The College Panda

SAT Essay

The Battle-tested Guide

Nielson Phu

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1. Introduction

In the past, the SAT required you to write a persuasive essay on a philosophical question such as *Do rules and limitations contribute to a person's happiness?*

The best approach was well-established: write an example-based response, one based on current events, literature, and history to support your stance. In fact, the top scorers often came into the essay with a slew of examples they had prepared beforehand and could tweak to almost any prompt.

This trend towards "scripted" essays alarmed not only The College Board but also the SAT's critics. How can a standardized test accurately assess the writing abilities of students who are regurgitating memorized sentences in 25 minutes? What's even scarier is that these essays were the ones that did the best.

In light of this, The College Board decided to overhaul the essay in its 2016 redesign of the SAT.

They wanted an essay assignment that would prevent pre-planning and scripted responses. In the face of stiff competition from the ACT, the SAT needed to shed its reputation as a test that could be "gamed."

What they came up with is an analytical essay assignment, one in which you're asked to read a passage and discuss how the author persuades his or her readers. Here's what a typical assignment looks like:

As you read the passage below, consider how Anthony Simon 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 Anthony Simon builds an argument to persuade his audience that student competitions should promoted within schools. In your essay, analyze how Simon uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your 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 Simon's claims, but rather explain how Simon builds an argument to persuade his audience.

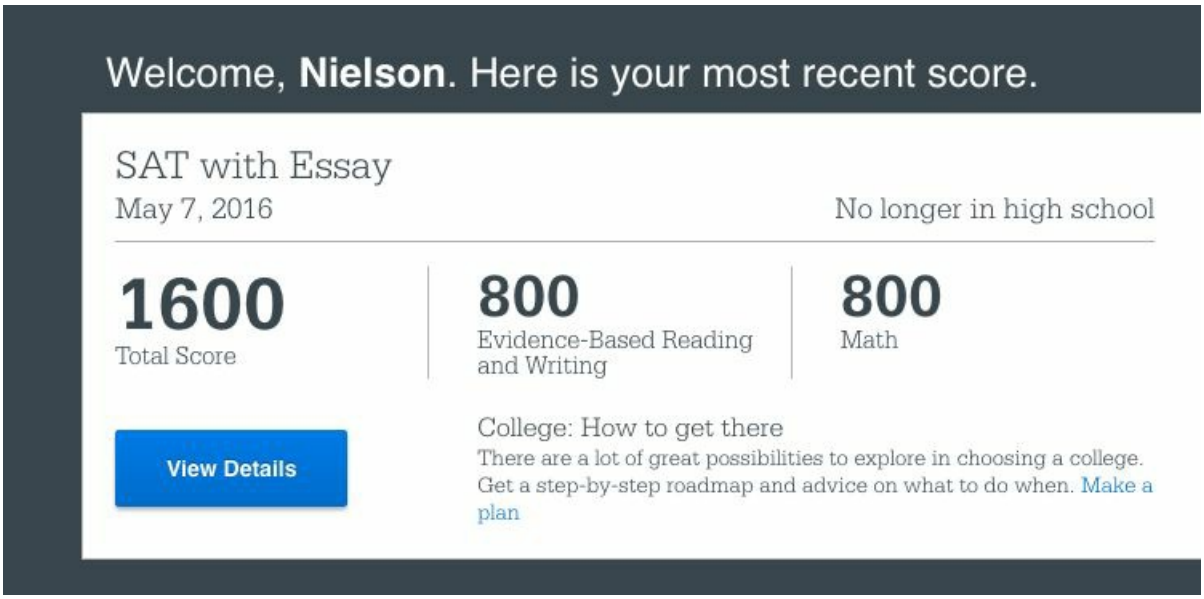
In theory, students wouldn't be able to regurgitate responses to this type of an assignment.

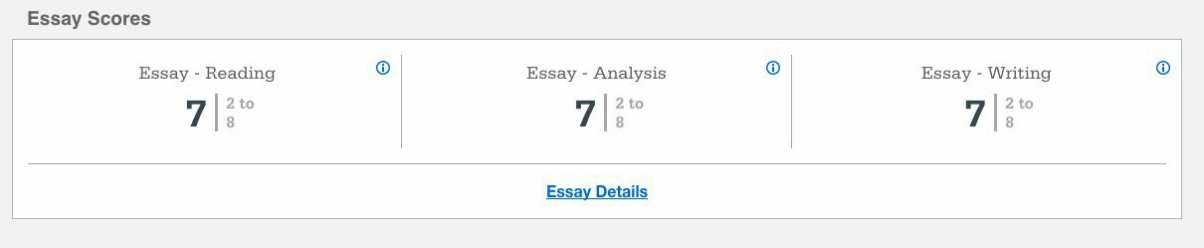
And even if they could, The College Board would be able to maintain plausible deniability. "But it has a passage that always changes!" they would say.

"There's no way that it's susceptible to prepared examples like it was before.

"Take this test instead of the ACT!"

Yes, prepared examples are no longer relevant to the new format, but it's just as susceptible to planned responses, and I took the SAT myself to prove it, getting a perfect 1600 on the test and a 21/24 on the essay.





In taking the SAT as a teacher, the goal wasn't to get a high score for bragging rights. Nor was it to show you fancy essays that only I could write. **The goal was to develop a framework for a high-scoring essay that could be replicated by all students and applied to all prompts.**

In the process, what I discovered is what I expected all along: **not only can the essay still be gamed, but it's easier than ever before.**

Whereas previously you might have struggled to come up with supporting examples for your stance, writer's block is hardly an issue on the new essay. Everything you need is in the passage. And since you're now given 50 minutes instead of 25 minutes, you have plenty of time to write a long, detailed response.

As one of the first guinea pigs that took the new SAT, I wrote this book to show you not only how easy it is to write a high-scoring essay but also how to avoid the subtle mistakes that kept me and some of my students from a 24/24 essay.

Hope you find these insights helpful.

2. How the SAT Essay is Graded

Before we get to how to write the essay, let's get some background information out of the way.

- The SAT Essay is optional, but most of the top 40 schools require it.
- It's 50 minutes long.
- It's given at the end of the test.
- The passage will be 650-750 words long.
- Though the passage is different from test to test, the assignment is always the same. It should never surprise you.
- You should use reasoning and textual evidence from the passages to support your analysis.

Once your essay is sent in, two readers each give it a score from 1-4 in three categories: Reading, Analysis, and Writing. The scores for each category are summed up.

	1st Reader 1-4		2nd Reader 1-4		Total 2-8
Reading	_____	+	_____	=	_____
Analysis	_____	+	_____	=	_____
Writing	_____	+	_____	=	_____

The three totals are then added up to get the final score, a value between 6 (the worst) and 24 (the best). This is the score colleges will look at.

Whereas previously your essay score was combined with your writing score, now the essay score is reported separately from the other sections and does not impact any of your other scores.

Students who are applying to top 20 schools should aim for at least a 21 out of 24 (at least a 7/8 in every category). If you follow everything I outline in this book, a 21 shouldn't be hard to obtain.

The grading rubric for the SAT Essay is available on The College Board's website, but because it's pretty vague and unhelpful, I'll reiterate only the points you need to know here. Future chapters will expand on these guidelines.

Reading—Did you understand the passage?

- Make sure to mention the main idea of the passage in your essay.
- Don't twist the author's argument.

Analysis—How well did you explain how the author builds his or her argument?

- Focus only on the parts of the passage that most contribute to the author's persuasiveness.
- Your essay should evaluate evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements in the passage. Note that you do not have to address all three. You may choose to discuss only the stylistic elements, for example.
- Do NOT take a stance on the issue. Your job is to analyze the author's argument, NOT show why you agree or disagree with the author.

Writing—How well did you write your response

- Break up your essay into discrete paragraphs (intro, body paragraphs, conclusion).
- Vary your sentence structures (short and long, simple and complex).
- Use some college-level words.
- Use correct punctuation.
- Maintain a formal style and objective tone.

Don't worry about keeping all these guidelines in your head. Yes, it's important to understand what the graders will be looking for, but we'll be giving you a template that takes care of everything for you.

Before we get to that template, however, we need to walk through the 7 elements of a perfect essay in the next chapter. There, we'll expand on some of these guidelines to make sure you know how to implement them.

3. The 7 Elements of a Perfect Essay

Imagine that you're The College Board and after each and every test date, your mailbox gets flooded with hundreds of thousands of essays from students all across the world. How on earth would you manage to grade every single one of them in 2-3 weeks?

Well, you would hire a bunch of teachers who presumably know something about grading papers. You would also standardize the grading process so that scores remain consistent across the board. How? By training the graders to put their own opinions aside and base their scores solely on models that have already been set.

And to get through the sheer number of essays that must be read, you'd require them to be quick.

Well, that's pretty much The College Board's grading process.

The graders don't spend any longer than TWO MINUTES reading your paper. Two minutes and that's it. It's a snap judgment: *What does this essay look like? A 4/3/3. Next!* Any flashes of your literary brilliance will be glossed over in a ruthless grading procedure that only cares about whether your work matches the standard model.

Your job, then, is not to write a masterpiece. This isn't your AP English class. The teacher won't be looking at every word and dissecting all your punctuation marks.

Instead, your job is simply to write something that looks like a 4/4/4. Write something that looks smart, something that looks like all the essays that have been awarded perfect scores before, and you in turn will be rewarded with a perfect score. That's it. It doesn't have to be innovative and it doesn't have to be in your voice and style. Just give them what they want.

Whenever I explain this mindset to students, there's always a slight outcry because it conflicts with the creative writing process they've been taught throughout school. A lot of students want to stand behind their own writing abilities instead of relying on any kind of pre-scripted formula. "I'm already a good writer," they say. "I don't need to follow a template."

I totally understand. As much as I would like the essay portion to be less of a game and more of an indicator of true writing ability, it's not. A 50-minute essay is hardly a good way to measure one's competence and the truth

is, those who go in prepared with a good idea of what they're going to write do better than those who don't.

The SAT is simply not the place for you to get fancy. There will be plenty of opportunities later on, whether you want them or not, to express yourself more creatively. The SAT is not one of them. Your purpose is to ace it and get into college, not start the next great American novel.

Having said all that, let's take a look at the characteristics of a perfect essay.

1. Length

Most students don't realize just how much essay length affects the score. You might think that a short essay can compensate for its length by being well-written, but while quality does count, you're much better off sacrificing some of that quality for a longer essay. In a 2005 *New York Times* article, writer Michael Winerip reports how Dr. Les Perelman, one of the directors of writing at MIT, posted student essays on a far wall and graded them solely on length. After he finished, he was stunned by the results-his predictions had been right over 90 percent of the time. The shorter essays received the lowest scores and the longer essays received the highest. More often that not, an essay's score was determined by its length.

With that in mind, you want to fill up as much space as you can, at least 2.5 pages out of the 4 pages they give you. Filling up 2.5 pages means you have to **write fast**. Read the passage and go. **You want to spend as many minutes writing as possible.**

Now this doesn't mean you should start lengthening the spacing between words. The graders are wary of essays with inflated spacing and I can tell you from my students' experiences that it definitely doesn't work. Write how you would normally but do so at a much faster pace. My essay in Appendix A shows the degree of illegibility you can get away with.

2. Thesis

As you probably have learned countless times from your English classes, a thesis is a statement that captures the main idea or essence of your essay. It's usually placed at the end of the introductory paragraph.

Always have a thesis statement because it's something graders can easily spot and reward you for. They should know where your analysis is headed

after reading it. I'll be teaching you how to write easy and effective thesis statements in the next chapter.

3. Organization and Structure

Always make sure you use paragraphs and that each paragraph serves a purpose that is distinct from the others. In other words, each of your paragraphs should contain a different idea but one that still relates to the overall analysis.

Essays that are just one humongous paragraph don't get high scores, so make sure you indent!

4. Vocabulary

People judge others by the level of their vocabulary. If you've ever thought of a person more highly because of his or her ability to use words you didn't understand, then you probably know just how much vocabulary can impress people. Well, the SAT essay graders are no exception. After all, good essays are good in part because they have sophisticated yet well-chosen words. Later on, we will be showing you not only what words to use but also some automatic ways of injecting them into your essay.

On the flip side, avoid using vague words like "stuff", "things", "lots of", "many cases", "many reasons", especially when you don't clarify them later with specifics.

5. Sentence Variety

Good writers use a mix of simple and complex sentences. Essays consisting solely of simple sentences don't get high scores. Imagine reading a paragraph like this:

> People are most productive under pressure. They have to think faster. They work harder to meet deadlines. Most people are lazy. They need motivation. Pressure is the best motivator.

Choppy and repetitive-not what you want. Let's take a look at a revised version:

> People are most productive under pressure because they have to think faster and work harder to meet deadlines.

Without motivation, most people are lazy. For those reasons, pressure is the best motivator.

Still not perfect, but a whole lot better. Notice that the main ideas didn't change, only the way in which they were connected.

By definition, the secret to creating complex sentences is **the comma**. By finding appropriate ways of inserting commas, you'll naturally start to add more detail to your sentences. Let's use an example sentence to see how this works:

The tiger ate my aunt earlier today.

Now let's add in some phrases:

After starving for several hours, the tiger, which had previously been so well-behaved, ate my aunt earlier today.

Notice that by adding in those phrases, which, by the way, required commas, **we not only made the sentence complex but also made it more detailed, which is part of what good writing is all about.**

Here is a toolbox of things you can do for sentence variety:

Tool:	Use *because*
Example:	The tiger ate my aunt earlier today because it was hungry.
Tool:	Use *who, which,* or *that*
Example:	The tiger, which had been very hungry, ate my aunt earlier today.
Tool:	Use a conjunction (FANBOYS)
Example:	The tiger was hungry and ate my aunt earlier today.
Tool:	Put *although/even though* in front
Example:	Although it is usually well-behaved, the tiger ate my aunt earlier today.
Tool:	Use a modifier
Example:	Always on the lookout for food, the tiger ate my aunt earlier today.

As you practice, make it a point to put complex sentences among simple ones.

6. Transitions

Another weapon in the sentence variety toolbox is transitions, words that show how your ideas are connected. These are so important to getting a high score that they deserve their own section. If you look at the official essay rubric on the The College Board's website, it's clear that graders are required to look for them. Not only do they serve as the "glue" between your ideas, but they also give your sentences rhythm and structure.

Common Transition Words

Example: *I love eating vanilla ice cream.* ***However****, too much of it makes me sick.*

Transition: presents an opposing point or balances a previous statement

Similar Transitions: *fortunately, on the other hand, conversely, whereas, while, in contrast*

Example: *Math trains you to approach problems more analytically.* ***Furthermore****, it helps you calculate the exact amount of tip to be left for the waiter.*

Transition: adds new and supporting information

Similar Transitions: *in addition, also, moreover, and, too, as well, additionally, not to mention*

Example: *Pandas are rapidly becoming extinct.* ***In fact****, some experts predict that pandas will die out in 50 years.*

Transition: gives emphasis to a point by adding a specific detail/case

Similar Transitions: *as a matter of fact, indeed, to illustrate, for instance, for example*

Example: *The state is facing a flu epidemic.* ***Consequently****, all hospital rooms are filled at the moment.*

Transition: shows cause & effect

Similar Transitions: *as a result, because, hence, therefore, thus, as a consequence, accordingly*

Example: ***Granted****, the SAT is a long and tedious exam, but it's necessary for college admissions.*

Transition: concedes a point to make way for your own point

Similar Transitions: *nevertheless, although, even though, despite, even if*

Example: *Place the bread on an ungreased baking sheet.* ***Finally****, bake in a preheated oven for 10 minutes.*

Transition: shows order or sequence

Similar Transitions: *subsequently, previously, afterwards, next, then, eventually, before*

Example: *Social security numbers uniquely identify citizens.* ***In the same way****, IP addresses identify computers.*

Transition: shows similarity

Similar Transitions: *similarly, likewise, by the same token*

Example: ***In conclusion****, the world would be a happier place without nuclear weapons.*

Transition: gives a summary

Similar Transitions: *in all, to summarize, in sum, to sum up, in short, as mentioned, thus*

You'll want to include several transition words in your essay to show the grader that you understand their importance and how they're used. The essay template in this book will give you easy ways to add both transitions and sentence variety to your essay.

7. Quotes from the Passage

If you read any of the top-scoring sample essays on The College Board website, you'll notice that they all quote extensively from the passage.

Why is this the case?

Because to write an analytical essay, you must point out what you're analyzing before you analyze it. If, for instance, you're discussing a writer's great choice of words, it only makes sense to provide specific examples of those words before you talk about how they contribute to the article's persuasive power. How do you do that? By quoting from the passage.

Quotes are the foundation of every analytical essay. The essays that speak of the passage in general terms without citing any specifics are the ones that do the worst.

Of course, you should never include quotes just to beef up your essay. You must quote with purpose and with proper punctuation. Don't worry. We'll be covering everything you need to know in a future chapter devoted entirely

to the art of quoting.

4. The Elements of Persuasion

In this chapter, you'll learn about all the elements of persuasion an author might use to build his or her argument. No passage will contain every single one, so it will be your job to identify which elements are present in the one you're given.

For each element, I've included an example of its usage as well as a summary of the effects it might have on the reader. You'll find these summaries extremely helpful once you start writing essays using the template in the next chapter.

I cover the elements that show up the most first. Word choice and statistics are used in nearly all the articles you'll read.

In addition, you'll often see multiple elements being used at the same time. For example, a rhetorical question might also contain an appeal to emotion. Even though I discuss each element separately, this overlap is completely normal and should give you even more to talk about in your analysis.

Finally, the example excerpts you see in this chapter have all been adapted from articles with the following main arguments:

- There has to be alien life on other planets.
- Animals should be treated as if they were people.
- Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save ourselves.
- The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.
- Girls make equally capable engineers as boys.
- Having a best friend is necessary for child success.

Rhetorical Elements

1. Word Choice

Word choice refers to using intense, lively, or thematically-similar words in a manner that leaves a certain impression.

Uses include:

- evoking emotions or images (imagery)

- characterizing a subject or topic in a particular way
- associating positive or negative connotations with something
- setting the tone

Example 1

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: There aren't enough differences between humans and animals to condone the widespread practice of **factory** farming, which differs from **concentration camp** conditions only in that animals are overfed rather than underfed, and **injected** with growth hormones rather than **gassed**, all so we can **butcher** them for more meat.

Analysis: The author uses quite a few strong words to portray the deplorable way animals are treated. The words in bold evoke images of The Holocaust, effectively associating all the horror of Nazi Germany to factory farms.

Example 2

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: Dolphins **wave** to their trainers and **listen** for instructions. They'll then **hold a brief conference** underwater to **plan** their synchronized **jumps** through the hoops.

Analysis: The author's main argument is that we should treat animals as if they were people. By using words that typically pertain only to people, the author is able to "humanize" dolphins in the reader's mind and hopefully evoke sympathy for them. This literary device is called anthropomorphism.

Example 3

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: First someone submits a bill. Once it gets the requisite sponsorship in Congress, it goes to a committee. This **gaggle** of **supposedly enlightened** politicians then **dilly-dallies** over the fine print, putting whatever **mumbo jumbo** they want in the bill before it's voted on.

Analysis: The author uses the words in bold to characterize politicians as incompetent, bumbling fools. This is especially persuasive because it implies that even the reader would be more effective in government than they are. By making readers feel good about themselves, the author is able to win them over.

2. Statistics/Data

Possible uses:

- to indicate a problem
- to make an idea hard to argue against because numbers are perceived as facts, not opinions
- to ground the author's argument in reality
- to surprise readers
- to put one quantity in relation to another for compare/contrast

Example 4

Argument: There has to be alien life on other planets.

Excerpt: The Universe is simply too vast, too filled with planets and stars, for us to be alone. The Milky Way contains 100 billion stars, including our own Sun. In the course of surveying thousands of stars over the last few years, the Kepler telescope has found that nearly all of them have planets and at least 17% have Earth-sized worlds orbiting them.

Analysis: By noting the incredible number of stars and orbiting planets, the author makes a strong case based on sheer probability that there is life on other planets.

Example 5

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: For example, each state gets two Senators so that all states have equal representation. This seems good until you consider that California has 80 times the number of people as Wyoming. **That means a single resident of Wyoming has the same Senatorial power as 80 residents of California combined.**

Analysis: The bolded sentence shocks the reader and incites a sense of unfairness. By comparing Wyoming residents with California residents using an exact number, the author shows the extent to which our system of democracy is broken.

Example 6

Argument: Girls make equally capable engineers as boys.

Excerpt: Why does America have so few female engineers? More than

50% of American college students are now female, but only about 1 in 5 engineering faculty or tech startup founders are women.

Analysis: The author uses statistics to point out not only a problem but also the extent of it. Readers are filled with a sense of inequity.

Example 7

Argument: Girls make equally capable engineers as boys.

Excerpt: Iran is not a women's rights haven. In this country, women can actually be stopped in public by actual morality police if their clothes are deemed too tight or revealing, and married women have to ask their husbands' permission to leave the country. Yet somehow, 70% of Iran's science and engineering students are women and so are a huge proportion of its tech startup founders. How did that happen?

Analysis: Using the 70% figure, the author draws an implicit comparison between the United States and Iran, which has a much higher proportion of women in tech and engineering fields. If a country that limits women's rights can produce such great numbers of female engineers, then surely there is no excuse for the disparity between men and women in the U.S. This comparison effectively shifts the burden of proof to the skeptics.

3. Appeal to Authority

An appeal to authority usually consists of quotes from authority figures, research from respected universities, or actions of government or other authoritative bodies. It can

- raise credibility by showing the author is not the only one who believes in an idea
- increase trust by showing that an argument is well-researched
- gain acceptance or sympathy from readers who identify or think highly of the authority figure
- establish a precedent that puts peer pressure on other people to do the same

Example 8

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: In 2013, for example, the government of India declared dolphins to be "non-human persons." This made keeping them captive for entertainment purposes illegal everywhere in the country. And in 2015, a New York judge ruled that two chimpanzees could not be "unlawfully detained" for research purposes, citing the writ of *habeus corpus*. *Habeus corpus*, literally meaning "show me the body," states that no person may be detained without evidence of wrongdoing. In this ruling, the judge extended Constitutional protection for "persons" to chimpanzees.

Analysis: The fact that places as far away from each other as India and New York City have passed rulings in support of the humane treatment of certain animals gives the author's argument credibility and establishes a precedent. In other words, the idea has already been accepted, and the pressure is on other governing agencies to do the same. It's easier to persuade people to do something when they won't be the first to do it.

Example 9

Argument: There has to be alien life on other planets.

Excerpt: World-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking agrees. "To my mathematical brain, the numbers alone make thinking about aliens perfectly rational. The real challenge is working out what aliens might actually be like."

Analysis: By quoting Stephen Hawking, who is known and admired both inside and outside the physics world as a brilliant scientist, the author makes his argument much harder to dismiss. For readers to disagree with the author, they would also have to disagree with one of the world's most respected physicists.

4. Acknowledging the other side/Making Concessions

A concession is a point that is strategically given up or granted to the opposing side. Acknowledging the other side allows an author to

- address counterarguments, doubts, or fears readers may have
- establish common ground
- pave the way for new points to be made, instead of getting bogged down in old ones

Example 10

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: Of course, we'd be dismantling the very system that America's founding fathers put in place. After all, the system of government we have now is based on the Constitution that they drafted. However, there were some logistical barriers to a direct democracy when the Constitution was written. There was, for example, no Internet. No way for every American to weigh in on a given issue in a timely fashion. But now there is. And if the founding fathers were alive today, they'd see the possibilities and advocate for a system that's more inclusive of everyone.

Analysis: The author willingly acknowledges that a direct democracy would run counter to the Constitution. That way, he is able to address it and carve a way past a major obstacle to his argument. In doing so, he is able to frame America's founding fathers not as enemies but as allies. If the author did not acknowledge the other side, he would not be able to quell the doubts they may have.

Example 11

Argument: Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save ourselves.

Excerpt: During the Permian Extinction, Earth got so hot that the land mass now known as Russia became one giant lava flow. I'm sure some skeptics of climate change will say, "See? The Earth survived that. Surely it can survive our puny little greenhouse gas emissions without a problem." Well, yeah. The Earth can survive alright. But what we selfish humans might want to know about the Permian extinction is that over 90% of all species living on Earth died out. That's why we don't see those cute little ammonites that you can only buy in fossil stores now, or those awesome fern-jungles you see in paintings of ancient Earth. They died out. We would have too, as I'm pretty sure skyrocketing global temperatures and global desertification would have killed all of our food crops.

Analysis: The author establishes common ground with those who may not believe in saving the Earth by first agreeing with them: The Earth will survive whatever we do to it. However, this common ground only paves the way for his primary

argument: Earth will survive, but we won't. By first identifying with his opponents' way of thinking, the author is able to weaken any resistance he may face in leading them down his own line of reasoning.

Example 12

Argument: Having a best friend is necessary for child success.

Excerpt: Many adults are now saying that children should not have best friends. In recent years, child psychologists have raised concerns about the exclusivity and potential for possessiveness in these relationships, which may detract from the varied social interactions important to childhood learning, or result in hurt feelings if one's best friend moves on. As a parent, none of this worries me at all. **Don't get me wrong—I've had my share of trials and tribulations with best friends whom I've had to say goodbye to. But these relationships, in good times and in bad, have given me invaluable practice for handling adult partnerships.**

Analysis: The author identifies with the audience and concedes that she herself has had bad experiences with best friends. This acknowledgment allows her to make a very strong point—that even with those bad experiences, the benefits of having best friends outweigh the costs.

5. Analogies/Comparisons

Analogies are comparisons between two things. In general, they

- allow readers to understand more complex concepts by comparing them with simpler ones
- associate new ideas with ones the reader is already familiar with
- lead the reader into agreement by connecting something new with something the reader has agreed with or done

Example 13

Argument: There has to be alien life on other planets.

Excerpt: In 2010, analysis of data from the Mars Global Surveyor found that methane concentrations in the red planet's atmosphere increase during the warm season. Why is this intriguing? Because methane is created by bacterial life here on Earth. **And anyone who's ever taken out stinky garbage**

during the summer will tell you that bacterial life grows much faster—and produces much more stinky gas like methane—when it's warm.

Analysis: By comparing methane on mars to taking out the garbage, the author makes his point relatable and easier to understand. Readers must first understand something before they can be persuaded by it. Furthermore, this analogy strengthens the link between bacterial life on Earth and the possibility of bacterial life on Mars.

Example 14

Argument: There has to be alien life on other planets.

Excerpt: While naysayers point out that we've never received radio signals from another civilization despite scanning the skies for such signals for decades, Hawking has another explanation for the silence. He believes that a smart extraterrestrial civilization would hide its existence to avoid being attacked by others. **"If aliens visit us," Hawking says, "the outcome would be much as when Columbus landed in America, which didn't turn out well for the Native Americans." If we're not hearing from alien civilizations, it's probably because they've learned to keep their communications private, like any smart family in a crowded neighborhood.**

Analysis: The analogies to Columbus and "any smart family in a crowded neighborhood" add validity to the author's main point and relates the idea to concepts readers are already familiar with. The comparisons make it seem like it's common sense that aliens would not want to contact us.

Example 15

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: Some suggest that the risks of hacking and voter fraud are too great. Really? You do all your banking online and you're telling us the Internet is not secure enough for voting?

Analysis: By comparing online banking to online voting, the author is able to downplay the risks of a direct democracy in which we all vote online. After all, if we already trust online systems to handle our money, there's no reason we shouldn't also allow them to handle our votes.

6. Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition is placing two things side by side for comparison or contrast. Unlike an analogy, it does not try to relate one concept to another. Instead, it merely positions them together in such a way that a significant distinction is highlighted or one option is made to seem better than the other.

Example 16

Argument: Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save ourselves.

Excerpt: The idea of being "kind to the planet" assumes a couple of things. First, it assumes that we are capable of helping or harming Earth in some meaningful way. We're not. Earth has weathered asteroid impacts and climate change that would have blown us off the map a dozen times over, and Earth's ecosystems have always adapted. Human activity is nothing. Earth will bounce right back from any havoc we may cause. It always does. Humans, however, will not.

Analysis: By juxtaposing Earth and humans, the author contrasts the fragility of humans with the durability of planet Earth. The intent is to make us feel small and insignificant, especially on a scale that includes "asteroid impacts" and "climate change." By making us feel this way, the author compels us to identify with her argument that we are most at risk when we don't save the environment, not Earth itself.

In SAT essay passages, you will often see authors juxtapose the past and the present, or one country with another, to emphasize a problem (e.g. In 1960, 83% of our clothing came from factories in the United States. By 2013, that percentage had declined to 18%.)

Example 17

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: Who wants rich, privileged bureaucrats bossing us around when we can have people like you and me fighting for our own causes?

Analysis: By juxtaposing "bureaucrats" with "people like you and me," the author creates an "us versus them" mentality. The implication is that politicians are totally out of touch with the common people they're supposed to serve. Furthermore, the reader is put into a situation with seemingly only two options,

and of course, one is made out to be more enticing than the other.

7. Challenging Assumptions

By challenging common assumptions, an author

- enables an argument to proceed from a clean slate
- dismisses any preconceived ideas or biases that may run counter to his or her argument

Example 18

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: I've had to think twice about ordering a burger ever since I found out that cows have best friends. That's right—scientist Krista McLennan discovered in 2011 that cows pair off, and not in a mating sense. Instead, a female cow will develop an especially close bond with another fellow cow and show signs of stress if they are separated.

Analysis: The author challenges the assumption that animals don't behave or feel as humans do. By moving the reader away from what is likely a widely-held belief, the author is able to argue from a clean slate and dismiss any preconceived notions that may sabotage the argument.

Example 19

Argument: There has to be alien life on other planets.

Excerpt: Recent experiments have shown that organisms can thrive with just two requirements: a temperature that allows for chemical bonding and an energy source such as the sun. Water is not necessary. In fact, certain proteins that usually contain water such as myoglobin can function just fine without it. And that's just Earth-based organisms we're talking about. There's no reason the biochemistry of an alien life-form can't run on something other than water.

Analysis: The author tears apart the common knowledge that water is necessary for life. By doing so, he opens up many more possibilities for alien life to exist. The ability to persuade the reader is no longer constrained by a limiting assumption.

8. Anecdotes

Anecdotes are short stories, often personal, that are used to make a point.

Example 20

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: A 2008 study found that crows are able to distinguish one human from another and react differently depending on how they are treated. In 2011, a four year old Seattle girl named Gabi Mann dropped a chicken nugget only to have a crow swoop in to eat it. She soon realized that the crows were watching her, looking for another bite. As time went on, she began feeding them on a regular basis. That's when the gifts started appearing: a miniature silver ball, a blue paper clip, a black button, a yellow bead, and the list of shiny objects goes on. It's a peculiar collection of objects for a little girl to treasure, but to Gabi these things are more valuable than gold.

Analysis: The author uses the anecdote of Gabi's crows to form a strong emotional bond between humans and animals in the reader's mind. By giving an illustration of how animals can act like humans, the author opens us up to accepting his main argument.

Example 21

Argument: Having a best friend is necessary for child success.

Excerpt: Growing up, I was always a bit of an odd duck. I was interested in things that other children weren't and bored by things they loved. I didn't really have a best friend I could relate to until the fifth grade, and when I did, it was so, so validating. We would squirrel ourselves away from rambunctious sports games to go for walks in the forest. We would get to school early to chat about our little hobbies. My bestie dragged me to places I wouldn't have ventured to alone. These experiences helped me grow into the person I am today.

Analysis: The author shares some of her personal memories and experiences in order to convey the importance of having a best friend. Her story is one that nearly all readers will be able to relate to and find similarities with. By establishing common ground through this anecdote, she opens up a strong connection with the reader.

9. Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is one that isn't answered by the author. Either the question doesn't need to be answered because the point being made is self-evident or it's designed for readers to answer themselves.

Possible uses:

- prods readers into agreeing or answering for themselves in a certain way
- gets the reader to imagine a certain scenario
- lays out common ground or assumptions that the author can then build upon

Example 22

Argument: Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save ourselves.

Excerpt: To understand just how much temperatures rose during the Permian Extinction, consider this: have you ever been outside on a really hot day? Like, really hot. We're not talking about some wimpy 84° days. I mean like, 104° heat. Massive-epidemic-of-heatstroke heat. That's how hot the ocean was.

Analysis: The author uses a rhetorical question to make the experience of a hot summer day more real and visceral. By reaching out to the reader's senses, the author makes a deeper impression when she later states, "That's how hot the ocean was."

Example 23

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: **Democracy is the greatest system of government ever, right?** It's the only system where We The People get to decide what goes on in our land—not some overlords who rule us by force.

Analysis: By ending the bolded sentence with "right?" the author is nudging the reader to respond mentally in the affirmative. A small gesture of agreement establishes common ground and give the argument momentum.

Example 24

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: The maze of American politics is such that few Americans even understand who makes our laws—much less where

those people come from. Doesn't that strike you as a problem?

Analysis: The sharp rhetorical question compels the reader to answer in a frame of logic that has been set by the author. Obviously, the answer is "yes," but by leaving it up to the reader to answer in the affirmative, the author is able to induce readers to persuade themselves. After all, there's nothing more persuasive than the thoughts and beliefs we ourselves come up with.

Example 25

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: So laws in America today are made by elite politicians who are elected through a convoluted system that doesn't represent anyone. What if We The People just made the laws?

Analysis: The rhetorical question at the end prompts readers to imagine an ideal scenario in which they are the ones who make the rules. Even if that scenario is far removed from reality, the author is able to persuade just by putting the possibility into the minds of readers, and they are compelled to at least think about the issue for themselves.

In general, stay away from analyzing rhetorical questions as a stand-alone persuasive technique on the SAT Essay. Why? Because there's typically only one or two rhetorical questions in any given article, and that's just not significant enough for an entire paragraph's worth of analysis. Instead, focus on rhetorical elements that occur throughout the article, not just in one sentence.

However, if the author makes heavy use of rhetorical questions or they work alongside another persuasive element, then mentioning them is a good move. For example, you will often see juxtaposition or a challenging of assumptions worked into rhetorical questions themselves.

10. Hypothetical Situations

The hypothetical situation is almost like a sibling to the rhetorical question because the uses are much the same even though it's not in question form.

Possible uses:

- Gets the reader to imagine certain possibilities without having to state

them explicitly
- Allows the author to describe certain outcomes in a way that benefits his or her argument

Example 26

Argument: Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save ourselves.

Excerpt: The Earth became scorchingly hot at least once before, and there's no reason it can't happen again. If it does, we could go the way of the dinosaurs and become popular little fossils for the hyperintelligent life-forms of the future to buy in jewelry stores.

Analysis: The author puts forth the hypothetical scenario of the Earth becoming too hot for humans to bear. In doing so, he gives himself an opportunity to describe the catastrophe that may occur if we don't protect the Earth. If he didn't bring up this hypothetical situation, he wouldn't have this additional avenue of persuasion.

Example 27

Argument: Having a best friend is necessary for child success.

Excerpt: Imagine a world without the best friend you have now. Wipe out all those trips you went on together, the birthday parties you celebrated, and the long chats you had over the phone.

Analysis: The author paints a stark hypothetical situation in order to win readers over emotionally. They are forced to think about the author's argument on a personal level, in terms that matter to them.

11. Appeal to Identity

An appeal to identity is one that takes advantage of the common values and beliefs of a group. It's persuasive because human beings are social creatures that seek belonging, and we gravitate towards those ideas that enhance that sense of belonging.

Example 28

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: What is *really* stopping us from bringing direct democracy to America? I would argue that it's simply fear of change. Fear

of change didn't stop our forefathers from crossing an ocean and settling a new continent. It didn't stop the Freedom Riders from risking their own lives in pursuit of equality for all. It isn't what invented the Internet or put smartphones in our pockets. As Americans, we as a people have always embraced change. And we deserve a change that will put the power of a truly democratic society in our own hands. If we want to see this dream become a reality, we must act. After all, the wealthy politicians of Washington are not going to be the ones to put themselves out of power. So let's start our petitions. Let's put it on our ballots. Let's embrace direct democracy, together.

Analysis: Throughout this entire excerpt, the author makes a strong appeal to the American identity. She mentions our forefathers and the Freedom Riders to stir up our nationalistic pride. She also brings up key words and ideas that resonate with every true American—*democracy, change, pursuit of equality*. In doing so, she's able to frame the idea of a direct democracy as one that upholds American values.

12. Strong Directives with the Collective Pronoun "We"

Directives are just another name for a strong suggestion or command, such as "Let's grab pizza!". Not only do they inform the reader of the next steps to take but they are also a call to action.

Typically, directives are used with the collective pronoun "we". Why is "we" significant? Because it serves to connect the author and the reader as being part of a larger group with a common cause. By using "we," an author portrays him or herself as being on the same side as the audience, one who will stand beside them in unison.

We'll use the previous example to illustrate.

Example 29

Argument: The United States should have a direct democracy, instead of a system of representatives.

Excerpt: What is *really* stopping us from bringing direct democracy to America? I would argue that it's simply fear of change. Fear of change didn't stop our forefathers from crossing an ocean and settling a new continent. It didn't stop the Freedom Riders from risking their own lives in pursuit of equality for all. It isn't what invented the Internet or put smartphones in our

pockets. **As Americans, we as a people have always embraced change. And we deserve a change that will put the power of a truly democratic society in our own hands. If we want to see this dream become a reality, we must act.** After all, the wealthy politicians of Washington are not going to be the ones to put themselves out of power. **So let's start our petitions. Let's put it on our ballots. Let's embrace direct democracy, together.**

Analysis: The bolded sentences serve to unify the audience and establish a common base of American values. The sentences toward the end are calls to action that incite impassioned readers to work towards a direct democracy.

Evidence

Though this chapter focuses mainly on the rhetorical elements you should know, that's not all your essay is limited to. The author's use of evidence is also something you can discuss. I'll go over two common types of evidence here: results from research and supporting examples.

13. Results from Research/Studies

Example 30

Argument: Animals should be treated as if they were people.

Excerpt: In McLellan's case, her team measured the heart rates of cows, which, like in humans, go up when the animals are feeling stressed, and the levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, in their blood. Sure enough, when cows were separated from their best buddy, their heart rates went up and so did their cortisol levels, almost as if they were worried about their best friend's absence.

Analysis: By drawing upon the results of an experiment, the author solidifies her argument on a scientific basis, which builds more credibility and reinforces the similarities between humans and animals.

14. Supporting Examples

Example 31

Argument: Save the environment, not to save the Earth but to save

ourselves.

Excerpt: You might be thinking that I'm blowing this whole "climate change" thing out of proportion. After all, you've barely noticed any changes in the weather, right? Unless, of course, you live in one of the U.S. states that has experienced the polar vortex, where changes to convection currents due to a warming ocean led to weeks of -40° temperatures. Or you're a resident of California, whose nearly empty aquifers have led to extreme water rationing measures in some of the biggest population centers in North America. Or you're really hoping that those tropical bugs that carry Zika and Chagas disease and malaria will stay around the equator where they belong, and not spread north as they have been for the past few decades.

Analysis: The author provides more than one example of the detrimental effects of climate change to magnify the extent of the problem. The variety gets readers to think of climate change not as an isolated problem but as one that will eventually affect them if they don't do something about it. Indeed, the author clearly wanted to make the issue of climate change loom large in the reader's mind. The examples themselves describe dire circumstances that elicit fear and despair.

Logos, Pathos, and Ethos

Logos

Logos is an appeal to logic or reason. Using statistics, challenging assumptions, and bringing up research are typical ways of making a logos-based argument.

Pathos

Pathos is an appeal to emotion (pity, sadness, greed, fear, joy, ambition, etc.). While using personal anecdotes or emotionally-charged words are common ways of invoking pathos, what an author chooses to discuss (the actual subject matter) is the primary weapon of pathos. Charities hoping to raise money for developing countries describe infant children who die in the arms of their mothers because they know it inspires guilt, pity, and compassion. Companies selling home alarm systems overplay the need to

protect your family to make you buy out of fear. A CEO who wants company employees to work harder might stoke their ambitions by telling them their work is changing the world.

Ethos

Ethos is an appeal to the author's own identity, character, or trustworthiness. Think of a presidential candidate describing his accomplishments and military service to appeal to voters.

I put logos, pathos, and ethos at the end of the list of rhetorical elements because I consider them over-arching terms of persuasion rather than ground-level techniques. Most of the time, what you see as logos, pathos, or ethos can actually be broken down into other elements of persuasion (e.g. statistics are typically a component of a logos-based argument). When that happens, I prefer to discuss the ground-level technique (i.e. statistics) as the persuasive element rather than the more abstract Greek term (i.e. logos).

In cases when I do want to bring up logos, pathos, or ethos in my analysis, I like to refer to them not by their names but by their more natural sounding definitions. Rather than saying that an author is invoking pathos, for example, I might instead say that he's appealing to emotion or fear. I've found that while using a Greek term in your essay might seem impressive, it can actually look forced and contrived if done in the wrong way. However, this is just my personal style. You are certainly welcome to mention logos, pathos, and ethos as modes of persuasion in your essay.

After reading this chapter, you may have noticed that a lot of the examples showcase more than one technique. This is not uncommon. Rhetorical questions will often pose hypothetical situations. Statistics may be used in conjunction with word choice. An appeal to identity can also appeal to emotion.

This overlap is good because it gives you more to talk about.

The way to handle overlap is to focus on one main persuasive element for each paragraph and use the other elements as additional reasons for why something in the passage is persuasive. Don't worry if this is a bit vague or confusing. You'll get a better sense of how to put everything together in the next two chapters.

5. The Essay Template for any Prompt

Now that you've learned what constitutes a perfect essay and the persuasive elements you'll be looking for, this chapter will introduce a repeatable framework that will make essay writing easy. After all, an essay is more than just analysis; there needs to be an underlying structure that organizes it. This is THE template that my students have used to get perfect scores. It may seem complicated and hard to memorize at first, but if you actually practice it a few times, you'll see how easy it is to produce amazing essays.

As you go through the template, notice the transitions and complex sentences that have been integrated by design. They ensure that your essay is built on a solid foundation.

Introduction

The idea that Main argument of the passage has its roots in Noun but the underlying reasons are often overlooked.
In Title of passage, author Author of passage puts forth a detailed argument for Noun.
In doing so, he/she employs a variety of rhetorical elements to persuade the reader, including Persuasive element 1, Persuasive element 2, and Persuasive element 3.

Body Paragraph 1

Author of passage's deft use of Persuasive element 1 begins with his/her discussion of Noun.

Your analysis using the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern (covered in the next chapter)
(6+ sentences)

Although Persuasive element 1 may come off as hyperbole/pandering/overly dramatic, Your rebuttal (reinforce why it's effective).

Body Paragraph 2

Just as persuasive as his/her use of Persuasive element 1 is Author of passage's Persuasive element 2.

Your analysis using the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern (covered in the next chapter)
6+ sentences

Without Persuasive element 2, Author of passage's message would lose Noun.

Body Paragraph 3

Lastly, Author of passage bolsters his argument by using Persuasive element 3.

Your analysis using the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern (covered in the next chapter)
6+ sentences

Conclusion

In summary, Author of passage—using Persuasive element 1, Persuasive element 2, and Persuasive element 3—--effectively makes the case that Main argument of the passage.
It's his/her use of persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into action.

At this point, you're probably very confused and overwhelmed. Don't worry! Using my very own essay, I'll illustrate exactly how this template is used. First, I'm going to be honest—I'm not a naturally talented writer. I was a solid B student in most of my high school English classes. But by using the template above, I was able get a 21/24 on the May 2016 essay with a few minutes to spare (I'll share the mistakes I made in a later chapter). The following is the typed-up, word-for-word version of my essay. See Appendix A for a copy of the original hand-written version.

Even though I can't reproduce the passage here (copyright issues), you should be able to spot each component of the template in this essay. Some components are a little out of order, but it's all there. If you'd like to read the passage, search the Internet for "Viewpoint: Air-Conditioning Will Be the End of Us" by Eric Klinenberg.

The idea that we should reduce our dependency on fossil fuels has its roots in environmentalism but its underlying reasons are often overlooked. In "Viewpoint: Air-Conditioning Will Be The End of Us," author Eric

Klinenberg puts forth a detailed argument that society as a whole must reduce its consumption of air-conditioning to thwart climate change. In doing so, he employs a variety of literary elements and supporting examples, including statistics, concessions, and word choice.

Klinenberg's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of air-conditioning use in America in paragraph one. He writes, "Today Americans use twice as much energy for air-conditioning as we did 20 years ago," further noting that this is "more than the rest of the world's nations combined." This statistic grounds his argument in reality, so that even skeptical readers will not be able to dismiss him so easily. The juxtaposition of America's energy consumption with not only its past but also the rest of the world indicates the intensity of the problem. The implication is that we have drastically increased air-conditioning useage beyond what is reasonable. By using these particular statistics, Klinenberg sounds the alarm on our energy use, signalling to readers just how rampant and excessive their habits of consumption may be. Later, in paragraph 5, Klinenberg brings up yet another statistic—sales of air conditioners rose 20% in India and China last year. Here, he makes it explicit that air-conditioning is not a problem distinct to America, but a global one.

Just as persuasive as Klinenberg's use of statistics is his relatability and acknowledgement of the other side. In paragraph 2 and 3, he identifies with those who may be hesitant to accept his argument: "I'm hardly against air-conditioning," he asserts. Indeed, he continues to enumerate may advantages of air-conditioning, which include saving "the lives of old, sick and frail people" and enhancing "productivity in offices." By granting these concessions, Klinenberg establishes credibility as someone who has thought through his point of view. Readers are more likely to perceive him not as an extreme environmentalist hell-bent on cutting off the luxuries of AC but as someone who realizes moderate air-conditioning has its place. Therefore, they are likely to be more receptive to his stance, knowing that their potential objections have been heard. Klinenberg smartly frames himself as an advocate of "public health programs," further creating trust with his audience by putting the greater good first.

Lastly, Klinenberg bolsters his argument with his specific word choice. In paragraph 3, he characterizes the damage caused by air-conditioners as "irreversible." In paragraph 4, he portrays stores in New York City as "pumping arctic air" while "burning through fossil fuels in suicidal fashion." By using words such as "arctic" and "suicidal," he invokes an intense kind of imagery, one that dramatizes the excessive way in which we consume AC. Indeed, we turn our "homes, offices, and massive commercial outlets into igloos." Klinenberg's message to the reader is loud and clear: our "burning

through fossil fuels" is extreme, superfluous, and even ridiculous. There is simply no need to use up energy at the level we are doing so today. Although some may say that Klinenberg's choice of words borders on hyperbole, it is an effective way of turning readers' attention to an issue that likely applies to them on a daily basis. It reinforces the point that our own energy habits have left us in a dire situation that will only get worse if changes aren't made.

In summary, writer Eric Klinenberg—using statistics, acknowledgements to the opposing view, and specific word choice—makes the case that rectifying climage change requires a substantial reduction in air-conditioning usage. It's those persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into solving it.

Step-by-step

Notice how closely my essay follows the template prescribed in this chapter. There is absolutely no way I would've been able to crank out that essay in 50 minutes if I didn't already have a solid blueprint to follow. Here's my step by step process after I first open the writing booklet:

1. Read the entire passage from beginning to end, underlining any words or sentences that contribute to its persuasive power. Next to each part you underline, quickly jot down the persuasive element being used.
2. When you finish the passage, go over the parts you underlined and make a mental list of the persuasive elements you identified.
3. From that list, choose three persuasive elements that you'll discuss in your essay. Try to choose ones that are used throughout the essay so that you'll have a lot to talk about. Don't choose persuasive elements that are used only in one sentence.
4. Read the essay task. It will tell you exactly what the author's main argument is.
5. At this point, it's time to begin writing your essay. You should be onto your introduction within 10 minutes of the starting time. That gives you at least 40 minutes to complete your essay.
6. Always always have a conclusion. The graders will punish you if you don't have one. I'd rather cut one of my body paragraphs short than run out of time before the conclusion. It's completely scripted out for you in the template so just bang it out when you have 3-4 minutes left. Like the introduction, the conclusion should be muscle memory.

The beauty of having a template is that it takes the thinking away from all the essay components that relate to organization, sentence variety,

vocabulary, and transitions, allowing you to focus your time and attention on your analysis.

This template makes a low score nearly impossible because even if your analysis isn't the strongest, you'll still score well on organization and language use.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How do I know whether the author is a he or a she? Sometimes the names are gender neutral.*
   You can tell from the assignment box at the end of the passage, based on whether it uses *his* or *her*.
2. *I've been taught all my life to write an awesome "hook" that draws the reader in. Doesn't the hook in the template seem a bit generic?*
   First of all, the template's introductory sentence is amazing because it reiterates the passage's main idea and leads into your essay in a clear and expressive way. No other type of hook will impress the graders more. Remember that they're hired to rush through hundreds of essays full of poor writing from students everywhere. There is NO hook in the ENTIRE world that would excite them. I'm a teacher myself and I've read hundreds of essays from students taking practice tests for the first time. The best they've been able to get from me is a chuckle (usually from a terrible hook). Maybe I'm just a mean, humorless teacher, but still … Don't go out of your way and waste 5 minutes coming up with an awesome hook. Even if you manage to come up with an ingenious attention-grabber, it's just one sentence in your entire essay. The hook alone will not get you a perfect score. Writing a long intelligent essay will.
3. *Will the graders know I'm using a template?*
   First, realize that the template does not script out the meat of your essay, which is your analysis. Much of what you write will actually be unique to you. Secondly, graders look at so many essays that it's extremely unlikely they'll be able to tell whether you're using a template. None of my students have ever been penalized for using the template in this book (or any other template). Even if the graders somehow knew you were using this specific template from this specific book, they would still have to base their grades on the essay content and NOT on whether they think you used a template. If you're still concerned, then I recommend developing your own introductory sentence. The first sentence is more likely to tip a grader off than anything else in the template. This leads me to the next question …

4. *Can I tweak the template to fit my own style/needs?*
   Absolutely. Everything in the template is a guideline. The main point is to go in prepared with something you can rattle off immediately.
5. *Do I need to practice?*
   Um yes! Keep writing essays until you can consistently churn out high quality responses. Do not think that it'll come easy just because you read this chapter. So many students, including my younger self, think that they can pull off a great essay just by reading some formula or template. Then when test day inevitably rolls around, they freeze up and totally botch it. Having the template in your mind is not the same as being able to write it. You need to make it muscle memory. Go and practice.

6. The Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern

The previous chapter laid out the best approach to the SAT Essay, but there are still some things that haven't been answered. Namely, how you should fill out each body paragraph.

The template requires that each body paragraph have at least 6 sentences of analysis using the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern. In this chapter, I'll explain what that is and how it works.

Overview

Here is an example of the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate Pattern in action.

---

[1] Harken's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of our voting system. [2] He mentions that "a single resident of Wyoming has the same Senatorial power as 80 residents of California combined." [3] By comparing Wyoming residents with California residents using an exact number, the author shows the extent to which our system of democracy is broken. [4] Such a lopsided statistic shocks the reader and incites a sense of unfairness. [5] The American system of government is supposed to promote fairness and equality, but in reality, it does just the opposite.

The first sentence is just the topic sentence for the first paragraph in the template.

The second sentence **narrates**, or recounts something the author does. Think of a broadcaster narrating the action of a basketball game. A narrate-sentence can consist of either a quote from the passage to point something out or a simple summary of what the author is doing at a certain place in the passage.

Sentences 3 and 4 **explain** why the narrated portion is persuasive. What's the purpose behind writing it? What does the author hope to achieve? What effect does it have on the reader?

The fifth sentence **reiterates**, or summarizes, the author's message in the portion being analyzed. This ties the narrating and the explaining together.

The idea is to keep writing Narrating and Explaining sentences until you

fill out your paragraphs, perhaps adding in a Reiterating sentence here and there (more on this later). So let's say you wanted one of your body paragraphs to focus on the author's use of statistics. You would pick out an example from the passage, narrate it, explain it, and then maybe reiterate it. Then you would pick out another example from the passage and repeat the process. At that point, you could conclude your paragraph or do another round if you thought it would bring something new to your analysis.

Keep in mind that this pattern is flexible. Typically you will narrate first but you might reiterate and then explain. Or you might narrate for three sentences and then explain in the next four. The order and the number of sentences don't matter. The point of the pattern is to ensure you have a purpose for each sentence in your analysis. No essay will follow the pattern exactly sentence by sentence; it's just a framework for thinking about what to write.

Here's an example paragraph, annotated for the narrate-explain-reiterate pattern.

Gioia's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of the arts. **(Narrating topic sentence)**
He brings up a study that measured the drastic fall in arts participation in America. **(Narrating, with a summary)**
He specifically draws attention to the fact that the "declines have been most severe among younger adults." **(Narrating, with a quote)**
By citing these trends, Gioia is grounding his argument in reality so that even skeptical readers won't be able to dismiss it so easily. **(Explaining)**
Not only do the numbers indicate that there is in fact a growing problem but they also show the extent of it. **(Explaining)**
The state of reading in America is in dire straits and because young people participate the least, the troubles will only compound. **(Reiterating)**
The underlying assumption that young people are the future of America makes the statistics even more alarming. **(Explaining)**
Gioia further points out that in a poll conducted in 2001, "38 percent of employers complained that local schools inadequately taught reading comprehension." **(Narrating)**
This additional statistic addresses any doubts readers may have over the value of literature engagement. **(Explaining)**
Certainly, literature is important from a cultural standpoint, but Gioia proves that it's also important from a practical standpoint. **(Reiterating/Explaining)**
By covering both bases, he is able to persuade readers with differing perspectives and values. **(Explaining)**

Although Gioia's use of statistics may come off as overly dramatic, it is hard to argue with numbers that paint a bleak picture of an issue that most Americans are familiar with, whether it be in school or in the workplace. **(Explaining concluding sentence)**

How to Narrate

To narrate effectively, you must be able to quote effectively. Unfortunately, quoting is big enough of a topic that we have to reserve it for the next chapter. What we will do is give you a list of common words and phrases to use when you're narrating.

The author…

- discusses
- frequently uses
- brings up
- cites
- writes
- expresses
- establishes the fact that
- indicates that
- argues that
- makes the conclusion that
- cites
- represents this issue as
- mentions
- notes that
- calls upon
- voices his concern that
- tells the reader that
- shows that
- continues
- sets the stage for his argument by noting
- goes on to state that
- characterizes
- warns
- connects this and that to
- points out
- quotes
- acknowledges
- contends

- states
- maintains
- emphasizes
- highlights
- makes a reference to
- asserts that

You don't have to memorize all of these but try to keep 5 or 6 of them in your back pocket and use them when you practice. That way, you'll have a variety of words to choose from when you need a word for a specific situation and can't come up with one, or when you want to avoid repeating the same narrating words in your paragraphs.

How to Explain

My favorite expressions to use when explaining:

- The implication is that…
- The suggestion is that…
- … serves to…
- The inclusion of… helps…
- … elicits …
- … grounds her argument in reality so that even skeptical readers won't be able to dismiss it
- … marks the extent of the problem.
- By appealing to our sense of…, the author…
- The author exploits the fact that… to…
- Given that…, …
- … proves to the reader that…
- By showing that there is…, the author…
- … contributes greatly to the argument's persuasive power by…
- Without …, readers wouldn't realize…
- … compels the reader to…
- … prompts readers to imagine…
- The author uses… in order to convey…

In filling out these sentences, you'll find it helpful to draw upon the reasons for using each rhetorical element in "The Elements of Persuasion" chapter. The examples in that chapter are good models to follow.

How to Reiterate

The most important thing about reiterating is that **you should keep it to a minimum**. Most of your essay should be narrating and explaining and if you look at the annotated example in this chapter, you'll see that there's only one full reiterating sentence.

Why should you avoid reiterating too much? Because even a few sentences of reiteration can make a paragraph sound like summary instead of analysis. Your job isn't to restate the author's message, but rather dissect the persuasive elements within it. In fact, your essay doesn't have to do any reiterating at all.

So why is it included in the Narrate-Explain-Reiterate pattern? Because sometimes you need a reiterating sentence to provide some context. It can also be a nice way of emphasizing or wrapping up one of your points. So while it is a useful tool, avoid using it too much or even altogether.

7. The Art of Quoting

Here are the rules you need to know when quoting from a passage.

1. Use quotation marks whenever you're quoting word-for-word directly from the passage

Example 1

Excerpt:	The panda could go extinct within the next two decades.
Sentence:	To convey a sense of urgency, Kingsley writes, "The panda could go extinct within the next two decades."

Notice the comma after *writes*. When a quote is preceded by an identifier such as *she said* or *according to experts*, a comma should be used after the identifier.

2. You should not use quotation marks when paraphrasing

Example 2

Excerpt:	The panda could go extinct within the next two decades.
Sentence:	Kingsley believes that the panda species may not exist in twenty years.

Not using quotation marks doesn't mean you can't borrow some words. It comes down to judgment, but as long as most of the words are your own, you don't have to use quotation marks.

3. Always place trailing periods and commas inside the quotation marks

This is the rule that American English follows (it's different for British English).

Example 3

Excerpt:	The panda could go extinct within the next two decades. Current conservation efforts are not enough.
Sentence:	"The panda could go extinct within the next two decades," Kingsley warns. "Current conservation efforts are not enough."

A comma is required after *decades* to set it apart from the indicator *Kingsley warns*.

4. Put quotation marks around quotes you've incorporated into the context of a sentence

Example 4

Excerpt: As a chess player, I can say for sure that great chess players have an enhanced ability to recognize patterns.

Sentence: The author operates under the assumption that "great chess players have an enhanced ability to recognize patterns."

Example 5

Excerpt: Pandas were once prevalent throughout Asia until infrequent reproduction, poaching, and habitat loss led to thousands of deaths.

Sentence: Kingsley attributes the rapid decline in the panda population to "infrequent reproduction, poaching, and habitat loss."

Example 6

Excerpt: The lack of regulation has enabled the destruction of thousands of forests.

Sentence: Because China takes a hands-off approach to land development, "the lack of regulation has enabled the destruction of thousands of forests."

If the quote includes the beginning of a sentence, you can adjust the capitalization to fit your sentence, as we did in the example above.

5. Semicolons, colons, and dashes that aren't part of the quote should always go outside the quotation marks

Example 7

Excerpt: We cannot allow our forests to go unprotected.

Sentence: According to Kingsley, "We cannot allow our forests to go unprotected"; the risks are much too great.

6. Question marks and exclamation points belong inside the quotation marks when they're part of the quote, outside when they're not

Example 8

Excerpt: What would you do if you had a million dollars?

Sentence: John gets readers thinking from the outset by asking the question, "What would you do if you had a million dollars?"

Example 9

Sentence: Have you read "The Great Gatsby"?

Example 10

Excerpt: We must save the environment! Too much is at risk.

Sentence: "We must save the environment!" Kingsley exclaims.

7. Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes

Example 11

Excerpt: Sleep disorders have been linked to diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and depression, and recent research suggests one main cause of "short sleep" is "long light."

Sentence: Bogard indicates that there are practical reasons too, pointing out that "one main cause of 'short sleep' is 'long light."

8. Put quotation marks around the title of the passage

Example 12

Sentence: In "Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment," Summers describes the advantages plastic bags have over paper bags.

9. Put quotation marks around words referred to as words

Example 13

Excerpt: 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.

Sentence: Goodman uses the word "global" three times in the same sentence to show the extent the world stage influences American issues.

Example 14

Excerpt: The ragged prisoners crawled out of their cells, desperate for food.

Sentence: The author uses words such as "ragged," "crawled," and "desperate" to illustrate the bleak conditions of the prison camp.

However, there is no need to put quotation marks around words or short phrases that you aren't calling out as words. In fact, overusing quotation marks can make it seem like you're doubting what the author is saying (scare quotes).

Example 15

Excerpt: In developed countries, running water is available everywhere and air-conditioning is expected not just in our homes but in our cars. We don't realize that these are luxuries.

Wrong: The author mentions "running water" and "air-conditioning" as examples of things we take for granted.

Correct: The author mentions running water and air-conditioning as examples of things we take for granted.

Again, you are allowed to borrow words without having to quote them. Too many students make the mistake of quoting every single word they use from the passage. Words like "running water" and "air-conditioning" are not significant enough by themselves to require quotation marks unless you are referring to them as words as I am in this sentence.

10. You can use an ellipsis to replace words that you want to omit from the middle of a quote.

Example 16

Excerpt: Researchers have found that pomegranate, which contains a variety of antioxidants, can slow the aging process.

Sentence: The author cites research that shows that "pomegranate … can slow the aging process."

However, don't use an ellipsis at the beginning or end of a quote, even if you're omitting the beginning or end of the original sentence.

Example 17

Excerpt: 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.

Wrong: One of the benefits of plastic bags is that they "… produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions…"

Correct: One of the benefits of plastic bags is that they "produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions."

11. You can use brackets to insert words or letters for clarity or punctuation

Example 18

Excerpt: Geography is important. It should be taught in every school.

Sentence: Given the global community we live in today, the author believes that "it [geography] should be taught in every school."

Without the word "geography," the sentence might confuse someone who doesn't know what "it" refers to. We can't assume that everyone has read the original passage.

Example 19

Excerpt: Reading exposes you to new ideas.

Sentence: Peters asserts that reading can "expose[] you to new ideas."

In Example 19, we changed the verb tense by removing "s" from "exposes." Empty square brackets indicate this change from the original. In cases where you want to add an "s" to make a verb singular, you can insert a "[s]" after the verb.

My favorite quoting patterns

One of the easiest and most effective ways of quoting from a passage is to use a colon.

Example 20

Excerpt: Ninety percent of all Americans live within 15 minutes of Walmart.

Sentence: Jones uses a surprising statistic to grab our attention: "Ninety percent of all Americans live within 15 minutes of Walmart."

This is my favorite way to quote because it pairs your analysis with a supporting quote. Just don't overuse this pattern.

Another pattern I like to use goes like this:

By ... [quote], [the author's name] ... [analysis]

Example 21

Excerpt:	The ragged prisoners crawled out of their cells, desperate for food.
Sentence:	By using words such as "ragged," "crawled," and "desperate," Livingston creates a sense of doom and despair.

Example 22

Excerpt:	Who wants rich, privileged bureaucrats bossing us around when we can have people like you and me fighting for our own causes?
Sentence:	By juxtaposing "bureaucrats" with "people like you and me," Rubin creates an "us versus them" mentality.

Final Note

At the end of the day, proper punctuation is not as important as your actual analysis. A few punctuation errors will not hurt your score. If you're unsure of something, do the best you can and move on.

8. 7 Fatal Mistakes Students Make on the Essay

1. Taking a Personal Stance

The SAT essay is an analytical one. While the passage you'll be reading will certainly be opinionated, your essay should not be. You can reiterate what the author's views are in your analysis, but you shouldn't comment on whether the author is right or wrong. The SAT essay is definitely one of those times when you should keep your opinions to yourself.

2. All Summary, No Analysis

One of the easiest traps to fall into is simply summarizing *what* the author's argument is rather than analyzing *how* he or she builds it.

Some students treat the essay almost as a mini book report in which they just restate what the author says. They completely forget to discuss the impact on the reader and how the author makes that impact.

So make sure your analysis takes center stage. Summary (reiterating) sentences should only be there to fill in the gaps and add context to your analysis. Keep them to a minimum.

3. Assertions Without Explanation

Here are some examples of assertions without explanation:

- *The statistic that plastic bags are 80 percent more efficient is very persuasive to the reader.*
- *The research done by the National Wildlife Foundation serves as solid evidence.*
- *The discussion of pollution's harmful effects helps to change the reader's mind.*

Don't make statements like the ones above without backing them up. In fact, I don't like making statements like the ones above period. They're much too general.

To get a high score, you really need to elaborate on your points and do more than just state that something is persuasive.

4. Too Many Quotes

I suspect that this is one of the mistakes that prevented me from getting a 24/24 on the May 2016 SAT essay (I got a 21/24). My third paragraph was filled with a few too many quotes and for some of them, the quotation marks weren't even necessary according to punctuation rules. Because of these errors, the paragraph came out a bit choppy and I didn't balance it out enough with my own analysis.

While quotes are an essential component of any analytical essay, it goes without saying that your essay should comprise more of your own words than someone else's. Some students quote too much, and their essays end up reading like a collection of excerpts from the passage.

Remember that quoting isn't the only way to narrate what the author is doing. You should alternate between quoting and giving a summary. Here are some examples of how you can point something out without using a direct quote:

- The author immediately jumps into a few concrete examples of … in order to …
- The author finishes his discussion of plastic with a rhetorical question, questioning whether …
- He then supplies two pieces of evidence from the National Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund.
- Her anecdote about … serves to …
- The brief background history about … helps …
- The author cites scientific evidence from … showing that …

See how the examples above narrate effectively without using a quote? Don't always feel the need to attach a quote to your analysis, especially when the specifics in the quote are unnecessary or when the quotes themselves are too long and unwieldy to include. For example, don't quote an entire anecdote just to say that the author uses an anecdote. That would be ridiculous. Just say *The author brings up an anecdote about ... in order to ...*

A good rule of thumb is that quotes should never make up more than a 25% of a paragraph. In fact, I now try to have quotes take up only 20% of each body paragraph.

The meat of your essay should be your analysis, so make sure there's enough of it!

5. Too Many Paragraph Markers

This is another mistake that probably cost me a point or two on my essay. I used way too many paragraph markers. A paragraph marker simply specifies the number of the paragraph you're writing about:

In paragraph five, ...

Initially, I thought the use of paragraph markers would be acceptable, even encouraged. After all, they're an easy way of setting the context of your analysis, and the SAT does print out the paragraph number at the start of each paragraph in the passage. The numbers are almost begging to be used.

But after seeing the scores for my essay and some of my students', my thoughts have changed. Paragraph markers should be avoided. One or two may be fine, but their usage is a sign of lazy writing. Even though they can be used as transitions, they don't add anything to your analysis and having too many will clutter your essay. Furthermore, The College Board has since released several high-scoring sample essays and they rarely if ever use paragraph markers.

6. Not writing fast enough

I'm serious about this one. You should be writing like the wind. You should be writing so fast your hand hurts. If you don't believe me, then you haven't tried writing a full 2.5-3 page SAT essay in 50 minutes.

7. No conclusion

Though missing the conclusion is not as bad as most students think, it's still a glaring error that makes it hard for anyone to ever give you a full score. Always save enough space and enough time for the conclusion. If you miss the conclusion, some graders might not give you the benefit of the doubt—they might just assume you don't know what a conclusion is. A one sentence conclusion is better than no conclusion because at the very least, it shows an understanding of essay organization.

9. Official Prompts & Sample Essays

The College Board has currently released 7 official SAT essay prompts for you to practice with. All of them can be found at thecollegepanda.com/complete-test-links/

I highly suggest you do at least four practice essays before you sit for the real exam. If you don't practice what you learn, you don't internalize it and you put your score at risk. Just reading this book is not enough.

Here's the list of official prompts:

1. "Let There Be Dark" by Paul Bogard
2. "Why Literature Matters" by Dana Gioia
3. "Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment" by Adam B. Summers
4. "Foreign News at a Crisis Point" by Peter S. Goodman
5. Foreword to "Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land, A Photographic Journey" by Jimmy Carter
6. "Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence." by Martin Luther King Jr.
7. "The Digital Parent Trap" by Eliana Dockterman

This chapter includes sample essays to the first four listed. All of them adhere to the template in this book so they should be good models to compare your essays with.

Sample Essay to "Let There Be Dark" by Paul Bogard

The idea that we should reduce our electricity usage has its roots in energy conservation but the underlying reasons are often overlooked. In "Let There Be Dark," author Paul Bogard puts forth a detailed argument for the preservation of darkness. In doing so, he employs a variety of literary elements to persuade the reader, including statistics, appeals to authority, and the juxtaposition of past and present.

Bogard's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of the dark sky. There, he mentions that "8 out of 10 children born in the United States will never know a sky dark enough for the Milky Way." This statistic strikes unsuspecting readers who aren't aware that artificial light overuse is even a problem. Its intent is to not only introduce the issue but also show the extent

to which we are losing the night sky. At this point, readers are instilled with a sense of loss, that something they once knew is now going away, but they still may have questions about whether darkness has any real value. Bogard puts those questions to rest by using more statistics. We depend on darkness for the "bats that save American farmers billions in pest control and the moths that pollinate 80% of the world's flora." The implication is that the night sky is just the start of what we'll lose if we continue to let light invade dark. The Earth's ecology relies on darkness and we in turn rely on Earth's ecology for a multitude of benefits. Even skeptical readers who don't appreciate the night sky as much as Bogard does are forced to contend with the practical consequences of the encroachment of day into night. Bogard intensifies the sense of urgency by noting that "the amount of light in the sky increases an average of about 6% every year." The more we ignore the problem of light pollution, the more insurmountable it becomes. Although some may say that Bogard's statistics are overly dramatic, they are grounded in reality and accurately reflect the aftermath in a world without darkness.

Just as persuasive as Bogard's use of statistics is his appeal to authority. He calls upon several credible sources to substantiate his points: "Already the World Health Organization classifies working the night shift as a probable human carcinogen, and the American Medical Association has voiced its unanimous support for 'light pollution reduction efforts and glare reduction efforts at both the national and state levels.'" By showing that there is a consensus among these respected organizations, Bogard gives his argument increased credibility and merit. The mention of the World Health Organization, for example, tells the reader that Bogard's argument is not an arbitrary assault on artificial light but a well-thought-out and researched position. Later, Bogard brings up Paris, the "city of lights." Surely, there is no place that is more a bastion of artificial light pollution than Paris. Why would Bogard mention it? Because "even Paris …, which already turns off its monument lighting after 1 a.m., will this summer start to require its shops, offices and public buildings to turn off lights after 2 a.m." The fact that Paris understands the importance of natural darkness puts peer pressure on other cities to do the same. Without these appeals to authority, Bogard's message would lose the credence gained from having others support it.

Lastly, Bogard bolsters his argument by juxtaposing the past and the present. He writes, "All life evolved to the steady rhythm of bright days and dark nights. Today, though, when we feel the closeness of night fall, we reach for a light switch." Here, he paints a sharp contrast between our natural behavior and our behavior today. This contrast continues in Bogard's description of the dark sky in the 1950s and the blanket of light that covers it

now. These comparisons of the past and the present highlight the rapid changes that have occurred since light started invading the dark. They convey a sense of foreboding, that the shift has been too sudden for us to cope with and that we're all worse off than before. The benefits of darkness are lost as quickly as we have polluted it with light. "In today's crowded, louder, more fast-paced world, night's darkness can provide solitude, quiet, and stillness," Bogard asserts. By framing darkness as the solution to today's fast-paced world, he uses yet another juxtaposition to persuade. After all, who would prefer crowded and loud to solitude and quiet?

In summary, Bogard—using statistics, appeals to authority, and juxtaposition—makes the case that darkness needs to be maintained and protected. It's his use of persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into action.

Sample Essay to "Why Literature Matters" by Dana Gioia

The idea that literature plays an integral role in society's development has its roots in academia but its underlying roots are often overlooked. In "Why Literature Matters," Dana Gioia puts forth a detailed argument for the advancement of literature as a bedrock of cultural progress. In doing so, he employs a variety of literary elements to persuade the reader, including statistics, word choice, and quotes from authoritative sources.

Gioia's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of the arts. He brings up a study that measured the drastic fall in arts participation in America. He specifically draws attention to the fact that the "declines have been most severe among younger adults." By citing these trends, Gioia is grounding his argument in reality so that even skeptical readers won't be able to dismiss it so easily. Not only do the numbers indicate that there is in fact a growing problem but they also show the extent of it. The state of reading in America is in dire straits and because young people participate the least, the troubles will only compound. The underlying assumption that young people are the future of America makes the statistics even more alarming. Gioia further points out that in a poll conducted in 2001, "38 percent of employers complained that local schools inadequately taught reading comprehension." This additional statistic addresses any doubts readers may have over the value of literature engagement. Certainly, literature is important from a cultural standpoint, but Gioia proves that it's also important from a practical standpoint. By covering both bases, he is able to persuade readers with differing perspectives and values. Although Gioia's use of statistics may come off as overly dramatic, it is hard to argue with numbers that paint a bleak picture of an issue that most Americans are familiar with, whether it be in

school or in the workplace.

Just as persuasive as his use of statistics is Gioia's word choice. He uses the words "longstanding" and "fundamental" to characterize the cultural activity that is reading literature. Later in the same sentence, he uses the word "deep" to describe the transformations that literature signifies in modern life. His choice of words establishes literature almost as an age-old tradition in America, a piece of cultural heritage that may soon be lost. By appealing to our sense of nostalgia and identity, he hopes to rekindle our connection to and passion for reading. Linking literature to the American identity allows him to cast it as something worth fighting to protect. Indeed, he warns of what will happen if we abandon our literary roots: "As more Americans lose this capacity, our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded." Notice that he explicitly calls out to Americans, again tying his argument to the American values of independence and freedom. Without Gioia's specific choice of words, his argument would lose a strong appeal to our American identities.

Lastly, Gioia bolsters his argument by quoting authoritative sources outside the arts. For instance, he cites "Wired" magazine, which is typically associated more with math and science than with the arts and humanities. Of course, this fact only serves Gioia's argument even more because it implies that even in the cold quantitative world of math, science, and business, literature has its place. He writes, "a new set of mental skills and habits proper to the 21st century [are] decidedly literary in character." He then quotes Daniel Pink, a well-known behavioral science writer, to substantiate his point —"the ability to create artistic and emotional beauty" is one that will be valued more than ever before. Readers of all backgrounds are encouraged to see how relevant literature is outside a humanities domain, that it has applications in our everyday creative and civic spheres. Indeed, Gioia cites studies done by the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Conference of State Legislatures to reinforce this point. The fact that Gioia is able to point to several authorities in a variety of industries that all value an engagement with literature lend great credibility to his main argument.

In summary, Dana Gioia—using statistics, word choice, and authoritative sources—makes the case that we must restore literature back to an active post in our society. It's his use of persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into action.

Sample Essay to "Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment" by Adam B. Summers

The question of whether to use paper bags or plastic bags has its roots in environmental conservation but its underlying assumptions are often overlooked. In "Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment," author Adam B. Summers puts forth a detailed argument for the use of plastic bags. In doing so, he employs a variety of rhetorical elements to persuade the reader, including an appeal to identity, statistics, and the results of health research.

Summers's deft use of an appeal to identity begins with his discussion of a bill that would ban plastic bags in California. He expresses contempt for "some politicians and environmentalists [who] are now focused on deciding for us what kind of container we can use to carry our groceries." Given the American values of freedom and independence, Summers is aware that this persuasive approach is likely to stir American sensibilities. After all, no one, especially Americans, likes being told what they can and cannot do. Furthermore, Summers frequently uses the collective pronoun "we." This strengthens the unity and sense of purpose of the audience he is addressing and portrays himself as being part of the group. Readers are more likely to accept an argument made by someone who is on their side and aligned with their values. The appeal to identity continues in Summers's definition of a free society: "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." By invoking a belief that is so fundamental to American democracy, Summers makes it hard for readers to disagree with him. He frames the right to use a plastic bag as one that all true Americans would rally behind. Although some may say that his appeal to identity is overly dramatic, especially for something as trivial as a plastic bag, it's undoubtedly effective because an American audience understands the larger issues at stake.

Just as persuasive as Summers's appeal to identity is his use of statistics. He quickly challenges the widely-held belief that plastic bags are "evil incarnate" with indisputable numbers: "plastic bags, sacks, and wraps of all kinds … make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials." In addition, "the most common kind of plastic grocery bags make up 0.3 percent of this total." These small numbers indicate just how inconsequential plastic bags are to the environment. They dispel any limiting assumptions readers may have and open them up to the possibility that plastic bags are not only harmless but also better than paper bags. Indeed, these initial statistics lay the groundwork for even more persuasive ones: "[plastic bags] require 40 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." By illustrating how much more efficient plastic bags are, Summers persuades the reader from both a cost perspective and an environmental one.

It's only through these numbers that he's able to dislodge the widespread idea that paper bags are better. Without them, his message would lose an important distinction between paper and plastic.

Lastly, Summers bolsters his argument by citing the results of scientific research. He brings up several studies showing that "plastic bag bans lead to increased health problems due to food contamination from bacteria that remain in the reusable bags." Furthermore, a statistical analysis by two law professors, Jonathan Klick and Joshua D. Wright, discovered a "spike in hospital emergency room visits" after San Francisco's plastic bag ban was introduced in 2007. The inclusion of this research solidifies the credibility and trustworthiness of Summers's argument. The implication is that if these authoritative sources agree that a plastic bag ban is a bad idea, then we should too. Moreover, Summers has skillfully shown an environmental problem—paper or plastic?—to also be a health problem, something that is far more likely to resonate with readers. Some may not care so much about the environment, but everyone cares about his or her health. Indeed, the specific mention of "E. coli, salmonella, and campylobacter-related intestinal infectious diseases" is sure to elicit a visceral response from many readers.

In summary, Summers—using an appeal to identity, statistics, and health research—effectively makes the case that plastic shopping bags should not be banned. It's his use of persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into action.

Sample Essay to "Foreign News at a Crisis Point" by Peter S. Goodman

The idea that news should encompass the world, not just America, has its roots in objective journalism practices but its underlying reasons are often overlooked. In "Foreign News at a Crisis Point," writer Peter S. Goodman puts forth a detailed argument that news organizations need to find ways to incorporate foreign affairs into the coverage that Americans consume. In doing so, Goodman employs a variety of literary elements to persuade the reader, including supporting examples, statistics, and strong directives with the pronoun "we."

Goodman's deft use of supporting examples begins with his discussion of the impact of global events on the U.S. He brings up "a global war on terror," "global imbalances in savings," and "a global trade treaty" to show the extent the world stage influences American issues. The word "global" is used three times in the same sentence to highlight this interconnectedness. Additional examples such as the "competition from counterparts on the other side of

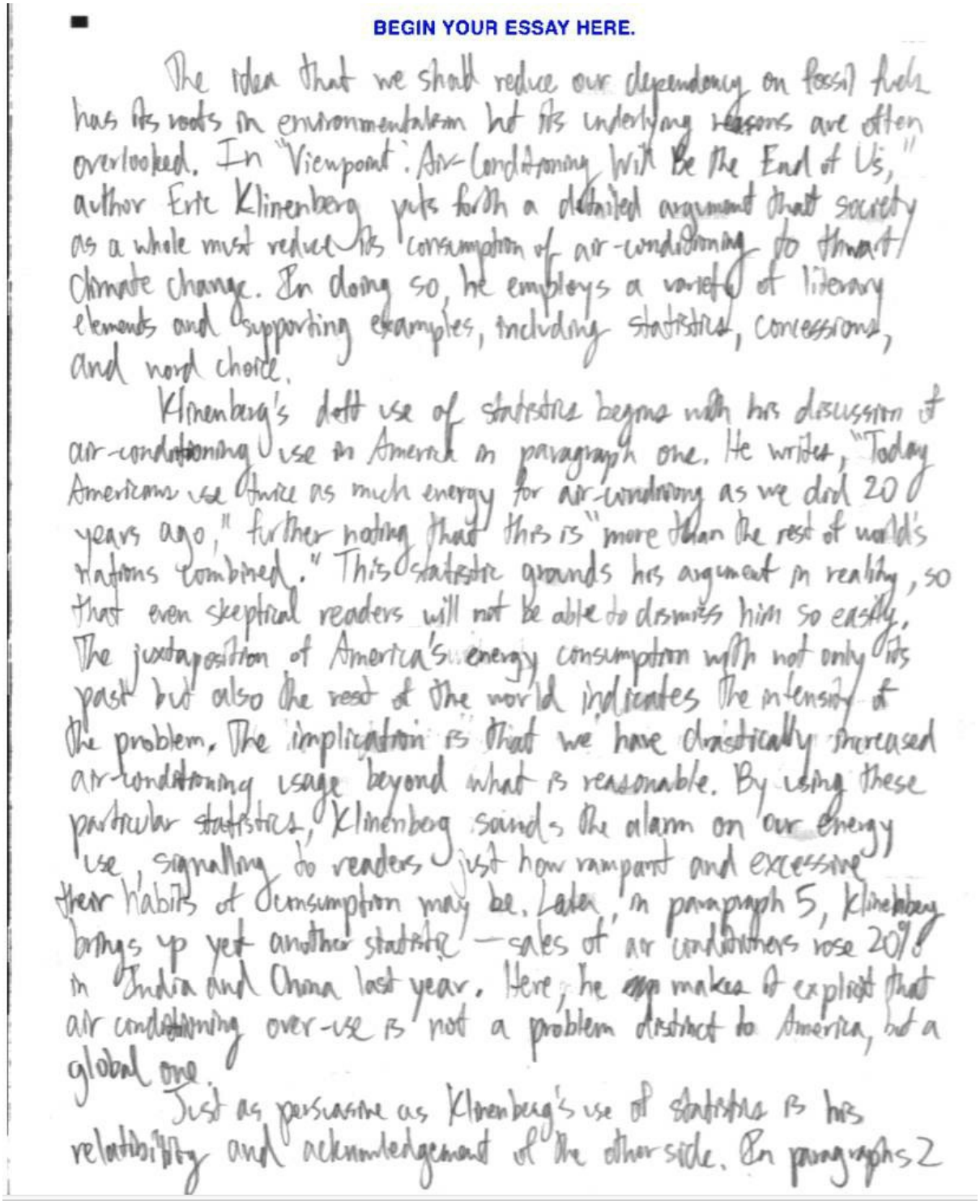
oceans" create a sense of importance and urgency. Goodman's message to the reader is simple: if we do not understand what is happening in the world at large, we are vulnerable to threats from abroad. Although Goodman's examples may come off as overly dramatic, they are all rooted in issues that Americans contend with on a daily basis. Those who have had to grapple with outsourcing, declining budgets, or terrorist attacks will strongly identify with Goodman's argument.

Just as persuasive as his supporting examples is Goodman's use of statistics. He sets the stage for his argument by noting the decrease in full-time foreign correspondents from 307 to 234. He also points out that the drop in world news coverage is reflected in the 53 percent reduction in newspaper space devoted to foreign affairs. These numbers are likely to surprise readers who aren't aware of the dire state of foreign news, opening their eyes to a real problem that needs to become a priority. They also ground Goodman's argument in reality so that even skeptical readers cannot so easily dismiss his claims. After all, statistics are hard to argue against. Without them, the gravity of the issue might go unrecognized.

Lastly, Goodman bolsters his argument by using strong directives with the pronoun "we." For example, his assertion that we all know the power of social media sets up a baseline assumption from which to further build his argument. The power of social media is a given; it's up to us to use it wisely and creatively to promote foreign news. In laying out his plan for change, Goodman again uses a strong directive with "we": "We need to embrace the present and gear for the future." This is a call to action that readers will find hard to ignore. By using the collective pronoun "we," he establishes a sense of solidarity with the reader, one that extends to society as a whole and the global issues everyone must face together. He frames his cause as one that we must all be a part of and finishes with a rallying cry that urges us to fight for serious-minded journalism: "We need to put back what the Internet has taken away. We need to turn the void into something fresh and compelling." Through these directives, Goodman inspires his audience and empowers them to be more proactive in creating and developing foreign news. He entrusts us with a noble goal and calls on us to be the ones who fulfill it.

In summary, Peter Goodman—using supporting examples, statistics, and strong directives—effectively makes the case that foreign news coverage has declined and must be restored. It's his use of persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into action.

10. Appendix A: A Copy of my Actual Essay



BEGIN YOUR ESSAY HERE.

The idea that we should reduce our dependency on fossil fuels has its roots in environmentalism but its underlying reasons are often overlooked. In "Viewpoint: Air-Conditioning Will Be The End of Us," author Eric Klinenberg puts forth a detailed argument that society as a whole must reduce its consumption of air-conditioning to thwart climate change. In doing so, he employs a variety of literary elements and supporting examples, including statistics, concessions, and word choice.

Klinenberg's deft use of statistics begins with his discussion of air-conditioning use in America in paragraph one. He writes, "Today Americans use thrice as much energy for air-conditioning as we did 20 years ago," further noting that this is "more than the rest of world's nations combined." This statistic grounds his argument in reality, so that even skeptical readers will not be able to dismiss him so easily. The juxtaposition of America's energy consumption with not only its past but also the rest of the world indicates the intensity of the problem. The implication is that we have drastically increased air-conditioning usage beyond what is reasonable. By using these particular statistics, Klinenberg sounds the alarm on our energy use, signalling to readers just how rampant and excessive their habits of consumption may be. Later, in paragraph 5, Klinenberg brings up yet another statistic — sales of air conditioners rose 20% in India and China last year. Here, he also makes it explicit that air conditioning over-use is not a problem distinct to America, but a global one.

Just as persuasive as Klinenberg's use of statistics is his relatability and acknowledgement of the other side. In paragraphs 2

DO NOT WRITE OUTSIDE OF THE BOX.

and 3, he identifies with those who may be hesitant to accept his argument: "I'm hardly against air-conditioning," he asserts. Indeed, he continues to enumerate many advantages of air-conditioning, which include saving "the lives of old, sick and frail people" and enhancing "productivity in offices." By granting these concessions, Klinenberg establishes credibility as someone who has thought through his point of view. Readers are more likely to perceive him not as an extreme environmentalist hell-bent on cutting off the luxuries of AC but as someone who realizes moderate air-conditioning use has its place. Therefore, they are likely to be more receptive to his stance, knowing that their potential objections have been heard. Klinenberg smartly frames himself as an advocate of "public health programs," further creating trust with his audience by putting the greater good first.

Lastly, Klinenberg bolsters his argument with his specific word choice. In paragraph 3, he characterizes the damage caused by air-conditioners as "irreversible." In paragraph 4, he portrays stores in New York City as "pumping arctic air" while "burning through fossil fuels in suicidal fashion." By using words such as "arctic" and "suicidal," he invokes an intense kind of imagery, one that dramatizes the excessive way in which we consume AC. Indeed, we turn our "homes, offices, and massive commercial outlets into igloos." Klinenberg's message to the reader is loud and clear: our "burning through fossil fuels" is extreme, superfluous, and even ridiculous. There is simply no need to use up energy at the level we are doing so today.

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Although some may say that Klinenberg's choice of words borders on hyperbole, it is an effective way of turning readers' attention to an issue that likely applies to them on a daily basis. It reinforces the point that our own energy habits have left us in a dire situation that will only get worse if changes aren't made.

In summary, writer Eric Klinenberg – using statistics, acknowledgements to the opposing view, and specific word choice – makes the case that rectifying climate change requires a substantial reduction in air-conditioning usage. It's those persuasive elements that not only inform the reader of the problem but also spur the reader into solving it.

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