

# The SAT Essay

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

### Analyze the author's writing **STYLE**.

Do not write your opinion about the author's topic, because that is not the task of this essay: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS.

If you are only talking about what the author says and not about why the author might have chosen to make the argument in the way that it is made, then you are summarizing, not analyzing.

### When you insert quotes, use short phrases and single words instead of full sentences.

ALWAYS REFERENCE PARAGRAPHS BY NUMBER, NOT JUST, "IN THE BEGINNING..."

**"Understand the importance of using fancy punctuation."**

Pay attention to the length of the writer's sentences. Short and straightforward or long and detailed. Good writers will use variety for emphasis. The same goes for paragraph structure and length.

### Recommended Structure

#### INTRODUCTION

Use all of the stuff in the bold: full name of author and title of the article. Main point of article. Main rhetorical devices used and an idea of why.

#### ANALYZE BEGINNING

Body #1.

#### ANALYZE MIDDLE

Body #2.

#### ANALYZE ENDING

Body #3.

#### CONCLUSION

Reiterate your introduction and add a slight critique. If you know any details about the author, throw in why this person might be a good person to discuss the topic of the piece.

**A**

#### LOOK FOR REPETITION

Words, phrases, sentence structures, themes, or ideas.

**B**

#### LOOK FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Any changes in tone, sentence length or structure, or tense.

**C**

#### LOOK FOR COMPARISONS

Personification, metaphor, contrasts, or parallel structures.

1

**LOGOS**

When an author uses numbers, facts, stats, and quotes from experts to appeal to LOGIC.

2

**ETHOS**

When the author's argument is about doing the right thing in order to appeal to ETHICS.

3

**PATHOS**

When the author uses descriptive language or other tactics to appeal to a reader's EMOTIONS.

**Find & Annotate**  
(bubble & connect)

- Examples
- Description
- Narration
- Analysis
- Comparison
- Contrast
- Classification
- Definition
- Cause & Effect
- Counterpoints
- Imagery
- Figurative Language
  - Personification
  - Metaphor
  - Simile
- Style
- Tone
- Voice
- Analogy
- Flashback
- Hyperbole
- Irony
- Oxymoron
- Paradox
- Symbolism
- Satire
- Diction
- Parallelism
- Appeals
- Equivocation

**Words that Describe**

**TONE**

angry / sharp / sad / boring / somber / hollow / sarcastic / candid / cold / tactful / nostalgic / motivational / urgent / poignant / detached / mocking / vibrant / patriotic / sentimental / condescending / sympathetic / humorous / bitter / serious / respectful / dramatic / provocative / restrained / irreverent

**DICTION**

abstract / academic / ambiguous / biting / bombastic / brusque / cacophonous / casual / caustic / concrete / colloquial / colorful / common / cultured / crisp / curt / divisive / emotional / esoteric / euphemistic / flowery / figurative / folksy / formal / grandiose / idiomatic / inflammatory / inflated / informal / insincere / literal / loaded / lyrical / melodious / monosyllabic / obscene / obscure / offensive / ordinary / ornate / passionate / patriotic / pedantic / picturesque / plain / poetic / political / polysyllabic / precise / pretentious / provincial / romantic / scholarly / shocking / sincere / subdued / symbolic / tame / technical / trite / unifying / uppity / vulgar

**WEAK VERBS THAT SUMMARIZE VERSUS STRONG VERBS THAT ANALYZE**

**WEAK:** says / relates / shows / goes on to say / states / tells / explains / writes

**STRONG:** implies / suggests / compares / emphasizes / defines / trivializes / denigrates / vilifies / demonizes / ridicules / flatters / praises / establishes / minimizes / qualifies / dismisses / supports / admonishes / narrates / lists / processes / analyzes / enumerates / expounds / describes / questions / contrasts / argues / warns / asserts / capitalizes / broadens / characterizes / complicates / constructs / considers / differentiates / employs / exploits / features / forecasts / pleads / speculates / illuminates / interprets / isolates / manipulates / negates / omits / predicts / redefines / proposes / reflects / specifies / summarizes / supports / sustains / theorizes / undermines / unifies

# SAT Essay Scoring Rubric

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.

## Score Point 4 — Advanced

### Reading

- The response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.
- 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.
- The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.
- The response makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.

### Analysis

- The response offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.
- 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.
- The response contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- The response focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Writing

- The response is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.
- The response includes a precise central claim.
- 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.
- 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.
- The response shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is free or virtually free of errors.

## Score Point 3 — Proficient

### Reading

- The response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.
- The response shows an understanding of the text's central idea(s) and important details.
- The response is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.
- The response makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.

### Analysis

- The response offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.
- 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.
- The response contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- The response focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Writing

- The response is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.
- The response includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.
- The response includes an effective introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.
- The response has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.
- 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.

## Score Point 2 — Partial

### Reading

- The response demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.
- The response shows an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) but not of important details.
- The response may contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- The response makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.

### Analysis

- The response offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.
- 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, or one or more aspects of the response’s analysis are unwarranted based on the text.
- The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.
- The response may lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.

### Writing

- The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## Score Point 1 — Inadequate

### Reading

- The response demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.
- 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).
- The response may contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.
- The response makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text.

### Analysis

- The response offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.
- 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,
- Or numerous aspects of the response’s analysis are unwarranted based on the text,
- The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.
- The response 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

- The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.
- The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.
- The response lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The response does not have a discernible progression of ideas.
- 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.
- The response shows a weak control of the conventions of standard written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.

As you read the passage below, consider how Jimmy Carter 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 former US President Jimmy Carter, Foreword to *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land, A Photographic Journey* by Subhankar Banerjee. ©2003 by Subhankar Banerjee.**

- <sup>1</sup> The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge stands alone as America’s last truly great wilderness. This magnificent area is as vast as it is wild, from the windswept coastal plain where polar bears and caribou give birth, to the towering Brooks Range where Dall sheep cling to cliffs and wolves howl in the midnight sun.
- <sup>2</sup> More than a decade ago, [my wife] Rosalynn and I had the fortunate opportunity to camp and hike in these regions of the Arctic Refuge. During bright July days, we walked along ancient caribou trails and studied the brilliant mosaic of wildflowers, mosses, and lichens that hugged the tundra. There was a timeless quality about this great land. As the never-setting sun circled above the horizon, we watched muskox, those shaggy survivors of the Ice Age, lumber along braided rivers that meander toward the Beaufort Sea.
- <sup>3</sup> One of the most unforgettable and humbling experiences of our lives occurred on the coastal plain. We had hoped to see caribou during our trip, but to our amazement, we witnessed the migration of tens of thousands of caribou with their newborn calves. In a matter of a few minutes, the sweep of tundra before us became flooded with life, with the sounds of grunting animals and clicking hooves filling the air. The dramatic procession of the Porcupine caribou herd was a once-in-a-lifetime wildlife spectacle. We understand firsthand why some have described this special birthplace as “America’s Serengeti.”
- <sup>4</sup> Standing on the coastal plain, I was saddened to think of the tragedy that might occur if this great wilderness was consumed by a web of roads and pipelines, drilling rigs and industrial facilities. Such proposed developments would forever destroy the wilderness character of America’s only Arctic Refuge and disturb countless numbers of animals that depend on this northernmost terrestrial ecosystem.

- 5 The extraordinary wilderness and wildlife values of the Arctic Refuge have long been recognized by both Republican and Democratic presidents. In 1960, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the original 8.9 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Range to preserve its unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values. Twenty years later, I signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, monumental legislation that safeguarded more than 100 million acres of national parks, refuges, and forests in Alaska. This law specifically created the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, doubled the size of the former range, and restricted development in areas that are clearly incompatible with oil exploration.
- 6 Since I left office, there have been repeated proposals to open the Arctic Refuge coastal plain to oil drilling. Those attempts have failed because of tremendous opposition by the American people, including the Gwich'in Athabaskan Indians of Alaska and Canada, indigenous people whose culture has depended on the Porcupine caribou herd for thousands of years. Having visited many aboriginal peoples around the world, I can empathize with the Gwich'ins' struggle to safeguard one of their precious human rights.
- 7 We must look beyond the alleged benefits of a short-term economic gain and focus on what is really at stake. At best, the Arctic Refuge might provide 1 to 2 percent of the oil our country consumes each day. We can easily conserve more than that amount by driving more fuel-efficient vehicles. Instead of tearing open the heart of our greatest refuge, we should use our resources more wisely.
- 8 There are few places on earth as wild and free as the Arctic Refuge. It is a symbol of our national heritage, a remnant of frontier America that our first settlers once called wilderness. Little of that precious wilderness remains.
- 9 It will be a grand triumph for America if we can preserve the Arctic Refuge in its pure, untrammelled state. To leave this extraordinary land alone would be the greatest gift we could pass on to future generations.

Write an essay in which you explain how Jimmy Carter builds an argument to persuade his audience that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should not be developed for industry. In your essay, analyze how Carter 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 argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Carter's claims, but rather explain how Carter builds an argument to persuade his audience.

*SAT Rhetorical Analysis Sample of passage on pages 72–73 in your course manual. **Please note that the purpose of this sample is to show you how to translate the annotations that were discussed in the video into an analysis essay. An analysis essay of this depth and strength would have been impossible to do under the SAT’s time constraints.** That being said, when we have taken the essay portion of the real SAT in the past, we have gotten perfect and near-perfect scores with this structure and analysis method. Pay close attention to how the analysis focuses on the writing decisions of the author, NOT THE TOPIC OF THE PASSAGE! Feel free to annotate any rhetorical strategies you might notice in our rhetorical analysis!*

Former US President Jimmy Carter — in his foreword to Subhankar Banerjee’s *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land, a Photographic Journey* — passionately appeals to the ethics of his readers regarding the debate about whether oil drilling should occur in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Carter finds a way to use personification, structure, and repetition to elevate the argument beyond the simplification that often surrounds this topic in order to make sure that readers understand “what is really at stake” (paragraph 7).

Within the melancholy of Carter’s first sentence, the reader understands the core emotion behind Carter’s personal attachment to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge due to the personification as it “stands alone” as the “last truly great wilderness.” Carter also, within that first sentence of paragraph 1, manages to invoke a sense of patriotic pride by including the word “America,” which ends up developing into a recurring theme through the passage. Carter crafts a second sentence that mimics the content in structure and in what it contains: The length mirrors the “vast” wilderness, and the sentence is loaded with animals and other “wild” inhabitants, such as “polar bears,” “caribou,” “sheep,” and “wolves.” Carter makes sure to use descriptive language to portray the wonderfully unique nature of “windswept coastal plain” with its “midnight sun,” referring, of course, to the fact that for months out of the year the sun does not fully set below the horizon. Carter even hints at the danger that lurks on the horizon for this wildlife refuge when he paints the picture that “sheep cling to cliffs” and “wolves howl.” With such a descriptive and dense introductory paragraph of rhetorical devices, the reader has to already feel something unsettling about the argument that Carter is about to explore thanks to his skillful use of foreshadowing.

Carter continues the introduction of this passage in the second paragraph with a personal anecdote of when he and his wife had the “fortunate opportunity to camp and hike” in the Arctic Refuge, which not only speaks to his credibility but also informs the reader that he is a bit of an outdoorsy guy and not the kind of president who needs luxury and extravagance surrounding him. He spends more time using descriptive adjectives to build a more dimensional environment for the reader’s imagination to wander through: “caribou trails,” “brilliant mosaic of wildflowers,” and “never-setting sun” all add to life of the Refuge. Carter deepens this feeling of life with multiple instances of personification within paragraph 2 — “lichens that hugged the tundra” and “rivers that meander.” The active verbs within the paragraph also add to the feeling of movement that he is progressing in the most subtle of ways when he describes the sun that “circled above the horizon” and the muskox “lumber along” in what is likely a slow and perhaps injured way. Beyond those writing strategies, Carter makes sure to repeatedly note the sense of time when he scatters phrases like “ancient,” “survivors of the Ice Age,” and “timeless,” even with that last instance finding a

prominent place within a very short sentence utilizing the to-be verb of “was” to display the idea that this timeless quality might be fleeting. Carter’s intention with every single word, image, and phrase to further his argument indirectly shows wonderful skill and thoughtfulness.

Carter continues his respectful description in paragraph 3 with an awestruck recounting of a particular moment in his travels to the refuge that also deepens his theme of movement and progression — depicting how they “witnessed the migration” and the “dramatic procession of the Porcupine caribou herd.” Carter calls the experience “one of the most unforgettable and humbling” of his life, which characterizes a bit more of his personality considering he was the President of the United States and has likely had a lifetime full of unbelievable experiences. Something to notice: Carter drops out of the description for just a second when he tosses in a numerical reference in his statement about “tens of thousands” of caribou, and he also repeats the “newborn” motif from the first paragraph when he mentions that the caribou “give birth.” In the depths of that third paragraph, Carter also demonstrates the abundant liveliness of this wondrous piece of land when he features the auditory details of “grunting animals and clicking hooves filling the air” in order to bring his personification to fruition with the phrase “flooded with life.” He dares to contrast the American people’s preconceived notions about the Arctic Refuge and how the imagination tends to create a landscape void of life, but he wants to make absolutely sure that readers understand there is so much more to this Arctic Refuge than a bunch of ice and nothingness. Carter finishes off his third paragraph with a patriotic reference to America and another reference to the idea of birth with “birthplace.” Even deeper, the “Serengeti” references more migration, but that does require some knowledge of the Serengeti from the reader to fully appreciate that scholarly depth of the passage.

With the first sentence of paragraph 4, Carter transitions from his introduction to the heart of this passage. The tone shifts immediately to be more tragic yet with an appropriate level of hesitation. With the qualifying language — “might” and “if” — Carter hints that the “tragedy” of oil drilling could be averted. The metaphoric “web of roads and pipelines, drilling rigs and industrial facilities” brings in the eternal conflict of man versus nature while proposing the dangerous nature of the “proposed developments.” He juxtaposes a few different things in this paragraph against the rhetorical devices of the first three paragraphs. The phrase “forever destroy” contrasts sharply with the idea of the “ancient” and “timeless” (paragraph 2) existence that currently inhabits the refuge. Carter again features personification when he assigns America as having a “wilderness character” in order to appeal to the ethical dilemma he has put forth, and he strengthens that appeal with the serious theory that “countless numbers of animals...depend on this northernmost ecosystem.” Notice the use of an abstract reference to numbers to again appeal to the logical side of a reader’s understanding of the argument. On a larger, structural analysis, Carter’s use of the phrase “ecosystem” is a casual highlight toward his overall structure in this passage in that he started his argument with plants and then progressed to animals to emphasize again that the Arctic Refuge is more than just a dead swath of land, and, as in most ecosystems, there will no doubt be an appearance of humans.

In paragraph 5, Carter addresses directly the potential argument that opposing drilling in the arctic is a “tree-hugger” issue by illustrating that “both Republican and Democratic presidents” are aware of the “extraordinary...wildlife values.” The intent here to bring in the historical relevance and context helps add to the credibility of the argument. He specifically includes President Dwight D. Eisenhower and another large-scale number of “8.9 million”



acres of a preserve. Carter repeats the word “value” to again highlight that this land is not worthless and to perhaps poke at the political usage of arguments based on values; he also repeats “wilderness” and “wildlife.” To show the length of this debate, Carter includes 1960 and how “twenty years later” he became a hero of sorts when the legislation he passed “safeguarded more than 100 million acres” (notice the use of a number again when pertaining to land in the refuge).

Carter skips ahead once again in time in paragraph 6 as he moves from some lighthearted word play in paragraph 5, contrasting the pristine white Alaskan landscape as being “clearly incompatible” with the dark and seemingly sinister villain of “oil exploration,” to the direct attack of the “repeated proposals” to drill for oil since he “left office.” He stokes the fire of his appeal to the patriotic mindset when he forges the connection between “the American people” and the “Gwich’in Athabascan Indians of Alaska and Canada” with a simple word: “including.” Most readers might not have made that immediate jump from the “indigenous people” who have “depended” on the animals in that part of the world for “thousands of years” to the Americans today. With the addition of humans into the discussion, Carter’s “ecosystem” is complete. Beyond that, Carter pushes forward, in a very subtle way, the idea that these Indians could be considered the first Americans, which deepens his overall argument as to why the oil drilling in Alaska would be a mistake. He again uses the word “safeguard” at the end of the paragraph in his straightforward statement, “I can empathize with the Gwich’ins’ struggle,” which feels loaded with an unspoken question to the reader: “Can you?” But the real argument that lies at the heart of this passage sits in the last three words of paragraph 6: “precious human rights.” With those words, Carter has elevated this issue to a human rights issue, which generally falls into the top category of political arguments, and thematically intertwined the topics that are just as interconnected in real life to make sure the reader understands the full depth of potentially negative consequences of drilling into the refuge — clearly an ethical appeal.

From the heart of the argument in paragraph 6 to the direct plea to the reader in paragraph 7, Carter switches to first-person inclusive and the idea that “we must look beyond” in order to make sure that his conclusion brings not only some logical calls to action from the reader but also some closure to the rhetorical devices and repeated themes and phrases he introduces earlier in the passage. He even directs the reader to “focus on what is really at stake.” The numbers Carter uses in paragraph 7 (“1 to 2 percent”) are meager when compared to the millions of acres and countless numbers of animals mentioned earlier in the passage to directly contrast the benefits of drilling against the casualties of drilling. And when he taps into the somewhat heavy-handed ethical appeal with the statement, “instead of tearing open the heart of our greatest refuge,” Carter brings some closure to all his previous uses of personification by depicting a gruesome murder of something he considers to be alive and important.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 are noticeably shorter and more compact, no doubt in an attempt by Carter to speed up the pacing of the reader and to add a feeling of how time is fleeting and the time to take action is coming quickly. The structure of these paragraphs contrasts wildly against the first paragraphs, which were dense with animals, vegetation, and beautifully descriptive language. Also, Carter decides to just bring home the point by directly calling the refuge “a symbol of our national heritage.” And with that short last sentence of paragraph 8, the structure mimics the idea behind the statement: “Little of that precious wilderness remains.” Paragraph 9 follows up with the grand finale of Carter’s argument, but first he makes sure to stoke the patriotic fires when he predicts, “It will be a grand triumph for

America,” with a tiny qualifier in there: “if we can preserve.” In his final sentence, Carter circles back to certain words from his first sentence, “alone” and “greatest,” but he switches the context of those words to be more positive. And the final phrase sums up his entire argument that he utilizes as his last sentence in order to leave that thought with you, hanging in the air: “we could pass on to future generations.” His argument is not about the current animals and people who “depend” (paragraphs 4 and 6) on the resources of the refuge; he is concerned for the future of American generations if this land is used as a drilling ground.

Former President Jimmy Carter delays his overall point until the very end of this passage in order to make sure that his argument is fully formed without any immediate dismissal from the reader that the drilling of the refuge is not that important to America’s overall strength. He builds the wilderness of the Arctic refuge into this beautiful landscape that is a living ecosystem of plants, animals, and people that we as a country should not destroy, especially since it has been thriving for thousands of years. His overall structure, tone, word choices, personification usage, and credibility all function to form a well-rounded and heartfelt argument that the refuge should be left alone in its “pure, untrammelled state” (paragraph 9). Though Carter perhaps gets a little over dramatic and relies a little too much on the emotional side of his appeal, that emotion comes through as genuine and profound considering he has spent the majority of his life battling for similar causes related to humanity and nature.