

**Question 2****Suggested time—40 minutes**

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

Michelle Obama was the First Lady of the United States during the presidential administration of her husband, Barack Obama (2009–2017). During that administration, she led programs including the Reach Higher Initiative, which encourages students to continue their education after high school. One way it does so is by supporting high school counselors' efforts to get students into college. On January 6, 2017, Obama gave her final speech as First Lady at an event honoring outstanding school counselors. The following passage is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Obama makes to convey her message about her expectations and hope for young people in the United States.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

*[A]s I end my time in the White House, I can think of no better message to send our young people in my last official remarks as First Lady. So, for all the Line young people in this room and those who are 5 watching, know that this country belongs to you—to all of you, from every background and walk of life. If you or your parents are immigrants, know that you are part of a proud American tradition—the infusion of new cultures, talents and ideas, generation after 10 generation, that has made us the greatest country on earth.*

*If your family doesn't have much money, I want you to remember that in this country, plenty of folks, including me and my husband—we started out with 15 very little. But with a lot of hard work and a good education, anything is possible—even becoming President. That's what the American Dream is all about.*

*If you are a person of faith, know that religious 20 diversity is a great American tradition, too. In fact, that's why people first came to this country—to worship freely. And whether you are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh—these religions are teaching our young people about justice, and 25 compassion, and honesty. So I want our young people to continue to learn and practice those values with pride. You see, our glorious diversity—our diversities*

of faiths and colors and creeds—that is not a threat to who we are, it makes us who we are. So the young 30 people here and the young people out there: Do not ever let anyone make you feel like you don't matter, or like you don't have a place in our American story—because you do. And you have a right to be exactly who you are.

*But I also want to be very clear: This right isn't just handed to you. No, this right has to be earned every single day. You cannot take your freedoms for granted. Just like generations who have come before you, you have to do your part to preserve and protect 40 those freedoms. And that starts right now, when you're young.*

*Right now, you need to be preparing yourself to add your voice to our national conversation. You need to prepare yourself to be informed and engaged as a 45 citizen, to serve and to lead, to stand up for our proud American values and to honor them in your daily lives. And that means getting the best education possible so you can think critically, so you can express yourself clearly, so you can get a good job 50 and support yourself and your family, so you can be a positive force in your communities.*

*And when you encounter obstacles—because I guarantee you, you will, and many of you already have—when you are struggling and you start thinking*

55 about giving up, I want you to remember something  
that my husband and I have talked about since we first  
started this journey nearly a decade ago, something  
that has carried us through every moment in this  
White House and every moment of our lives, and that  
60 is the power of hope—the belief that something better  
is always possible if you’re willing to work for it and  
fight for it.

It is our fundamental belief in the power of hope  
that has allowed us to rise above the voices of doubt  
65 and division, of anger and fear that we have faced in  
our own lives and in the life of this country. Our hope  
that if we work hard enough and believe in ourselves,  
then we can be whatever we dream, regardless of the  
limitations that others may place on us. The hope that  
70 when people see us for who we truly are, maybe, just  
maybe they, too, will be inspired to rise to their best  
possible selves.

That is the hope of students like Kyra<sup>1</sup> who fight to

discover their gifts and share them with the world. It’s  
75 the hope of school counselors like Terri<sup>2</sup> and all these  
folks up here who guide those students every step of  
the way, refusing to give up on even a single young  
person. Shoot, it’s the hope of my—folks like my dad  
80 who got up every day to do his job at the city water  
plant; the hope that one day, his kids would go to  
college and have opportunities he never dreamed of.

That’s the kind of hope that every single one of  
us—politicians, parents, preachers—all of us need to  
be providing for our young people. Because that is  
85 what moves this country forward every single  
day—our hope for the future and the hard work that  
hope inspires.

<sup>1</sup> a student who worked with school counselor Terri Tchorzynski

<sup>2</sup> Terri Tchorzynski, the 2017 National School Counselor of the Year and honoree of the event

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**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.**

**Question 3**

**Suggested time—40 minutes**

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

In a 2016 interview published in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Maxine Hong Kingston, an award-winning writer famous for her novels depicting the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the United States, stated: “I think that individual voices are not as strong as a community of voices. If we can make a community of voices, then we can speak more truth.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Kingston’s claim about the importance of creating a community of voices is valid.

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.

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**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.**

## Rhetorical Analysis

6 points

Michelle Obama was the First Lady of the United States during the presidential administration of her husband, Barack Obama (2009–2017). During that administration, she led programs including the Reach Higher Initiative, which encourages students to continue their education after high school. One way it does so is by supporting high school counselors' efforts to get students into college. On January 6, 2017, Obama gave her final speech as First Lady at an event honoring outstanding school counselors. The following passage is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Obama makes to convey her message about her expectations and hope for young people in the United States.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row A Thesis (0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<b>1 point</b> Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>• Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes.</li> <li>• Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense.</li> </ul>		<b>Responses that earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt <b>and</b> clearly articulate a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices Obama makes to convey her message about her expectations and hope for young people in the United States.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <p><b>Restate the prompt</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>In 2017, then First Lady Michelle Obama delivered her final speech as First Lady at an event honoring school counselors.</i>”</li> </ul> <p><b>Make a claim, but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>In her 2017 speech to school counselors, Michelle Obama set high expectations for her audience, the young people of America.</i>”</li> </ul> <p><b>Repeat provided information from the passage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>Michelle Obama claims in her speech that ‘our glorious diversity’ is what ‘makes us who we are.’</i>”</li> </ul>		<b>Examples that earn this point:</b> <p><b>Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<i>Michelle Obama uses a friendly tone, inspirational diction, and examples from her own family to convey her message about her expectations and hope for young people in America.</i>”</li> <li>• “<i>In her last speech as First Lady, Michelle Obama adopts the persona of a mentor or parental figure, using second person pronouns and giving direct advice, to inspire her audience of young people to ‘rise to their best possible selves.’</i>”</li> <li>• “<i>In her inspirational 2017 speech, First Lady Michelle Obama provides multiple examples of her own family to exhort the young people in her audience with a call to action to take their place as positive and productive members of American society.</i>”</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>• For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

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

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	<b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b> Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempt to contextualize the text, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where . . .</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time . . .</i>”).</li> <li>Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”).</li> <li>Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text.</li> <li>Oversimplify complexities in the text.</li> <li>Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance their analysis.</li> </ul>		<b>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:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation).</li> <li>Explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions.</li> <li>Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</li> </ul>		

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