

CCSS Alignment	
L.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing.
L.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts.
L.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
W.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting.
W.6	Use technology to produce, publish, and update individual writing products.

Writing the Research Simulation Essay for English

Let's get started. Below is the first RST sample question with which we will work. Our first RST deals with the topic of video games, the inspiration of which comes from the famous science fiction novel, *Ender's Game*, by Orson Scott Card. Those lucky enough to have read this book will appreciate the topic very much.

Here's the prompt:

RST #1: Videogames

85 minutes

Sony PlayStation. Wii. X-Box. It seems as though videogames are becoming an ever-increasing form of entertainment in our country. Advocates of videogames

claim that it is a harmless form of entertainment, while others view videogames as contributing to violence.

You have reviewed three sources regarding the benefits and drawbacks of videogames. These three pieces provide information to begin drafting your own argument.

- **Source A:** Video, History of Gaming
<http://vimeo.com/18743950>
- **Source B:** Image
- **Source C:** Excerpt, *Youth* (G. Stanley Hall)

Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America? Write a persuasive piece that addresses the question and supports your position with evidence from at least two of the three sources. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. You may give examples from past and current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position. You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, Source C).

As we have shown you throughout this book, the writers of the PARCC view reading and writing as connected activities. Therefore, to begin, we will show you, as in Chapter 2, how you might interact with the sources in the RST prompt in a meaningful manner. Here are some questions that will guide us as we view and read the texts:

- What is the main idea the author wishes to convey?
- What statistics seem to be important, especially when I have to write the essay?
- What type of bias does the author have in writing the piece?
- Can the information be interpreted in a way different from the way the author presents it?
- How can I use the arguments presented to further my opinion on the matter?

Here is our first source in our quest to answer the question, "Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America?" Since our text (our anchor text), "Source A," is a video, we have a graphic organizer that is an effective tool to utilize when interacting with videos. As you watch the video, notice the notes we have recorded in the chart. These notes represent the mental actions the mind is required to make when viewing media on the PARCC.

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Source A: Anchor Text Graphic Organizer

Summary of “History of Games” video:

In this video clip, a variety of games are introduced to illustrate the evolution of videogames. Make note of the trends that exist from the beginning of this video to the ending segment. Be conscious of details to help support your argument.

RST Prompt: History of Videogames

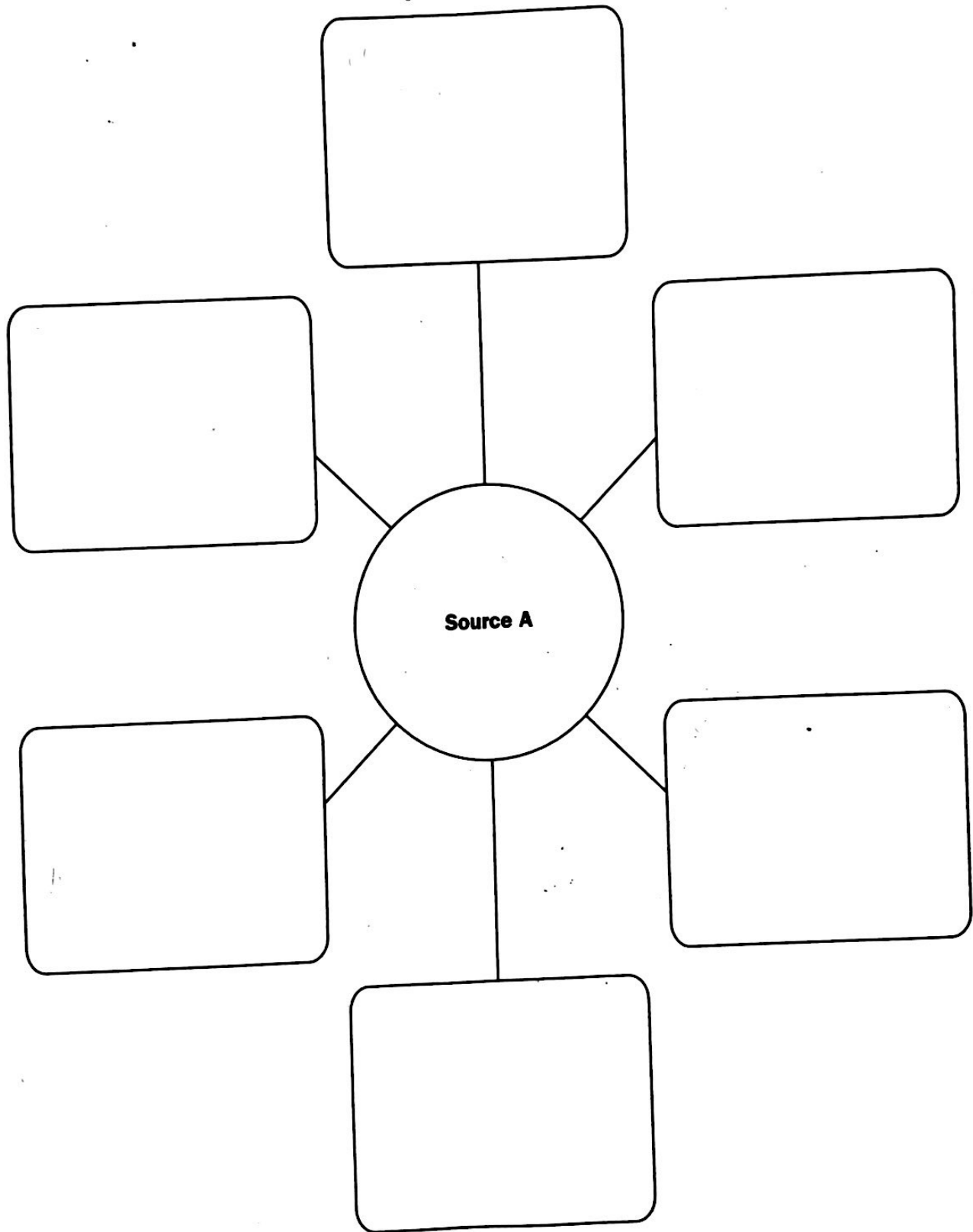
Video notes

- The first contraption looks almost prehistoric.
- Pac-Man is a game that serves as a childhood memory for many.
- As the movie continues forward, one can see the change in technology, and especially, the major change in vibrant colors, graphics, and concepts upon the ever-evolving television screen.
- Characters become more and more lifelike.
- Violence exists, though, on a more and more detailed scale. What was once just a point-and-shoot game has turned into a more interactive battle between the player and the characters on their screen. This should be strongly noted.
- It is also obvious that such games, as in the golf video game, will help a teenager’s dexterity and motor skills.

The chart above is an excellent example for you to learn from when taking notes on a video in an RST prompt on the PARCC. As we watched and listened to the video, we learned that the evolution of the videogame is quite long. We are taken through the gambit of genres that appear before our television set, flat-screen or otherwise. We learned that the graphics, sounds, and colors of the games have become more vibrant, intricate, and detailed. We also inferred from this video that the purpose of these videogames is also vast. From simple point-and-shoot games, to sporting games, and even more violent battle scenes, a teenager experiences a lot through the various genres of games that exists. These can easily help one to make an argument for either side of this question, utilizing information from this video to help as support.

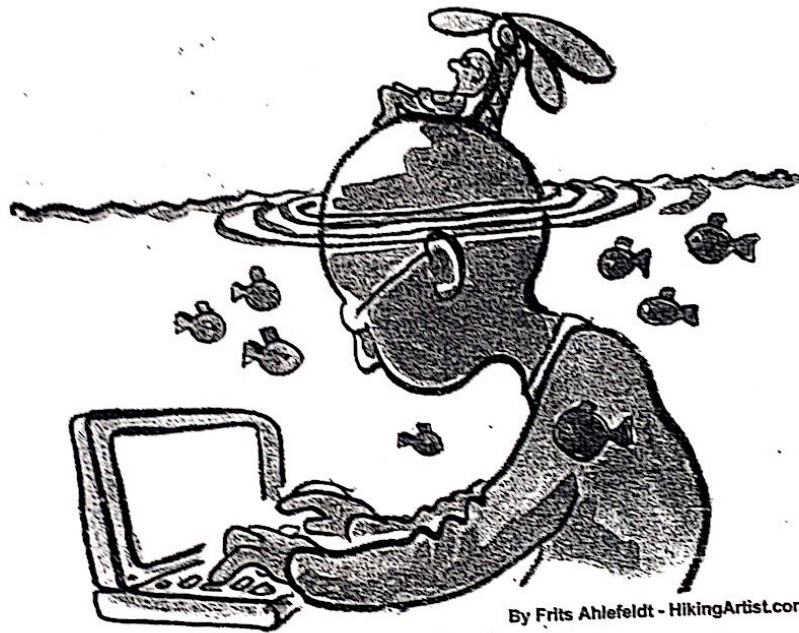
Consider using the following graphic organizer to also help you in preparing notes as you view the video clip (or any video clip).

Research Simulation Task Graphic Organizer



So, now that we have all this information at our disposal, it is still premature to take aside in the question, “Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America?” Let’s look at our next source.

Source B: Image



Image

- It is clear that the image portrays videogames in a very negative light. The blame is put on videogames and less on the player themselves. Instead, the videogame’s content serves as the one in control, harming our teenagers as a result.

OK. So, what did we learn from our analysis of this source? First, we must remember that the artwork comes from only one person, Frits Ahlefeldt. While this fact does not invalidate the information present, it should give us some pause when considering the data in the text. Having said this, there are some interesting points to notice here: Two-thirds of Americans play videogames.

It is completely unrealistic, then, to make the argument that

- a. all videogames are harmful, and
- b. that people who play videogames, even violent ones, are automatically violent.

Keep these items in mind as you continue through the reading of your last and final source.

Source C Excerpt, Youth (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>Dancing is one of the best expressions of pure play and of the motor needs of youth. Perhaps it is the most liberal of all forms of motor education. Schopenhauer thought it the apex of physiological irritability and that it made animal life most vividly conscious of its existence and most exultant in exhibiting it. In very ancient times China ritualised it in the spring and made it a large part of the education of boys after the age of thirteen. Neale thinks it was originally circular or orbicular worship, which he deems oldest. In Japan, in the priestly Salic College of ancient Rome, in Egypt, in the Greek Apollo cult, it was a form of worship. St. Basil advised it; St. Gregory introduced it into religious services. The early Christian bishops, called præsuls, led the sacred dance around the altar; and only in 692, and again in 1617, was it forbidden in church. Neale and others have shown how the choral processions with all the added charm of vestment and intonation have had far more</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is clear that Hall explains the need to complete a variety of physical activities. • Games are strongly encouraged, at a very young age. While Hall does not explain videogames specifically, one could argue that videogames certainly serve as games themselves.

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Source: C. Excerpt, Youth (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>to do in Christianizing many low tribes, who could not understand the language of the church, than has preaching. Savages are nearly all great dancers, imitating every animal they know, dancing out their own legends, with ritual sometimes so exacting that error means death. The character of people is often learned from their dances, and Molière says the destiny of nations depends on them. The gayest dancers are often among the most downtrodden and unhappy people. Some mysteries can be revealed only in them, as holy passion-plays. If we consider the history of secular dances, we find that some of them, when first invented or in vogue, evoked the greatest enthusiasm. One writer says that the polka so delighted France and England that statesmen forgot politics. The spirit of the old Polish aristocracy still lives in the polonaise. The gipsy dances have inspired a new school of music. The Greek drama grew out of the evolution of the tragic chorus. National dances like the hornpipe and reel of Scotland, the <i>Reihen</i>, of Germany, the <i>rondes</i> of France, the Spanish tarantella and <i>chaconne</i>, the strathspey from the Spey Valley, the Irish jig, etc., express racial traits. Instead of the former vast repertory, the stately pavone, the graceful and dignified saraband, the wild <i>salterelle</i>, the bourrée with song and strong rhythm, the light and skippy bolero, the courtly bayedere, the dramatic plugge, gavotte, and other peasant dances in costume, the fast and furious fandango, weapon and military dances; in place of the pristine power to express love, mourning, justice, and philosophical conceptions, and every industry or characteristic act of life in pantomime and gesture, we have in the dance of the modern ballroom only a degenerate relict, with at best but a very insignificant culture value, and too often stained with bad associations. This is most unfortunate for youth, and for their sake a work of rescue and revival is greatly needed; for it is perhaps, not excepting even music,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of physical activities remains paramount in a child's life. • This source certainly is a little confusing, due to its slightly outdated language. The sentiment remains the same, however. Physical activity and mentality of mind of work hand-in-hand with one another.

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Source C Excerpt, Youth (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>the most complete language of the emotions and can be made one of the best schools of sentiment and even will, inculcating good states of mind and exorcising bad ones as few other agencies have power to do. Right dancing can cadence the very soul, give nervous poise and control, bring harmony between basal and finer muscles, and also between feeling and intellect, body and mind. It can serve both as an awakener and a test of intelligence, predispose the heart against vice, and turn the springs of character toward virtue. That its present decadent forms, for those too devitalized to dance aright, can be demoralizing, we know in this day too well, although even questionable dances may sometimes work off vicious propensities in ways more harmless than those in which they would otherwise find vent. Its utilization for and influence on the insane would be another interesting chapter.</p> <p>Very interesting scientifically and suggestive practically is another correspondence which I believe to be new, between the mode of spontaneous activity in youth and that of labor in the early history of the race. One of the most marked distinctions between savage and civilized races is in the longer rhythm of work and relaxation. The former are idle and lazy for days, weeks, and perhaps months, and then put forth intense and prolonged effort in dance, hunt, warfare, migration, or construction, sometimes dispensing with sleep and manifesting remarkable endurance. As civilization and specialization advance, hours become regular. The cultured man is less desultory in all his habits, from eating and sleeping to performing social and religious duties, although he may put forth no more aggregate energy in a year than the savage. Women are schooled to regular work long before men, and the difficulty of imposing civilization upon low races is compared by Bücher[8] to that of training a eat to work when harnessed to a dog-cart. It is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer here, Hall, explains the importance of performing one's social duties. Videogames can contribute to a teenager's social direction.

(continued)

Source: <i>C. Excerpt, Youth</i> (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>not dread of fatigue but of the monotony of method makes them hate labor. The effort of savages is more intense and their periods of rest more prolonged and inert. Darwin thinks all vital function bred to go in periods, as vertebrates are descended from tidal ascidian. [9] There is indeed much that suggests some other irregular rhythm more or less independent of day and night, and perhaps sexual in its nature, but not lunar, and for males. This mode of life not only preceded the industrial and commercial period of which regularity is a prime condition; but it lasted indefinitely longer than the latter has yet existed; during this early time great exertion, sometimes to the point of utter exhaustion and collapse, alternated with seasons of almost vegetative existence. We see abundant traces of this psychosis in the muscle habits of adolescents, and, I think, in student and particularly in college life, which can enforce regularity only to a limited extent. This is not reversion, but partly expression of the nature and perhaps the needs of this stage of immaturity, and partly the same instinct of revolt against uniformity imposed from without, which rob life of variety and extinguish the spirit of adventure and untrammelled freedom, and make the savage hard to break to the harness of civilization. The hunger for fatigue, too, can become a veritable passion and is quite distinct from either the impulse for activity for its own sake or the desire of achievement. To shout and put forth the utmost possible strength in crude ways is erethic intoxication at a stage when every tissue can become erectile and seems, like the crying of infants, to have a legitimate function in causing tension and flushing, enlarging the caliber of blood vessels, and forcing the blood perhaps even to the point of extravasation to irrigate newly growing fibers, cells, and organs which atrophy if not thus fed. When penalty, fear, anger, consolation, divine service, symbolic maturity is complete this need abates. If this be correct, the phenomenon of second breath, so</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videogames can, perhaps, can keep teenagers mentally active, free from fatigue. • Exercise and physical activity can help keep the blood flowing in teenagers. • Teenage boys, naturally, may often fight. Videogames may either push a teenager to be more violent, or may help to inhibit this behavior, keeping these violent urges contained within the confines of a television or computer screen.

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Source: C Excerpt: Youth (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>characteristic of adolescence, and one factor in the inebriate's propensity, is ontogenetic expression of a rhythm trait of a long racial period. Youth needs over-exertion to compensate for underexertion, to under-sleep in order to offset oversleep at times. This seems to be nature's provision to expand in all directions its possibilities of the body and soul in this plastic period when, without this occasional excess, powers would atrophy or suffer arrest for want of use, or larger possibilities would not be realized without this regimen peculiar to nascent periods. This is treated more fully elsewhere.</p> <p>Perhaps next to dancing in phyletic motivation come personal conflicts, such as wrestling, fighting, boxing, dueling, and in some sense, hunting. The animal world is full of struggle for survival, and primitive warfare is a wager of battle, of personal combat of foes contesting eye to eye and hand to hand, where victory of one is the defeat and perhaps death of the other, and where life is often staked against life. In its more brutal forms we see one of the most degrading of all the aspects of human nature. Burk[10] has shown how the most bestial of these instincts survive and crop out irresistibly in boyhood, where fights are often engaged in with desperate abandon. Noses are bitten, ears torn, sensitive places kicked, hair pulled, arms twisted, the head stamped on and pounded on stones, fingers twisted, and hoodlums sometimes deliberately try to strangle, gouge out an eye, pull off an ear, pull out the tongue, break teeth, nose, or bones, or dislocate jaws or other joints, wring the neck, bite off a lip, and torture in utterly nameless ways. In unrestrained anger, man becomes a demon in love with the blood of his victim. The face is distorted, and there are yells, oaths, animal snorts and grunts, cries, and then exultant laughter at pain, and each is bruised, dirty, disheveled and panting with exhaustion. For coarser natures,</p>	

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(continued)

Source C: Excerpt, Youth (G. Stanley Hall)	Our Thoughts
<p>the spectacle of such conflicts has an intense attraction, while some morbid souls are scared by a distinct phobia for everything suggestive of even lower degrees of opposition. These instincts, more or less developed in boyhood, are repressed in normal cases before strength and skill are sufficiently developed to inflict serious bodily injury, while without the reductives that orthogenetic growth brings they become criminal. Repulsive as are these grosser and animal manifestations of anger, its impulsion can not and should not be eliminated, but its expression transformed and directed toward evils that need all its antagonism. To be angry aright is a good part of moral education, and non-resistance under all provocations is unmanly, craven, and cowardly.[11] An able-bodied young man, who can not fight physically, can hardly have a high and true sense of honor, and is generally a milksop, a lady-boy, or sneak. He lacks virility, his masculinity does not ring true, his honesty can not be sound to the core. Hence, instead of eradicating this instinct, one of the great problems of physical and moral pedagogy is rightly to temper and direct it.</p>	

It should be clear to you by this time that Source C is quite different from the previous two in that it seems to be written much longer ago than the more contemporary video and images in Sources A and B. We must remember that Hall's "facts" are certainly biased, but that does not mean that they are not useful. The success of G. Stanley Hall's piece is that he is able to appeal, quite successfully, to the reader's sense of logic. The phrases used throughout this excerpt are extremely scientific, and almost clinical in tone.

Moreover, Hall is also able to use firsthand observations of youth to make his assertions throughout his writing. Source A makes it clear that violence in our videogames can often be seen subjectively, as does Source B. Source B, moreover, addresses key opposite points that we must consider when developing an answer to the question, "Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America?"

At this point in our analysis of the three pieces, it is time to come to a decision as to where we stand on the issue of violence in videogames. As we have suggested throughout this book, we think it is important, if not critical, that you answer this question based upon the facts of the sources rather than your own emotions. Therefore, in our analysis of the videogame texts, we choose to answer the question in the negative: Videogames do not cause teens in America to become more violent. This conclusion is based upon the observation that Sources A and B grapple with the question of videogames and violence by addressing the range that exists amongst the genres of videogames that exist, whereas Source C, while still persuasive, is centered more on observations that can be used to support one's point further as well.

Now that we have our thesis statement in mind, let's refer back to the writing prompt (reproduced below):

RS1 #1: Videogames

85 minutes

Sony PlayStation. Wii. X-Box. It seems as though videogames are becoming an ever-increasing form of entertainment in our country. Advocates of videogames claim that it is a harmless form of entertainment, while others view videogames as contributing to violence.

You have reviewed three sources regarding the benefits and drawbacks of videogames. These three pieces provide information to begin drafting your own argument.

- **Source A:** Video, History of Gaming, <http://vimeo.com/18743950>
- **Source B:** Image, Frits Ahlefeldt, HikingArtist.com
- **Source C:** Excerpt, *Youth* (G. Stanley Hall)

Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America? Write a persuasive piece that addresses the question and supports your position with evidence from at least two of the three sources. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. You may give examples from past and current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position. You may refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, Source C).

At this point, we should be very ready to tackle this essay topic, but let's take a closer look at what the prompt is actually asking of us. In our many years of teaching, we have seen too many students do poorly on an assessment because they either (a) didn't understand the prompt, or (b) didn't do exactly what the prompt required. On the PARCC, we cannot afford to make these mistakes. Below are eleven specific steps you can take to ensure success.

11 Steps for Success on the RST

Before Writing Begins

- Step #1: Read through the question carefully. Make sure to decipher if the question is asking you to convey an opinion, or to convey information/research objectively.
- *The question is asking us to convey an opinion.*
- Step #2: Simplify what the question is asking you to do. Put the question/task into your own words.
- *The prompt is asking this: "Do I think that videogames contribute to teen violence in America?"*
- Step #3: Circle the minimum amount of sources that need to be addressed.
- *Two sources*
- Step #4: Take notes with each of the sources. Address the source's main points. Underline actively.
- *We completed this activity extensively in our two-column approach and when we took notes on the video.*
- Step #5: After you've addressed and highlighted the main point of the source, make separate notes on the reliability of these sources. Is the source reliable in general? Is it slanted in any way? Do logical fallacies or "holes in argument" exist?
- *We took notes on the reliability of sources in our active reading.*

Step #6: You've read through your sources. Choose the sources that you are most comfortable with, and put an asterisk (*) next to them.

- *Clearly, we will be primarily working with Sources A & B. We have asterisked them above.*

Writing the RST

Step #7: Copy the arguments—textual evidence—you will use in your essay into the prewriting chart. (shown below)

Step #8: Now, look at the relationships among your sources. Do they agree with each other? Do they disagree? Use your source-relationship chart to begin thinking about how you will have your sources begin conversing with one another. (shown below)

Step #9: Compose a quick outline of your essay (shown below)

Step #10: Complete your essay using the framework/outline as a guide. (shown below)

Step #11: After you have completed your essay, go back to check that your sources have a conversation, and replace the verbs you've used to integrate these sources with the action verbs from the sheet provided. (shown below)

Now that we have completed Steps 1–6, it is time for us to really start writing. For the RST, we have designed a graphic organizer for you to use to structure the writing process. We feel that this organizer is important because it serves one critical aspect of the RST writing task: Getting your sources “talking to each other.” This skill of getting your sources “talking” is a key feature of the RST and is representative of all good writing that synthesizes information. Let's look at our prewriting chart:

Topic: Do videogames contribute to violence among teens in America?		
My Thesis Statement: It is a false notion to believe that videogames contribute to violence in teens.		
Source A	Source B	Source C
<p>Video Evolution (video clip)</p> <p>The first contraption looks almost prehistoric. Pac-man is a game that serves as a childhood memory for many. As the movie continues forward, one can see the change in technology, and especially, the major change in vibrant colors, graphics, and concepts upon the ever-evolving television screen. Characters become more and more lifelike. Violence exists, though, on a more and more detailed scale. What was once just a point-and-shoot game has turned into a more interactive battle between the player and the characters on their screen. This should be strongly noted. It is also obvious that such games, as in the golf video game, will help a teenager's dexterity and motor skills.</p>	<p>Videogame Image (photograph)</p> <p>Image It is clear that the second image portrays videogames in a very negative light. The blame is put on videogames and less on the players themselves. So, the videogame's content is viewed as being in control, harming our teenagers as a result.</p>	<p>Excerpt, Youth</p> <p>It is clear that Hall explains the need to complete a variety of physical activities. Games are strongly encouraged, at a very young age. While Hall does not explain videogames specifically, one could argue that videogames certainly serve as games themselves. The importance of physical activities remains paramount in a child's life. This source certainly is a little confusing, due to its slightly outdated language. The sentiment remains the same, however. Physical activity and mentality of mind of work hand-in-hand with one another. The writer here, Hall, explains the importance of performing one's social duties. Videogames can contribute to a teenager's social direction. Videogames can, perhaps, can keep teenagers mentally active, free from fatigue. Exercise and physical activity can help the blood flowing in teenagers. Teenage boys, naturally, may often fight. Videogames may either push a teenager to be more violent, or may help to inhibit this behavior, keeping these violent urges through the confines of a television or computer screen.</p>
<p>Exactly how do the sources talk with each other?</p> <p>On the point of violence in America, Sources A and B both help the student infer that violence amongst American youth is quite subjective, and the answer is not clear. Therefore, both sources do a great job in relaying that videogames may do just the opposite, help with one's creativity, and the notion of violence may be a misperception. Consequently, it is easy and erroneous to make the claim that videogames are making our teens more violent. A note on validity: All sources may be questionable in nature. While Source A seems to be created by technology workers in their field, we do not know who has created Source B, and Source C is obviously antiquated. We must remember how each addresses the topic in our contemporary perspective.</p>		

As you can see, we have tackled steps seven and eight. The amount of prewriting we completed with these steps will be of great benefit to us as we compose a response to the RST. For now, however, we must move on to Step 9: Making an Outline. Please note that our outline need not be “formal” or overly detailed. We just need to do enough in order to provide structure and organization to our own writing. Look at our sample below:

Sample Outline for Videogame RST

- I. Introduction
 - a. Attention grabber
 - b. Thesis statement: It is a false notion to believe that videogames contribute to violence in teens.
- II. Body
 - a. Argument A: The Misperception of Violence
 - b. Argument B: The Facts about Videogames and Violence
- III. Conclusion
 - a. Reworking of thesis
 - b. Answering the So What? Question (What is really important about the thesis of this paper?)

Step 10: Writing the Essay

Now that we have completed all the necessary steps for the RST, it is time to actually do the essay writing. What we want you to note at this point in the process is that a majority of the work of our writing has already been completed. The actual writing of the RST essay should be quite easy. Here is our sample below.

Turn on the evening news and there you have it: another example of someone committing a violent crime. Turn on the news app on your handheld phone, and, once again, there you have it: an even more sad case of violent crime. In today's America, violence seems to be ubiquitous; it seems to be the norm. In the midst of this

seeming chaos, it is human nature to find a scapegoat for our failings as a culture: that scapegoat would be videogames. However, when one looks at the research, it becomes clear that our media are creating a false reality and that, in fact, videogames do not make people more violent. Based upon the information presented, it is a false notion to believe that videogames contribute to violence in teens.

America lives in a false reality. We believe that violence is on the rise and that videogames are the culprit. A look at our sources, however, paints a different story. One can clearly note that Sources A and B can provide one with the benefits that exist as a result of videogames. How can it be that videogames are causing America's teens to be more violent when so many opportunities for creativity exist? From the growth in vibrant colors to the vast variety of genres, videogames truly provide something for every teenager. Teenagers may be introduced to new sports, can work on their own dexterity, and can build upon teenager's own strategic skills in using their own inference skills to solve virtual puzzles and to navigate through the twists and turns upon one's gaming world. Look at the vibrant colors and intricate details of each screen! If nothing else, videogames should provide interesting entertainment for all types of teenagers. As a result, the answer is clear: Videogames are not making teens violent. As much as one would like to blame videogames for our country's perceived violent tendencies, the facts do not coincide.

Further, by looking at through Hall's observation (Source C) of youngsters, it is clear that he makes an argument in support of the importance of physical activity for our youth. While he cites gymnastics and dancing as possible activities, he mentions the importance of playing games. One must keep in mind that it is very much possible for a teenager to find a balance between physical activity and mental activity through videogames. While the second image in Source B clearly depicts the violence in some videogames, this is certainly not an absolute. Source A exhibits the vast variety of game genres that exist to our current teenagers in America. They can learn how to play golf. They can work through puzzles. They can learn strategy. Videogames allow teenagers to apply their interests and creative explorations to this variety of gaming scenarios, and as a result, one is left to remember that things, especially for teenagers, are best in moderation. Finding a balance between physical and mental activities may be paramount to the development of the American teenager.

There is an old saying that goes, "Perception is reality." While to a certain degree this adage might be true, it is the purpose of science to find truth and to debunk myths. In the case of the misperception that violent videogames cause teenagers to be violent, the research is unequivocally clear: the answer is a resounding, "No!" Videogames do not cause teenagers to be violent; they do not even cause most students to have behavioral problems at school. As this essay has made clear, other factors are at play. If America wants to find the cause of the seemingly endless violence portrayed on the media, it needs to look someplace else.

Step 11: Looking at the Verbs

Now that we have completed the essay, it is time to consider our last step, number 11: the use of active verbs. After a combined 25 years in education, we have learned that the key to quality writing is contained within the verbs. Using precise, descriptive action verbs is a sure way to improve the value of what you have written. This list is presented to you in Appendix A. Look back through the sample essay. Did the author do an adequate job with the action verbs? Which ones would you change?

Analysis of Sample Essay

You may have been wondering through this entire process, "How will the PARCC grade my essay?" Well, we're glad you asked because we will address it now. In terms of the writing task you will complete on the test, the PARCC has defined quality written expression in four categories:

1. Development of Ideas,
2. Organization,
3. Clarity of Language,
4. Knowledge of Language and Conventions.

By “Development of Ideas,” the makers of the PARCC refer to the ways in which arguments are developed and maintained throughout the course of the essay. Some questions might be:

“Did the author use evidence from the text?”

“Did this evidence come from more than one source?”

“Did the author successfully have the two sources interact with each other?”

As you can see, these questions are quite difficult and will take time for you to master. However, you can see these principles in action if you read carefully through our sample essay above. We did cite evidence from both sources. We did have the two sources interact with each other. Both Source A (Video) and Source B (Images) are used together as evidence against violence and videogames. One source complements and feeds off the other.

Second, the PARCC will look at the organization of your writing. This, in fact, should come as no surprise at all for you. Organization is a key facet of all good writing, regardless of where it is done. By virtue of the fact that we meticulously followed our outline, we organized our work. The three main parts of the essay are clearly present:

Introduction,

body, and

conclusion.

The next criterion, “clarity of language,” will look at your writing style and the effectiveness of that style. “What is writing style?” you may ask? It deals with the author’s ability to effectively use vocabulary, including content-specific words, to utilize vivid and proper description, and to appropriately use transitional words throughout the piece. Style, then, is nothing more than the writer’s identity on paper. What the PARCC cares about most is simple: Is your style clear, concise, and to the point? There is nothing worse than reading an essay that lacks clarity and is difficult to read because the writer lacks a command of language.

Looking at our sample essay:

What would you say of the style? Look back at our choice of vocabulary: Did we use vocabulary terms that were appropriate to research and statistics?

Were our descriptions of the research sources clear?

Was any of the wording ambiguous and difficult to comprehend?

Could something we wrote have been written clearer?

All of these questions are great starting points when looking at style.

Lastly, the PARCC will consider your knowledge of language and conventions. This is where your knowledge of grammar, mechanics, and usage will come to play.

Were there any mistakes in these three categories?

Did the author go back and edit the work? Does the work read effortlessly?

Does poor grammar become a distraction or a nuisance?

Our sample essay, we believe, does pretty well in this area, and provides to you, a RST essay that is free of grammatical issues and reads as though it were edited (which it was!).

In order to assist you in the skill of evaluating writing, we have included a checklist for you based upon PARCC writing standards. In addition, we have also included the PARCC rubric. You might wish to score our sample essay using the rubric.

Summary of the RST in English

We have covered a great many skills and issues in this chapter concerning the RST, including the skills involved, the necessary steps in terms of reading and prewriting, and the structure and organization of a model essay. We are under no delusions that this task is easy, but we are absolutely certain that the more you follow our 11 steps and the more you practice getting your sources “talking,” the better you will be at the RST task.

In the interest of helping you achieve success on the RST in English, we are giving you three sample essay prompts with the accompanying graphic organizers for you to use. You are about to venture on a highly productive journey. Refer back often to our model essay and when you first start, try not to skip any of the 11 steps. One last thing: We have said this numerous times in this book: Your ability to write well depends upon your ability to read well. Make sure you read and understand the texts before you begin any of the writing work.