign correspondents reporting to the U.S. in order to persuade his audience that there is a need for more professional coverage. He begins his essay with the statistic saying that the level of professional foreign correspondents dropped from 307 full-time people to 234. This conveys that the number of people providing legitimate and credible information to news services in the U.S. is going down, thus alluding to the overall decrease in foreign Media. Goodman uses this to build his argument by evoking his audience to think that they may not be getting all the true media and facts presented. He uses the statistic of the shrinking correspondents to establish the fact that if this number is continually decreasing, there may be in the future a lack of unbiased media presentation, asking his audience to consider the importance of foreign news coverage.

Goodman connects to the vast implications of bias presented via social media to further build his argument. Reporters “know the power of Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media” and, as they continue to rise in popularity in the distribution of media, are enabling the genesis of “citizen journalists who function largely as funnels . . . pouring white noise into the mix”. Goodman further builds his argument here in order to persuade his audience by showing how with the rise of social media, more biased and superfluous information can be projected and wrongly viewed.

Goodman says this to evoke a concern within his audience about the truth in media. Blatantly put, Goodman accounts for that if you want unbiased foreign media people must turn from social media such as Twitter and Facebook and turn toward professional foreign media presentation. Presenting this idea of a possible fallacy within social media greatly establishes his purpose as well as affirms his audience on whether they agree with him or not.

Also, Goodman uses specific diction to further establish his argument to persuade his audience. Goodman uses personal pronouns such as “we” to show that he personally is a part of the media presentation community, not only establishing his credibility on the subject, but also aiding in his persuasion of his audience by allowing them to think he is an expert in the field. Through his word choice, Goodman further establishes his argument by ascribing the need for more foreign reporter not as a burden but as a challenge. This adds in the persuasion of his audience by showing them that this is a real problem and that there are people rising up to it, and so should they.

Goodman’s use of up-to-date references as well as connections to social media, use of statistics, and diction establish his argument of the need for more foreign reporters as well as persuading his audience of the need to do so.

Scoring Explanation Sample 7: This response scored a 4/3/3.

Reading—4: This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text and shows an understanding of the relationship between the central idea and the important details in Goodman’s piece. The writer includes the central claim of Goodman’s text (*news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage to the Americas*) and even paraphrases the claim in broader terms (*Media presentation from across the globe is vital to the upkeep and maintenance of our society*). The writer also exhibits an understanding of the details in Goodman’s text (*He begins his essay with the statistic saying that the level of professional foreign correspondents dropped from 307 full-time people to 234; if you want unbiased foreign media people must turn from social media such as Twitter and Facebook and turn toward professional foreign media presentation*). The response is also free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response demonstrates good understanding of the analytical task by offering an effective analysis of the source text. Focusing on the most relevant features of Goodman’s argument, the writer thoroughly discusses, for example, the use of Goodman’s opening statistic (the drop from 307 full-time foreign correspondents to 234), how it *conveys that the number of people providing legitimate and credible information to news services . . . is going down*, and how, therefore, *Goodman [is] . . . evoking his audience to think that they may not be getting all the true . . . facts*. The writer then follows up the point by saying that Goodman is *asking his audience to consider the importance of foreign news coverage*. The writer also competently selects relevant textual evidence from Goodman’s argument about the dangers of social media, citing the evocative quotation *“citizen journalists who function largely as funnels . . . pouring white noise into the mix.”* Additionally, the writer analyzes the diction in Goodman’s text by discussing the author’s deliberate choice of *personal pronouns such as “we”* to establish *credibility on the subject*. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—3: This response demonstrates cohesion as well as effective use and command of language. The response includes a precise central claim (*Goodman builds an argument to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage to the Americas through the presentation of statistics, connections to social media as well as using specific diction to establish his argument*). The focused introduction establishes context for the writer’s analysis and provides the framework for the response’s organizational structure. The writer then follows that framework faithfully in the body of the response, progressing clearly from idea to idea. The response displays variety in sentence structure and some precise word choice (*vital to the upkeep and maintenance of our society, vast implications of bias, superfluous information*), although the writer sometimes uses infelicitous phrasing and vocabulary (*evoking*

his audience to think, a possible fallacy within social media greatly establishes his purpose). Overall, this response demonstrates proficient writing.

Sample Passage 2

As you read the passage below, consider how Adam B. Summers uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Adapted from Adam B. Summers, “Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment.” ©2013 by The San Diego Union-Tribune, LLC. Originally published June 13, 2013.

- 1 Californians dodged yet another nanny-state regulation recently when the state Senate narrowly voted down a bill to ban plastic bags statewide, but the reprieve might only be temporary. Not content to tell us how much our toilets can flush or what type of light bulb to use to brighten our homes, some politicians and environmentalists are now focused on deciding for us what kind of container we can use to carry our groceries.
- 2 The bill . . . would have prohibited grocery stores and convenience stores with at least \$2 million in gross annual sales and 10,000 square feet of retail space from providing single-use plastic or paper bags, although stores would have been allowed to sell recycled paper bags for an unspecified amount. The bill fell just three votes short of passage in the Senate . . . and Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Los Angeles, who sponsored the measure, has indicated that he would like to bring it up again, so expect this fight to be recycled rather than trashed.
- 3 While public debate over plastic bag bans often devolves into emotional pleas to save the planet or preserve marine life (and, believe me, I love sea turtles as much as the next guy), a little reason and perspective is in order.
- 4 According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, plastic bags, sacks, and wraps of all kinds (not just grocery bags) make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials. High-density polyethylene (HDPE) bags, which are the most common kind of plastic grocery bags, make up just 0.3 percent of this total.
- 5 The claims that plastic bags are worse for the environment than paper bags or cotton reusable bags are dubious at best. In fact, compared to paper bags, plastic grocery bags produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, require 70 percent less energy to make, generate 80 percent less waste, and utilize less than 4 percent of the amount of water needed to manufacture them. This makes sense because plastic bags are lighter and take up less space than paper bags.
- 6 Reusable bags come with their own set of problems. They, too, have a larger carbon footprint than plastic bags. Even more disconcerting are

the findings of several studies that plastic bag bans lead to increased health problems due to food contamination from bacteria that remain in the reusable bags. A November 2012 statistical analysis by University of Pennsylvania law professor Jonathan Klick and George Mason University law professor and economist Joshua D. Wright found that San Francisco's plastic bag ban in 2007 resulted in a subsequent spike in hospital emergency room visits due to *E. coli*, salmonella, and campylobacter-related intestinal infectious diseases. The authors conclude that the ban even accounts for several additional deaths in the city each year from such infections.

- 7 The description of plastic grocery bags as “single-use” bags is another misnomer. The vast majority of people use them more than once, whether for lining trash bins or picking up after their dogs. (And still other bags are recycled.) Since banning plastic bags also means preventing their additional uses as trash bags and pooper scoopers, one unintended consequence of the plastic bag ban would likely be an increase in plastic bag purchases for these other purposes. This is just what happened in Ireland in 2002 when a 15 Euro cent (\$0.20) tax imposed on plastic shopping bags led to a 77 percent increase in the sale of plastic trash can liner bags.
- 8 And then there are the economic costs. The plastic bag ban would threaten the roughly 2,000 California jobs in the plastic bag manufacturing and recycling industry, although, as noted in the Irish example above, they might be able to weather the storm if they can successfully switch to producing other types of plastic bags. In addition, taxpayers will have to pony up for the added bureaucracy, and the higher regulatory costs foisted upon bag manufacturers and retailers will ultimately be borne by consumers in the form of price increases.
- 9 Notwithstanding the aforementioned reasons why plastic bags are not, in fact, evil incarnate, environmentalists have every right to try to convince people to adopt certain beliefs or lifestyles, but they do not have the right to use government force to compel people to live the way they think best. In a free society, we are able to live our lives as we please, so long as we do not infringe upon the rights of others. That includes the right to make such fundamental decisions as “Paper or plastic?”

Write an essay in which you explain how Adam B. Summers builds an argument to persuade his audience that plastic shopping bags should not be banned. In your essay, analyze how Summers uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Summers's claims, but rather explain how Summers builds an argument to persuade his audience.

Sample Student Essays

Student Sample 1—Scores: 2/1/1

Adams B. Summers argues what the damages of a proposed plastic bag ban would do if the legislation gets passed. Summers presents his argument well, and his use of fact/examples, reasoning to develop ideas, and persuasive word choice build his argument. He uses examples/facts, such as plastic bags only make up 1.6 percent of all solid waste. His excellent word choice that appeals to your mind such as him saying the politician hopes to bring up the bill again to essentially “recycle rather than trash it”. He uses reasoning that makes sense to a reader stating how many jobs may be potentially lost due to the bill and how much waste is really caused by plastic bags v. paper.

Scoring Explanation Sample 1: This response scored a 2/1/1.

Reading—2: This response demonstrates some comprehension of Summers’s text. The writer indicates an understanding of the main idea of Summers’s argument (*Summers argues what the damages of a proposed plastic bag ban would do if the legislation gets passed*). The writer also selects some important details from the text (*plastic bags only make up 1.6 percent of all solid waste; many jobs may be potentially lost due to the bill*). However, the writer does not expand on the significance of these details in relation to the main ideas of Summers’s text. The response makes limited and haphazard use of textual evidence with little or no interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful reading comprehension.

Analysis—1: This response demonstrates little understanding of the analytical task. Although the writer identifies some argumentative elements in Summers’s text (*his use of fact/examples, reasoning to develop ideas, and persuasive word choice*), the writer does not explain how these elements build Summers’s argument. Instead, the writer only identifies these aspects of the text and names an example of each, with no further analysis (*He uses examples/facts, such as plastic bags only make up 1.6 percent of all solid waste*). There are two moments in which the writer attempts to analyze Summers’s use of word choice and reasoning (*His excellent word choice that appeals to your mind* and *He uses reasoning that makes sense to a reader*). There is not enough textual evidence given to support these claims, however. For example, the writer does not analyze Summers’s use of specific words and instead falls back into summary of the passage. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

Writing—1: This response demonstrates little cohesion and limited skill in the use of language. The response is only one brief paragraph and lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. Although there is a central claim, taken directly from the prompt (*Summers presents his argument well, and his use of fact/examples, reasoning to develop ideas,*

and persuasive word choice build his argument), there is no discernible progression of ideas in the response. Furthermore, sentence structures are repetitive. Due to the brief nature of the response, there is not enough evidence of writing ability to merit a score higher than 1. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate writing.

Student Sample 2—Scores: 3/1/2

Adam B. Summers brings up several good points as to why plastic shopping bags should not be banned. He explains how the EPA says all plastic bags only make up 1.6 percent of all waste, and plastic shopping bags only contribute 0.3 percent to all the waste. The bags hardly make up any waste and require less energy to make compared to paper or cotton bags. Plastic bags produce fewer greenhouse gasses, 80 percent less waste and less water to make them over paper or cotton reusable bags. Reusable bags also have a higher risk of giving a consumer food poisoning because of bacteria left in them and then the bags are used again.

Plastic bags are also called “single use” bags, but that is not true because people re-use them for garbage bags. By cutting of plastic shopping bags people would by more garbage bags wich are plastic so it would defeat the purpose. eliminating plastic bags would also cause the people who make them and dispose them lose their jobs too. Enviornmentalists can try to convince people paper is better than plastic but people should also look at it from the other perspective, and choose, “Paper or Plastic?”

Scoring Explanation Sample 2: This response scored a 3/1/2.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of Summers’s text. The writer provides appropriate textual evidence (in this case, paraphrases) to articulate both the central idea (*plastic shopping bags should not be banned*) and important details from the passage (*all plastic bags only make up 1.6 percent of all waste, and plastic shopping bags only contribute 0.3 percent to all the waste; Plastic bags produce fewer greenhouse gasses, 80 percent less waste and less water to make them over paper or cotton reusable bags*). The writer also demonstrates a proficient understanding of the entirety of Summers’s text by incorporating details from various points throughout Summers’s argument (*Plastic bags are also called “single use” bags, but that is not true because people re-use them for garbage bags; eliminating plastic bags would also cause the people who make them and dispose them lose their jobs too*). The response, which is essentially summary, is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—1: This response demonstrates no understanding of the analytic task, as it is exclusively summary and offers no discernible analysis of Summers’s text. The writer fails to identify aspects of evidence, reasoning, or stylistic and persuasive elements that Summers uses to build his argument and instead only provides a



REMEMBER

Your response on the Essay should not simply be a summary of the argument presented in the passage. A critical part of your task is to analyze how the author builds an argument using evidence, reasoning, and stylistic or persuasive elements.

general statement on the quality of the passage (*Adam B. Summers brings up several good points as to why plastic shopping bags should not be banned*). Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

Writing—2: This response demonstrates limited cohesion and writing skill. The response includes an ineffective introduction and conclusion based on the brief, general central claim that opens the response (*Adam B. Summers brings up several good points as to why plastic shopping bags should not be banned*) and the concluding sentence of the response (*Environmentalists can try to convince people paper is better than plastic but people should also look at it from the other perspective, and choose, “Paper or Plastic?”*). There is no real organization of ideas within paragraphs, and there are no transitions between the two paragraphs that indicate how the ideas in one relate to the other. Although there is some limited progression of ideas over the course of the response, there is little progression of ideas within paragraphs. There are numerous errors that detract from the quality of writing, and the response at times exhibits limited control of language and vague word choice (*By cutting of plastic shopping bags people would by more garbage bags which are plastic so it would defeat the purpose*). Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful writing.

Student Sample 3—Scores: 3/2/2

In Adam B Summers’ essay he gives valid reasons why plastic bags should not be banned. His essay is persuasive in many ways such as focusing on the effect on the earth and also job cutting. He also gives alternative ways to use a plastic bag. Summers gives examples on how banning plastic bags can lead to worse human damage.

Summers states that a plastic bag is easy to make without using much of anything. Knowing that making a plastic bag takes up to 70% less energy and can also help our earth because it produces less green house gases. Saying this part persuades the earth lovers and it persuades them to side with the no bag ban because it’s not as harmful as the reusable bags.

Reusable bags are more harmful than anyone could think and when Summers put in the facts that people die from food born illnesses it catches the doctors and people who care about the well being of others his essay persuades them to not only use the plastic bags but to use caution when using reusable bags because of the illnesses and deaths.

There are many ways to use a plastic bag not just for groceries and when Adam Summers states this it focuses on the renew and reusers where can use plastic bags in the home and daily life. Also being a cheaper alternative. Summers states that if the banning of plastic bags will cost the jobs of 2000 people which to the companies and workers this is a valid argument if they want to keep their jobs.

Summers provides multiple ways to persuade some one and any one with different beliefs. This build many persuasive arguments and cause and effects fact based conclusions.

Scoring Explanation Sample 3: This response scored a 3/2/2.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of Summers’s text. The writer accurately paraphrases the central idea (*plastic bags should not be banned*) and important details from the passage—for instance, the environmental impacts of plastic vs. reusable bags (*Knowing that making a plastic bag takes up to 70% less energy and can also help our earth because it produces less green house gases*) and the impact of the bag ban on jobs (*Summers states that if the banning of plastic bags will cost the jobs of 2000 people*). The writer summarizes all of the major points in Summers’s argument with no substantive errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—2: This response offers a limited analysis of Summers’s text, indicating only partial understanding of the analytical task. Although the writer attempts to explain how Summers’s use of evidence builds his argument, the writer only asserts the importance of this evidence and its effect on the audience. For example, the fact that plastic bags take 70 percent less energy to make *persuades the earth lovers . . . to side with the no bag ban because it’s not as harmful as the reusable bags*. The writer then asserts that this evidence helps build Summers’s argument but does not explain how or why. This pattern of assertion without explanation continues in the subsequent paragraph about the health consequences of reusable bags (*when Summers put in the facts that people die from food born illnesses it catches the doctors and people who care about the well being of others . . . [and] persuades them to not only use the plastic bags but to use cation when using reusable bags*) and in the paragraph about job cuts (*to the companies and workers this is a valid argument if they want to keep their jobs*). Overall, the response demonstrates partially successful analysis.

Writing—2: This response demonstrates limited cohesion and writing skill. The response does contain a central claim (*Summers gives valid reasons why plastic bags should not be banned*). It also contains an introduction and conclusion; however, they are mostly ineffective due to imprecise word choice (*Summers provides multiple ways to persuade some one and any one with different beliefs. This build many persuasive arguments and cause and effects fact based conclusions*). Although each body paragraph is loosely centered on one of three aspects of Summers’s argument (ecological, health, and unemployment consequences of the plastic bag ban), there is limited variety in sentence structures and vague word choice throughout the response (*Summers gives examples on how banning plastic bags can lead to worse human damage; when Adam Summers states this it focuses on the renew and reusers where can use plastic bags in the home and daily life. Also being a cheaper alternative*). Language and writing errors, such as syntactically awkward sentences, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, detract from the quality of writing and impede understanding. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful writing.

Student Sample 4—Scores: 3/3/3

The style and features an author use can help persuade the audience if clearly used. Adam B. Summers in the essay “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” uses factual evidence, word choice, and emotion to build his argument. In doing this, Summers successfully persuades his audience into believing “Paper or Plastic” is a personal right.

When using factual evidence, Summers further persuades his reader. Readers are often attracted to facts because they are hard evidence to proving a point. Summers touches upon how plastic bag waste makes up only 0.3 percent out of the 1.6 percent of all munciple solid waste products. By providing this fact Summers shows the low numbered statistics which persuade the reader. The reader sees the small numbers and is immediately taking the authors side. Another use of factual evidence is when Summers discusses Ireland’s problem since they’ve banned the use of plastic bags. By adding in the effects this had on another country, the audience realizes the same situation could happen in California, causing the reader to further his mind to Summer’s ideas.

The word choice Summers uses helps lure his readers into his argument. In the first paragraph, Summers uses words such as “dodged”, “narrowly”, and “down”. The usage of words makes the reader feel as if he is in the actual voting process of the bill, taking the rocky road in state government only to get voted down. From the start, Summers makes the audience feel involved which intrigues the reader further. In the second to last paragraph, Summers plays with the phrases “weather the storm” and “pony up” to represent the possibilities to come if a bill banning plastic bags is passed. By telling the reader to “get ready”, he puts a negative feeling to the future of the bill and persuades the reader into thinking that the future may not be something they like.

Summers also adds in personal emotion to make the reader feel connected to the author. He writes “I love sea turtles as much as the next guy” to show that he is human too and cares about nature. The claim would touch many readers who are in the same position as Summers; they love nature but think the banning of plastic bags is unreasonable. Summers connects to all readers in his audience when he further helps

[unfinished]

Student Sample 4: This response scored a 3/3/3.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text by exhibiting proficient understanding of both the central idea and important details in Summers’s text. The writer accurately paraphrases the central idea of the passage (*Summers successfully persuades his audience into believing “Paper or Plastic” is a personal right*). The writer also both paraphrases and directly quotes important details from the text (*Summers plays with the phrases “weather the storm” and “pony up” to represent the possibilities to come if a bill banning plastic bags is passed; Summers touches upon how plastic bag waste makes up only 0.3 percent out of the 1.6 percent of all munciple solid waste products*). Although the response is incomplete,

as it ends midsentence, there are enough details provided from the text to indicate that the writer adequately understands the entirety of Summers’s argument. The response is also free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response offers an effective analysis of Summers’s argument and demonstrates proficient understanding of the analytical task. The writer identifies three persuasive elements—*factual evidence, word choice, and emotion*—and competently evaluates how these aspects of Summers’s text contribute to building his argument. Moreover, the writer explains, with sufficient support, what effects these persuasive elements have on Summers’s audience. One example of this type of analysis occurs in the paragraph that analyzes Summers’s use of factual evidence, particularly *Ireland’s problem since they’ve banned the use of plastic bags. By adding in the effects this had on another country, the audience realizes the same situation could happen in California, causing the reader to further his mind to Summer’s ideas.* Effective analysis continues in the paragraph that analyzes Summers’s word choice (*By telling the reader to “get ready”, he puts a negative feeling to the future of the bill and persuades the reader into thinking that the future may not be something they like*). Although these moments of analysis are effective, the response lacks the thoroughness and insight seen in responses scoring higher. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—3: The response is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language. The introduction is brief but effectively provides a clear central claim (*Adam B. Summers in the essay “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” uses factual evidence, word choice, and emotion to build his argument*). The rest of the response is organized according to this three-pronged structure, with each body paragraph remaining on topic. A clear progression of ideas is demonstrated both within paragraphs and throughout the response. The writer integrates quotations and examples from the source text to connect ideas and paragraphs logically. There is a variety of sentence structures (*He writes “I love sea turtles as much as the next guy” to show that he is human too and cares about nature. The claim would touch many readers who are in the same position as Summers; they love nature but think the banning of plastic bags is unreasonable*). There also are some examples of precise word choice (*helps lure his readers into his argument; taking the rocky road in state government only to get voted down; makes the audience feel involved which intrigues the reader further*). Although the response has no conclusion, this does not preclude the response from demonstrating proficient writing overall.

Student Sample 5—Scores: 3/3/4

In the wake of environmental concerns in the United States, a bill in California which would ban plastic bags for groceries failed to make it through the state Senate by a small margin. In his article “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” (2013), Adam Summers asserts that the plastic bag ban would be harmful for consumers and the environment. He conveys this through citing statistics, appealing to the audience’s emotions and sense of self-interests, and utilizing sarcastic diction. The intended audience for this article is primarily readers who support the proposed bag ban and intend to help it pass.

The author’s statistics cited throughout the article reinforce his argument and provide a solid base. In the fourth paragraph he mentions the most common plastic grocery bags, which “make up just 0.3 percent of solid municipal waste materials. The author also cites the “77 percent increase in the sale of plastic trash can liner bags” as a result of a similar ban in Ireland. These statistics appeal to the reader’s logic and ensure that they can follow a logical path to support the author and oppose the ban. The statistics provide solid evidence that are enhanced by the numbers and cannot be easily argued against.

The author’s patriotic asides in the first and final paragraphs appeal to the audience’s emotions and self-interests. In the first paragraph, the author talks of the rights the government has impeded and talks of a regulation of “what kind of container we can use to carry our groceries.” In the final paragraph, the author talks of the fundamental rights to decide “paper or plastic.” This causes the readers to feel violated by the government and want to look out for his rights. When the regulations start to harm the individuals themselves, then they are more likely to take measures to oppose the bill.

The author’s sarcastic tone throughout the article conveys the conception that those people supporting this bill are misinformed and incorrect. In the sixth paragraph, the author says “The claims that plastic bags are worse for the environment than paper bags or cotton reusable bags are dubious at best.” He also leads the reader to infer that supporters of the bill believe plastic bags are “evil incarnate” and “use government force to compel people to live the way they think best.” In the first paragraph, the author talks of how “Californians dodged yet another nanny-state regulation.” This sarcastic tone causes the audience to lose faith in these Environmentalists. It also causes the reader to question the motives of the bill and its supporters.

Through citing statistics, appealing to self interest and emotions, and utilizing sarcastic diction, Adam Summers conveys his beliefs that California should not pass a law banning plastic grocery bags.

Scoring Explanation Sample 5: This response scored a 3/3/4.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text, with the writer showing an understanding of both the central idea (*the plastic bag ban would be harmful for consumers and the environment*) and important details of the passage (*the most common plastic grocery bags, which “make up just 0.3 percent” of solid municipal waste; government . . . regulation of “what kind of container we can use to carry our groceries”*). Throughout the response, the writer conveys an understanding of the text with appropriate use of both quotations and paraphrases. There are also no errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task by offering an effective analysis of the source text. The writer centers the analysis on how Summers conveys his argument through *citing statistics, appealing to the audience’s emotions and sense of self-interest, and utilizing sarcastic diction*. In each of these areas, the writer competently discusses the effect of Summers’s argumentative strategies. For example, in the first body paragraph, the writer cites some of the statistical evidence in the source text and points out that *these statistics appeal to the reader’s logic and ensure that they can follow a logical path to support the author and oppose the ban*. Further, the writer states that the statistics *cannot be easily argued against*. The analysis continues in the second body paragraph, in which the writer evaluates Summers’s *patriotic asides* and the fact that they cause the reader to *feel violated by the government and want to look out for his rights*. The response is consistently focused on analyzing the effect of various argumentative strategies on the audience, and the writer chooses relevant support for the analysis. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—4: This response demonstrates a highly effective use of language in this cohesive essay. The body paragraphs closely follow the central claim (*Adam Summers asserts that the plastic bag ban would be harmful . . . through citing statistics, appealing to the audience’s emotions and sense of self-interests, and utilizing sarcastic diction*) presented in the introduction. There are some slight organizational mistakes that lead to a somewhat clumsy progression of ideas. For example, the last sentence of the introductory paragraph, although informative, does not enhance the introduction in any way or provide a smooth segue into the following paragraphs. However, these organizational mistakes are balanced by a consistent variety of sentence structures and precise word choice (*wake of environmental concerns, take measures to oppose the bill*) and language errors do not impede understanding. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced writing.

Student Sample 6—Scores: 4/4/4

In Adam B. Summers' "Bag ban bad for freedom and environment" editorial for the San Diego Union-Tribune, he argues against the possible laws hindering Californians from using plastic bags at grocery stores. He believes they would do more harm than good, and that "a little reason and perspective is in order." By the end of this piece the reader will likely find themselves nodding in agreement with what Summers has to say, and this isn't just because he's right. Summers, like any good writer, employs tactical reasoning and persuasive devices to plead with the audience to take his side. In this article, he demonstrates many such devices.

"Plastic bags . . . make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials," Summers ventures, his first utilization of a cold, hard fact. The truth in the numbers is undeniable, and he cites his sources promptly, making the statement that much more authentic. Knowledge is often viewed as power, and with information as direct as a statistic, Summers is handing that power to the reader – the power to agree with him. Not only does Summers spread the facts with numbers, he also does so with trends. He talks about the price increase in Ireland, and the documented health hazards of reusable bags. He uses the truth, backed by reliable sources, to infiltrate the readers' independent mind. His thoroughness in this regard carefully builds his argument against this piece of legislation, and this is just one of the many ways he spreads his opposition.

Additionally, Summers appeals to the ethnical and emotional side of individuals. With key phrases like "taxpayers will have to pony up" and "borne by consumers," Summers activates the nature of a human to act in their own self-interest. While one might view this as selfish, Summers reassures the reader that they are not alone in feeling this way, further contributing to his argument. With his statement that he "love[s] sea turtles as much as the next guy," Summers adds acceptance to those who don't care to act with regard for the environment. By putting himself beside the reader as a typical consumer, he equals them, and makes himself more likeable in the process. Appealing to environmentalists, too, Summers qualifies that they "have every right to try to convince people to adopt certain beliefs or lifestyles, but they do not have the right to use government force . . ." A statement such as this is an attempt to get readers of either persuasion on his side, and his ingenious qualification only adds to the strength of his argument.

An article focusing on the choice between "paper or plastic," and how that choice might be taken away certainly seems fairly standard, but by adjusting his diction (i.e. using well known phrases, selecting words with strong connotations), Summers creates something out of the ordinary. It is with word choice such as "recycled rather than trashed" that the author reveals the legislations intent to stir up a repeat bill. Because the issue at hand is one of waste and environmental protection, his humorous diction provides a link between he and the audience, revealing not only an opportunity to laugh, but also reinforcement of the concept that Summers is trustworthy and just like everyone else. Negative words with specifically poor connotations also aid

Summers in his persuasive struggle. “Reprieve,” “dubious,” “bureaucracy,” and “evil incarnate” all depict a disparaging tone of annoyance and anger, surely helping Summers to spread his message.

It is through many rhetorical devices that Summers sells his argument.

Powerful diction, qualification, ethos, pathos, logos, and informative facts all contribute to an exceptionally well-written argument. It is his utilization of these practices and more that make this article worthy of recognition. Once one reads the piece, they’ll be nodding along in accordance with Summers, and it isn’t for no reason.

Scoring Explanation Sample 6: This response scored a 4/4/4.

Reading—4: This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text. The writer provides a brief summary of Summers’s main point in the introductory paragraph (*he argues against the possible laws hindering Californians from using plastic bags at grocery stores*) and throughout the response uses a mixture of direct quotations and paraphrases to show an understanding of the central idea and important details from the source text interrelate (*He talks about the price increase in Ireland, and the documented health hazards of reusable bags; the legislations intent to stir up a repeat bill*). Further, the writer demonstrates an understanding of how the central idea and important details interrelate by consistently relating details to the main argument of the source text. The response is free from errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

Analysis—4: This response demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task by offering an insightful analysis of Summers’s employment of *tactical reasoning and persuasive devices to plead with the audience to take his side*. The writer puts forth a thorough evaluation of Summers’s use of evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements by continually analyzing even the smallest features of Summers’s piece. For example, when citing a fact that Summers provides (*“Plastic bags . . . make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials”*), the writer focuses on *the truth in the numbers* as well as Summers’s deliberate choice to share the fact’s source and the effect doing so has on Summers’s argument. The writer continues the analysis by broadening the focus to a brief but sophisticated discussion of knowledge as power and the persuasive approach of *handing that power to the reader*. This type of well-considered evaluation continues throughout the response, during which the writer touches on Summers’s *appeals to the ethical and emotional side of individuals* and Summers’s use of diction to create *something out of the ordinary*. The response is focused on relevant and strategically chosen features of the source text in support of the writer’s analysis. Overall, this essay demonstrates advanced analysis.

Writing—4: This response demonstrates highly effective command of language and cohesion. The response is organized around the writer’s claim that readers *will likely find themselves nodding in agreement with what Summers has to say, and this isn’t just because he’s right* but also because of his use of *tactical reasoning and persuasive devices*. The response is highly organized and demonstrates a deliberate progression of ideas, with the writer seamlessly transitioning from point to point. Sentence structures are varied and often sophisticated (*While one might view this as selfish, Summers reassures the reader that they are not alone in feeling this way, further contributing to his argument*). Word choice is precise without tonal missteps (*tactical reasoning; his ingenious qualification only adds to the strength of his argument; disparaging tone of annoyance and anger*). The response shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is virtually free of errors. Minor conventions errors (*Summers adds acceptance to those who don’t care to act; and it isn’t for no reason*) do not detract from the quality of the writing. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced writing ability.

Student Sample 7—Scores: 4/4/4

“Paper or plastic?” This is often a question we are asked at our weekly and/or bi-weekly trip to the supermarket to purchase groceries to keep our family fed. Adam B. Summers has created a highly plausible argument that may change your answer next time you go grocery shopping. He has developed valid claims that are backed up with crucial evidence and has been able to properly persuade the reader by appealing to logos and other rhetorical strategies.

Summers uses his words and research to reason with the reader and explain to them why plastic bags really are the correct choice. A vast majority of people are misled about all of the waste that plastic bags cause when Summers writes, “. . . plastic bags, sacks, and wraps of all kinds (not just grocery bags) make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials.” This number is definitely lower than we all assume, going into this passage, and we are left surprised. Using reusable bags is a solution that others have come up with to attempt to create less waste, however Summers delivers an appealing argument. “. . . plastic bag bans lead to increased health problems due to food contamination from bacteria that remain in the reusable bags.” This excerpt creates another claim that leaves the reader wondering if reusable bags are really worth it. These past two claims are connected well because they both draw the reader back to the idea of using plastic bags. Another claim by Summers, “. . . one unintended consequence of the plastic bag would likely be an increase in plastic bag purchases for these other purposes.” These “other purposes” can be for lining trash bins, picking up after your dog on a walk, collecting kitty litter, and many more things we use plastic bags for. When the author brings in all of these additional uses of the plastic bag, we see the significance of the plastic bag and how much money we save by reusing them. A final claim by Summers, “The plastic bag ban would threaten the roughly 2,000 California jobs in the plastic bag manufacturing and recycling industry . . .”



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Your response doesn’t have to be an exhaustive analysis of the passage. Focusing your essay on a few key features, with ample textual evidence and analysis, can yield high scores.

Now the reader almost feels guilty because they do not want to take away jobs of others and the fact that some people even depend on shoppers using plastic bags. These two final claims are well connected because the author stressed the economic benefits of using plastic bags. Not only are these bags saving you money, but they also are keeping some people in work. These four ideas are successfully connected and convince the reader to use plastic bags over paper bags and other types of reusable bags.

Evidence is a key component of this passage and Summers is sure to include this when presenting us with key facts. He references important agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and includes a professor from the University of Pennsylvania, Jonathan Klick and a professor from George Mason University, Joshua D. Wright. The inclusion of this agency and these professors make the work of Summers credible and believable because us readers are confident of what we are being told is correct and true. Evidence he also uses are facts such as, “. . . plastic grocery bags produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, require 70 percent less energy to make, generate 80 percent less waste.” These facts back up Summers’ claims that plastic bags are the better choice. Without evidence, his passage would not mean a thing to us readers and we would never be able to believe what he has said.

Persuasive elements are what make this passage successful. Summers has excellent ideas and credible evidence, but his use of persuasion are what capture the reader. He appeals to logos when stating all of his claims about how using plastic bags can save you money and keep you from getting sick, but he also appeals to pathos because this passage described how plastic bags amount to less waste than most of us think and he wants to help us make the Earth a better place to live. Throwing examples at us, “. . . San Francisco’s plastic bag ban in 2007 resulted in a subsequent spike in hospital emergency room visits due to E. Coli, salmonella, . . .” persuade the reader as well. With rhetorical strategies and direct examples, Summers is clearly able to persuade the reader to choose plastic next time.

So what will you choose next time you’re shopping for groceries with your family? Summers has made the choice obvious with his persuasive and effective passage. He has been able to develop several ideas and backed them up with evidence that us readers can trust. After reading this passage, there seems to be no other choice than plastic.

Scoring Explanation Sample 7: This response scored a 4/4/4.

Reading—4: This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text. The writer shows an understanding of Summers’s *highly plausible argument* and the important specifics that add detail to one of Summers’s central claims: that *plastic bags really are the correct choice*. The writer accurately paraphrases ideas from Summers’s text throughout the essay (*These “other purposes” can be for lining trash bins, picking up after your dog on a walk, collecting kitty litter, and many more things we use plastic bags for*), and the writer skillfully incorporates direct quotations within the response (*people are misled about all of the waste that plastic bags cause when Summers writes,*

“. . . plastic bags, sacks and wraps of all kinds”). The writer also understands how the details in Summers’s text interrelate to convey the main point of the piece (*valid claims that are backed up with crucial evidence; Summers uses his words and research to reason with the reader; These past two claims are connected well because they both draw the reader back to the idea; Summers has . . . credible evince, but his use of persuasion are what capture the reader*). The response is free from errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

Analysis—4: This response demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task by offering an insightful analysis of the source text. Rather than relying on assertions as analysis, the writer thoroughly evaluates how Summers uses *words and research to reason with the reader, how evidence is a key component, and how persuasive elements . . . make this passage successful*. The writer is able to fully discuss each of these aspects of Summers’s piece, using relevant examples from the source text as support for the writer’s analysis. For example, the writer uses Summers’s claim that “*The plastic bag ban would threaten the roughly 2,000 California jobs in the plastic bag manufacturing and recycling industry*” to discuss the guilt the writer perceives the reader feels in reaction to this claim. The writer also explains how Summers uses this claim in conjunction with discussion of alternate uses for plastic bags to stress *the economic benefits of using plastic bags*. The writer consistently focuses on the features of Summers’s text that are most relevant and offers well-considered evaluations throughout the response. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced analysis.

Writing—4: This response demonstrates highly effective command of language and cohesion. Beginning with the skillful introduction, the writer constructs a response that demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas, starting with an examination of Summers’s claims and evidence and ending with emphasis on the use of persuasive elements. This skillful control over organization occurs at the body paragraph level as well, as the writer connects pieces of evidence from different parts of the source text within each paragraph. The writer’s word choice is precise (*a highly plausible argument, a key component, the inclusion of this agency*), and sentence structures are varied and sophisticated. This response demonstrates a strong command of written English and is virtually free of errors. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced writing.

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