

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**

**SECTION II**

**Total time – 2 hours and 15 minutes**

**Question 1**

**Suggested reading and writing time – 55 minutes**

**It is suggested you spend 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and 40 minutes writing your response.**

**Note: You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.**

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

In 2022 Taylor Swift decided to create a concert called the Eras Tour that would celebrate her career as a musician. Many fans known as “Swifties” were excited to attend the concert tour. Demand for the concert was at an all time high. Some people could not go to the concert because of the scarcity of the tickets. Others got a ticket and raved about the concert.

Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source, and consider the different responses to the authors of the articles. Then, synthesize material from at least three sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-written argument in which you develop a position on the value, if any, of attending Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour.

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the sources to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. 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 (Burck)

Source B (Carden)

Source C (Kaplan)

Source D (Fish)

Source E (Costello)

Source F (Pena)

Source G (infographic)

### Source A

Burck, David. "Taylor Swift's Eras Tour in Sydney" Cigar Jukebox 26 Feb 2024.

I may never be able to watch live music again. After going to Taylor Swift's Eras tour night two in Sydney, my world has changed. Just to get it out of the way, this is the best concert I have ever seen and it lives up to all the hype. Seeing Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, Patti Smith and Kev Carmody may have been more emotionally impactful because those are my music heroes, Swift's Eras tour is the best live show I have ever seen.

First of all, this is the largest and longest concert I have ever seen. There were over 82,000 people...which will be important to think about later...and she played for 3 1/2 hours. That's right, 44 songs for 3 1/2 hours. In saying that, the pacing was amazing and it felt like a 90 minute show and the energy she had at the end was enough for her to go for another hour, which the crowd would not have turned down.

This was all done flawlessly on a stage made of like 100 LED screens which raised, lowered and projected crystal clear images. The epic nature of the concert will never be duplicated and it spanned 18 years of Taylor Swift. This concert is a monumental achievement that will be talked about for decades and was easily the biggest concert in Australia in the past 20 – 25 years. I still have to mention the fans. They have created these fan events like trading friendship bracelets with your favourite Swift lyric, song or album title on it. We walked around an hour before the doors opened and traded bracelets with countless Swift fans beaming to be at the concert and talking about how they liked our purple *Speak Now* bracelet. What's your favourite song? What album to do like? Wow, how did you make those cool bracelets? There was such a joy and shared experience before the concert that you found yourself floating on cloud nine headed into the show.

This concert was very generous to the fans and was an incredible experience. The sheer epic nature of tackling 10 records that span 18 years in one concert, and pull it off, is incredible. However, is this going to change concerts? Will we see Era-esque tours from other artists? Artists like Paul McCartney do retrospective concerts, but nothing at this scale. I could see Rihanna or Beyoncé having the discography deep enough and fan base rabid enough to pull it off and I hope they do. The Eras concert was not just a live show, but a historical event and the fact that she could play music spanning 18 years and my 14 year old daughter knows every word to every song speaks to Swift's connection with her audience. It was an amazing show that I will think about for the rest of my life.

## Source B

Carden, Art. "Can't Get Taylor Swift Tickets? Blame Other Fans, Not Ticketmaster"  
Forbes.com. 18 Nov. 2022.

It's a perfect storm: Taylor Swift is going on tour for the first time in five years. "Two weeks to flatten the curve" lasted for the better part of two years, and everyone is still working off a lot of cabin fever. Both of these help explain why the demand for Taylor Swift tickets is so high that it crashed Ticketmaster's website.

Ticket prices are between \$49-\$449, with VIP packages priced at \$199-\$899. Even prices of \$49-\$449 for normal tickets and \$199-\$899 for VIP packages are too low. People waited in virtual queues for hours and others took off work for the opportunity to pay these prices for Taylor Swift tickets. A quick Google search turned up tickets for Swift's June 3 show in Chicago. The asking price to sit in the Soldier Field grandstand on one website? \$872. Another site had the tickets for \$594. We could say "shake it off," but that won't be easy. Getting back together with Taylor Swift is going to be pricey.

So who is to blame? Ticketmaster? Unscrupulous ticket scalpers? Taylor Swift? No, no, and no. If there's going to be bad blood between anyone, it should be between the fans themselves. If they spent more time reading the obscure works of long-dead Austrian economists, they would understand that tickets are really expensive because there are a lot of Swifties who are willing to pay a lot of money to spend an evening with Ms. Swift and thousands of their closest friends. As Michael Munger explains in an article applying lessons from Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk, "You Buy From Other Consumers, Not From Producers." The fact that so many people are willing to pay so much for tickets is why Taylor Swift tickets are so expensive. It's why it's so expensive to see *Hamilton*—and why I don't think I'll see it when it comes to Birmingham.

This isn't the way things *should* be in some cosmic sense. It's just the way things *are*. The reason you can't get a ticket to see Taylor Swift for \$50 is because so many other people are willing to pay \$600 or \$800 for those same tickets. Crucially, even if you did score a cheap ticket or just found one lying on the ground, it would *still* cost you \$600 or \$800 to go to the concert because if you use the ticket, you forsake the opportunity to sell it to someone else at a steep markup.

Even when people are able to get tickets for (say) the low face value of \$50, it's likely that they're paying through the nose in other ways. Someone who takes the day off to try to get Taylor Swift tickets forsakes earnings or at least loses a valuable vacation day. Someone searching high and low for tickets might pay with \$49 in cash—and a few hundred dollars worth of time.

So what can be done about it? Not much. The inescapable fact is that there are only *thousands* of tickets but *millions* of fans. Taylor Swift could alleviate some of the price pressure by touring more—a *lot* more—but even if she did, tickets would probably still be very expensive. It looks like it will be a cruel summer, indeed.

### Source C

Kaplan, Juliana. "Avid Fans are Flashing Their Dollars" Business Insider. 8 July 2023.

When the Eras Tour was announced, Bridget Doyle quickly noticed there was no show scheduled for her then-home state of New York, but she wasn't going to miss the experience.

While many New Yorkers gravitated toward shows in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Doyle and her friends wanted to travel somewhere that would be a new experience. So they chose to see Swift in Nashville, Tennessee.

"I hadn't taken a good vacation since pre-COVID. I hadn't taken a trip at all since 2019 that was more than going to visit family for a weekend," Doyle, a 28-year-old who works in higher-education administration, said. So she road-tripped to Nashville over the course of two days, stopping at places such as the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

She spent four days in Nashville with her friends. Doyle estimated her total costs — which included her lodging, rental car, tickets, gas money, concert outfit, and friendship-bracelet supplies — came to around \$1,500. That doesn't include how much they spent on food in Nashville.

"People are like, 'Oh, you spent that much on a Taylor Swift concert?' I'm like, 'I spent that much on a vacation and experience with my friends.' My favorite artist was a big part of that," she said. "But it was way more of the time spent with people I love and the experience of getting to see an artist that we mutually love."

Meanwhile, Christy G plans on spending around \$4,000 to attend the Eras Tour in Denver later this month. She and her husband are set to make a weeklong trip out of it and plan on going to several restaurants and at least one museum exhibit.

"It's a little bit concert, a little bit vacation," she said.

Lindsey Lisalda, a 35-year-old astrophysics Ph.D. student in St. Louis, similarly went on Swiftcation. Between four shows, her family of three is set to spend around \$2,750 total on the Eras Tour this summer. That includes hotels, parking, gas, and tickets for trips to Glendale, Arizona; Nashville; Chicago; and Kansas City, Missouri.

"This is the summer of Taylor," Lisalda said. "Whatever we would have set aside for vacation has been set aside for Taylor."

Overall, a Swiftcation costs less than an all-out vacation would have for the family.

"The first night of just seeing everybody on the same page, singing every word, and just really in unison, I think is what continues to draw me to want to do this again," she said.

Megan Crowley, a 27-year-old who flew from Salt Lake City to Phoenix for a whirlwind first weekend of the Eras Tour, spent around \$1,000 in total. She slept in her Airbnb for only two hours before jetting back home. She plans to make a proper trip out of attending Swift's Los Angeles dates and anticipates spending \$1,300 there.

### Source D

Fish, Ryan. "Why Taylor Swift Fans Are Sharing Friendship Bracelets at Her Eras Tour." *The Hollywood Reporter*. 7 Aug. 2023.

What started out as yet another Taylor Swift-related trend on social media has now become an integral part of the Eras Tour experience. Inspired by the lyric "Make the friendship bracelets, take the moment and taste it ..." from one of Swift's *Midnights* songs, "You're on Your Own, Kid," Swifties across the country are making themed bracelets to trade and hand out to other fans during all stops on the Eras Tour.

Before they attend the Eras Tour, many fans have spent hours using beads to make unique Swift-inspired bracelets. One attendee in Chicago brought a gallon-sized ziploc bag full of the accessories to hand out to those around her. Various lines and lyrics from across Swift's entire career are being used to craft the clever wristbands. Some say simple phrases such as "Red," "Eras Tour" or "evermore," while others have gotten more creative including references such as "Starbucks Lovers," "It's Me, Hi" and the surprisingly ubiquitous "F— Ticketmaster."

For those who don't want to spend hours (many, many hours) standing in line for official merch, the bracelets make for a nice and affordable keepsake from one of the biggest tour's of the year (of all time?).

"By the time I got to the merchandise, there was nothing left in my size," said one Eras Tour attendee, "but it's almost nicer that I get to take home an arm full of handmade bracelets from the friends I've made tonight."

Along with fans, security guards, cashiers, bartenders and other venue staff are racking up quite the collection of bracelets. It's not uncommon for most security guards to have both arms completely full — up to the elbows — with crafts given to them by friendly fans.

"It's a nice way for us all to be connected," said the Eras Tour attendee. "It's great to see the staff get into it and for everyone to have a good time bonding over their love for Taylor Swift."

## Source E

Costello, Rose. "Ticketmasters During the Eras Tour Sale" The Crimson. 23 Nov. 2022

On November 1, 2022, global popstar Taylor Swift announced her sixth tour "The Eras Tour," her first concert tour since her "Reputation Stadium Tour" in 2018.

Excited fans immediately went to register for the Verified Fan presale on Ticketmaster, getting to choose their top three shows dates and locations that they would want to purchase tickets for. If chosen for presale, fans would have received an email from Ticketmaster on the evening of November 14th and later get a code for the presale of one of their show options in a text. Over 3.5 million people registered for the presale, while only 1.5 million fans actually received codes. Some fans were unfortunately waitlisted, decreasing their chance of being chosen to get tickets. Though many thrilled fans were chosen to register for presale, nothing could have prepared them for the disappointment and disaster they would face the next day.

The problems arose long before the presale actually began. Prior to the presale at 10 AM on November 15th, fans who were chosen for presale had been told the waiting room would open 30 minutes prior to the actual presale, though most were on the website a whole hour before. The amount of fans using the Ticketmaster website caused the site to crash down, many receiving an error on their screen.

Once fans were actually able to get into the waiting room for their show, they would be redirected to the queue smoothly if experiencing no other website issues. Some were eventually able to get into the queue, however for most, that's where they stayed. While many did move up the line in the queue, eventually facing a screen that told them they were next in line, some were immediately redirected back to the beginning of the queue instead of continuing to checkout. For fans that did make it to checkout, many received an error on their screen every time they selected seats on the seating chart for their show location, saying those seats were already taken. In the end, 2.4 million fans were able to get tickets through Ticketmaster. According to research by Bookies, the probability of getting Taylor Swift tickets was 2%. Ticketmaster finally spoke out on the issue when their fan-support Twitter had posted a few updates on the tour at 1:04 PM that day.

"There has been historically unprecedented demand with millions showing up to buy tickets for the TaylorSwiftTix Presale," stated Ticketmaster, continuing to thank fans for their support and patience.

For many swifties, this post did more harm than good, making them even angrier than they were after being directed to the front of the queue countless times. Many fans expressed their annoyance online with hateful statements or memes on popular social media apps like Twitter and TikTok.

"8 billion people in the world and every single one of them is ahead of me in the Taylor Swift Ticketmaster queue apparently," one tweet says.

A TikTok quotes, "Not Ticketmaster saying 'due to unprecedented demand for tickets' like they're not the ones that decided/knew exactly how many verified codes they sent out and how many people would log on???"

Then, the most upsetting event occurred on November 17th, when Ticketmaster canceled the general sale due to "extraordinarily high demands on ticketing systems and insufficient remaining ticket inventory to meet that demand." Therefore, any fans who were not able to purchase tickets during the presale, or were not chosen for presale at all, do not get any chance to get tickets.

Swift finally made a statement on the matter at 12:03 on November 18th on her Instagram story. Swift starts off by explaining how she tours with the sole purpose of connecting with fans and is very protective of them. She then continues to express her disappointment in Ticketmaster and the anger she has from everyone experiencing multiple problems with the website.

“I’m not going to make excuses for anyone because we asked [Ticketmaster], multiple times, if they could handle this kind of demand and we were assured they could.”

Swift then ends her statement by saying that she hopes to come up with more opportunities to play her music with the fans who did not get tickets and thanks them for their dedication to her. With many angered fans, Ticketmaster is really proving to be the anti-hero of the swifties’ hearts, relating massively to the lyric “It’s me, hi, I’m the problem, it’s me.”

## Source F

Pena, Daniella. "Taylor Swift's Eras Tour: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" *The Stampede*. 206 Apr. 2023.

Young singer-songwriter Taylor Swift's fans have mixed feelings about her Eras tour as people experience fading merchandise and ticket troubles.

Since the announcement of her Eras tour in Nov. 2022, Taylor Swift became a trending sensation in modern media, especially after the release of her most recent album, "Midnights." Swift has been a top female artist since she began releasing music in 2006, with albums like "1989" and "Folklore" sweeping top spots on the Billboard 200, making her a sensational young artist.

Swift's release of her tour tickets on Ticketmaster was nothing short of a disaster. While she broke the record for the most number of tickets sold in one day (two million), many fans encountered difficulties within the platform. A lot of fans experienced delays and extremely long queue times on Ticketmaster as the website crashed for many due to a lot of user traffic on the platform. Junior Emilia Harbors was anxiously anticipating the day of ticket sales, only to be met with extremely long queue times and a buggy website.

"It was honestly the most upsetting experience," Harbors said. "I miss the days when you had to buy tickets in person so bots and resellers couldn't take everything."

Millions of fans were unable to purchase tickets during and after the ticket presale event. Ticketmaster released another official statement explaining the entire situation on their website, detailing that the influx of people trying to buy tickets was too much for their system to handle. For everyone to get a ticket, Swift would need over 900 stadium shows throughout two and a half years, performing every night.

Although many fans were unable to purchase tickets, some fans were able to secure their spots at the concert venues for the tour, even if they were at higher prices from resellers. As thousands of people prepared for the upcoming concerts, many released their outfits inspired by Swift's songs for the tour on TikTok. From bedazzled shoes to cowboy hats, pink hearts, and bold black attire, fans dressed to recreate each of Swift's albums. Alissa Horrigan, a junior, mentioned her experience attending the Tampa show.

"Me and my friends spent two days decorating our tour 'fits," Horrigan said. "My mom thought we were over-dressing but when we got there, legit everyone was dressed up—it was so cool."

Swift quickly became a trending topic of discussion across all media platforms. Opening at Glendale, AZ, Swift stunned concert attendees as well as the internet with her first performance of the tour as she performed for over three hours. Fans were left in awe as they experienced Swift's outfit-changes live as she progressed through the setlist which spanned her many eras. "When she [Swift] got onstage, I started crying," Horrigan said. "It was the most magical thing ever 'cause like, I grew up listening to her ever since I was little, so seeing her in person was such a full circle moment."

Despite the magical experience, things start coming back to reality once fans bought their merchandise. Long lines at the merchandise trucks left a lot of products out of stock, including crewneck sweaters that many fans longed for. In addition to this, many fans took to social media to express their discontent with merchandise defects after washing. Swift fans encountered issues with their merchandise after they washed it, as many claimed the ink faded very badly. Washing it by hand and other gentle cleaning methods seemed to make the ink fade regardless.

In response to the complaints, Swift's merchandise website released a care notice explaining that the tour collection merchandise was supposed to have a faded, vintage look, encouraging fans to follow the product care instructions on the label. They did, however, offer fans

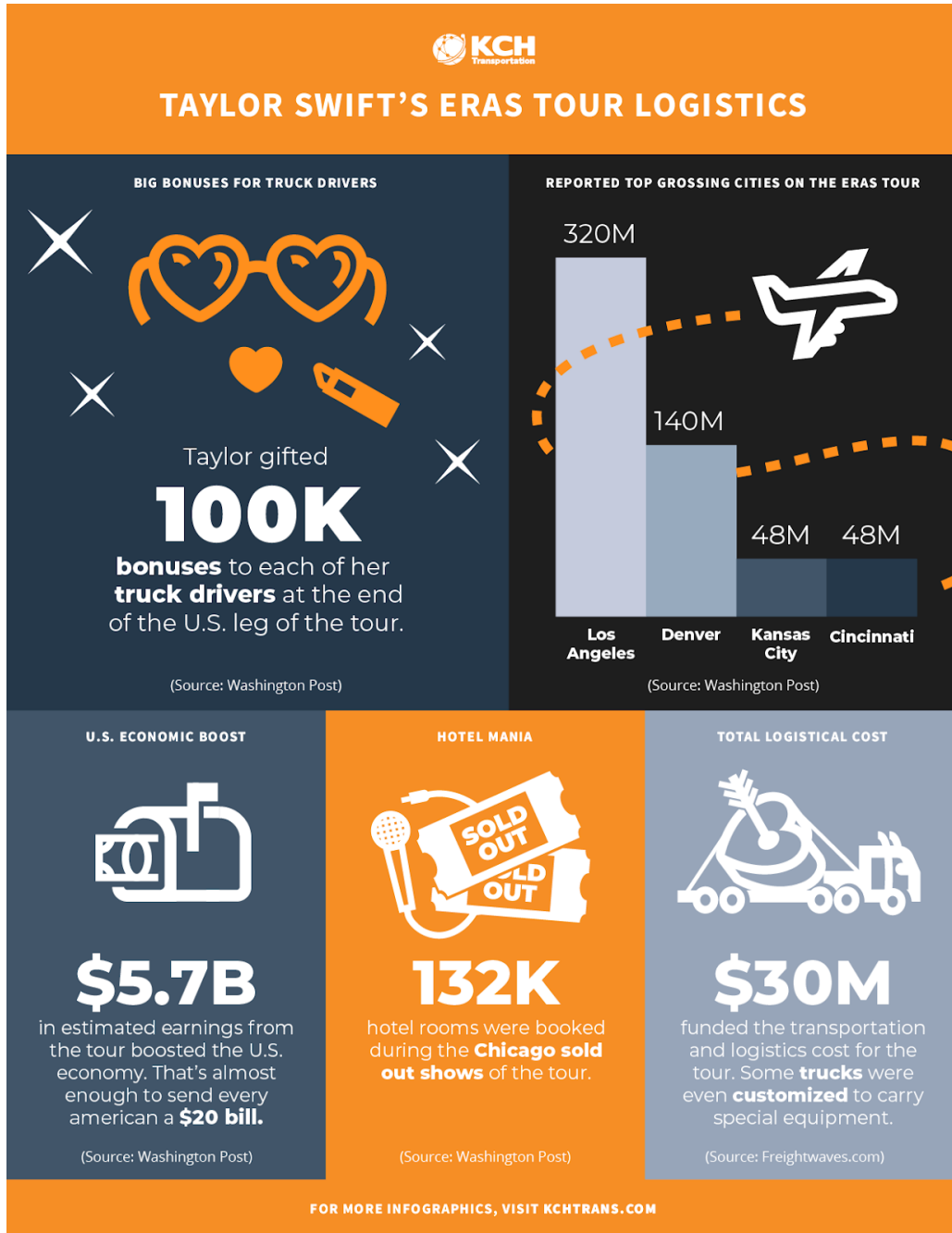


the opportunity to reach out if they felt their product was too faded, so they could possibly receive a replacement.

Swift's sensational tour has only just begun and already many things have happened, both good and bad. From ticket mishaps and faded merchandise to three-hour-long concerts and emotional crowds, the Eras tour has made a lasting impact on fans all around. Swift's last concert will be in Los Angeles, CA in August.

Source G

Eras Tour Infographics.



# THE ERAS TOUR BY THE NUMBERS

**73,000**



fans attended Taylor Swift's first show, which led her to break the official record for the highest attended concert for a female artist

**44**

songs performed by Taylor at each show



**16**



outfit changes during her 3.5 hour performance



**10**

different Taylor eras to choose from



**2,000,000**

tickets were sold on Ticketmaster on Nov. 15, the most tickets ever sold for an artist in one day