



ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1¹

(Suggested Time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Introduction

The holiday season—Thanksgiving through New Year’s—is often a time of joy and celebration. Every year individuals in most, if not all, cultures come together to rekindle and foster relationships, give gifts, and share their life experiences from the past year; such traditions have been around for centuries. In a more contemporary sense, the holiday season has also become more commercialized and new traditions such as *Black Friday* and *Cyber Monday* shopping have arisen, often influencing individuals to include commercial plans during their festive seasons. Some people argue that holiday deals and sales help foster the giving spirit by allowing individuals to affordably give freely to those that they love, while detractors say such days are ruining the holiday spirit.

Assignment

Carefully read the following eight (8) sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least **four (4)** of the sources—one **MUST BE** *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*—and incorporate it into a coherent, well-reasoned essay that *develops a position on the meaning of the holiday season*.

Directions:

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

- Source A ("Hanukkah")
- Source B (Various Black Friday)
- Source C ("New Year Celebrations")
- Source D (Olsen)
- Source E (Gallo)
- Source F (Atheist Christmas)
- Source G (Rockwell)
- Source H (Seuss)

¹ Modified from an original version produced by Meghan Hobbs Chandler
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Source A

"Hanukkah." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 2009. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following article is a brief history and explanation of Hanukkah and its traditions.

HANUKKAH

The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. Hanukkah, which means “dedication” in Hebrew, begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar and usually falls in November or December. Often called the Festival of Lights, the holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

HISTORY OF HANUKKAH

The events that inspired the Hanukkah holiday took place during a particularly turbulent phase of Jewish history. Around 200 B.C., Judea—also known as the Land of Israel—came under the control of Antiochus III, the Seleucid king of Syria, who allowed the Jews who lived there to continue practicing their religion. His son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, proved less benevolent: Ancient sources recount that he outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods. In 168 B.C., his soldiers descended upon Jerusalem, massacring thousands of people and desecrating the city’s holy Second Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing pigs within its sacred walls.

DID YOU KNOW?

The story of Hanukkah does not appear in the Torah because the events that inspired the holiday occurred after it was written. It is, however, mentioned in the New Testament, in which Jesus attends a "Feast of Dedication."

Led by the Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons, a large-scale rebellion broke out against Antiochus and the Seleucid monarchy. When Mattathias died in 166 B.C., his son Judah, known as Judah Maccabee (“the Hammer”), took the helm; within two years the Jews had successfully driven the Syrians out of Jerusalem, relying largely on guerilla warfare tactics. Judah called on his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah—the gold candelabrum whose seven branches represented knowledge and creation and were meant to be kept burning every night.

THE HANUKKAH “MIRACLE”

According to the Talmud, one of Judaism’s most central texts, Judah Maccabee and the other Jews who took part in the rededication of the Second Temple witnessed what they believed to be a miracle. Even though there was only enough untainted olive oil to keep the menorah’s candles burning for a single day, the flames continued flickering for eight nights, leaving them time to find a fresh supply. This wondrous event inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival. (The first Book of the Maccabees tells another version of the story, describing an eight-day celebration that followed the rededication but making no reference to the miracle of the oil.)

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HANUKKAH STORY

Some modern historians offer a radically different interpretation of the Hanukkah tale. In their view, Jerusalem under Antiochus IV had erupted into civil war between two camps of Jews: those who had assimilated into the dominant culture that surrounded them, adopting Greek and Syrian customs; and those who were determined to impose Jewish laws and traditions, even if by force. The traditionalists won out in the end, with the Hasmonean dynasty—led by Judah Maccabee’s brother and his descendants—wresting control of the Land of Israel from the Seleucids and maintaining an independent Jewish kingdom for more than a century. Jewish scholars have also suggested that the first Hanukkah may have been a belated celebration of Sukkot, which the Jews had not had the chance to observe during the Maccabean Revolt. One of the Jewish religion’s most important holidays, Sukkot consists of seven days of feasting, prayer and festivities.

HANUKKAH TRADITIONS

The Hanukkah celebration revolves around the kindling of a nine-branched menorah, known in Hebrew as the hanukiah. On each of the holiday’s eight nights, another candle is added to the menorah after sundown; the ninth candle, called the shamash (“helper”), is used to light the others. Jews typically recite blessings during this ritual and display the menorah prominently in a window as a reminder to others of the miracle that inspired the holiday.

In another allusion to the Hanukkah miracle, traditional Hanukkah foods are fried in oil. Potato pancakes (known as latkes) and jam-filled donuts (sufganiyot) are particularly popular in many Jewish households. Other Hanukkah customs include playing with four-sided spinning tops called dreidels and exchanging gifts. In recent decades, particularly in North America, Hanukkah has exploded into a major commercial phenomenon, largely because it falls near or overlaps with Christmas. From a religious perspective, however, it remains a relatively minor holiday that places no restrictions on working, attending school or other activities

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Scott Diesenhaus and Timm Freitas

Source B

Various Black Friday Adverts. Digital image. *TheBlackFriday.com*. TheBlackFriday, 2016. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following are the front pages from two popular stores' most recent advertisements.

This Walmart advertisement features a central red banner with the Walmart logo and the text "Black Friday Starts 6PM THURSDAY, November 26 in-store & all-day Thursday online!". Surrounding this banner are several product images with their respective prices and savings:

- 50" Class HDTV: SPECIAL BUY \$269
- 40" Class HDTV: SPECIAL BUY \$149
- Fitbit Flex: SAVE \$40, \$59
- Was \$99 Fitbit Flex** Wristband
- Was \$20.99, SAVE 20.99 \$28.88
- Was \$49.97 RCA 7" Voyager II Android™ Ad-Free Tablet
- TCL Roku TV: SPECIAL BUY \$125
- 32" 31.5" LED Roku TV
- NETFLIX, VUDU, hulu, HBO GO, PANDORA, PBS
- SAVE \$2.88 \$27 each
- Was \$9.99 NBA2K16, Madden 16, or FIFA 16 for Xbox One™
- Also available for Xbox 360™, PlayStation® 3, or PlayStation® 4

This Toys R Us advertisement features a central banner with the Toys R Us logo and the text "black friday starts thurs. 5pm* over 200 doorbusters!". Below this banner are several product images with their respective prices and savings:

- 50% off 39.99 sale
- Vtech InnoTab 3S Connect Wi-Fi Learning Tablet (272577), Reg. 79.99
- Our exclusive! Offer available in store only. Limit 2 per customer. InnoTab software on sale! See p. 3.
- over 30% off 19.99 sale
- Disney Frozen Olaf Jumbo Plush (125369), Reg. 29.99
- Our exclusive! Over 2' tall. Offer available in store only. Limit 2 per customer.
- buy 1 get 1 70% off
- ALL Skylanders Trap Team figures & Traps**
- Reg. 6.99-16.99 ea.
- Offer available in store only.
- thurs. 5pm - 9pm*
- 4 hour deals! while supplies last!
- up to 50% off 37.50 sale
- ALL Skylanders Trap Team Starter Packs
- Reg. 64.99-74.99
- Offer available in store only. Available on Xbox 360, Xbox One, PS3, PS4, Wii, Wii U, 3DS & tablet.
- 50% off 39.99 sale
- Polaroid 7" Dual Core Tablet (175154), Reg. 79.99
- Android 4.4 KitKat OS
- Dual core processor
- 800 x 480 resolution
- 7" capacitive screen
- Google Play certified
- Offer available in store only.
- over 30% off 19.99 sale
- Kinetic Sand Mega Set (072861), Reg. 29.99
- Our exclusive! Ages 3-up. Offer available in store only. Limit 2 per customer.
- 50% off 39.99 sale
- Barbie Sisters' Horse Adventure Play Set (113178, 928915), Reg. 79.99
- Our exclusive! Ages 3-up. Offer available in store only. Limit 2 per customer.

Toysrus.com | 1-800-TOYSRUS | 595 Stores

Quantities limited; no rain checks. Prices, offers and exclusions may vary online; at Toys "R" Us Times Square, Toys "R" Us Express and Outlet stores; and at stores located in Puerto Rico. Selection varies by store. *See p. 28 for information about store hours. **Discounted item must be of equal or lesser value to the lowest priced item purchased.

Sale prices valid November 27-29, 2014

Source C

"New Year Celebrations Around the World."

Http://www.scholastic.com/. Scholastic, 2016.
Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following details different New Year's Celebrations around the world.

New Year's Eve

In many places people stay up late to see the old year out and the new year in. Almost everywhere in the world church bells ring, horns toot, whistles blow, sirens shriek. London's Trafalgar Square and New York City's Times Square swarm with crowds of happy, noisy people. The hullabaloo expresses people's high spirits at holiday time.

Chinese New Year

Many Chinese children dress in new clothes to celebrate the Chinese New Year. People carry lanterns and join in a huge parade led by a silk dragon, the Chinese symbol of strength. According to legend, the dragon hibernates most of the year, so people throw firecrackers to keep the dragon awake.

In the Chinese lunar calendar each of the 12 years is named after an animal. According to Legend, Lord Buddha asked all the animals to come to him before he left the earth. Only 12 animals came to wish him farewell, and as a reward Buddha named a year after each one.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur

In September or October, Jews believe that God opens the Book of Life for 10 days, starting with Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and ending with Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). During these days, the holiest in the Jewish year, Jews try to atone for any wrongdoing and to forgive others. A ram's horn trumpet, known as the shofar, is blown before and during Rosh Hashanah and at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

Songkran

In Thailand, a special three-day water festival on April 13–15 marks Songkran, the Buddhists' celebration of the new year. Parades feature huge statues of Buddha that spray water on passersby. In small villages, young people throw water at each other for fun. People also release fish into rivers as an act of kindness.

At Songkran, people tie strings around each other's wrists to show their respect. A person can have as many as 25 or 30 strings on one wrist, each from a different person. The strings are supposed to be left on until they fall off naturally.

New Year History

Ancient Greeks began their new year with the new moon after June 21. Before the time of Julius Caesar the Roman new year started on March 1. In most European countries during the Middle Ages the new year began on March 25, the day of the Feast of the Annunciation.

More New Year Traditions

- Indonesia also has two New Year celebrations — the official one on January 1 and another on the Islamic New Year, whose date varies from year to year.
- The Russian Orthodox Church observes the New Year according to the Julian calendar, which places the day on January 14.
- In Vietnam the new year usually begins in February.
- Iran celebrates New Year's Day on March 21.
- Each of the religious groups in India has its own date for the beginning of the year. One Hindu New Year, Baisakhi, comes sometime in April or May.
- The people in Morocco observe the beginning of the year on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year.
- The Koreans celebrate their New Year the first three days in January.

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Source D

Olsen, Greg. *The Nativity*. Digital image. *GregOlsen.com*.
Greg Olsen, n.d. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following is a contemporary artist's portrayal of the incarnation of Jesus.



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Source E

Gallo, Elysia. "Reconnect With Yuletide Tradition—or Create Your Own." *Llewellyn Worldwide - Articles: Reconnect With Yuletide Tradition—or Create Your Own*. Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd., n.d. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following is a brief overview about generating seasonal holiday traditions..

The holiday period stretching from Thanksgiving to New Year's can take its toll on anyone. This unusually hectic period gets stuffed with to-do lists, shopping lists, party lists, and mailing lists to the point where you may want to crawl back into bed and ignore the holidays altogether. One way to combat this overwhelming feeling is by reconnecting with traditions; if you've always hated your holiday traditions, then revamp them to make them your own. Introduce a new activity, ritual or tradition for you and your loved ones to practice each year—one that actually means something to you.

There are many Yuletide traditions to choose from, because the Winter Solstice has been a constant marker of time as long as humanity can remember. It is only natural that every culture would create its own rites and rituals to mark the shortest day of the year, knowing that it heralds the return of the sun and lengthening days. It makes perfect sense that Christians, too, would eventually choose to celebrate the birth of their Divine Child at the same time as so many diverse groups (Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans) had always celebrated their gods' birth, rebirth, or reinstatement. In the end, it really doesn't matter where the traditions we practice started, as long as we can attach personal meaning to them. For example, though sending Christmas cards is a relatively new custom dating back to 1843, we can all agree that Yule is a wonderful time for reconnecting with loved ones and sending them warm wishes of peace and love, whatever our spiritual path.

One very popular tradition that may have Pagan origins is decorating an evergreen tree. There are so many accounts of how this tradition started that you'll have to read a few books, and then you still won't know for sure! The interesting thing about this custom today is how widely it can vary from family to family or country to country. In some places they only decorate on Christmas Eve and surprise their children with the sight. In other places the children are active participants in the decoration, which takes place weeks before Christmas. You may have fond memories of this yourself. Several books can help you place the "Christmas tree" in a more Pagan context, including blessing the tree and choosing appropriate ornaments to symbolize abundance in the coming year, to act as protective talismans or simply to help usher in the coming spring. See *Wheel of the Year* by Pauline Campanelli and *Yule: A Celebration of Light and Warmth* by Dorothy Morrison for ideas. You can also enhance this tradition by creating a ritual out of it, including favorite music, scents (oils, potpourri, food, or drink), reading special poems or passages, lighting candles, and more. Give your creativity free rein!

And though nowadays it may reek of commercialism, gift-giving during the Winter Solstice period is a tradition that can be traced back centuries to the ancient Babylonians. It became especially popular during the Roman Saturnalia festivals. While it may seem stale, there are plenty of ways to make gift giving "feel" right. Part of that may be creating handmade gifts for your closest friends like bath salts, a magical blend of tea, baked goods, a painting, or a poem. Another may be to give a gift to the earth as well by choosing environmentally-friendly gifts and wrapping them in something other than gift-wrap—for example, in a gorgeous scarf, a crocheted or hand-embroidered cover, or even a collage of images cut out from old magazines pasted onto a brown paper bag. The place, day, time, and manner of exchanging gifts can form a family ritual, too. Just remember that the bottom line is heart: you're doing something to show your love for friends and family, not trying to buy into everything the advertisements suggest.

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Source F

Atheist Christmas Billboard. Digital image. *ForwardProgressives.com*.
Forward Progressives LLC, 2015. Web. 20 Dec. 2016.

The following visual is a billboard that was released and publicized by American Atheists.



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Source G

Rockwell, Norman. *Freedom from Want*. 1943. Oil on Canvas. Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

The following is a famous American painting.



Source H

Seuss, Dr. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas: Mini Book and Finger Puppet*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Random House, 1999. Print

The following is the complete text from a children's book about Christmas.

Every Who Down in Whoville Liked Christmas a lot...
But the Grinch, Who lived just north of Whoville, Did NOT!

The Grinch hated Christmas! The whole Christmas season!
Now, please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason.

It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right.
It could be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.
But I think that the most likely reason of all,
May have been that his heart was two sizes too small.

Whatever the reason, His heart or his shoes,
He stood there on Christmas Eve, hating the Whos,
Staring down from his cave with a sour, Grinchy frown,
At the warm lighted windows below in their town.
For he knew every Who down in Whoville beneath,
Was busy now, hanging a mistletoe wreath.

"And they're hanging their stockings!" he snarled with a sneer,
"Tomorrow is Christmas! It's practically here!"
Then he growled, with his Grinch fingers nervously drumming,
"I MUST find some way to stop Christmas from coming!"

For Tomorrow, he knew, all the Who girls and boys,
Would wake bright and early. They'd rush for their toys!

And then! Oh, the noise! Oh, the Noise!
Noise! Noise! Noise!
That's one thing he hated! The NOISE!
NOISE! NOISE! NOISE!

Then the Whos, young and old, would sit down to a feast.

And they'd feast! And they'd feast! And they'd FEAST!
FEAST! FEAST! FEAST!
They would feast on Who-pudding, and rare Who-roast beast.
Which was something the Grinch couldn't stand in the least!

And THEN They'd do something He liked least of all!
Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Would stand close together, with Christmas bells ringing.
They'd stand hand-in-hand. And the Whos would start singing!

They'd sing! And they'd sing! And they'd SING!
SING! SING! SING!

And the more the Grinch thought of this Who ChristmasSing,
The more the Grinch thought, "I must stop this whole thing!"

"Why, for fifty-three years I've put up with it now!"
"I MUST stop this Christmas from coming! But HOW?"

Then he got an idea! An awful idea!

THE GRINCH GOT A WONDERFUL, AWFUL IDEA!

"I know just what to do!" The Grinch laughed in his throat.
And he made a quick Santy Claus hat and a coat.
And he chuckled, and clucked, "What a great Grinchy trick!"
"With this coat and this hat, I look just like Saint Nick!"
"All I need is a reindeer..." The Grinch looked around.

But, since reindeer are scarce, there was none to be found.
Did that stop the old Grinch? No! The Grinch simply said,
"If I can't find a reindeer, I'll make one instead!"
So he called his dog, Max. Then he took some red thread,
And he tied a big horn on the top of his head.

THEN He loaded some bags And some old empty sacks,
On a ramshackle sleigh And he hitched up old Max.
Then the Grinch said, "Giddap!" And the sleigh started down,
Toward the homes where the Whos Lay asnooze in their town.

All their windows were dark. Quiet snow filled the air.
All the Whos were all dreaming sweet dreams without care.
When he came to the first little house on the square.
"This is stop number one," the old Grinchy Claus hissed,
And he climbed to the roof, empty bags in his fist.

Then he slid down the chimney. A rather tight pinch.
But, if Santa could do it, then so could the Grinch.
He got stuck only once, for a moment or two.
Then he stuck his head out of the fireplace flue.
Where the little Who stockings all hung in a row.
"These stockings," he grinned, "are the first things to go!"

A DED Zone/Garden of English Production

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Then he slithered and slunk, with a smile most unpleasant,
Around the whole room, and he took every present!
Pop guns! And bicycles! Roller skates! Drums!
Checkerboards! Tricycles! Popcorn! And plums!
And he stuffed them in bags. Then the Grinch, very nimbly,
Stuffed all the bags, one by one, up the chimney!
Then he slunk to the icebox. He took the Whos' feast!

He took the Who-pudding! He took the roast beast!
He cleaned out that icebox as quick as a flash.
Why, that Grinch even took their last can of Who-hash!
Then he stuffed all the food up the chimney with glee.

"And NOW!" grinned the Grinch, "I will stuff up the tree!"
And the Grinch grabbed the tree, and he started to shove,
When he heard a small sound like the coo of a dove.

He turned around fast, and he saw a small Who!
Little Cindy-Lou Who, who was not more than two.
The Grinch had been caught by this tiny Who daughter,
Who'd got out of bed for a cup of cold water.
She stared at the Grinch and said, "Santy Claus, why,"
"Why are you taking our Christmas tree? WHY?"
But, you know, that old Grinch was so smart and so slick,
He thought up a lie, and he thought it up quick!

"Why, my sweet little tot," the fake Santy Claus lied,
"There's a light on this tree that won't light on one side."
"So I'm taking it home to my workshop, my dear."
"I'll fix it up there. Then I'll bring it back here."

And his fib fooled the child. Then he patted her head,
And he got her a drink and he sent her to bed.
And when CindyLou Who went to bed with her cup,
HE went to the chimney and stuffed the tree up!
Then the last thing he took Was the log for their fire!

Then he went up the chimney, himself, the old liar.
On their walls he left nothing but hooks and some wire.

And the one speck of food That he left in the house,
Was a crumb that was even too small for a mouse.
Then He did the same thing To the other Whos' houses
Leaving crumbs Much too small For the other Whos' mouses!

It was quarter past dawn... All the Whos, still a-bed,

All the Whos, still asnooze When he packed up his sled,
Packed it up with their presents! The ribbons! The wrappings!

The tags! And the tinsel! The trimmings! The trappings!

Three thousand feet up! Up the side of Mt. Crumpit,
He rode with his load to the tiptop to dump it!
"PoohPooh to the Whos!" he was grinchishly humming.

"They're finding out now that no Christmas is coming!"
"They're just waking up! I know just what they'll do!"
"Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,
Then the Whos down in Whoville will all cry BooHoo!"

"That's a noise," grinned the Grinch, "That I simply MUST hear!"
So he paused. And the Grinch put his hand to his ear.
And he did hear a sound rising over the snow.
It started in low. Then it started to grow.
But the sound wasn't sad! Why, this sound sounded merry!
It couldn't be so! But it WAS merry! VERY!

He stared down at Whoville! The Grinch popped his eyes!
Then he shook! What he saw was a shocking surprise!
Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Was singing! Without any presents at all!
He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME!

Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,
Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?"
"It came with out ribbons! It came without tags!"
"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"

And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!

"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store."
"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"

And what happened then? Well...in Whoville they say,
That the Grinch's small heart Grew three sizes that day!
And the minute his heart didn't feel quite so tight,
He whizzed with his load through the bright morning light,
And he brought back the toys! And the food for the feast!

And he, HE HIMSELF! The Grinch carved the roast beast!

Holiday Essays

Scott Diesenhaus and Timm Freitas

Question 2 (Works best with the question 3 included)

Suggested time—40 minutes

In 1897, an eight year old named Virginia O’Hanlon wrote a letter to the New York *Sun*, a prolific newspaper, that begged the editors to “Please tell [her] the truth; is there a Santa Claus?” Her original correspondence also disclosed that her friends had recently bombarded her with ideas that “there is no Santa Claus.” In response to this plea, veteran-newsman Francis Pharcellus Church produced the following editorial. Read the piece carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies Church uses to develop his message about belief in Santa.

VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that
5 nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his
10 intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa
15 Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa
20 Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The
25 eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch

30 in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus.
35 The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or
40 imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world
45 which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the
50 supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years
55 from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

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Question 2 (Alternate)

Suggested time—40 minutes

Aaron Shepherd's historical fiction that follows refers to the infamous, yet unofficial, "Christmas Truce" that took place on December 25, 1914 during World War I. Until this time, German and English troops were deadlocked on a French battlefield jockeying for position in an area called "No Man's Land". In the subsequent letter to his sister Janet, a British soldier named Tom recounts this unexpected, though not unwelcome, war-time encounter with the enemy. Read the excerpted letter carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the rhetorical choices Tom makes to characterize the significance of this experience.

Christmas Day, 1914

My dear sister Janet,

It is 2:00 in the morning and most of our men are asleep in their dugouts—yet I could not sleep myself before writing to you of the wonderful events of Christmas Eve. In truth, what happened seems almost like a fairy tale, and if I hadn't been through it myself, I would scarce believe it. Just imagine: While you and the family sang carols before the fire there in London, I did the same with enemy soldiers here on the battlefields of France!

As I wrote before, there has been little serious fighting of late. The first battles of the war left so many dead that both sides have held back until replacements could come from home. So we have mostly stayed in our trenches and waited. [...]

Through all this, we couldn't help feeling curious about the German soldiers across the way. After all, they faced the same dangers we did, and slogged about in the same muck. What's more, their first trench was only 50 yards from ours. Between us lay No Man's Land, bordered on both sides by barbed wire—yet they were close enough we sometimes heard their voices. [...]

Just yesterday morning—Christmas Eve Day—we had our first good freeze. Cold as we were, we welcomed it, because at least the mud froze solid. Everything was tinged white with frost, while a bright sun shone over all. Perfect Christmas weather. During the day, there was little shelling or rifle fire from either side. And as darkness fell on our Christmas Eve, the shooting stopped entirely. [...]

I went to the dugout to rest, and lying on my cot, I must have drifted asleep. All at once my friend John was shaking me awake, saying, "Come and see! See what the Germans are doing!" I grabbed my rifle, stumbled out into the trench, and stuck my head cautiously above the sandbags.

I never hope to see a stranger and more lovely sight. Clusters of tiny lights were shining all along the German line, left and right as far as the eye could see.

"What is it?" I asked in bewilderment, and John answered, "Christmas trees!"

And so it was. The Germans had placed Christmas trees in front of their trenches, lit by candle or lantern like beacons of good will. And then we heard their voices raised in song.

Stille nacht, heilige nacht This carol may not yet be familiar to us in Britain, but John knew it and translated: "Silent night, holy night." I've never heard one lovelier—or more

55 meaningful, in that quiet, clear night, its dark softened by a first-quarter moon.

When the song finished, the men in our trenches applauded. Yes, British soldiers applauding Germans! Then one of our own men started singing, and we all joined in.

60 *The first Noel, the angel did say*

In truth, we sounded not nearly as good as the Germans, with their fine harmonies. But they responded with enthusiastic applause of their own and then began another.

65 *O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum*

Then we replied.

O come all ye faithful [...]

British and German harmonizing across No Man's Land! I would have thought nothing could be more amazing—but what came next was more so. "English, come over!" we heard one of them shout. "You no shoot, we no shoot."

70 There in the trenches, we looked at each other in bewilderment. Then one of us shouted jokingly, "You come over here."

To our astonishment, we saw two figures rise from the trench, climb over their barbed wire, and advance unprotected across No Man's Land. One of them called, "Send officer to talk."

80 I saw one of our men lift his rifle to the ready, and no doubt others did the same—but our captain called out, "Hold your fire." Then he climbed out and went to meet the Germans halfway. We heard them talking, and a few minutes later, the captain came back with a German cigar in his mouth! [...]

Across the way, we could make out groups of two or three men starting out of trenches and coming toward us. Then some of us were climbing out too, and in minutes more, there we were in No Man's Land, over a hundred soldiers and officers of each side, shaking hands with men we'd been trying to kill just hours earlier!

95 Before long a bonfire was built, and around it we mingled—British khaki and German grey. I must say, the Germans were the better dressed, with fresh uniforms for the holiday.

Only a couple of our men knew German, but more of the Germans knew English. I asked one of them why that was.

100 "Because many have worked in England!" he said. "Before all this, I was a waiter at the Hotel Cecil. Perhaps I waited on your table!"

"Perhaps you did!" I said, laughing.

105 He told me he had a girlfriend in London and that the war had interrupted their plans for marriage. I told him, "Don't worry. We'll have you

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beat by Easter, then you can come back and marry the girl.”

110 He laughed at that. Then he asked if I’d send her a postcard he’d give me later, and I promised I would. [...]

115 [We] exchange gifts—our cigarettes for their cigars, our tea for their coffee, our corned beef for their sausage. Badges and buttons from uniforms changed owners, and one of our lads walked off with the infamous spiked helmet! I myself traded a jackknife for a leather equipment belt—a fine
120 souvenir to show when I get home.

Newspapers too changed hands, and the Germans howled with laughter at ours. They assured us that France was finished and Russia nearly beaten too. We told them that was nonsense, and one of
125 them said, “Well, you believe your newspapers and we’ll believe ours.”

Clearly they are lied to—yet after meeting these men, I wonder how truthful our own newspapers have been. These are not the “savage
130 barbarians” we’ve read so much about. They are men with homes and families, hopes and fears, principles and, yes, love of country. In other words, men like ourselves. Why are we led to believe otherwise? [...]

135 I was just starting back to the trenches when an older German clutched my arm. “My

Goodness,” he said, “why cannot we have peace and all go home?”

140 I told him gently, “That you must ask your emperor.” He looked at me then, searchingly. “Perhaps, my friend. But also we must ask our hearts.”

And so, dear sister, tell me, has there ever been such a Christmas Eve in all history? And what
145 does it all mean, this impossible befriending of enemies? For the fighting here, of course, it means regrettably little. Decent fellows those soldiers may be, but they follow orders and we do the same. Besides, we are here to stop their army and send it
150 home, and never could we shirk that duty.

Still, one cannot help imagine what would happen if the spirit shown here were caught by the nations of the world. Of course, disputes must
155 always arise. But what if our leaders were to offer well wishes in place of warnings? Songs in place of slurs? Presents in place of reprisals? Would not all war end at once?

All nations say they want peace. Yet on this Christmas morning, I wonder if we want it quite
160 enough.

Your loving brother,
Tom

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Question 3

Suggested time—40 minutes

Consider the following observations:

“It is a happiness to wonder—it is a happiness to dream.”

— Edgar Allan Poe

“The Trust of the innocent is the liar’s most useful tool.”

—Steven King

Holiday seasons may be commonly known to adults as being times of mass-marketing gimmicks and consumerism; although, for children these times of year are often filled with joy and wonder. Undoubtedly, some of the most memorable life experiences stem from imagining Santa coming down the chimney, observing seemingly voluminous amounts of presents under a tree, and even reflecting on those Easter baskets—left by the Easter Bunny—full of candy; all of this highlights youthful naiveté. However, though the aforementioned may be true, it is indeed up to adults to maintain these fanciful images for children, often by purposely manipulating their surroundings for up to several months at a time. Furthermore, threats of “Santa is watching”—or at least one of his elves is—are so common, that such bluffs have become a cute, house-hold holiday game.

After reflecting on the above, and your experiences with the holiday seasons, develop a position about the ethics of adults establishing and maintaining known fictions for the sake of childhood experience.