
AP[®] English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Free-Response Question 2

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Rhetorical Analysis**6 points**

The following is a passage from the introduction to David Treuer’s 2012 nonfiction book *Rez Life: An Indian’s Journey Through Reservation Life*. Treuer is a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, a tribal nation in Minnesota. In *Rez Life*, Treuer draws on research and personal experience to explore the history of reservations and the issues that affect Native Americans who live on them today. A reservation is an area of land governed by a tribal nation in what is now the United States. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Treuer makes to develop his argument about the contributions that Native Americans and their communities have made to the United States.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Fail to address the rhetorical choices the writer of the passage makes. Describe or repeat the passage rather than making a claim that requires a defense. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt <u>and</u> clearly articulate a defensible thesis about the rhetorical choices Treuer makes to develop his argument about the contributions that Native Americans and their communities have made to the United States.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In his book Rez Life: An Indian’s Journey Through Reservation Life, Treuer uses a variety of rhetorical strategies to make his point about the contributions of Native Americans.”</i> Make a claim but do not address the writer’s rhetorical choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Treuer’s main point is that although most people are not familiar with Indian reservations or Native Americans’ contributions to American society, Native Americans have played a key role in the nation’s history.”</i> Repeat provided information from the passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Indian reservations can be found all over the United States, and Native Americans have participated in every war America has been involved in.”</i> 	Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“In this passage, Treuer uses interesting facts about Native Americans to show that they have made significant contributions.”</i> <i>“Using rhetorical strategies such as contrast and a humorous yet slightly ironic tone, Treuer calls attention to the fact that Native Americans and Indian reservations are ‘as American as apple pie.’”</i> <i>“In the introduction to his 2012 book, Rez Life: An Indian’s Journey Through Reservation Life, Treuer describes the history of Native Americans and then focuses on their contributions. By combining historical examples with engaging contemporary examples, he shows they are an integral part of US society and history.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. For a thesis to be defensible, the passage must include at least minimal evidence that <i>could</i> be used to support that thesis; however, the student need not cite that evidence to earn the thesis point. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student’s argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer’s argument, purpose, or message.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no textual references or references that are irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary or description of a passage rather than specific details or techniques. Mention rhetorical choices with little or no explanation. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific words and details from the passage to build an argument. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained. Explain how the writer’s use of rhetorical choices contributes to the student’s interpretation of the passage.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. To earn the fourth point in this row, the response may observe multiple instances of the same rhetorical choice if each instance further contributes to the argument, purpose, or message of the passage. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize the text, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (<i>“In a world where ...”</i> OR <i>“Since the beginning of time ...”</i>). Only hint at or suggest other arguments (<i>“While some may argue that ...”</i> OR <i>“Some people say ...”</i>). Examine individual rhetorical choices but do not examine the relationships among different choices throughout the text. Oversimplify complexities in the text. Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance their analysis. 	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer’s rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation). Explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 	

Sample 2A (1 of 2)

David Treuer, an Indian novelist who grew up on a Minnesota reservation, argues that Americans should pay more attention to Indians and put forth more effort in understanding their livelihoods. Using rhetorical techniques, Treuer does this by first comparing and contrasting reservations with non-reservation land, then describing reservations more in depth, and finally describing the importance of Indians in American history.

In order to convey his argument to Americans that they should work towards understanding Indian life, Treuer begins by comparing the land most Americans are familiar with to reservation lands. He states that the sign welcoming travelers into the reservation "is soon behind you and soon forgotten" (Treuer 2). This anaphora with the repetition of "soon" emphasizes the fact that non-Indians entering a reservation typically ignore the fact that they have entered such a place and fail to acknowledge the meaning behind where they are located. This serves to show the audience that their ignorance is noticeable, effectively setting up the argument that they should pay more attention to the meaning of Indian life. Continuing, Treuer states that "The houses don't look all that different [on the reservations], perhaps a little smaller, a little more ramshackle" (2). The words "smaller" and "ramshackle" describe a setting that seems in worse shape than in non-reservations. This comparison further demonstrates a degree of ignorance toward reservation life, serving as a way to familiarize the audience with an unfamiliar and often overlooked setting, again setting up the main issue of ignorance in the passage.

Treuer continues this passage by describing reservation life more in depth in order to describe the conditions and livelihoods of Indians on reservations. He states that "...all reservations have signs... you can see these signs in more than thirty of the states" (Treuer 3). The repetition of the word "signs" expresses to the audience that the resources are there for them to learn more about reservations and actually pay attention to their existence. However, as the passage as a whole demonstrates, the audience generally ignores their existence, showing just how much of an unknown problem this ignorance is. Treuer continues his description of reservations, stating that "Some reservations are so small that the sign itself seems larger than the land it denotes" (3). This hyperbole emphasizes the difference in sizes of the reservations, showing how similar they are to the land that most other Americans are accustomed to (with the fact that they all differ). This allows the audience to reflect on their attention to Indian reservations and have more of an inside look at reservation life, making them question whatever assumptions they may have had.

Finally, Treuer establishes his argument that Americans should pay more attention to reservation life by expressing the importance of Indians in American history. He states that "The Oneida were allies of the Revolutionary Army who fed U.S. troops at Valley Forge and helped defeat the British in New York" (Treuer 4). This allusion to the Revolutionary War (which eventually led to the independence of the American colonies) shows just how important Indians are in the establishment of the country now known as the United States. This enables the audience to reflect on how they have been ignorant toward Indian culture and livelihood, persuading them that they should pay more attention and do more research regarding the matter. Treuer also uses personification, stating that "Indians are part of the story that America tells itself" (5). This shows how Americans do acknowledge Indians but

often have a false narrative. In conclusion, David Treuer establishes his argument that Americans must pay more attention to reservation life and the role of Indians in America by comparing American lands to reservations, explaining the characteristics of reservations, and describing the importance of Indians in American history.

Sample 2B (1 of 2)

Despite living in this country for countless years, or even being born here, many members of American society have never met or interacted with a Native American before. This is a disappointing fact, as the communities that make up the 564 federally recognized Native American tribes have left an unimaginable impact on the American that we know today. Throughout this excerpt from his nonfiction book *An Indian's Journey Through Reservation Life*, author David Treuer displays this importance of Native Americans in our history through direct historical examples, using second person point of view to address the reader directly, and similes to commonly used phrases.

The contributions to America that have been made by Native Americans go beyond helping early British settlers, and include fighting alongside other Americans in battles as recently as 2007. Treuer includes historical examples of wars fought in part by Native Americans to allow the audience to understand just how great their sacrifice has been. Beyond battles, the author mentions that these communities not only were "allies of the Revolutionary Army who fed U.S. troops at valley", but also stood as "one of the many models for the American constitution", a paper that defined the founding ideals of this country forever. The inclusion of these historical details provides specific details to the readers of his novel, which allows them to better understand and connect with his message of Native American Importance.

During this short five paragraph excerpt, Treuer takes care in making sure the audience is thoroughly engaged in his relaying of Native Americans vital role in our history, and he accomplishes this by using a direct tone with the reader. By utilizing second person language such as "you" or "us", the author effectively brings the reader into their words, and connects them with the meaning of the essay or novel. Instead of simply saying "the signs can be seen from all over America", while referencing the welcome signs for American reservations, Treuer chooses the language "you can see these kinds of signs all over America". While this seemingly insignificant change might be overlooked, the message behind it is one of inclusion for the reader, and in this context is exemplified to show the audience how they have access to connecting with Native Americans all across America. Additionally, this use of direct address of the reader will ultimately drive home his message of how vital the Native Americans are to our America.

Treuer not only displays examples of historical details and direct address of the reader, but also includes the simple rhetorical device of a simile, to compare the Native American communities to a common descriptor. The phrase "as American as apple pie" is one that references the apparent significance of homemade food, such as apple pie. It conjures up the image of what a stereotypical, old fashioned American might look like, including light skin, blond hair, and a sweet demeanor. By referring to Native Americans and their reservations as being "as American as apple pie", he is working against the narrative of what is considered American, and highlighting how these vital communities have worked to shape our nation. By creating this simile, he also is exemplifying how they are nothing more American than those that were here long before European settlers, and who fight alongside us to this day.

The way in which Native American contributions have been consistently overlooked is something that our Nation should not be proud of. From assisting our troops in the

Sample 2B (2 of 2)

Revolutionary war to our most recent one, Native Americans have consistantly changed what our nation looks like, and how we live in it. This is a fact that should be overlooked no longer, so that we may one day embrace their status as true Americans.

Sample 2C (1 of 1)

David Treuer is a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, a tribal nation in Minnesota. In the book "Rez Life," Treuer uses research and personal experiences to explore the history of reservations and the issues that affect Native Americans who live on them today. Treuer develops his argument by describing the landscape of the reservation to open up the passage and by giving credibility to Indians that have contributed to American life.

In the first paragraph of the passage, Treuer states, "The landscape is unchaned. The same pines, and the same swamps, hay feilds, and jeweled lakes dropped here and there among the trees." These description showcases the value of history and representing the past is important for those living on the reservations. By highlighting the fact that lots of things have remained the same demonstrates the fact that Indians living on the reservation respect and honor those who came before them. They are remaining the same to showcase the importance of the past and by opening up the passage this way it gives the reader a solid understanding of what the reservations look like. The first paragraph also states, "The children playing by the road do look different, though. Darker." This is completely opposite from the landscape itself. This highlights the fact that the people living on these reserves have changed. They look pysically different which represents how the times have changed for the people living on these reserves. These two opposite claims represent how certain things have stayed the same while other things remain different. The opening paragraph from this passage provides a description of the past and the everchanging future.

Treuer also highlights the American lifestyle compared to life on the reservations for the Indians and stating how Indians have contributed to the American lifestyle. He opens up paragraph four by explaining, "Indian reservations, and those of us who live on them, are as American as apple pie, baseball, and muscle cars. Unlike apple pie, however Indians contributed to the birth of America itself." Using specifc examples of an American lifestyle including appie pie, baseball, and muscle cars is used to show the simularities between the life of the reservations compared to an average American life. He is pointing out the fact that these lifestyles are not totally different. He creates and opposing statement but adding in how Indians contributed to the birth of America. This sarcastic comment aims to show how Indians have affected American life and how they have contributed to the birth of America. He also states, "Indians have been disproprtionally involved in every war America has fought since its first, including one were fighting now..." He is giving credibility to the Indians by highlighting how they have contributed to this country. Treuer is describing two lifestyles and giving credibility in order to prove the impacts Native Americans and thier communities have made to the United States.

Overall, David Treuer uses imagery to desribe the physical layout of the reservation and highlights the changes made from the past to present. He also showcases the similarity between the American and Indian lifestyle by giving credibility to the Indians that contributed to the American lifestyle. All of these choices contribute to his argument about the contributions that Native American and their communitis have made to the United States.

Question 2

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 2A

Score: 1-4-1

Thesis (0–1 points): 1

The response offers a defensible position in paragraph 1: “Using rhetorical techniques, Treuer does this by first comparing and contrasting reservations with non-reservation land, then describing reservations more in depth, and finally describing the importance of Indians in American history.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4

The response provides specific evidence to support all claims in its line of reasoning. “He states that the sign welcoming travelers into the reservation ‘is soon behind you and soon forgotten’ (Treuer 2)” to support “his argument to Americans that they should work towards understanding Indian life.”

The commentary consistently and clearly explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning, such as “He states that the sign welcoming travelers into the reservation ‘is soon behind you and soon forgotten’ (Treuer 2)” to support “his argument to Americans that they should work towards understanding Indian life.” Additionally, the commentary explains how multiple rhetorical choices contribute to the writer’s claim that “Americans must pay more attention to reservation life and the role of Indians in America.” The response explains that the writer uses anaphora, which “emphasizes the fact that non-Indians entering a reservation typically ignore the fact that they have entered such a place and fail to acknowledge the meaning behind where they are located,” and historical evidence that “shows just how important Indians are in the establishment of the country now known as the United States” in order to demonstrate that “that Americans must pay more attention to reservation life and the role of Indians in America.”

Sophistication (0–1 points): 1

The response demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation) by explaining a purpose or function of the passage’s complexities or tensions. For example, the sophistication is seen in the response when it states, “This shows how Americans do acknowledge Indians but often have a false narrative.”

Question 2 (continued)**Sample: 2B****Score: 1-3-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The response offers a defensible position at the end of paragraph 1: “Throughout this excerpt from his nonfiction book *An Indian’s Journey Through Reservation Life*, author David Treuer displays this importance of Native Americans in our history through direct historical examples, using second person point of view to address the reader directly, and similies to commonly used phrases.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 3

The response provides specific evidence to support all claims in its line of reasoning that Native Americans have been an important force in American history. For example, paragraph 2 specifically identifies historical examples employed by Treuer: “Beyond battles, the author mentions that these communities not only were ‘allies of the Revolutionary Army who fed U.S. troops at valley’, but also stood as ‘one of the many models for the American constitution’, a paper that defined the founding ideals of this country forever.”

The commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning, such as “By referring to Native Americans and their reservations as being ‘as American as apple pie’, he is working against the narrative of what is considered American, and highlighting how these vital communities have worked to shape our nation.” Additionally, the commentary explains how at least one rhetorical choice contributes to the writer’s argument. For example, the response explains that the writer uses historical examples to demonstrate that although Native Americans’ contributions are often overlooked, they have been important throughout U.S. history.

However, some commentary does not effectively integrate evidence into the argument. In paragraph 3, the response supports the claim that Treuer uses second-person pronouns to directly address the audience, but the commentary provided for the evidence does not clearly demonstrate how this contributes to Treuer’s purpose of bringing to light the contributions of Native Americans. This is seen when the response asserts, “this use of direct adress of the reader will ultimately drive home his message of how vital the Native Americans are to our America.”

Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

The response does not demonstrate sophistication of thought or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.

Question 2 (continued)**Sample: 2C****Score: 1-2-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The response offers a defensible position in paragraph 1: “Treuer develops his argument by describing the lanscape of the reservation to open up the passage and by giving credibility to Indians that have contributed to American life.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 2

The response provides relevant evidence. Some evidence is specific, as in paragraph 2: ““The landscape is unchaned. The same pines, and the same swamps, hay feilds, and jeweled lakes dropped here and there among the trees.”” However, the response also consists of many broad generalities, as in paragraph 3: “He creates and opposing statement but adding in how Indiancs contributed to the birth of America.”

The response provides commentary that explains how some of the evidence relates to the argument, such as in paragraph 2: “By highlighting the fact that lots of things have remained the same demonstrates the fact that Indians living on the reservation respect and honor those who came before them.” However, it does not explain how the evidence supports the claim, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.

Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

The response does not demonstrate sophistication of thought or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.