

Question 3

Suggested time—40 minutes

(This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In a 2013 *New York Times* article on the practice of taking selfies, writer, editor, and podcast host J Wortham wrote: “Rather than dismissing the trend as a side effect of digital culture or a sad form of exhibitionism,¹ maybe we’re better off seeing selfies for what they are at their best—a kind of visual diary, a way to mark our short existence and hold it up to others as proof that we were here.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Wortham’s claim about the value of documenting one’s life with selfies is valid.

¹ behavior that is meant to attract attention to oneself

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

Argument Essay

6 points

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Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 	Responses that earn this point: Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Wortham’s claim about the value of documenting one’s life with selfies is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Do not take a position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In a New York Times article, J Wortham defends the practice of taking selfies.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Taking and posting selfies online is one of the most widespread phenomena of digital culture, but many people see this practice as a form of exhibitionism.”</i> 	Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“I agree that taking selfies does not necessarily mean that a person is merely seeking attention; selfies are a form of self-expression and communication.”</i> <i>“Wortham’s claim is partly true. While a quick look at any social media proves that many post selfies merely to show themselves off, such pictures can also help us capture and share memorable experiences.”</i> <i>“Wortham’s claim is valid; the person who takes a selfie in the twenty-first century is no more exhibitionist than the artist who painted a self-portrait in the nineteenth century.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis <i>may</i> be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis <i>may</i> be anywhere within the response. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no evidence or evidence that is irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary of evidence rather than specific details. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (<i>“In a world where...” OR “Since the beginning of time...”</i>). Only hint at or suggest other arguments (<i>“While some may argue that...” OR “Some people say...”</i>). Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument. 	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions. Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or an argument related to the prompt) by situating it within a broader context. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 	