

## Question 2

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

The passage below is from *Last Child in the Woods* (2008) by Richard Louv. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

Line  
5 Researchers at the State University of New York at Buffalo are experimenting with a genetic technology through which they can choose the colors that appear on butterfly wings. The announcement of this in  
10 2002 led writer Matt Richtel to conjure a brave new advertising medium: “There are countless possibilities for moving ads out of the virtual world and into the real one. Sponsorship-wise, it’s time for nature to carry its weight.” Advertisers already stamp their  
15 messages into the wet sands of public beaches. Cash-strapped municipalities hope corporations agree to affix their company logo on parks in exchange for dollars to keep the public spaces maintained. “The sheer popularity” of simulating nature or using nature  
20 as ad space “demands that we acknowledge, even respect, their cultural importance,” suggests Richtel. Culturally important, yes. But the logical extension of synthetic nature is the irrelevance of “true” nature—the certainty that it’s not even worth looking at.  
25 True, our experience of natural landscape “often occurs within an automobile looking out,” as Elaine Brooks said. But now even that visual connection is optional. A friend of mine was shopping for a new luxury car to celebrate her half-century of  
30 survival in the material world. She settled on a Mercedes SUV, with a Global Positioning System: just tap in your destination and the vehicle not only provides a map on the dashboard screen, but talks you there. But she knew where to draw the line. “The salesman’s jaw dropped when I said I didn’t want a  
35 backseat television monitor for my daughter,” she told me. “He almost refused to let me leave the dealership until he could understand why.” Rear-seat and in-dash “multimedia entertainment products,” as they are called, are quickly becoming the hottest add-on since rearview mirror fuzzy dice. The target market: parents who will pay a premium for a little backseat peace.

40 Sales are brisk; the prices are falling. Some systems include wireless, infrared-connected headsets. The children can watch *Sesame Street* or play Grand Theft Auto on their PlayStation without bothering the driver.

45 Why do so many Americans say they want their children to watch less TV, yet continue to expand the opportunities for them to watch it? More important, why do so many people no longer consider the physical world worth watching? The highway’s edges may not be postcard perfect. But for a century, children’s early understanding of how cities and  
50 nature fit together was gained from the backseat: the empty farmhouse at the edge of the subdivision; the variety of architecture, here and there; the woods and fields and water beyond the seamy edges—all that was and is still available to the eye. This was the  
55 landscape that we watched as children. It was our drive-by movie.

Perhaps we’ll someday tell our grandchildren stories about our version of the nineteenth-century Conestoga wagon.

60 “You did *what*?” they’ll ask.

“Yes,” we’ll say, “it’s true. We actually *looked out the car window*.” In our useful boredom, we used our fingers to draw pictures on fogged glass as we watched telephone poles tick by. We saw birds on the  
65 wires and combines in the fields. We were fascinated with roadkill, and we counted cows and horses and coyotes and shaving-cream signs. We stared with a kind of reverence at the horizon, as thunderheads and dancing rain moved with us. We held our little plastic  
70 cars against the glass and pretended that they, too, were racing toward some unknown destination. We considered the past and dreamed of the future, and watched it all go by in the blink of an eye.

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## 2013 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 2

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

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

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- 9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for the 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 Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. 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 the 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 Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. They develop their analysis with evidence and explanations that are appropriate and sufficient, referring to the passage explicitly or implicitly. The essay may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 analyze the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. 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.

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## 2013 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 2 (continued)

#### 4 – Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** analyze the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. These essays may misunderstand the passage, misrepresent the strategies Louv uses, or may analyze these strategies insufficiently. The evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or unconvincing. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

- 3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in analyzing the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the passage or Louv'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 Louv uses to develop his argument about the separation between people and nature. These essays may misunderstand the prompt, misread the passage, fail to analyze the strategies Louv uses, or substitute a simpler task by responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The essays often demonstrate 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 the 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.

\* For the purposes of scoring, analysis refers to explaining how the author's rhetorical choices develop meaning or achieve a particular effect or purpose.

## Sample 2A

Since the dawn of mankind, even before civilization, man lived off the land and depended on it for survival. Even in the first civilizations - Egypt, for example - nature controlled all aspects of life. Slowly, he began to learn how to control nature and use it to our advantage. Today, man's connection with nature is sparse and, as Richard Louv argues in "Last Child in the Woods," this is a sad fact that continues to progress in severity. Louv argues against the separation of man and nature using the devices of anecdote, hypothetical example, and imagery.

Louv uses an accessible anecdote to advance his claim. He recounts a friend's story of being pushed to buy an in-car multimedia system, using hyperbolic descriptions such as "the salesman's jaw dropped" in order to create a dramatic effect. The result of his description of the event is that he leads the reader to share the same annoyance the customer must have felt in the anecdote. By making the anecdote seem like a common event, he attempts to show that the salesman's attitude towards dependence on technology is one that is nearly universal in today's society. Through this anecdote, Louv critiques the common opinion of a constant need for technology and his disapproval of that opinion.

To continue building off the in-car entertainment anecdote, Louv uses a hypothetical example to help him show his disdain towards the idea. He proposes that we'll someday tell our grandchildren that there was a time when kids "looked out the car window" instead of playing on phones or watching backseat television. The key to the effectiveness of this hypothetical example is that it is frighteningly realistic. Even today, our grandparents tell us about a childhood without TV or Internet, so certainly, Louv's hypothesis could prove to be true. The shocking realism of this hypothetical example makes the reader realize the immediacy of the issue and the pace at which the issue is progressing, effectively causing alarm at the separation between man and nature and possibly creating more hypothetical examples in the reader's mind.

Lastly, Louv uses the devices of abstract and concrete imagery to advance his claim of the separation of man and nature. Perhaps his most effective device, Louv's imagery paints a scene that is virtually unable to write off in that it is deeply familiar, thus evoking an emotional connection to the issue. His description of the "fogged glass," the telephone poles streaking by, and "counting cars and horses" evokes a nostalgic remembrance of a reader's own childhood, rendering them unable to resist the desire to preserve those memories for future generations. He makes the reader realize that this experience may be lost on the children of future decades if the separation between people and nature is not bridged. His imagery creates a sense of wistful loss or desire that brings the issue home on a personal level to anyone who has ever gazed out a car window as a child.

Louv's argument relies on anecdotal evidence, hypothetical example, and imagery but more importantly, it relies on a sense of personal attachment to the issue at hand. He subtly proves that the disparity between humanity and nature is an issue that affects all of us. In order to preserve the golden days of our youth, we must close the gap. Louv effectively proves that the separation is, in a word, unnatural and needs a remedy. Luckily, the remedy is not unattainable; rather, it begins with our own decisions.

## Sample 2B

It is rather difficult to comprehend our society today. We strive to define ourselves as individuals, yet many times we conform to the norm in an effort to fit in. We look for the best in technology with cellphones, televisions, and vehicles, sometimes forgetting to just enjoy the simplicity of nature. In his well-developed essay "Last Child in the Woods," Richard Louv appealed to both logos and pathos in a sincere effort to illustrate the separation between people and nature.

Mr. Louv began his essay by referring back to a friend who purchased a vehicle. When pushed by the salesman to include a television in the rear seat, the friend said no. Mr. Louv's friend desired for her child to enjoy the beauty of nature. Many Americans claim they want their kids to watch less television. So logically, why would they purchase these "multimedia entertainment products"? Mr. Louv used imagery to elaborate on the simplicity of just looking out the window from the back seat. He stated, "...children's early understanding...was gained from the backseat: the empty farmhouse, the variety of architecture...the woods and fields and water beyond the seamy edges..." Using these words, Mr. Louv logically implied that nature can indeed instruct. We just must take the time and effort to pay attention.

As the essay developed, Mr. Louv flashed back to the typical childhood experience in a car. He claimed, "We actually looked out the car window." With an appeal to pathos, Mr. Louv allowed his readers to reconnect with their joyous childhood antics. He wrote, "We saw birds...counted cows and horses...held our plastic cars against the glass and pretended that they, too, were racing towards some unknown destination." By doing so, Mr. Louv allowed his readers to relive emotions during their car rides to help them understand the simple yet profound separation between people and nature.

Moreover, by appealing to both logos and pathos, Richard Louv established the separation between people and nature. For even through a simple car ride, nature can call out to us and allow us to see who we truly are.

## Sample 2C

Richard Louv writes a striking piece on the separation between people and nature. He uses several rhetorical strategies to develop his argument. Louv uses direct quotation, rhetorical questions, and a tone of urgent nostalgia.

The author uses a lot of direct quotations to get his point across. He tells the story of a friend who he quotes, saying how a salesman's jaw dropped when she said she didn't want a backseat television monitor. Louv uses this to show the absurd reaction of many modern people and their need for more and more technology. Louv then goes on a bit of a rant in the form of rhetorical questions. He attacks hypocritical parents who buy the backseat televisions and then complain their child watches too much TV. The author asks why the real world is not worth watching from the backseat anymore. His rhetorical questions make the reader think and reflect on their own behaviors concerning technology and nature.

The passage as a whole carries a sense of nostalgia. He reminisces on the past days of his childhood, seeing the world through the backseat. The author sees himself as an old man telling his grandchildren, with shocked expressions, that he actually "looked out the car window." He also seems a bit saddened by this, that his grandchildren will be totally overrun by technology and miss out on the beauty of nature.

Richard Louv uses the rhetorical devices of rhetorical questioning, the tone of nostalgia, and direct quotation to show that society is indulging in a world less of nature and more of technology.

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## 2013 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 2

#### Overview

Question 2, the analysis question, provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their practical understanding of rhetorical analysis. Like the synthesis question, the analysis question requires students to integrate reading and writing skills. Rhetorical reading entails comprehending both the **meaning** and **purpose** of an author's **argument** and its intended **audience(s)**, and students are asked to demonstrate rhetorical comprehension of a text by explaining how the author's rhetorical decisions promote or hinder successful accomplishment of the purpose. In short, rhetorical analysis means explaining not only **what** writers are saying but also **why** and **how** they are saying it.

This year's analysis question featured a passage from Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* that sounds an alarm about the increasing separation between humans and the natural world. The passage opens by mentioning advances in genetic engineering that increase nature's potential as a medium for corporate advertising. Louv then recounts an anecdote in which a car salesman pressures one of his friends to equip her vehicle with a backseat video screen and asks, "Why do so many people no longer consider the physical world worth watching?" In answer to this question, he presents a nostalgic account of the car trips of yesteryear when "children's early understanding of how cities and nature fit together was gained from the backseat," and he imagines a collective "we" telling "our" grandchildren "We actually *looked out the car window*."

This year's analysis asked students to discern an *implicit* argument directed to audiences far less immediate and concrete than Kennedy's message and audiences in last year's prompt. Louv's "we" is a generational descriptor, separating his primary audience from the generation of readers represented by students taking the exam, a generation for whom backseat video screens have become commonplace. This year's students were therefore positioned as eavesdroppers on a conversation conducted by their elders about young people's changed relationship to the natural world. Louv conveys his message indirectly, by describing a brave new world in which butterfly wings can be designed to carry corporate logos and in which children cannot imagine entertaining themselves by looking out the car window, much less interacting directly with nature.

#### Sample: 2A

Score: 8

In the opening paragraph of the essay, the student identifies a clear understanding of Richard Louv's argument that "man's connection with nature is sparse ... a sad truth that continues to progress in severity." While the essay presents a rather formulaic approach to analyzing the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument, each paragraph presents a full explanation of how each of the strategies (anecdote, hypothetical example, and imagery) serves to advance Louv's argument. In the second paragraph, the student insightfully analyzes how Louv's "accessible anecdote" of the friend's purchase of an SUV "leads the reader to experience the same annoyance the customer must have felt" and intentionally shows that the "salesman's attitude towards dependence on technology is one that is nearly universal in today's society." Despite the rather choppy transition between these discrete paragraphs, the student provides a convincing analysis of how Louv's presentation of the hypothetical "grandchildren" example illustrates the "shocking realism" that calls the reader's attention to the "immediacy of the issue and the pace at which the issue is progressing." The student develops the analysis further by noting how the shift to a nostalgic tone illustrates Louv's desire to communicate the danger that could occur "if the separation between people and nature is not bridged." The student's poignant observation that Louv's imagery creates "a sense of wistful loss that brings the issue home on a personal level to anyone who has ever gazed out a car window as a child" is particularly effective in analyzing how Louv's rhetorical choices are designed to illicit a particular effect and develop a particular purpose. The essay earned an 8 for its overall convincing explanations and its consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Sample: 2B**

**Score: 6**

The student opens the essay by providing an adequate understanding of Louv's argument that technology interferes with society's enjoyment of the "simplicity of nature," noting that although "we strive to define ourselves as individuals . . . we conform to the norm in an effort to fit in." Using the anecdote of the friend who purchased the SUV, the student sufficiently analyzes Louv's point about the faulty logic behind the salesman's advice that Louv's friend purchase a television screen for the vehicle when many "Americans claim they want their kids to watch less television." The student later notes in the same paragraph that Louv's use of imagery allows him to elaborate on the simplicity of nature, logically implying that "nature can indeed instruct." In the third paragraph, the extensive quotations diminish the effectiveness of the student's analysis of Louv's use of an appeal to pathos to argue against the separation between people and nature. However, the student's final commentary that "through a simple car ride, nature can call out to us, and allow us to see who we truly are" provides sufficient closure to the essay. The essay earned a 6 for its adequate explanation of how the author's rhetorical choices develop meaning and its generally clear and coherent prose.

**Sample: 2C**

**Score: 3**

The essay provides an inadequate analysis of the rhetorical strategies Louv uses to develop his argument, claiming only that Louv "writes a striking piece on the separation between people and nature." Each of the three body paragraphs has a similar simplistic structure: the student identifies a strategy, provides a short piece of evidence, and explains in a limited way how or why the strategy is connected to Louv's argument. In the second paragraph, the student clearly struggles with connecting rhetorical strategies to meaning when offering "direct quotation" as a strategy Louv uses to reveal "the absurd reaction of modern people and their need for more and more technology." In the third paragraph, the student misrepresents Louv's tone as angry, stating that Louv "goes on a bit of a rant in the form of rhetorical questions" and "attacks hypocritical parents." The student does later correctly recognize that Louv's anecdotes in the second half of the passage carry a "sense of nostalgia" and notes that Louv is "saddened" by the separation between people and nature. Overall, however, the essay earned a 3 for its less perceptive understanding of Louv's rhetorical choices and its particularly limited and simplistic explanations.