

## **Michael's response essay to College Board Practice Test 10 Essay section**

Here for the: [SAT Practice Essay #10 \(collegeboard.org\)](https://www.collegeboard.org)

Davidson builds his argument for additional funding for the National Park Service through a combination of rhetorical flash, financial statistics, and appeal to authority. Launching his argument with the rhetorical question as to “Who among us has... not been overcome by the incredible, magical grandeur” that are the national parks, Davidson next guides the reader from that pathos to the logos of its economic importance, backed up with statistics and economic analysis, which he then attaches to a national priority as set by the President of the United States. Individually, these appeals may have merit and may invoke a positive reader response, but given their inherent flaws of exaggeration, unsupported claims, and poorly connected logic, together they fail to create a cohesive argument, thus leaving the piece empty of persuasive effect.

Beginning with the unsupported claim of the first line that “The world has an enduring love affair with America’s national parks,” Davidson attempts to draw in the reader with vivid imagery, such as “blue caldera of Crater Lake” and “spectacular October fall colors,” and, next, national pride as, he states, the parks “represent the very best our nation has to offer.” Indeed, he posits that, “intrepid and iconic Park Rangers... embody the true spirit of the country, bringing our nation’s history to life.” It’s an odd claim that leaves the reader curious as to how exactly “intrepid” park rangers and the “spirit” of the country tie in to a worldwide “love affair” with these parks and their rangers, but also as to their position as “the very best our nation has to offer.” Perhaps Davidson didn’t mean to invite the reader into an evaluation of who, exactly, constitutes the “best” our nation “has to offer,” be it park rangers, parks, astronauts, moon launches, doctors, miracle pills, etc., but here and elsewhere, Davidson dangles both a claim and a superlative without any logical or factual support.

Clinging to emotional appeals and exaggeration (“immensely affordable destinations,” “awe-inspiring places”), Davidson next provides statistical evidence of the importance of the national park system, such as the number of visitors and the amount of revenue generated as result of park visits, which Davidson calls a “significant component of the U.S. tourism economy.” Here he presents, indeed, in a logical progression, by moving from emotional assertions to evidence, the need for additional funding of the National Park Service and what that funding would accomplish, which is fine. However, he then launches into the culmination of his argument, that national parks are “veritable economic engines” that are integral to the overall “U.S. travel and tourism industry” that produces \$1.8 trillion and 14 million jobs, a claim that begs the reader to revisit numbers he listed previously, \$30 billion and 250,000 jobs generated by national parks. A scratch pad calculation of that contribution to the overall numbers Davidson presents leaves the parks representing a rather unimpressive under 2% of the travel and tourism industry and its jobs, rendering Davidson’s claim irrelevant.

After his claims of the economic significance of parks and the overall tourism industry, Davidson attaches his agenda to that of the President, who, Davidson informs, has made travel and tourism “a national priority.” Such ethical appeals are intended to add credence to a persuasion through association with an accepted authority, in this case, “President Obama” and “the White House.” Now we have Davidson’s fuller reasoning that: 1) National Parks are tourism; 2) the President has called tourism a national priority; 3) therefore National Parks are a national priority – a false syllogism that illogically extends a specific to a general claim.

Effective persuasion must not only support an argument, it must also present that argument and evidence honestly. Davidson's essay demonstrates the failures of a persuasion that requires exaggerations, superlative claims, and unsupported logic. One hopes that in seeking to Davidson's goal of additional funding for National Parks, other proponents have provided the Congress and the public with a more cohesive and logical argument.

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This essay doesn't address another problem in the text:

Less important to both the argument and its problems is that while claiming that the Park system needs funding "every dollar invested... generates \$10 in economic activity," which ought to be inherent to the numbers previously presented, which thus renders the assertion meaningless; it does, however, contribute to the overall inconsistency in Davidson's arguments.

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