



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

It's inarguably human nature to explore the unknown. This desire has manifested itself as sailors set to the seas to search for new lands, and as—in more recent history—astronauts have broken through the atmosphere on quests to explore the observable universe. And yet, the unknown is not limited to concrete, physical destinations; rather, it extends to how individuals wrestle with the most enigmatic area of their lives: death. Throughout generations, artists have been at the forefront of exploring and reasoning with death, in all of its forms, and this has rapidly increased recently due to the rise in the consumption of entertainment: ominous and foreboding creations have become remarkably profitable, especially around Halloween. Now, some argue that the consistent bombardment of horrific images and deathly contemplations is producing a society that is either overly anxious or desensitized, while others suggest that creating and consuming such media is just one of the ways that humans learn to deal with life and the inevitable end that claims all.

Assignment

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source.

Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on how commercializing fear and horror affects the ways individuals respond to the unknown and macabre.

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.

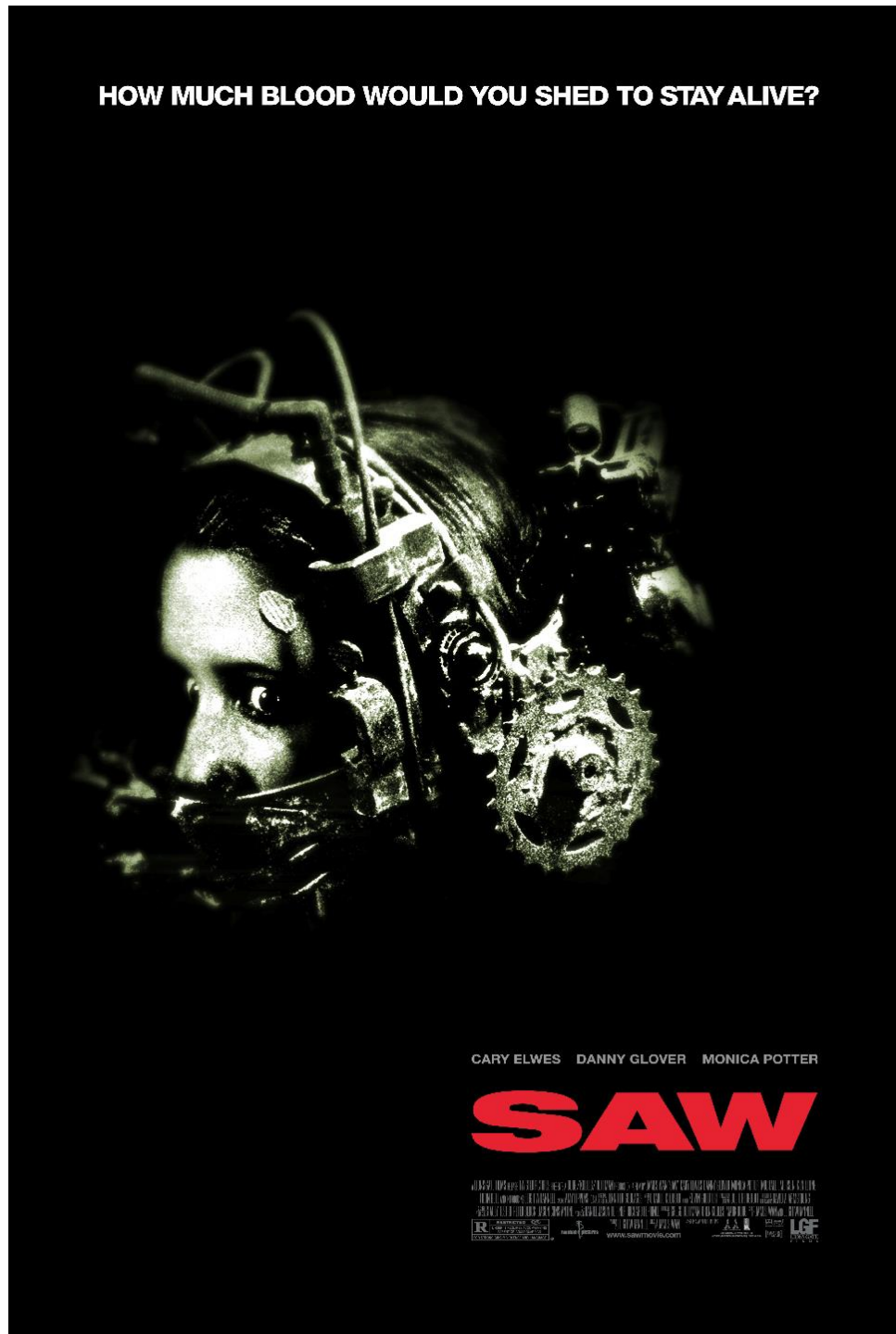
- Source A (Poster)
- Source B (Jarrett)
- Source C (“How Watching”)
- Source D (“Violence”)
- Source E (Christensen)
- Source F (Keane)

¹ Modified from an original version produced by Meghan Hobbs Chandler

Source A

Wan, James, Director. *Saw*. *IMDB.com*, Lions Gate Films, 2004,
[www.imdb.com/title/tt0387564/companycredits?ref_=
=tt_dt_co](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0387564/companycredits?ref_=tt_dt_co).

The following is the cinematic poster for a 21st-century horror film.



Source B

Jarrett, Christian. "The Lure of Horror." *The Psychologist*, The British Psychological Society, Nov. 2014, thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-24/edition-11/lure-horror.

The following is excerpted from an article on a website that analyzes psychological research.

Who Wants to be Afraid?

Psychology can help explain why horror takes the persistent form that it does, but that still leaves the question of why we should want to scare ourselves through fiction in the first place. One suggestion is that, like play, it allows us to rehearse possible threatening scenarios from a position of relative safety. 'Movie monsters provide us with the opportunity to see and learn strategies of coping with real-life monsters should we run into them, despite all probabilities to the contrary,' says Fischhoff. 'A sort of covert rehearsal for... who knows what.' Despite its fantastical elements, Clasen explains that successful horror fiction is usually realistic in its portrayals of human psychology and relationships. 'That's where horror matters,' Clasen says; 'that's where horror can teach us something truly valuable.'

Further clues come from a line of inquiry, most of it conducted in the 80s and 90s (coinciding with the rising popularity of slasher films), that looked at individual differences in horror film consumption. After all, although many people enjoy horror, most of us don't. Who are these people who pay out money to be scared? A meta-analysis of 35 relevant articles, by Cynthia Hoffner and Kenneth Levine published in 2005 in *Media Psychology*, highlights the principal relevant traits: affective response; empathy; sensation seeking; aggressiveness; gender; and age.

The more negative affect a person reports experiencing during horror, the more likely they are to say that they enjoy the genre. Media experts like Dolf Zillmann make sense of this apparent contradiction as a kind of conversion process, whereby the pleasure comes from the relief that follows once characters escape danger. This explanation struggles to account for the appeal of slasher films, in which most characters are killed. Part of the answer must lie with meta-emotion – the way we interpret the emotional feelings we're experiencing, with some people finding pleasure in fright. Another possibility is that, for some, pleasure is derived from the sense that film victims are being punished for what the viewer considers to be their immoral behaviour.

[...]

'Frequent depictions of women in prolonged states of terror may reinforce traditional gender schemas of women as helpless and, as a result, may serve to normalise aggression or hostile attitudes toward women,' Walsh and Brantford said.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, people with lower self-reported empathy levels are also more likely to say they enjoy horror films. However, this literature is hampered by conflicting findings depending on whether one includes or omits films that include scenes of graphic torture and violence. People who seek out intense thrills and experiences (as measured by Marvin Zuckerman's Sensation-Seeking Scale), and those who are more aggressive, are also more likely to report enjoying horror films, as are men, probably in part because they tend on average to be more aggressive and have lower empathy (see 'Your brain on horror').

With regard to age, there's a suggestion that enjoyment rises through childhood, peaks in adolescence and then gradually fades with age. Related to this is the 'snuggle theory' – the idea that viewing horror films may be a rite of passage for young people, providing them with an opportunity to fulfil their traditional gender roles.

Source C

“How Watching Horror Films Can Harm Children.” *The Victoria Advocate*, 21 Feb. 2018,
www.victoriaadvocate.com/how-watching-horror-films-can-harm-children/article_efae53e1-566b-513b-bc51-4c8b528e0c52.html.

The following is an online article from an independently owned Texas newspaper.

Kids love Halloween. Dressing up in costumes and getting candy is a joy. But, the ghoulish season also brings terror in ways that are harmful. While sensible parents would agree that kids should be protected from killer clown pranks and toxic sweets, some are still undecided on one Halloween staple—horror movies.

Parents might decide that watching a scary movie will be fun for the whole family; after all, it's just acting, right? Psychologists, however, warn that this form of entertainment often leads to an intense [adrenaline rush](#) that affects individuals differently. Some people might relish terrifying scenes while others could experience acute distress. This is especially true for children. Their brains are not yet able to process threatening and disturbing images—even if they are make-believe. They might immediately react to frightening on-screen stimuli by starting to tremble or bursting into tears. Sleepless nights, sleep riddled with nightmares, and a loss of appetite are common after-effects as well.

It is also worrying that, in recent years, horror movies have become increasingly [gory and realistic](#). Young children are at a point in their lives where their imaginations are very active. This should be encouraged through healthy and creative and playtime exercises. Having their fantasy worlds bombarded with mutilated corpses and violent monsters can have an extremely negative emotional impact that can endure for years.

It's not uncommon to hear of adults who are afraid of clowns because they saw Stephen King's *It* as a child or can no longer swim in open water after watching Peter Benchley's *Jaws*. This can be attributed to classical conditioning in which objects or events become associated with fear. An unusual noise in the house can have a perfectly logical explanation, but movies have trained people to instead expect a killer on the loose. The effect is multiplied when the subject was conditioned while still young.

A well-known study by [Harrison and Cantor](#) of the University of Wisconsin shows that the younger a child is when allowed to view a horror film, the longer-lasting the effects. Undesirable behavior could also develop as they grow older with some having trauma and anxiety disorders well into adulthood. There are also cases where subjects succumbed to phobias or developed an unhealthy interest in the occult and paranormal.

[Researchers](#) funded by the National Institute of Mental Health also concluded that an excess of movie and television watching, whether of the horror genre or not, is detrimental to a child's psychological development. Even media rated as appropriate for children can sometimes be harmful. Parents should still judge material themselves and then make a decision whether their children should be allowed to watch it or not.

Good parents do all they can every day to shield their kids from images they deem unsuitable in the media. Horror movies are definitely becoming more horrific. Even those parents who regard themselves as lenient and dislike coddling would not want to raise problematic, fearful children.

Never be afraid of setting restrictions on what kids and teens can watch. The horror they see now could last for the rest of their lives.

Source D

“Violence in the Media Psychologists Study Potential Harmful Effects.” *American Psychological Association*, American Psychological Association, 2015, www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/protect.aspx.

The following is excerpted from an article by the American Psychological Association.

Television and Video Violence

Virtually since the dawn of television, parents, teachers, legislators and mental health professionals have wanted to understand the [impact of television programs](#), particularly on children. Of special concern has been the portrayal of violence, particularly given psychologist [Albert Bandura's work](#) in the 1970s on social learning and the tendency of children to imitate what they see.

As a result of 15 years of “consistently disturbing” findings about the violent content of children's programs, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior was formed in 1969 to assess the impact of violence on the attitudes, values and behavior of viewers. The resulting report and a follow-up report in 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health identified these major effects of seeing violence on television:

- Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others.
- Children may be more fearful of the world around them.
- Children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

Research by psychologists L. Rowell Huesmann, Leonard Eron and others starting in the 1980s found that children who watched many hours of violence on television when they were in elementary school tended to show higher levels of aggressive behavior when they became teenagers. By observing these participants into adulthood, Huesmann and Eron found that the ones who'd watched a lot of TV violence when they were 8 years old were more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for criminal acts as adults.

Interestingly, being aggressive as a child did not predict watching more violent TV as a teenager, suggesting that TV watching could be a cause rather than a consequence of aggressive behavior. However, later research by psychologists Douglas Gentile and Brad Bushman, among others, suggested that exposure to media violence is just one of several factors that can contribute to aggressive behavior.

Other research has found that exposure to media violence can desensitize people to violence in the real world and that, for some people, watching violence in the media becomes enjoyable and does not result in the anxious arousal that would be expected from seeing such imagery.

Source E

Christensen, Jen. "Go Scare Yourself! It's Good for You." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 28 Oct. 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/10/28/health/fear-can-be-healthy/index.html.

The following is excerpted from a news website.

[...] Experts say that being scared, at least when we can control it, can be healthy. "People like to be scared, but there is scared, and there is 'scared,'" said [Jeffrey Goldstein](#), a psychology professor and expert in violence and entertainment at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. "You can be frightened in a movie or a play that is designed that way, and that can be a good kind of scared."

But, he said, there's a difference between real and fake fright. Take the [scary clown phenomenon](#) that has plagued the United States and Europe. That is not a scare that people enjoy, because we don't know the scary clowns' motivation. "This plays with the border of what is unpleasant and threatening and may be violent," Goldstein said. Translation: Scary clowns on the silver screen, yes; scary clowns you encounter in the woods, no.

Why we're drawn to horror

There's absolutely nothing wrong with going on a Stephen King binge. In fact, we were drawn to the horrific long before horror movies were invented. The hellish art of 15th-century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch and the hell beast of 14th-century painter [Giotto di Bondone](#) have been popular for decades. [...] There's a reason Giotto's devil monster, who stuffs his face with a hapless human, is placed right above the entrance of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy. It's the last painterly propaganda you'd see as you left Mass.

In modern, more secular times, fewer people fear a real hell, but these paintings still draw a huge audience. This summer, lines wrapped around museums in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, and in Madrid. People were eager to see [Bosch's hellish masterpieces](#), brought together in a sold-out show for the 500th anniversary of his death. But they probably didn't go for religious reasons; instead, patrons admired the painter's skill, or they may have been drawn to the macabre out of much deeper instinct. Scientists say we're hard-wired to seek out scary images.[...]

"That's also why we are often tempted to peek through our fingers when we see scary things," said Margee Kerr, a sociologist and author of "Scream: Chilling Adventures in the Science of Fear." "Our nervous system gives us a big physical kick." Even if the image is fictional, we still experience that rush of adrenaline, and our brains get flooded with dopamine, the feel-good chemical that floods your brain when taking illicit drugs or when you're in love. "Some people really like that natural high," Kerr said. However, we can quickly become desensitized to these scary images. That's why, when Kerr helps design an elaborate haunted house in Pennsylvania, she varies the scares, appealing to different senses.

Violence can ground you in reality

Viewing or reading about scary things has another advantage.

"People who consume violent and scary entertainment rarely do it alone," Goldstein said. "Going as a group helps ground you in reality, and you can compare your reactions with others and show others that you are strong enough to take it."

Observing audiences at horror films for years, Goldstein has seen people scream and cry and [even throw up](#), but often, those same people will appear happy after the movie is over. They've also proved to themselves they can handle it. Experts saw this play out in a study in the 1970s after a murder on a university campus in Wisconsin. Scholars wanted to see whether people who knew about violence in real life would avoid scary movies. They looked at attendance figures for two theaters near campus: One played a Disney movie, and the other played "In Cold Blood," a movie based on Truman Capote's book about the violent murders of four family members in Kansas. Attendance at the Disney film stayed consistent. Attendance at the violent film went up significantly.

[...]

"Violence in the real world doesn't always have a satisfactory resolution. One of the appeals of violent entertainment is, you can see a story with a just resolution," Goldstein said. "When we see justice is done, it reaffirms our belief that justice is possible." Even if the fiction lacks a happy ending, the movie does end, and we can escape from the horror and leave the theater, unlike in real life. In Kerr's studies, she has also noticed that some people have a real sense of calm and improved mood after seeing a scary movie, kind of like the calm you experience after taking a yoga class.

Avoiding haunts

Of course, not everyone has this experience, nor does everyone love a horror film or a haunted house. That's OK too, Kerr said. Sometimes, people feel overstimulated by fictional scares. Others may have been traumatized by them as children. That's why Kerr suggests that you should never drag a kid through a haunted house if they don't want to go, particularly if they're at an age when they have trouble telling the difference between truth and fiction.

Source F

Keane, Bil. "Halloween." *The Family Circus*, 1968.

The following is a popular comic strip.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
Question 2

Suggested time—40 minutes

The tumultuous life of Edgar Allan Poe was plagued by the deaths of many individuals close to him: most of them being women. Undoubtedly, his oppressed psyche influenced his writings, and in 1845 he, perhaps prophetically, penned his most famous poem “The Raven.” Only two years later, he would lose his wife, Virginia Eliza Clemm, to tuberculosis. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-developed composition, analyze the rhetorical choices the speaker makes to convey his attitude toward the loss of his lover.

The Raven

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I
pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious
volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping,
suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping,
rapping at my chamber door.
“Tis some visitor,” I muttered,
“tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the
bleak December;
And each separate dying ember
wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly
I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—
sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom
the angels name Lenore—
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling
of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic
terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my
heart, I stood repeating
“Tis some visitor entreating entrance
at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance
at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger;
hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your
forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and
so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping,
tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard
you”—here I opened wide the
door;—
Darkness there and nothing
more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I
stood there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal
ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and
the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken
was the whispered word,
“Lenore?”
This I whispered, and an echo
murmured back the word,
“Lenore!”—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my
soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping
somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is
something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thetreat is, and
this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this
mystery explore;—
’Tis the wind and nothing
more!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when,
with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the
saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a
minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched
above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just
above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing
more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad
fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the
countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and
shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no
craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven
wandering from the Nightly
shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the
Night’s Plutonian shore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl
to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—
little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no
living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird
above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust
above his chamber door,
With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the
placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that
one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a
feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered
“Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as
my Hopes have flown before.”
Then the bird said
“Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by
reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is
its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master
whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till
his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that
melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling all my
fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in
front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook
myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this
ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly,
gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking
“Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no
syllable expressing

A *Garden of English* Production
Halloween Essays

To the fowl whose fiery eyes now
burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my
head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the
lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the
lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser,
perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls
tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent
thee—by these angels he hath sent
thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from
thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and
forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—
prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether
tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this
desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell
me truly, I implore—
Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—
tell me—tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—
prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—
by that God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if,
within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom
the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden
whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird
or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and
the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of
that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit
the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and
take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is
sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above
my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a
demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him
streaming throws his shadow on
the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow
that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

Question 3

Suggested time—40 minutes

The following is a quote by famed horror author Stephen King:

“The thing under my bed waiting to grab my ankle isn’t real. I know that, and I also know that if I’m careful to keep my foot under the covers, it will never be able to grab my ankle.”

Consider the above observation carefully. Then, write a well-reasoned composition in which you develop a position about how fear affects the human psyche. Use appropriate examples from your reading, experience, or observations.