

Essay Prompt:

- As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] 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 [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author's claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author's] claims, but rather explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.

KEY TO THE SAT

The prompt used for the SAT Essay will be consistent for all administrations. The passage will differ.

SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Use the SAT Essay prompt with passages relevant to your curriculum (science, social studies, health, career), giving students the opportunity to analyze quality pieces of writing in the content areas, and also practice with the prompt.

- » Practice evaluating evidence for consistent and legitimate supporting arguments. Students must discern whether the evidence they use actually strengthens their argument.
- » Revisit previous writing assignments periodically, and allow students to alter their evidence, their word choices, or otherwise edit their work to strengthen their skills.

SAT ESSAY DOMAIN (PROVISIONAL)

Content Dimension	Description
Reading	Comprehension of the source text Understanding of central ideas, important details, and their interrelationship Accuracy in representation of the source text (i.e., no errors of fact or interpretation introduced) Use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both) to demonstrate understanding of the source text
Analysis	Analysis of the source text and understanding of the analytical task Evaluation of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or features chosen by the student Support for claims or points made in the response Focus on features of the text most relevant to addressing the task
Writing	Use of a central claim Use of effective organization and progression of ideas Use of varied sentence structures Employment of precise word choice Maintenance of a consistent, appropriate style and tone Command of the conventions of standard written English

ESSAY SAMPLE

*Adapted from Paul Bogard, "Let There Be Dark." ©2012 by the Los Angeles Times.
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At my family's cabin on a Minnesota lake, I knew woods so dark that my hands disappeared before my eyes. I knew night skies in which meteors left smoky trails across sugary spreads of stars. But now, when 8 of
 Line 10 children born in the United States will never know a sky dark enough
 5 for the Milky Way, I worry we are rapidly losing night's natural darkness before realizing its worth. This winter solstice, as we cheer the days' gradual movement back toward light, let us also remember the irreplaceable value of darkness.

All life evolved to the steady rhythm of bright days and dark nights.
 10 Today, though, when we feel the closeness of nightfall, we reach quickly for a light switch. And too little darkness, meaning too much artificial light at night, spells trouble for all.

Already the World Health Organization classifies working the night shift as a probable human carcinogen, and the American Medical
 15 Association has voiced its unanimous support for "light pollution reduction efforts and glare reduction efforts at both the national and state levels." Our bodies need darkness to produce the hormone melatonin, which keeps certain cancers from developing, and our bodies need darkness for sleep. Sleep disorders have been linked to diabetes, obesity,
 20 cardiovascular disease and depression, and recent research suggests one main cause of "short sleep" is "long light." Whether we work at night or simply take our tablets, notebooks and smartphones to bed, there isn't a place for this much artificial light in our lives.

The rest of the world depends on darkness as well, including
 25 nocturnal and crepuscular species of birds, insects, mammals, fish and reptiles. Some examples are well known—the 400 species of birds that migrate at night in North America, the sea turtles that come ashore to lay their eggs—and some are not, such as the bats that save American farmers billions in pest control and the moths that pollinate 80% of the
 30 world's flora. Ecological light pollution is like the bulldozer of the night, wrecking habitat and disrupting ecosystems several billion years in the making. Simply put, without darkness, Earth's ecology would collapse. . . .

In today's crowded, louder, more fast-paced world, night's darkness can
 35 provide solitude, quiet and stillness, qualities increasingly in short supply. Every religious tradition has considered darkness invaluable for a soulful life, and the chance to witness the universe has inspired artists, philosophers and everyday stargazers since time began. In a world awash with electric light. . . how would Van Gogh have given the world his "Starry
 40 Night"? Who knows what this vision of the night sky might inspire in each of us, in our children or grandchildren?

SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

To ensure that your students understand the difference between opinion, argument, and analysis, assign all three types of writing. Require students to use evidence to support their analyses of nonfiction documents. Remind them that the SAT Essay will ask for evidence-based claims, not their personal opinions.

Yet all over the world, our nights are growing brighter. In the United States and Western Europe, the amount of light in the sky increases an average of about 6% every year. Computer images of the United States at night, based on NASA photographs, show that what was a very dark country as recently as the 1950s is now nearly covered with a blanket of light. Much of this light is wasted energy, which means wasted dollars. Those of us over 35 are perhaps among the last generation to have known truly dark nights. Even the northern lake where I was lucky to spend my summers has seen its darkness diminish.

It doesn't have to be this way. Light pollution is readily within our ability to solve, using new lighting technologies and shielding existing lights. Already, many cities and towns across North America and Europe are changing to LED streetlights, which offer dramatic possibilities for controlling wasted light. Other communities are finding success with simply turning off portions of their public lighting after midnight. Even Paris, the famed "city of light," 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. Though primarily designed to save energy, such reductions in light will also go far in addressing light pollution. But we will never truly address the problem of light pollution until we become aware of the irreplaceable value and beauty of the darkness we are losing.

SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Use the sample student essays in **Appendix C** of this guide to extend understanding of the SAT Essay prompt. Immerse students in the samples, and help them notice components and characteristics common to all, in addition to analyzing and identifying areas for improvement.

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY (300-600 words)

The following essay is reprinted exactly as it was originally written (in response to the prompt above), including grammatical mistakes. An explanation of why the essay received the score it was given follows the essay. Find more sample student essays, the essay rubric, and score explanations in Appendix C.

Bogard builds a very persuasive argument when he talks about all of the effects of light polution. First, he starts out by telling a story from his youth and how he loved the darkness then goes on to say how things have changed. He uses different facts to support his claim that not having enough natural darkness is a very bad thing for not only the human population but also for animals and other species living on the planet. Finally, after listing consequences of the problem he starts to say what different nations are starting to do about it.

To support the theory that Bogard has on light polution he lists some facts about it. He says things like different species of fish, reptiles, insects, mammals and birds need the darkness to survive. However, animals arent the only things that depend on darkness, humans do also. As everyone knows sleep is a very important thing and, usually, darkness is a key part in sleep. This is important because, according to Bogard, sleep disorders have been linked to many diseases including depression and diabetes. Also, the darkness can offer some peace and quiet in todays busy world.

Also in this article the author gives some statistics on how our already bright world is just getting brighter. One of the facts that is stated is that the amout of light in the sky at night is increasing, on average, 6% per year. Along side those facts he tells us some things that we wouldnt have if it wasnt for very dark nights like Van Gogh's "Stary Night". If the world had been lit as much at night as it is now that painting would not exist and generations of people would miss out on seeing it.

Although much of this article is stating facts about the problem, Bogard does give some good news about what certain nations are starting to do to help it. For example, he says that many cities in North America and Europe are changing to LED streetlights to try and cut down on wasted energy. Some communities are turning off lights after midnight. And even one of the buissiest cities in the world, Paris, is requiring shops to turn off lights after two am.

All of the things that Bogard mentions in his article make it very persuasive. He did a very good job on building an argument to show why light polution is such a bad thing. He did this by explaining how things used to be, telling how it effects all of the different species living on th planet. How things changed and how they could be different. And finally, he tells us what other people are doing about the problem. Which, all put together make a very persuasive article and help build an argument that makes readers want to go and help the issue.

Scoring Explanation (400-700 words)

This paper scored a 3/2/3.

Reading—3: This response demonstrates an effective comprehension of Bogard's text and an understanding of Bogard's central ideas ("*the effects of light pollution*" and the "*consequences of the problem*"). Focusing on the "*consequences of the problem*," the writer paraphrases important supporting details from throughout Bogard's piece, demonstrating an understanding of the support Bogard offers ("*he starts out by telling a story from his youth and how he loved darkness . . . He uses different facts to support his claim that not having enough natural darkness is a very bad thing for not only the human population but also animals and other different species of fish, reptiles, insects, mammals and birds.*") The response is free from substantive errors and demonstrates some awareness of the interrelation between the passage's central ideas and supporting details ("*As everyone knows sleep is a very important thing and usually darkness is a key part in sleep . . . according to Bogard, sleep disorders have been linked to many diseases including depression and anxiety*"), but the writer does not demonstrate a full understanding of this interrelation. Overall, this paper demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—2: The writer demonstrates a partial understanding of the analytical task by offering a limited analysis of Bogard's text. Any attempts on the writer's part to analyze do not move past assertions that state the importance of the author's use of "statistics" or "facts." Although focused on relevant features of the source text, the writer praises Bogard's argument without offering much analysis of that argument ("*All of the things Bogard mentions in his article make it very persuasive. He did a very good job on building an argument to show why light pollution is such a bad thing*"), with limited support for these claims. Overall, this paper demonstrates a partial analysis.

Writing—3: Following a very basic structure, the essay is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language throughout the essay. Choosing to structure his writing around his central claim that "*Bogard builds a very persuasive argument*," the writer produces a simply structured essay of short, discrete paragraphs that are free of significant language errors that detract from the quality of writing. While not very complex, the sentences demonstrate some varied and complex sentence structures ("*To support the theory that Bogard has on light pollution he lists some facts about it. . . One of the facts that is stated is*") and word choice remains precise and formal in tone ("*If the world had been lit as much at night as it is now, that painting would not exist and generations of people would miss out on seeing it.*"). Overall, this paper demonstrates proficient control of language.

SKILL-BUILDING STRATEGY

Students benefit from using a rubric to analyze their writing—rubrics provide a clear description of the skills, knowledge, and understandings they must demonstrate. Give students the opportunity to compare the rubric to their work, and to the writing of their peers, evaluating areas in which they met the standards of the rubric and areas in which they need improvement. See **Appendix C** for the SAT essay rubric.

NEW SAT RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY OUTLINE (5 PARAGRAPHS)

Introduction Paragraph

In “[Insert title] _____,” [Insert author’s last name’s name] _____ effectively builds his argument using [list devices] _____, _____, and _____. Through the use of [list devices again] _____, _____, and _____, [insert author’s last name] _____ argues that [inset author’s claim] _____.

_____. Through the use of rhetorical devices, [insert author’s last name] _____ builds a convincing argument.

Body Paragraph Outline #1

[Insert author’s last name] _____ uses _____ to make his argument that _____ more effective. [Insert author’s last name] _____ uses _____ when he writes, “_____.” He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author’s last name] _____’s argument more effective because _____.

[Insert author’s last name] _____ also uses _____ when he writes, “_____.” He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author’s last name] _____’s argument more effective because _____.

[Insert author’s last name] _____ effectively uses _____ in his article.

Body Paragraph Outline #2

[Insert author’s last name] _____ uses _____ to make his argument that _____ more effective. [Insert author’s last name] _____ uses _____ when he writes, “_____.” He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author’s last name] _____’s

argument more effective because _____

[Insert author's last name] _____ also uses _____ when he writes, "_____."

He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author's last name] _____'s argument more effective because _____

[Insert author's last name] _____ effectively uses _____ in his article.

Body Paragraph Outline #3

[Insert author's last name] _____ uses _____ to make his argument that _____ more effective. [Insert author's last name] _____ uses _____ when he writes, "_____."

He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author's last name] _____'s argument more effective because _____

[Insert author's last name] _____ also uses _____ when he writes, "_____."

He uses _____ in order to _____. This makes [insert author's last name] _____'s argument more effective because _____

[Insert author's last name] _____ effectively uses _____ in his article.

Conclusion Paragraph Outline

In "[insert title] _____," [insert author's last name] _____ effectively builds his argument using _____, _____, and _____. When one considers [insert author's last name] _____'s use of [list devices] _____, _____, and _____, it is clear that (*rephrase author's claim*) _____. In conclusion, [insert author's last name] _____'s use of rhetoric devices makes his argument effective.