

Question Three

Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes

(This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Directions:

The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Introduction:

Though the penchant for computer gaming among adolescents is undeniable, the effects of such gaming are hotly debated. While some see this as a deleterious, obsessive fixation that contributes to, even promotes, violent and/or anti-social behavior, others see it as a technological boon that fosters, even enhances, problem-solving skills and imaginative thought.

Assignment:

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges or qualifies the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents' intellectual and social development.**

Document A

Young, Dr. Kimberly S. Young. *Caught in the Net: How to Recognize the Signs of Internet Addiction*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1998: 67-69.

Steve never became the quarterback of his high school football team, as his father had hoped. He's not making the dean's list in his sophomore year at a major university in upstate New York, as his mother would like to see. She often reminds Steve that his brother is pulling a solid 3.5 grade point average at Rutgers. Steve also has no friends at school and his girlfriend recently broke up with him.

But in LambdaMOO, all that changes. In LambdaMOO, everyone bows to Steve in recognition of his power, skill, and intelligence. They respect and fear him. In LambdaMOO, Steve has buddies whom he can meet for drinks and small talk at Dred's Tavern. In LambdaMOO, Steve charms every woman he meets. He's recently been dating the beautiful and charming SoftSnow. In LambdaMOO, Steve is regarded as a great wizard—the highest honor anyone can achieve.

LambdaMOO is the land of the Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) where Steve spends most of his time. MUD commonly refers to the Internet's many active games, including the pure adventure type and the more socially oriented games known as MUSHes and MOOs. Traditionally, a MUD is a spinoff of the old Dungeons & Dragons game, where players take on the names of characters who compete through fighting battles, buying weapons, engaging in duels, killing monsters, slaying dragons, storming castles, and saving maidens. There are hundreds of MUDs, each with its own theme....

Because MUDs never end—play is continuous day and night, week to week—the only way to become a wizard is to play often. Steve plays at least 60 to 70 hours every week, following a pattern of jumping on the computer immediately after dinner and staying with it until 2 or 3 a.m. Then he sleeps until noon, skipping his morning classes. He may attend an afternoon class or two before rushing back to his dorm for another night as Chameleon. His grades are slipping to basic passing level, but he hasn't seriously considered cutting down....

Document B

Reeks, Anne. "Teens not just playing games; they're bettering themselves." *Houston Chronicle* 18 Apr 2002: 4. Online <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?index=79&did=114628955&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=...>

EVERYBODY talks about what's wrong with the Internet—raunchy content, unbridled commercialism, rampant misinformation, invasive data-gathering and the list goes on.

I've certainly done my share of journalistic hand-wringing over its dangers to children.

In a refreshing change of pace, someone is talking about what's right with the Internet. Turns out, today's kids aren't only going online to play games, diss classmates and spend money, although they do plenty of that.

"But young people are also using the Internet these days to register to vote, to debate issues of war and peace, even to become social activists," says Kathryn Montgomery, president of the Center for Media Education, based in Washington, D.C. In other words, Web sites are acting as agents of good citizenship....

Examples are Voices of Youth, at www.unicef.org/voy, a worldwide forum for discussions of child labor, the environment, armed conflicts, gender discrimination and other issues; the Diary Project, www.diaryproject.com, where teen-agers can write about day-to-day concerns and respond to others in barebones (and wrenchingly affecting) plain-text posts; YouthNOISE, www.youthnoise.com, which aims to "connect, inform and empower youth" by encouraging them to help themselves and others; and HarlemLive, www.harlemlive.org, an Internet publication whose message boards address meatier fare than concerts and clothes....

Document C

DiConsiglio, John, "Game Over." *Scholastic Choices* 23.4 (Jan 2008): 6-9. Online
<http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?index=5&did=1403808271&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=...>

Between 70 percent and 90 percent of teens in the United States play video or online games. Some experts suggest that 5 percent to 10 percent of these teens are gaming addicts. The problem has become serious enough for the American Medical Association to issue a warning about the dangers of gaming addiction.

"The problem is enormous," Dr. Hilarie Cash, co-founder of Internet/Computer Addiction Services tells *Choices*. "But people don't think of gaming addiction as being real. And those who need help with an addiction don't know where to get it"....

"The games are designed to keep you at your computer as long as possible because you can't win," says Liz Woolley of On-Line Gamers Anonymous, a group that helps gamers overcome addiction. "There's a large group of people who just can't stop playing"....

Cash, a therapist, has counseled teens who stop going to school or hanging out with their friends to make more time for their gaming. "Imagine a kid who used to have friends, used to love sports, and used to do things with his family," she says. "Now his grades are falling, he is totally out of shape, and he's withdrawn. He can no longer function in real life. All he wants to do is play the game"....

Document D

Neiburger, Eli and Matt Gullett. "Out of the Basement: The Social Side of Gaming." *Young Adult Library Services* 5.2 (Winter 2007): 34-37. Online <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?index=21&did=1192061811&SrchMode=17SID=3&fMT...>

When people play games together, the competition has value in and of itself, but the sharing of knowledge that occurs also increases the social value of the encounter. While both the loser and the winner learn something from every chess match, video games are usually so full of arcane secrets and exploitable glitches that exclamations of "How did you do that?" are central components of any gaming event. Players who can reliably execute difficult maneuvers, but also explain how they were done, have cachet and credibility among their peers that simply can't be obtained in the classroom. These are useful life skills here, unlike trigonometry....

While the social and recreational benefits alone make gaming events a good fit for any public library, games are also learning activities and even, in many cases, literacy activities. On the most basic level, all video games require the development of cognitive skills that are useful in the always "on" modern world, such as pattern recognition, spatial reasoning, and information processing....

Games are widely used as educational tools, not just for pilots, soldiers and surgeons, but also in schools and businesses.... Games require players to construct hypotheses, solve problems, develop strategies, learn the rules of the in-game world through trial and error. Gamers must also be able to juggle several different tasks, evaluate risks and make quick decisions.... Playing games is, thus, an ideal form of preparation for the workplace of the twenty-first century, as some forward-thinking firms are already starting to realize....

Document E

www.cartoonstock.com



Document F

Worthy, Kym. "How Violent Video Games can Cultivate real Youth Violence." *Michigan Chronicle* 69.2 (Sep 28-Oct 4, 2005): A1. Online <http://proquest.umi.com/pdqweb?index=43&did=924450061&SrchMade=1&sid=3&Fmt=...>

The stark lead in an *Indianapolis Star* news story captures a teenager's glee as he demonstrates proficiency in a video killing game.

The 18-year-old, according to the newspaper, "takes careful aim and shoots, red spray fills the air, and the target falls dead, as (the youth) laughs lightly and says, "There's the blood."

Meanwhile, in Oakland, Calif., a group of teens and young adults were arrested last year in a highly publicized spree of carjackings, robberies, and murders. Some of the alleged assailants acknowledged the role violent video games played in the crimes. A lawyer in a CBSNews.com Q&A reported that older gang members used the Grand Theft Auto III game to "train teens to do carjackings and murders."

According to one arrested youth, "We played the game by day and lived the game by night."

Précis and Explication of Free-Response Question Three: Synthesis Question on the Effects of Internet and Computer Gaming On Adolescents

Free-Response Question Three asked students to consider five articles and one cartoon on whether Internet or computing gaming has a beneficial or detrimental impact upon the adolescents who play them. The prompt asked students to “take a position that defends, challenges or qualifies the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents’ intellectual and social development.”

The six sources provided offered students a diversity of perspectives on this topic. Document A, from a book on Internet addiction by Dr. Kimberly Young, offers a peek into the life of a college age sophomore who is not making the Dean’s List at his school, has no friends, and who recently broke up with his girlfriend. However, in the LambdaMOO, an interactive Internet game, he has achieved cult status as a dragon-slaying, castle-storming, maiden-saving hero who can socialize easily with anonymous players in this fantasy realm. So compulsive is his addiction that he spends up to sixty to seventy hours a week playing the game, at the expense of slipping grades and serious sleep deprivation. Document B, an article from the *Houston Chronicle*, takes the opposite tack: that young people’s involvement on the Internet is not merely about games but an avenue to voter registration and a forum to discuss important social issues. The author cites several websites that promote what she calls “meatier fare than concerts and clothes” and that promote dialogue among young people about everything from global concerns to personal issues. Document C, entitled “Game Over,” returns to the negative aspect of computer gaming, stressing again the social withdrawal that such solitary involvement abets while also providing statistics on the percentage of teens who have become “gaming addicts.”

Document D, an article in *Young Adult Library Services* magazine, again offers a contrary take, stressing the social gains provided by online gaming. Not only do the authors compliment the skills that such players exhibit, but they claim that such success achieves “a cachet and credibility among their peers that simply can’t be obtained in the classroom.” They credit these games with improving skills in “pattern recognition, spatial reasoning, and information processing” and argue that such games are regularly used to develop the skills of pilots, soldiers and surgeons, claiming they are an ideal “preparation for the workplace.” Document E, a droll cartoon, shows a teacher using terminology of a popular video game, “Space Invaders,” to get his students interested in learning mathematics while Document F, the most unique of the six, attributes an increase in real-life murders and carjacking to kids playing the “Grand Theft Auto” video game, implying that criminal behavior can be spawned by violent video games.

These six sources provide a rich variety of perspectives on the relative merits or demerits of Internet and computer gaming that should allow students plenty of latitude in developing their responses to the prompt.

This question has been reprinted for your convenience.

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**Scoring Guide for Free-Response Question Three:
Synthesis Question on the Effects of Internet and Computer Gaming On Adolescents**

- 9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet all the criteria for 8 papers and in addition are especially thorough in their analysis or demonstrate a particularly impressive control of style.
 - 8 Essays earning a score of 8 effectively take a position that defends, challenges or qualifies the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents' intellectual and social development. They present a carefully reasoned argument in support of their position and enlist appropriate evidence from the sources that supports it. Their prose demonstrates an impressive control of the elements of effective writing, though it is not flawless.
 - 7 Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of 6 essays but feature either more purposeful arguments or a greater command of prose style.
 - 6 Essays scoring 6 also take a position that defends, challenges or qualifies the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents' intellectual and social development. Their arguments, while generally sound in nature and adequately supported, are nevertheless not as persuasive as papers earning a score of 7 or better due to their being less developed or less cogent. Though these papers may also feature lapses in diction or syntax, they nevertheless contain the insight and composition skills that characterize a paper in the upper-half.
 - 5 Essays scoring 5 generally understand the task, but are either limited in scope or insufficiently developed. Though they may be marked by errors in syntax or in diction, they nevertheless reflect a certain level of competence.
 - 4 Essays scoring 4 respond inadequately to the question's task, often misunderstanding, misrepresenting, or oversimplifying the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents' intellectual and social development, or by providing insufficient evidence to support their claims. Though their prose is often adequate enough to convey their writers' claims, it generally suggests a limited control over organization, diction, or syntax.
 - 3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4, but are either less persuasive or display a more limited control over the elements of effective composition.
 - 2 Essays scoring 2 achieve little success in defending, challenging, or qualifying the claim that Internet and/or computer gaming is indisputably harmful to adolescents' intellectual and social development. They may on occasion misread a passage, fail to develop their arguments to any substantive level, summarize rather than analyze the sources, or display significant weaknesses in organization, clarity, fluency or mechanics.
 - 1 Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are either overly simplistic or marred by severe deficiencies in the elements of composition.
 - 0 Essays scoring 0 offer an off-topic response that receives no credit, or a mere repetition of the prompt.
- Indicates a blank or completely off-topic response.