

## APPENDIX C:

# SAT Essay Rubric and Sample Essays

In broad terms, essay responses will be evaluated across three dimensions: reading (for demonstrated comprehension of the source text), analysis (the quality of analysis of that source text), and writing (the quality of the writing in the response). Three dimension scores will be reported, each on a scale of 2–8, the combined scores of two scorers using the three 1–4 scales in the rubric below.

## SAT Essay Rubric

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
4	<p><b>Advanced:</b> The response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.</p>	<p><b>Advanced:</b> The response offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>The response contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p><b>Advanced:</b> The response is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.</p> <p>The response includes a precise central claim.</p> <p>The response includes a skillful introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>The response shows a strong command of the conventions of Standard Written English and is free or virtually free of errors.</p>

### Sample 1: This response scored a 4/4/4.

In response to our world’s growing reliance on artificial light, writer Paul Bogard argues that natural darkness should be preserved in his article “Let There be dark”. He effectively builds his argument by using a personal anecdote, allusions to art and history, and rhetorical questions.

Bogard starts his article off by recounting a personal story – a summer spent on a Minnesota lake where there was “woods so dark that [his] hands disappeared before [his] eyes.” In telling this brief anecdote, Bogard challenges the audience to remember a time

where they could fully amass themselves in natural darkness void of artificial light. By drawing in his readers with a personal encounter about night darkness, the author means to establish the potential for beauty, glamour, and awe-inspiring mystery that genuine darkness can possess. He builds his argument for the preservation of natural darkness by reminiscing for his readers a first-hand encounter that proves the “irreplaceable value of darkness.” This anecdote provides a baseline of sorts for readers to find credence with the author’s claims.

Bogard’s argument is also furthered by his use of allusion to art – Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” – and modern history – Paris’ reputation as “The City of Light”. By first referencing “Starry Night”, a painting generally considered to be undoubtedly beautiful, Bogard establishes that the natural magnificence of stars in a dark sky is definite. A world absent of excess artificial light could potentially hold the key to a grand, glorious night sky like Van Gogh’s according to the writer. This urges the readers to weigh the disadvantages of our world consumed by unnatural, vapid lighting. Furthermore, Bogard’s alludes to Paris as “the famed ‘city of light’”. He then goes on to state how Paris has taken steps to exercise more sustainable lighting practices. By doing this, Bogard creates a dichotomy between Paris’ traditionally alluded-to name and the reality of what Paris is becoming – no longer “the city of light”, but moreso “the city of light. . . before 2 AM”. This furthers his line of argumentation because it shows how steps can be and are being taken to preserve natural darkness. It shows that even a city that is literally famous for being constantly lit can practically address light pollution in a manner that preserves the beauty of both the city itself and the universe as a whole.

Finally, Bogard makes subtle yet efficient use of rhetorical questioning to persuade his audience that natural darkness preservation is essential. He asks the readers to consider “what the vision of the night sky might inspire in each of us, in our children or grandchildren?” in a way that brutally plays to each of our emotions. By asking this question, Bogard draws out heartfelt ponderance from his readers about the affecting power of an untainted night sky. This rhetorical question tugs at the readers’ heartstrings; while the reader may have seen an unobscured night skyline before, the possibility that their child or grandchild will never get the chance sways them to see as Bogard sees. This strategy is definitively an appeal to pathos, forcing the audience to directly face an emotionally-charged inquiry that will surely spur some kind of response. By doing this, Bogard develops his argument, adding gutthral power to the idea that the issue of maintaining natural darkness is relevant and multifaceted.

Writing as a reaction to his disappointment that artificial light has largely permeated the presence of natural darkness, Paul Bogard argues that we must preserve true, unaffected darkness. He builds this claim by making use of a personal anecdote, allusions, and rhetorical questioning.

## Score Explanation

**Reading — 4:** This response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text through skillful use of paraphrases and direct quotations. The writer briefly summarizes the central idea of Bogard's piece (*natural darkness should be preserved; we must preserve true, unaffected darkness*) and presents many details from the text, such as referring to the personal anecdote that opens the passage and citing Bogard's use of *Paris' reputation as "The City of Light."* There are few long direct quotations from the source text; instead, the response succinctly and accurately captures the entirety of Bogard's argument in the writer's own words, and the writer is able to articulate how details in the source text interrelate with Bogard's central claim. The response is also free of errors of fact or interpretation. Overall, the response demonstrates advanced reading comprehension.

**Analysis — 4:** This response offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task. In analyzing Bogard's use of *personal anecdote, allusions to art and history, and rhetorical questions*, the writer is able to explain carefully and thoroughly how Bogard builds his argument over the course of the passage. For example, the writer offers a possible reason for why Bogard chose to open his argument with a personal anecdote, and is also able to describe the overall effect of that choice on his audience (*In telling this brief anecdote, Bogard challenges the audience to remember a time where they could fully amass themselves in natural darkness void of artificial light. By drawing in his readers with a personal encounter. . . the author means to establish the potential for beauty, glamour, and awe-inspiring mystery that genuine darkness can possess. . . . This anecdote provides a baseline of sorts for readers to find credence with the author's claims*). The cogent chain of reasoning indicates an understanding of the overall effect of Bogard's personal narrative both in terms of its function in the passage and how it affects his audience. This type of insightful analysis is evident throughout the response and indicates advanced analytical skill.

**Writing — 4:** The response is cohesive and demonstrates highly effective use and command of language. The response contains a precise central claim (*He effectively builds his argument by using personal anecdote, allusions to art and history, and rhetorical questions*), and the body paragraphs are tightly focused on those three elements of Bogard's text. There is a clear, deliberate progression of ideas within paragraphs and throughout the response. The writer's brief introduction and conclusion are skillfully written and encapsulate the main ideas of Bogard's piece, as well as the overall structure of the writer's analysis. There is a consistent use of both precise word choice and well-chosen turns of phrase (*the natural magnificence of stars in a dark sky is definite, our world consumed by unnatural, vapid lighting, the affecting power of an untainted night sky*). Moreover, the response features a wide variety in sentence structure and many examples of sophisticated sentences

(By doing this, Bogard creates a dichotomy between Paris' traditionally alluded-to name and the reality of what Paris is becoming — no longer "the city of light", but moreso "the city of light... before 2AM"). The response demonstrates a strong command of the conventions of Standard Written English. Overall, the response exemplifies advanced writing proficiency.

### SAT Essay Rubric

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
3	<p><b>Proficient:</b> The response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and important details.</p> <p>The response is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.</p>	<p><b>Proficient:</b> The response offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>The response contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p><b>Proficient:</b> The response is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.</p> <p>The response includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.</p> <p>The response includes an effective introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a good control of the conventions of Standard Written English and is free of significant errors that detract from the quality of writing.</p>

### Sample 2: This response scored a 3/3/3.

In Paul Bogard's article "Let there be dark" he's building an argument to persuade his audience to preserve natural darkness. Bogard builds his argument in a few different ways. Bogard uses a personal story, appeals to people's emotions, and states benefits of natural darkness.

By using a personal story Bogard allows his audience to connect to him. If his audience can relate or even understand his story they will be more willing to agree with him. The personal story also shows that the issue of preserving natural darkness isn't just another topic to write about but something that he is actually passionate for. In his personal story Bogard uses great imagery making the audience picture what he saw and maybe make them want to experience it too.

Bogard uses pathos by stating examples that appeal to people's emotions. In the article he wrote "Those of us over 35 are perhaps

among the last generation to have known truly dark nights.” This statement appeals more to the younger generations emotion. By stating this people who are younger then 35 might feel that they were robbed of the oppurtunity to experience the real beauty of natural darkness. This would proably help his younger audience to agree with him because they might want the chance to see the real beauty of natural darkness.

Bogard writes about the benefits that natural darkness actually produces. In the article he talks about how darkens actually helps the body produce a hormone that keeps certain cancers from developing. He also includes how darkness helps and is neccessary for certain animals. These examples will help his audience see that he is arguing for some benefical for people. This also helps appeal to an audience that might not care for the beauty of darkness but care for their own personal health.

Bogard uses different features in order to persuade his audience. The different features also help him in appealing to a broader audience.

### Score Explanation

**Reading — 3:** This response demonstrates effective understanding of the passage, with increasing evidence as the response continues. In the second paragraph, the writer discusses the personal experience of the night sky that Bogard draws on; although the writer does not recount the experience itself, it is nevertheless clear that the writer understands the story of Bogard’s youth. In the next paragraph, the writer cites and discusses a generational claim that Bogard makes, again demonstrating comprehension. Finally, the writer discusses general points Bogard makes about darkness’s usefulness for both animals and humans, although again, the writer makes a vague reference *that darkness helps and is neccessary for certain animals* without offering any of the specific textual examples that Bogard provides. However, across the whole of this essay, the writer demonstrates effective understanding of the text’s central idea (*he’s building an arguement to persuade his audience to preserve natural darkness*) and important details.

**Analysis — 3:** The writer demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task by first identifying three ways Bogard builds his argument (*Bogard uses a personal story, appeals to people’s emotions, and states benefits of natural darkness*) and then developing each point in turn. In the response’s body paragraphs, the writer moves beyond mere assertions to a competent evaluation of how pieces of evidence, reasoning, or stylistic or persuasive elements contribute to the argument. For example, in the response’s discussion of the personal story that Bogard opens with, the writer not only argues that the story *allows his audience to connect to him* but also explains the importance of such a connection (*If his audience can relate or even understand his story they will be more*

*willing to agree with him*). The writer also contends that the use of this personal story shows Bogard's passion and that the imagery included in the story makes *the audience picture what he saw and maybe make them want to experience it too*. The response could have made a stronger point had the writer elaborated on the potential effects of making the audience want to share Bogard's experience. Nevertheless, in this example and others like it in the response, the writer exhibits effective analysis of the source text using relevant and sufficient support.

**Writing — 3:** This essay is mostly cohesive and demonstrates mostly effective control of language. The brief introduction establishes the writer's central idea and sets up the essay's three points. The essay then follows a clear, if formulaic, format. In each paragraph, the writer demonstrates a progression of ideas, integrating quotations or examples from the source text into the analysis and connecting ideas logically (*Bogard uses pathos by stating examples that appeal to people's emotions. In the article he wrote "Those of us over 35 are perhaps among the last generation to have known truly dark nights." This statement appeals more to the younger generations emotion. By stating this...*). Sentence structure is varied, and some precise phrasing is used to convey ideas (*robbed of the opportunity, their own personal health*). Language control on the whole is good, although there are a few minor errors (*These examples will help his audience see that he is arguing for some benefical for people*) that do not detract materially from the quality of writing. Overall, the response demonstrates proficient writing.

### SAT Essay Rubric

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
2	<p><b>Partial:</b> The response demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) but not of important details.</p> <p>The response may contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.</p>	<p><b>Partial:</b> The response offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>Or one or more aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p><b>Partial:</b> The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea or may deviate from the claim or idea over the course of the response.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The response has limited variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive. The response demonstrates general or vague word choice; word choice may be repetitive. The response may deviate noticeably from a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response 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.</p>

### Sample 3: This response scored a 2/2/2.

In Paul Bogard's essay "Let there be Dark" he emphasizes the importance of natural darkness. Bogard begins his argument by first providing a story from his personal experience, appealing to the reader by adding imagery. "I knew night skies in which meteors left smoky trails across sugary spreads of stars." In this sentence, Bogard depicts the beauty of natural darkness using detail. Bogard continues with comparing his personal perspective of natural darkness in the past to society's perspective in the present. "Today, though, when we feel the closeness of night fall, we reach quickly for a light switch." Implying that the times have definitely changed and natural darkness's value has been lost in society, replaced with artificial light. This example gives Bogard a sense of voice and his use of comparison is definitely effective.

Bogard supports his claims about natural darkness's underrated value by providing the reader with evidence of health problems that the opposite replacement, artificial light, can cause. "Our bodies need darkness to produce the hormone melatonin, which keeps certain cancers from developing." Oh, no! Not cancer! Right there is

a quick attention grabber to any reader previously bored by Bogard's constant opinions because now there are facts, and a fact relating to the reader is the best persuasion, especially when it relates to their health or well-being. Cancer, because who wants a terminal illness over an action as simple as flipping a switch on a night light when it's too dark for your comfort?

### Score Explanation

**Reading — 2:** This writer demonstrates some comprehension of the passage. In the first paragraph, the writer conveys the passage's broad central point — *the importance of natural darkness*. The writer also shows an understanding of the comparison Bogard draws between his own past and the present day (*the times have definitely changed and natural darkness's value has been lost in society, replaced with artificial light*). In the paragraph that follows, the writer briefly cites Bogard's point about the negative health implications of too much artificial light. However, this is the last evidence of understanding the writer provides, as the essay ends almost immediately afterward. Overall, the writer has demonstrated partial understanding of the source text.

**Analysis — 2:** The response offers some limited analysis of the source text, demonstrating partial understanding of the analytical task. The writer identifies Bogard's use of *imagery* in the story of meteors in the night sky and then asserts that this imagery appeals to the reader, but the writer offers no further discussion of Bogard's use of imagery or how imagery contributes to his argument. The writer also refers to the comparison Bogard makes between his youth and current times and says that the comparison gives Bogard a *sense of voice*, but the writer doesn't explain why this comparison contributes to an authorial voice or how establishing a particular voice serves Bogard's argument. The writer offers one additional point of analysis, asserting that Bogard's reference to cancer is a *quick attention grabber* and that the use of a *fact relating to the reader is the best persuasion, especially when it relates to their health or well-being*. However, the writer does not elaborate on this point. In each instance of analysis in this short response, the writer identifies the use of evidence or rhetorical features, but asserts rather than explains the importance of those elements. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful analysis.

**Writing — 2:** This response demonstrates limited cohesion and some skill in the use of language. Although the writer offers a central claim that guides the essay, there is no indication of an introduction or conclusion to frame ideas. Overall, sentences are clear and the writer generally observes the conventions of Standard Written English. However, by the end of this short response, the writer has deviated from a formal style and objective tone (*Oh, no! Not cancer! Right there is a quick attention grabber to any reader previously bored by Bogard's constant opinions*). The essay abruptly concludes



with a rhetorical question that also somewhat strays from a formal tone (*Cancer, because who wants a terminal illness over an action as simple as flipping a switch on a night light when it's too dark for your comfort?*). On the whole, this response offers some evidence of cohesion and control of language.

### SAT Essay Rubric

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
1	<p><b>Inadequate:</b> The response demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response fails to show an understanding of the text's central idea(s), and may include only details without reference to central idea(s).</p> <p>The response may contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text.</p>	<p><b>Inadequate:</b> The response offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>Or numerous aspects of the response's analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.</p> <p>The response may not focus on features of the text that are relevant to addressing the task.</p> <p>Or the response offers no discernible analysis (e.g., is largely or exclusively summary).</p>	<p><b>Inadequate:</b> The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.</p> <p>The response lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The response does not have a discernible progression of ideas.</p> <p>The response 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.</p> <p>The response shows a weak control of the conventions of Standard Written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.</p>

### Sample 4: This response scored a 2/1/1.

In "Let there be dark," Paul Bogard talks about the importance of darkness.

Darkness is essential to humans. Bogard states, "Our bodies need darkness to produce the hormone melatonin, which keeps certain cancers from developing, and our bodies need darkness for sleep, sleep. Sleep disorders have been linked to diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and depression and recent research suggests are 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." (Bogard 2). Here, Bogard talks about the importance of darkness to humans. Humans need darkness to sleep in order to be healthy.

Animals also need darkness. Bogard states, “The rest of the world depends on darkness as well, including 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 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...” (Bogard 2). Here Bogard explains that animals, too, need darkness to survive.

### Score Explanation

**Reading — 2:** This response demonstrates some comprehension of Bogard’s text. Although this essay consists almost entirely of two quotations taken directly from the passage, the writer does show an understanding of two of Bogard’s main points — darkness is crucial to humans and to animals — by selecting and briefly summarizing two important lines of text. However, the writer demonstrates no deeper understanding of the passage’s main ideas or important details. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful reading comprehension.

**Analysis — 1:** The response demonstrates no understanding of the analytical task. The writer does not attempt to analyze Bogard’s use of evidence, reasoning, or stylistic or persuasive elements. Instead, the writer merely cites two sentences from the passage and offers a brief restatement of each point. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

**Writing — 1:** This essay demonstrates little cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language. The essay begins with a very broad central claim (*In “Let there be dark,” Paul Bogard talks about the importance of darkness*) but otherwise lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The writer’s two main ideas are separated into two separate paragraphs, but because there is little original writing here, there is no clear evidence of the writer’s ability to logically order or advance ideas. There is also little evidence of the writer’s ability to vary sentence structure. Overall, this essay does not provide enough evidence of writing ability to warrant a score higher than a 1.