

Question 2

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

On April 10, 1962, as the United States was emerging from a recession, the nation's largest steel companies raised steel prices by 3.5 percent. President John F. Kennedy, who had repeatedly called for stable prices and wages as part of a program of national sacrifice during a period of economic distress, held a news conference on April 11, 1962, which he opened with the following commentary regarding the hike in steel prices. Read Kennedy's remarks carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

Line Simultaneous and identical actions of United
States Steel and other leading steel corporations,
increasing steel prices by some 6 dollars a ton,
5 constitute a wholly unjustifiable and irresponsible
defiance of the public interest.

In this serious hour in our nation's history, when
we are confronted with grave crises in Berlin and
Southeast Asia, when we are devoting our energies
to economic recovery and stability, when we are
10 asking Reservists to leave their homes and families
for months on end, and servicemen to risk their
lives—and four were killed in the last two days in
Viet Nam—and asking union members to hold
down their wage requests, at a time when restraint
15 and sacrifice are being asked of every citizen, the
American people will find it hard, as I do, to accept a
situation in which a tiny handful of steel executives
whose pursuit of private power and profit exceeds
their sense of public responsibility can show such
20 utter contempt for the interests of 185 million
Americans.

If this rise in the cost of steel is imitated by the
rest of the industry, instead of rescinded, it would
increase the cost of homes, autos, appliances, and
25 most other items for every American family. It
would increase the cost of machinery and tools to
every American businessman and farmer. It would
seriously handicap our efforts to prevent an
inflationary spiral from eating up the pensions of our
30 older citizens, and our new gains in purchasing
power.

It would add, Secretary McNamara* informed me
this morning, an estimated one billion dollars to the
cost of our defenses, at a time when every dollar is
35 needed for national security and other purposes. It
would make it more difficult for American goods to
compete in foreign markets, more difficult to
withstand competition from foreign imports, and
thus more difficult to improve our balance of
40 payments position, and stem the flow of gold.

And it is necessary to stem it for our national
security, if we are going to pay for our security
commitments abroad. And it would surely handicap
our efforts to induce other industries and unions to
45 adopt responsible price and wage policies.

The facts of the matter are that there is no
justification for an increase in the steel prices. The
recent settlement between the industry and the union,
which does not even take place until July 1st, was
50 widely acknowledged to be non-inflationary, and the
whole purpose and effect of this Administration's
role, which both parties understood, was to achieve
an agreement which would make unnecessary any
increase in prices.

55 Steel output per man is rising so fast that labor
costs per ton of steel can actually be expected to
decline in the next twelve months. And in fact, the
Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor
Statistics informed me this morning that, and I quote:
60 "Employment costs per unit of steel output in 1961
were essentially the same as they were in 1958."

The cost of the major raw materials, steel scrap
and coal, has also been declining, and for an industry
which has been generally operating at less than two-
65 thirds of capacity, its profit rate has been normal and
can be expected to rise sharply this year in view of
the reduction in idle capacity. Their lot has been
easier than that of a hundred thousand steel workers
thrown out of work in the last three years. The
70 industry's cash dividends have exceeded 600 million
dollars in each of the last five years, and earnings in
the first quarter of this year were estimated in the
February 28th Wall Street Journal to be among the
highest in history.

75 In short, at a time when they could be exploring
how more efficiency and better prices could be
obtained, reducing prices in this industry in
recognition of lower costs, their unusually good
labor contract, their foreign competition and their
80 increase in production and profits which are coming

this year, a few gigantic corporations have decided to increase prices in ruthless disregard of their public responsibilities.

85 The Steel Workers Union can be proud that it abided by its responsibilities in this agreement, and this government also has responsibilities, which we intend to meet.

90 The Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission are examining the significance of this action in a free, competitive economy.

95 The Department of Defense and other agencies are reviewing its impact on their policies of procurement, and I am informed that steps are underway by those Members of the Congress who plan appropriate inquiries into how these price

decisions are so quickly made, and reached, and what legislative safeguards may be needed to protect the public interest.

100 Price and wage decisions in this country, except for very limited restrictions in the case of monopolies and national emergency strikes, are and ought to be freely and privately made, but the American people have a right to expect in return for that freedom, a higher sense of business responsibility for the welfare of their country than has been shown in the last two days.

110 Some time ago I asked each American to consider what he would do for his country and I asked the steel companies. In the last 24 hours we had their answer.

* Robert S. McNamara, secretary of defense from 1961 to 1968

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Question 2

The score should reflect a judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 40 minutes to read and write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

- 9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for a score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in their development, or impressive in their control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** analyze* the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and convincing, referring to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

- 7** Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for a score of 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style.

6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** analyze the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and sufficient, referring to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 analyze the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. The evidence or explanations used may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** analyze the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. These essays may misunderstand the passage, misrepresent the strategies Kennedy uses, or may analyze these strategies insufficiently. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or less convincing. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be less consistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

* For the purposes of scoring, *analysis* refers to identifying features of a text and explaining how the author uses these to develop meaning or to achieve a particular effect or purpose.

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Question 2 (continued)

- 3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in analyzing the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the passage or Kennedy's strategies, or the explanations or examples may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in analyzing the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose. These essays may misunderstand the prompt, misread the passage, fail to analyze the strategies Kennedy uses, or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control.

- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, or weak in their control of language.
- 0** Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.
- Indicates an entirely blank response.

Sample 2A

Throughout his speech in which he condemned companies for raising steel prices, Kennedy repeatedly appeals to a sense of communal sacrifice and collective responsibility in order to rally his everyman audience around this ostensible cause for outrage. From the beginning, Kennedy, a millionaire Harvard graduate, includes himself in the aggrieved camp of everyday Americans by using the first person "we." The list of sacrifices being made by the "185 million Americans" are thus shared by him as well. He is on their side, united with them. Yet in the very same breath in which he lumps himself in with the rest of the country, he takes another privileged group - the "tiny handful of steel executives" - and sets them apart, separate. Such an us-vs.-them distinction is a critical justification for the contempt and righteous indignation that Kennedy heaps on the steel companies.

But his appeal does not rest solely on class warfare, because if he played up the class conflict for too long, he would lose the faith of his hardworking and self-sacrificing audience. So he switches to real, tangible patriotism - after all, there's a war on. And so the pitch is not limited to union workers but also extends to "Reservists, servicemen, and every American businessman and farmer." These professions connote a fighting spirit, rugged individual ingenuity, and self-reliance; one hundred percent Americanism. Kennedy is far from being in bed with the unions - he is careful to note (albeit without elaborating) that the steel companies enjoy an "unusually good labor contract," implying that right and reason suggest the steel companies have every opportunity to succeed. But his litany of economic statistics lends further credibility to his condemnation of the Steel companies, precluding the possibility of the companies replying, "it was necessary for business."

Further evidence of Kennedy's rhetorical caution can be found in his disclaimer that "Price and wage decisions are and ought to be freely and privately made." Because in 1962 it would have been unprecedented for a president to coerce a private company into taking a specific economic action. But again, Kennedy invokes the uncontroversially virtuous idea of a "higher responsibility" so as not to undermine his message. And his final closing lines cleverly put the ball in his opponent's court. Kennedy does not directly go on the warpath or appear to be aggressive, yet manages to appear strong and principled without giving the steel companies any ammunition to respond to the actual substance of his speech.

Sample 2B

After the price increase of steel in 1962, John F. Kennedy had a very powerful response. In his speech made on April 11, 1962, Kennedy is extremely effective in his use of rhetorical strategies to convey his message. Kennedy employs a disapproving tone and strong diction in order to clearly achieve his goal of making the steel companies reverse the increase.

Kennedy's tone parallels that of a father. For example, if the eldest brother, big and strong, beat up the youngest brother for no reason at all, the father would use a tone similar to Kennedy's. The father would emphasize the innocence of the younger brother, representing the American people, and how he could not defend himself. The American people couldn't handle the increase because of the recession. However, Kennedy, by using this tone, wants to make the steel companies feel guilty about what they have done to the pure, innocent younger brother. To conclude his speech, Kennedy says, "Some time ago I asked each American to consider what he would do for his country and, I asked the steel companies. In the last 24 hours we had their answer." The tone of these two sentences is so powerful. It isn't angry - but it is so disapproving. Kennedy conveys his disappointment in the steel companies, which, as any child knows, is much worse than anger. It leads to feelings of guilt, which was Kennedy's intention.

Kennedy's well-chosen diction also contributes to the effectiveness of his speech. The diction also helps create the disapproving tone. In the introduction, Kennedy states, "...the American people will find it hard, as I do, to accept a situation in which a tiny handful of steel executives whose pursuit of private power and profit exceeds their sense of public responsibility can show such utter contempt for the interests of 185 million Americans." This quote is packed with exceptional word choice, such as "utter contempt" and "tiny handful." He singles out the executives alone, making it seem as if they do not care about anything but themselves. Also, he makes sure to compare this "tiny handful" with "185 million Americans." Not only does this make the executives seem insignificant, but it pits a small group against a national army.

Kennedy's use of tone and diction makes his speech extremely effective in subtly urging the steel companies to lower prices.

Sample 2C

President John F. Kennedy was a highly skilled speaker and writer. He was able to take complex situations and make them understandable to all of America, offering the opportunity for citizens to truly grasp what was happening in their country. JFK did not sugarcoat issues, yet he presented them in a way that was accessible to the citizens of America, motivating them to be involved and make a difference in their world.

President JFK's tone displayed both his sympathy for his nation and encouragement that hard times would start to get better. JFK used many examples to enhance his diction. His word choice showed a deep knowledge of the subject matter he was speaking about.

John F. Kennedy instilled the idea of making a difference in his nation by allowing them to think they had responsibilities to their country. He asked them what they could do to help the economy. He reminded them not to forget about the men and women fighting in combat while others were fighting for money at home.

President John F. Kennedy employed many other rhetorical strategies in his passages. He used listing to help further prove his point; he used quotations from people in the steel companies and provided detailed information. In a way, President JFK also used a technique in his speech called repetition. Repetition was not directly present in his speech but was more indirect. In the president's inaugural address, he said the very famous quote, "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Similarly, in his speech regarding the increased steel prices, he asked that same question in a different way. He asked the American people to reflect on that statement and then he told them about how he asked the steel companies the same question. This approach was enough to rally everyone and ready them to fight alongside him.

JFK was very astute when it came to strategic oratory. With his tone and diction, he was able to make everyone agree with him and unite them in fighting for the same cause.

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Question 2

Overview

This question asked students to analyze the rhetoric of a speech given by John F. Kennedy at a 1962 news conference in which Kennedy lambasted the steel industry for its increase in prices. The prompt asked students to “analyze the rhetorical strategies President Kennedy uses to achieve his purpose.” Exam readers looked for analyses that accomplished four tasks: (1) reading for comprehension of Kennedy’s rhetorical purpose; (2) identifying features of the text that illustrated elements of rhetorical strategies; (3) explaining these strategies in the context of the speech; and (4) explaining the logic by which the selected strategies work (or fail to work) to advance Kennedy’s rhetorical purpose.

Sample: 2A

Score: 9

This more than effective essay is especially sophisticated in its argument, thorough in its development, and impressive in its control of language. The student demonstrates how President Kennedy, “millionaire Harvard graduate,” both distances himself from the privileged class of steel executives with whom one might expect him to share a class identification and situates himself among the “aggrieved camp of everyday Americans” in his audience by invoking the dichotomous logic of us versus them. However, lest Kennedy raise the specter of class warfare — an issue of special concern, as he might seem to be intervening in the market and violating its ideology of free enterprise — he must establish another rationale for reinforcing his identification with that audience; hence, the appeal to patriotism anchored in his salute to American types (farmers, reservists, servicemen) and his invocation of a higher authority. This essay is especially astute in its superb analysis of the way that Kennedy’s identifications are carefully crafted and is remarkable in how it minutely traces the emergence of a strategy, rather than focusing superficially on the deployment of isolated rhetorical devices.

Sample: 2B

Score: 5

This essay advances uneven evidence and explanations in supporting its analysis of Kennedy’s rhetorical strategies. The first example uses a family metaphor (father, elder son, and younger son) in order to identify the triangulation of Kennedy, the steel executives, and the American people in the speech. The student’s use of the family metaphor simplifies the context of the speech, and the characterization of Kennedy’s tone as paternal is not entirely apt. However, the family analogy is not wholly inaccurate; it allows the student to understand how Kennedy is in an authoritative position to adjudicate guilt: he assigns guilt to the elder son (the steel industry) for unnecessarily inflicting pain on the younger one (an innocent American public). Although the use of the metaphor may be strained, it nonetheless succeeds in highlighting the workings of pathos. As further evidence of the unevenness of this essay, the second paragraph makes an adequate observation about the contrast between a “tiny handful” of steel executives pitted against “185 million Americans” but embeds the contrast in an otherwise unconvincing and underdeveloped paragraph ostensibly analyzing “Kennedy’s well-chosen diction.”

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Question 2 (continued)

Sample: 2C

Score: 3

The student does demonstrate an awareness of how audience shapes a message and also understands the task of rhetorical analysis when pointing out that Kennedy does not “sugarcoat” his message as he frames it for American citizens. The essay notes and paraphrases key parts of the speech, focusing on a call to action based on nationalist impulses (“John F Kennedy enstils [*sic*] the ideas of wanting to make a difference in his nation be [*sic*] allowing them to think they have responsibilities to their country”). However, the essay fails to connect its claims with the speech through sufficient and clarifying discussion. In the fourth paragraph, the essay lapses into a disjointed and particularly limited recitation of devices identified by the student as rhetorical. Control of writing is less mature than in a higher-scored response.