Underlined and in bold on the next several pages are some of the most common, repeated themes in SAT Essay questions. The odds are good that you’ll see a version of one of these themes, so prepare now by thinking of SPECIFIC examples that you might develop into body paragraphs.

On the following pages, list examples that you might use in essays on these themes, drawing from the categories below...

(to see real SAT questions, refer to the handout 38 Real SAT Prompts and Questions),

Personal Experience/Observations

For example: Sports you play, Volunteer work, Family trips, Family traditions, Family background/history, Accomplishments, Creative projects, Inventions, Clubs, Jobs you’ve held, Camps, Hobbies, Talents, Experiences with pets, Relationships with people other than your immediate family...

Current Events/History

For example: Elections; National and World issues; Famous leaders like Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Abe Lincoln, Stalin, Malcolm X, Winston Churchill; Rebellions, as in the uprisings in Syria/Egypt/Libya; Natural disasters; Developments in Medicine, Government, and the Arts; Major events in History: Wars and Battles, Renaissance, Witch Trials, Revolutions, World Explorations, Slavery, Civil Rights...

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

For example: Materialism, Greed: Great Gatsby
Conformity vs. Individuality/Social Expectations: Catcher in the Rye, Scarlet Letter
Standing up For Your Principles: To Kill a Mockingbird
Revealing True Character: Lord of the Flies
Facing and Overcoming Fear: Finding Nemo
Getting in Touch with What’s Really Important, Loyalty and Friendship: The Wizard of Oz

Imagine how much easier having examples already in mind can make your experience on test day, the day you have to

PLAN AND WRITE AN ESSAY IN 25 MINUTES!

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Individuality vs. Conformity/Independence vs. Collaboration

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

Motivation, Determination, Success vs. Failure, Hardship, Struggle

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television
Creativity, Knowledge, Ideas, Problem Solving, Imagination

Personal Experience/Observations
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_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Current Events/History
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_________________________________________________________________

Reading/Literature/Film/Television
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Heroes

Personal Experience/Observations
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_________________________________________________________________

Current Events/History
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_________________________________________________________________

Reading/Literature/Film/Television
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Responsibility to Self vs. Responsibility for Others

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

Honesty vs. Dishonesty, Loyalty, Truth

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

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Optimism vs. Pessimism/Idealists vs. Realists

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

Judgment, Criticism, Acceptance

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television
Risk, Willingness to Change and Try New Things vs. Remaining the Same/Doing What’s Familiar/Doing What’s Been Done Before—Tradition vs. Innovation

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television

Technology, Government, The Arts

Personal Experience/Observations

Current Events/History

Reading/Literature/Film/Television
Other Themes:
(Compromise, Decision Making, Happiness, Common Sense, or any other biggies you can think of):

Personal Experience/Observations

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Current Events/History

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Reading/Literature/Film/Television

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