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Essay

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ESSAY

Example 2 of 2

Prompt

As you read the passage below, consider how Dana Gioia 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.

Adapted from Dana Gioia, "Why Literature Matters" ©2005 by The New York Times Company. Originally published April 10, 2005.

[A] strange thing has happened in the American arts during the past quarter century. While income rose to unforeseen levels, college attendance ballooned, and access to information increased enormously, the interest young Americans showed in the arts—and especially literature—actually diminished.

According to the 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, a population study designed and commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts (and executed by the US Bureau of the Census), arts participation by Americans has declined for eight of the nine major forms that are measured....The declines have been most severe among younger adults (ages 18–24). The most worrisome finding in the 2002 study, however, is the declining percentage of Americans, especially young adults, reading literature.

That individuals at a time of crucial intellectual and emotional development bypass the joys and challenges of literature is a troubling trend. If it were true that they substituted histories, biographies, or political works for literature, one might not worry. But book reading of any kind is falling as well.

That such a longstanding and fundamental cultural activity should slip so swiftly, especially among young adults, signifies deep transformations in contemporary life. To call attention to the trend, the Arts Endowment issued the reading portion of the Survey as a separate report, "Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America."

The decline in reading has consequences that go beyond literature. The significance of reading has become a persistent theme in the business world. The February issue of *Wired* magazine, for example, sketches a new set of mental skills and habits proper to the 21st century, aptitudes decidedly literary in character: not "linear, logical, analytical talents," author Daniel Pink states, but "the ability to create artistic and emotional beauty, to detect patterns and opportunities, to craft a satisfying narrative." When asked what kind of talents they like to see in management positions, business leaders consistently set imagination, creativity, and higher-order thinking at the top.

Ironically, the value of reading and the intellectual faculties that it inculcates appear most clearly as active and engaged literacy declines. There is now a growing awareness of the consequences of nonreading to the workplace. In 2001 the National Association of Manufacturers polled its members on skill deficiencies among employees. Among hourly workers, poor reading skills ranked second, and

38 percent of employers complained that local schools inadequately taught reading comprehension.

The decline of reading is also taking its toll in the civic sphere....A 2003 study of 15- to 26-year-olds' civic knowledge by the National Conference of State Legislatures concluded, "Young people do not understand the ideals of citizenship... and their appreciation and support of American democracy is limited."

It is probably no surprise that declining rates of literary reading coincide with declining levels of historical and political awareness among young people. One of the surprising findings of "Reading at Risk" was that literary readers are markedly more civically engaged than nonreaders, scoring two to four times more likely to perform charity work, visit a museum, or attend a sporting event. One reason for their higher social and cultural interactions may lie in the kind of civic and historical knowledge that comes with literary reading....

The evidence of literature's importance to civic, personal, and economic health is too strong to ignore. The decline of literary reading foreshadows serious long-term social and economic problems, and it is time to bring literature and the other arts into discussions of public policy. Libraries, schools, and public agencies do noble work, but addressing the reading issue will require the leadership of politicians and the business community as well....

Reading is not a timeless, universal capability. Advanced literacy is a specific intellectual skill and social habit that depends on a great many educational, cultural, and economic factors. As more Americans lose this capability, our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded. These are not the qualities that a free, innovative, or productive society can afford to lose.

Write an essay in which you explain how Dana Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience that the decline of reading in America will have a negative effect on society. In your essay, analyze how Gioia uses one or more of the features in the directions that precede the passage (or features of your own 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 Gioia's claims, but rather explain how Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience.

Sample Student Essays

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Sample 1 Scores: 1/1/1



Sample 2 Scores: 2/2/2



Sample 3 Scores: 3/2/3



Sample 4 Scores: 3/3/3



Sample 5 Scores: 3/3/3



Sample 6 Scores: 3/3/4



Sample 7 Scores: 4/2/4



Sample 8 Scores: 4/3/4



In the article, "Why Literature Matters" by Dana Gioia, Gioia makes an argument claiming that the levels of interest young Americans have shown in art in recent years have declined and that this trend is a severe problem with broad consequences. Strategies Gioia employs to support his argument include citation of compelling polls, reports made by prominent organizations that have issued studies, and a quotation from a prominent author. Gioia's overall purpose in writing this article appears to be to draw attention towards shortcomings in American participation in the arts. His primary audience would be the American public in general with a significant focus on millennials.

In his introduction paragraph, Gioia employs a distinct contrast with several listed positive changes in American life such as increased college attendance and increases in income, with the focus of his article: the fact that the interest young Americans show in art has declined. This tool is utilized to establish an emphasis on his primary point by highlighting it as a negative development relative to other changes in American life. This literary tool serves a strong purpose by acting as a vehicle to draw the audience into the principle issue addressed by the writing.

In paragraph 5, Gioia utilizes a synergistic reference to two separate sources of information that serves to provide a stronger compilation of support for his main topic. By citing a quotation from author Daniel Pink who states, that the talents individuals require for success in the 21st Century are not, "linear, logical, analytic talents," but ones that provide, "the ability to create artistic and emotional beauty, to detect patterns and opportunities," and "to craft a satisfying narrative," Gioia is able to build his point with the agreement of a respected individual. He then immediately follows with a statement that business leaders like to see, "imagination, creativity, and higher order thinking" as qualities for individuals in management positions. This dual utilization of claims from two separate sources conveys to Gioia's audience the sense that the skills built through immersion in the arts are vital to succeeding in the modern workplace which aids in logically leading his audience to the conclusion that a loss of experience with the arts may foreshadow troubling results.

In paragraph 6, Gioia follows up on the point established in paragraph 5 by introducing a negative example of the consequences of loss of the arts with a focus on literacy. Gioia cites a 2001 poll on the National Association of American Manufacturers stating that poor reading skills ranked second among its employees surveyed for skill deficiencies while 38% of employees believed local schools inadequately taught reading comprehension. Gioia's presentation of a numerical statistic based on a major employer adds significant logical weight to his argument by providing an example of the effects of a deficit in experience with art and literature. This may affect his audience by providing a more accurate depiction of the true problems caused by disconnection with arts while possibly choosing an example they could personally relate to.

Overall, Gioia provides a strong logical argument that disconnection with the arts is troubling for America. He employs strong logical connections and establishes real-world foundations for his point.

This paper scored a 4/3/4.

Reading—4: This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text and illustrates an understanding of the interrelation between the central idea and important details in Gioia's piece. The writer accurately paraphrases the central idea of Gioia's text (*the levels of interest young Americans have shown in art in recent years have declined and that this trend is a severe problem with broad consequences*). The writer then exhibits an understanding of the details in Gioia's text and how they work together to convey the main point (*Gioia is able to build his point, He then immediately follows with...; In paragraph 6, Gioia follows up on the point established in paragraph 5...*). The response is also free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, this response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: The response demonstrates good understanding of the analytical task by offering an effective analysis of the source text. The writer is able to move past simple identification of and assertions about the analytical elements in Gioia's text to discuss how these elements contribute to Gioia's argument. For example, the writer identifies the *distinct contrast* that Gioia establishes early in the passage between *positive changes in American life* and *the fact that the interest young Americans show in art has declined*. The writer then explains that Gioia uses this contrast to *establish an emphasis on his primary point by highlighting it as a negative development*. The writer then competently evaluates the effect of this element of Gioia's text by explaining that *this literary tool serves a strong purpose by acting as a vehicle to draw the audience into the principle issue addressed by the writing*. This pattern of effective analysis continues throughout the remainder of the response and indicates proficient analytical skill. The writer clearly can delineate and evaluate the impact of Gioia's argumentative moves, but this analysis lacks the thoroughness and completeness needed to receive a higher score. For example, there is no indication of how or why these moves are effective.

Writing—4: The writer demonstrates highly effective use and command of language in this cohesive response. The response includes a precise central claim (*Strategies Gioia employs to support his argument include citation of compelling polls, reports made by prominent organizations that have issued studies, and a quotation from a prominent author*). The skillful introduction establishes the framework for the writer's organizational structure, which is followed throughout the response. Although the subsequent discussion is not laid out as explicitly as the simple three-pronged thesis suggests, each body paragraph remains on-topic and demonstrates a deliberate progression of ideas, and the response as a whole remains focused and cohesive. The response contains many examples of sophisticated sentence structure, notable vocabulary, and precise word choice (*This dual utilization of claims from two separate sources conveys to Gioia's audience the sense that the skills built through immersion in the arts are vital to succeeding in the modern workplace which aids in logically leading his audience to the conclusion that a loss of experience with the arts may foreshadow troubling results*). Overall, this response demonstrates advanced writing ability.

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- Two different people will read and score your essay.
- Each scorer awards 1–4 points for each dimension: reading, analysis, and writing.
- The two scores for each dimension are added.
- You'll receive three scores for the SAT Essay—one for each dimension—ranging from 2–8 points.
- There is no composite SAT Essay score (the three scores are not added together) and there are no percentiles.

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Reading Scoring Guide

Score of 4



- Demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and of most important details and how they interrelate, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the text.
- Is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.

Score of 3



- Demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and important details.
- Is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.

Score of 2

- Demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.
- Shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) but not of important details.
- May contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.

Score of 1

- Demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.
- Fails to show an understanding of the text's central idea(s), and may include only details without reference to central idea(s).
- May contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- Makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text.

Analysis Scoring Guide**Score of 4**

- Offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.
- Offers a thorough, well-considered evaluation of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.
- Contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- Focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

Score of 3

- Offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.
- Competently evaluates the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing.
- Contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- Focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

Score of 2

- Offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.
- Identifies and attempts to describe the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's own choosing, but merely asserts rather than explains their importance, or one or more aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.
- Contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- May lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

Score of 1

- Offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.
- Identifies without explanation some aspects of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student's choosing.
- Or numerous aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.
- Contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.
- May not focus on features of the text that are relevant to addressing the task.
- Or the response offers no discernible analysis (e.g., is largely or exclusively summary).

Writing Scoring Guide

Score of 4

- Is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.
- Includes a precise central claim.
- Includes a skillful introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- Has a wide variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates a consistent use of precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is free or virtually free of errors.

Score of 3

- Is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.
- Includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.
- Includes an effective introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- Has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a good control of the conventions of standard written English and is free of significant errors that detract from the quality of writing.

Score of 2

- Demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.
- May lack a clear central claim or controlling idea or may deviate from the claim or idea over the course of the response.
- May include an ineffective introduction and/or conclusion. The response may demonstrate some progression of ideas within paragraphs but not throughout the response.
- Has limited variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive.
- Demonstrates general or vague word choice; word choice may be repetitive. The response may deviate noticeably from a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a limited control of the conventions of standard written English and contains errors that detract from the quality of writing and may impede understanding.

Score of 1

- Demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.
- May lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.
- Lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The response does not have a discernible progression of ideas.
- Lacks variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive. The response demonstrates general and vague word choice; word choice may be poor or inaccurate. The response may lack a formal style and objective tone.
- Shows a weak control of the conventions of standard written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.

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