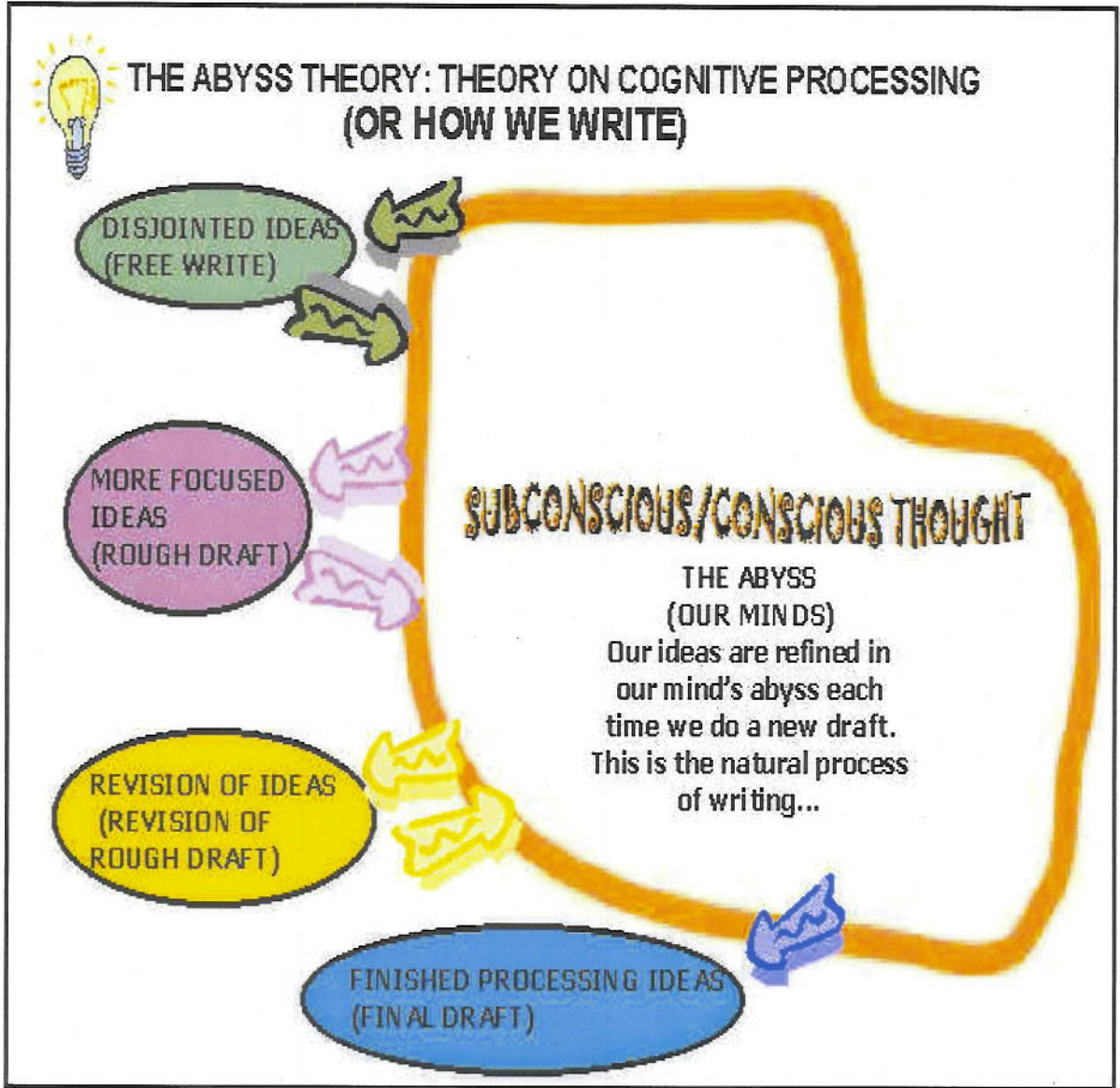


The Essay






SEMIOTICS & LINGUISTICS
 (Study of language, meanings and symbols)






Language is symbolic and full of meanings that have been handed down for generations. Meanings have been assigned and reassigned since people began creating words and symbols in order to communicate. How do we come to know what we know? Many meanings have come through more than one “diacritical” process.



DIFFERENT LEVELS INVOLVED IN THINKING AND WRITING

<p>1. Mental Pictures</p> 	<p>2. Physical Sensations</p> 
<p>3. Emotional Sensations</p> 	<p>4. Linguistic Information</p> 

SAT ESSAY SCORING RUBRIC

	6	5	4	3	2	1
						
POINT OF VIEW & CONTENT <i>(Bring something good to the table)</i>	Insightful, Outstanding, Critical Thinking	Effective Strong critical thinking	Developed Fair critical thinking	Limited Some critical thinking	Lacking <i>(Little critical thinking)</i>	None <i>(No critical thinking Wow!)</i>
EXAMPLES <i>(That support your point of view)</i>	Clearly Appropriate	Appropriate	Adequate	Inadequate <i>(Where's the Beef?)</i>	Insufficient <i>(Doh!?)</i>	None- <i>(Wha?? No way!)</i>
ORGANIZATION <i>(Has Intro/Body Conclusion)</i>	Clearly Focused	Focused	General	Limited <i>(Call Information!)</i>	Poor- <i>(Need a map Einstein!)</i>	None- <i>(Lost in the ozone!)</i>
LANGUAGE USE <i>(Say something nicely!)</i>	Skillful, Varied	Appropriate	Adequate	Weak Vocab <i>(Where's your Dictionary?)</i>	Limited <i>(Did you study your vocab?)</i>	Errors <i>(No way –you can do this....)</i>
SENTENCE STRUCTURE <i>(Make it whole!)</i>	Meaningful variety	Variety	Some variety	Lacks <i>(Variety Don't be soporific!)</i>	Fragments <i>(Make it whole Dude!)</i>	Flaws <i>(Have needle and thread?)</i>
GRAMMAR <i>(Say it correctly)</i>	Free of most errors	Generally free of errors	Some errors	Many errors <i>(Computer Grammar check is your friend)</i>	Difficult to always understand <i>(I kinda know..)</i>	Very hard to understand <i>(Je ne comprende pas!)</i>
POINTS	800	700	600	500	300-400	100-200

12. B, rule 11
13. A (sentence is correct)
14. D, rule 7
15. B, rule 10



THE ESSAY

I thought we
were going to
take this part
out!

—Janet

The essay is your only opportunity in the entire SAT system to be creative—within limits. You see, the ETS graders are looking for certain qualities in each essay; if you deviate too much from those limits, the ETS will be frightened by your creativity and give you a low score. In this section, we will tell you how to write the kind of essay the ETS wants to see.

As in another important aspect of life, length doesn't matter, skill does. Don't worry about how much you write, as long as it's good. The essay graders look at thousands and thousands of essays. They spend a few minutes at the most on each one. If your essay is short but solid, they will be grateful.

Only you know how much time you have to set aside for planning the essay, writing it, and proofreading. But the time limit for the entire essay process is 20 minutes on the SAT II Writing test and 25 minutes on the new SAT.

Here are some examples of recent essay topics:

"Describe a previously undiscovered cause of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo."

"Interpret Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from a Freudian standpoint."

"If sulfur were to mix with lithium in a heated, pressurized container, what would be the result?"

"What is the meaning of life? Show work."

Just kidding. No essay question will ever ask you for specific knowledge on a subject. The question will always ask you to write about a vague concept or to debate the validity of a statement. Here are some essay topics of the sort you might actually see:

1. "Progress always comes at a price." Use an example from literature, current affairs, history, or personal observation in which a difficult price had to be paid in order for progress to be made. Was the progress worth the price or was the price too high?
2. "The more difficult path can be the better path to take." Write an essay in which you explain why you agree or disagree with this statement. Support your argument with specific examples from history, current events, literature, or personal observation.
3. In a well-organized essay, describe a situation in which an individual or group at first resisted some form of change, then was convinced that change was necessary. Include in your essay
 - a. what the change was and why it was resisted at first
 - b. how the person or group was convinced to change
 - c. a discussion of the results of the change once it was made

Be sure to include examples in your discussion. The examples may come from personal observation, or from your reading in history, literature, science, or current affairs.

You'll notice that in all three examples the subjects you can write about are extremely broad—"examples from history, contemporary affairs, literature, or personal observation"—basically anything except cartoons, video games, or group sex. So the first trick is to learn a lot about two or three subjects that interest you. Almost any will do. Read a few articles and books about these subjects and form some strong, well-thought-out opinions about them. Since the essay topics are so broad, you should be able to turn whatever you know into an essay that fits the topic.

For example, suppose you decide to become an expert on the civil rights movement in the United States. You could an-

swer question 1 by talking about the great personal sacrifices made by people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Then you could talk about whether the progress in civil rights was worth the high price they paid. You might give examples of the rights these people won for our generation (desegregated schools, affirmative action). For question 2, you could basically write the same thing—about how people like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X chose the difficult path of standing up for their civil rights.

For question 3, you could explain that racial intolerance and fear led many people to resist desegregation of schools, then outline how protests, court cases, and brave African-American students who had to attend school with armed guards helped change public opinion. Finally, you could talk about some ways in which America has become a more diverse, more tolerant place as a result of desegregation, while admitting that problems remain.

As you can see, the questions are broad enough for you to adapt them to whatever you feel like writing about. The most important thing is that you not waste even five seconds asking yourself, “Hmmm . . . what should I write about?” Know in advance the subjects you are prepared to write on; then all you have to do is figure out how to apply your knowledge to the question.

While the questions do not necessarily demand that you write about one specific subject, we think it is a good idea. If you take the first question and then say in your essay, “Everything has its price . . . when my gerbil died it cost a lot to freeze-dry it . . . and in the same way, Martin Luther King, Jr., paid a great price for social change . . . and it should also be noted that the price of renting a video has increased markedly,” then you will get a low grade for failing to make any sense at all. You should use multiple examples to prove your points, but they should all relate to a specific thesis statement. Don’t write in general about how “everything has its cost” or your essay will wander. Your thesis statement should be quite specific: “The civil rights movement demonstrated that social change is accomplished at great cost.”

Write on One Subject

"Personal Observation"

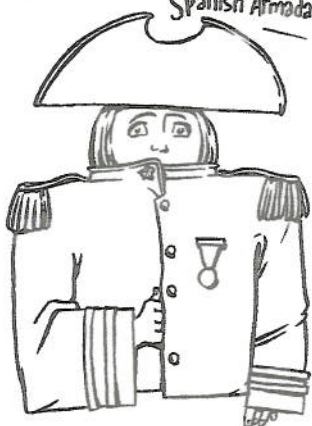


If, as you read the remarks about the civil rights movement, you said to yourself, "Sure, that topic is interesting, but it isn't nearly as interesting as I am," then perhaps you should write an essay from "personal observation." Many of the questions will allow you to use examples from "personal observation." If you want to do this, then write about some issue in your own life or the life of someone close to you. Be sure to make it dramatic. Tell stories about the characters involved that illustrate the points you are making. Do not just blab your opinions without giving specific examples of why they are true. For example, if you are writing about how you have noticed that students do not show enough respect for the SAT, make sure to tell one story about how disrespectful the students are, and perhaps another story about how much joy and peace you have created by respecting the SAT.

It's definitely worth taking the time to review your life for good essay material. In the unlikely event that the Serpent's essay question is a poor fit for your areas of expertise, you can always turn to your own experience. Think back on times that were important to you—when there was a challenge you met, a moral quandary, a turning point in your life, some sort of realization. You know exactly the kinds of things we're talking about. (Hopefully you'll think of something that the essay readers haven't already read about hundreds of times that day.) But you don't want to find yourself thinking, "Oh, great, I can write about that time I saw Grandma shoplifting/hitchhiking/drinking margaritas," and then go blank on what to actually say about it, so determine what your central point might be, then take some notes on supporting material. Ask yourself "what happened," "what did I learn," "how did it change things?" And here's the bonus: Not only will this deep, introspective self-knowledge give you material for a strong SAT essay, but it will also be good practice for your college application essay, and a lovely little stroll down memory lane, to boot. Our next point—that it's okay to make stuff up—is particularly applicable to personal observation essays.

Making Stuff Up

Papa! Hahaha
When making up stuff for your "personal observation" avoid the opening, "I learned a valuable lesson as admiral of the Spanish Armada."



Suppose you are writing your essay and you are a little short of evidence. Our advice is to make stuff up. Because this test is not about how much you know but about how well you can write, don't worry if you fudge some of your facts. Your essay will not be graded on factual accuracy. Remember, the readers spend about a minute on each essay—they aren't going to spend that minute running to the encyclopedia to make sure you have your details right. They are just looking at the overall quality of your writing and organization.

This doesn't mean that you should say something that is obviously false. In the civil rights example, if you write, "The reason Malcolm X is still alive today is that . . .," your grader will know you don't know what you are talking about. But suppose you write, "In 1961, 80 percent of taxpayers in North Carolina opposed desegregation, but by 1971, only 20 percent opposed it." Your grader will probably be impressed that you argue so convincingly (when actually you made the numbers up). The reason the second example works is that it isn't completely a fantasy; it is based on an awareness of a shift in public opinion that did occur during the sixties.

If you're writing about personal observations, feel free to make up characters and events as long as they're within reason.

The ETS-Friendly Essay

In your essay, the ETS wants to see if you know the "rules" of good essay writing. The ETS does not care that the art of essay writing has been explored for centuries by great writers, each of whom discovered original ways of organizing and writing great essays. No, all the ETS graders care about is whether you know how to do the basic, no-frills high school essay. So, you should give them what they want and write an essay according to the formula they are expecting.

The formula they want is one that is organized just like an old-fashioned first date. Not a modern first date, which takes place in a mosh pit, but the kind you see in an old movie. An old-fashioned date has three parts: the introduction, the meal, and the goodnight.

Before you get down to your date, however, it's wise to spend a couple of minutes preparing. Organize your thoughts and jot down a few notes so that when you begin, you'll be smooth and polished and won't make a fool of yourself trying to sound intelligent when you aren't sure what you want to say.

1. The Introduction

- This begins with a "pickup line" in which you get the prospective date's (the reader's) attention.
- Next there is a provocative sentence that explains the pickup line and gets you talking about something you know about.
- Then you invite the prospective date (the reader) to join you for a meal. (This is the thesis sentence.)



3. The Goodbye

You conclude by talking about what a lovely discussion you have had, you make a hint about your future together, and then, if you get the right signals, there should be one goodnight kiss.

Now is your chance to do something you never get to do on a date. Review the experience a few times, correcting any part of it that didn't turn out exactly as you wanted it to. Add anything you wish you had said, and cross out anything you wish you hadn't said. As long as you do it neatly, no one will care that you didn't get it perfect the first time.



Some Insider Tips

Remember that a reader spends only a few minutes on your essay. Make it clear, concise, and, above all, *readable*. Although the ETS says the essays aren't judged on handwriting, it makes sense to write clearly. If the reader can't read what you've written, how can he or she grade it fairly? (And don't make the mistake of thinking that he or she will assume your illegible handwriting is hiding a brilliant essay—illegible handwriting just makes people *grumpy*. If you don't believe us, go ask any of your teachers about grading finals.)

Also, these slaves of the ETS do not have time to go back and reread your essay, so save your real creativity for English class. They're just looking for an understanding of basic essay structure, proper grammar, and good supporting details. Again, it's okay to make stuff up.

2. The Meal

We recommend that you divide the meal into three courses, during which you continue talking about the stuff you started discussing in the opening but now in greater depth so that you can show your date how knowledgeable and interesting you are. Make sure you move from one course to another by using smooth transitions.



Writing the
essay or
How do you
want to be
remembered?
#

The Do-It-Yourself Essay Formula

Reminder! If you're taking the new SAT, all of your score recipients have the option of seeing your essay along with your scores. That means an admissions officer might be poring over that 25-minute essay you wrote a year before you started applying to colleges. Add that to the fact that the essay accounts for 240 points of your writing score, and you can see why you need to *do it well!*

To show just how easy it is to apply this formula to any essay topic, we have made a chart of the do-it-yourself essay. You'll see that no matter what the question is, you can write about whatever subject you planned to write about, and you can always make that subject fit the formula. We have written one essay about scientists, and one about the environment, but remember, you can write on almost any topic.

Note that Essay I agrees with the question, while Essay II disagrees. There isn't a "right" answer to any of the essay questions; remember, it isn't what you say that counts, but rather how well you say it.

Essay I: Question: "Progress always comes at a price . . ." (question 1 discussed on page 268).

Essay II: Question: Depending heavily on others keeps us from realizing our own potential. Agree or disagree.

1. The Introduction—Opening Paragraph

Attention-getting pickup line

There is an ancient Sudanese proverb that states, "To kill a tree is to kill oneself." (*We made this up. There's no such proverb, but how would the ETS know?*)

In tribute to the scientists who came before him, Isaac Newton said, "If I seem to see farther than others, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants."

Explain your pickup line; get the discussion going

In the search for better transportation, homes, and defenses, human beings have drained the earth's resources.

Newton was aware that his deep insights into science came from his mastery of the works of his predecessors.

Invitation to the meal (a good way to do this is to restate the essay question in relation to your topic and then say how you are going to organize your discussion)

First example that supports your argument (1 paragraph)

Another example that supports your argument (1 paragraph)

Has the progress we have made in our standard of living been gained at too great a cost to the environment? We can begin to answer this question by exploring three areas of human progress and their environmental repercussions.

2. The Meal—Paragraphs 2, 3, 4: Three Examples That Support Your Argument

One area in which human beings have made enormous technological progress is in transportation. Only two centuries ago, the only means of land transportation were on foot or on the backs of animals. Now we have high-speed trains, automobiles, airplanes, and spaceships. However, the environmental cost of all of this transportation has been vast. The burning of fossil fuels is ruining the ozone layer and causing global warming. Roads now scar the land that was once wilderness.

Humans have also paid a price for the improvements we've made in our dwellings. Once we lived in caves or in earthen huts. Now many of us live in manufactured homes in crowded cities. While this has brought us modern conveniences and greater protection from the elements, this lifestyle has ravaged the natural habitats of many animals.

Depending heavily on the work of other scientists does not keep one from realizing one's own potential as a scientist. In fact three great scientists realized their potentials by depending heavily on others.

When Copernicus suggested that perhaps the planets revolve around the Sun instead of the planets and the Sun revolving around the Earth, this was a new way of looking at the world. However, most historians of science agree that Copernicus's work depended heavily on Ptolemy and on contemporary mathematicians. Thus, while he had conceived of an entirely new way of understanding the shape of the solar system, he did so with the help of other scientists.

Galileo also discovered new details of the universe—the moons of Jupiter, mountains on Earth's moon—which had never before been seen. Still, he was dependent on the scientists who preceded him. He used Copernicus's model of the universe to track the planets. Also, the telescope that he used was made possible by the work of other

Third
example that
supports your
argument
(1 paragraph)

Scientists speculate that American cities are a prime cause of the extinction of at least three species of birds each year. (*We made this statistic up.*)

Finally, human beings have always sought defense from one another and from animals. In pursuit of safety, we have advanced the science of weaponry to the point where our power to destroy the environment is absolute. If nuclear war should occur, the environment would pay the ultimate price—the end of life as we know it.

scientists who had made progress in the field of optics.

Even though Newton's work on gravity seemed to depart radically from that of the scientists who preceded him, it too relied on the work of his predecessors. As his "shoulders of giants" statement indicates, Newton was fully aware that his discoveries depended heavily on Galileo and other scientists who had advanced the idea that the universe follows mathematical laws.

Summarize your
argument (explain
what you proved
in the previous
three paragraphs)

3. The Goodbye—Last Paragraph: Conclusion

We have made great progress in the fields of transportation, housing, and defense, but the environment has paid a tremendous price.

Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton fully realized their potential as scientists by depending heavily upon others.

Look to the future
(this is optional,
but graders
love it)

If our planet is to survive, we will have to realize that some forms of progress are not worth the environmental cost.

Those who will make future contributions to science will likely also do so through careful study of other scientists.

A goodnight kiss
(one last cute point,
perhaps referring
to your pickup line)

To invert the Sudanese proverb: To save a tree may be to save ourselves.

By standing on the shoulders of those other scientists, they will be able to see farther still.



If you find that the time allotted is not enough for you to write an essay according to the formula, then just put two paragraphs in the “meal” instead of three.

If you’re saying to yourself, “I don’t know enough facts about science to write an essay like the second one,” don’t worry. We didn’t either. We just opened up our high school history book to the chapter about scientists and got our facts from there. Remember, because you are going to prepare your essay in advance, you can look up the facts you anticipate needing. And if you get to the test and forget some of those facts, you can just make them up. For example, you could have said, “After waking each morning, Isaac Newton allegedly spent four hours sitting in bed reading the works of scientists who preceded him.” How would the test graders know that wasn’t true?

The secret to the essay section is to write a couple of essays about two subjects that interest you before you even get to the test. Then, while everyone else is sweating over what to write about, you will just be tweaking your approach to a topic you have already prepared. As practice, why not write two essays about your chosen subject in response to the two essay questions here?



Transitional Devices (Connecting Words)

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

Transitional devices are like bridges between parts of your paper. They are cues that help the reader to interpret ideas in the way that you, as a writer, want them to understand. Transitional devices help you carry over a thought from one sentence to another, from one idea to another, or from one paragraph to another with words or phrases. And finally, transitional devices link your sentences and paragraphs together smoothly so that there are no abrupt jumps or breaks between ideas.

There are several types of transitional devices, and each category leads your reader to make certain connections or assumptions about the areas you are connecting. Some lead your reader forward and imply the "building" of an idea or thought, while others make your reader compare ideas or draw conclusions from the preceding thoughts.

Here is a list of some common transitional devices that can be used to cue your reader in a given way.

To Add:

and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, nor, too, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, first (second, etc.),

To Compare:

whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, vis a vis, but, although, conversely, meanwhile, after all, in contrast, although this may be true

To Prove:

because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is

To Show Exception:

yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course, once in a while, sometimes

To Show Time:

immediately, thereafter, soon, after a few hours, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then

To Repeat:

in brief, as I have said, as I have noted, as has been noted,

To Emphasize:

definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, emphatically, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation

To Show Sequence:

first, second, third, and so forth. A, B, C, and so forth. next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently, thus, therefore, hence, next, and then, soon

To Give an Example:

for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration, to illustrate

To Summarize or Conclude:

in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said, hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently, on the whole,

For information about using many of these words and phrases, see the Purdue OWL handout Sentence Variety at

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_sentvar.html

SAMPLE ESSAYS WITH SCORES

To illustrate how the College Board will score your essay, we've included a series of sample essays and scores. These will also help you to evaluate your own essay writing on these practice tests in this book.

We'll use the following topic and prompt for each of the sample essays.

Directions: Consider carefully the following excerpt and the assignment below it. Then plan and write an essay that explains your ideas as persuasively as possible. Keep in mind that the support you provide—both reasons and examples—will help make your view convincing to the reader.

Intellectuals in America and abroad have debated over the concept of success in American culture. Success can be defined quite differently by different people, but few people argue that being successful is not considered valuable. However, some people also advocate the view that something considered unsuccessful can also have some value.

Assignment: What is your view of the claim that something unsuccessful can still have some value? In an essay, support your position by discussing an example (or examples) from literature, the arts, science and technology, history, current events, or your own experience or observation.

ESSAY AT SCORING LEVEL 6

Introduction

In today's fast-paced, driven society, much emphasis is placed on the final result of an endeavor. American society places a premium on success; our culture has little tolerance for failures or losers. Within this cultural framework it sometimes becomes easy to immediately dismiss failures. However, value is not found only in success. As the examples of the recent Columbia shuttle disaster and the Vietnam war demonstrates, events that are not successful still have value.

First example

When the Columbia space shuttle disintegrated upon reentry, the American people experienced a great tragedy. The failure of NASA engineers to prevent this disaster shocked the nation. Certainly, many people would argue that there is no value in this horrific failure. But the Columbia tragedy led to a complete investigation of the space program. Deficiencies in the chain of command and in the entire culture of NASA were exposed. As a result of the Columbia tragedy, NASA will reexamine its practices and change their ways so something like this doesn't happen again. Surely, this is a valuable thing to come from a horrible failure.

Restates thesis

Second example

Another unsuccessful endeavor was the Vietnam War. America sent troops to Vietnam to prevent the country from becoming Communist. However, after many years of struggle, the troops were withdrawn and Vietnam fell to the Communist party. But this failure had much value. On one hand, our failure in Vietnam led to an important lesson in successful war strategy. The experience of the fierce guerilla war led to changes in tactics that later helped America in other conflicts. Also, the Vietnam failure helped change the American culture. People protested the war and the government responded to the voice of the public. These important changes show the value that can come from failure.

Restates thesis

Conclusion

Clearly, there is much value in things that our not successful. The Columbia disaster and the Vietnam War are but two examples of unsuccessful events that led to valuable lessons and changes. There is much to be learned from a failure and those who focus only on success will miss out on valuable lessons.

Evaluation for Essay at Scoring Level 6

One of the first things that readers will look for is good organization. This essay is well organized because it has an introductory paragraph, two body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. The first paragraph begins with a strong opening line and then paraphrases the essay prompt. It ends with an easily understandable thesis that mentions the examples the essay will discuss to support that thesis.

In the next two paragraphs, the essay expands on the two examples mentioned in the last sentence of the first paragraph. In this case, there are two examples, one from current events and one from history. Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that introduces the example. Then, each body paragraph relates the example back to the thesis. Each body paragraph stays on topic with no digressions and employs good transition sentences to introduce new points. The body paragraphs end by reiterating the thesis, which makes the essay more focused and forceful.

The readers will also consider command of the language. This essay has a variety of sentence structures, using simple, compound, and complex sentences. The essay also shows a good range of vocabulary.

This essay does contain some errors, including noun-verb disagreement in the last sentence of the first paragraph, misspelling *disintegrated* in the second paragraph, using *our* instead of *are* in the conclusion, and using some pronouns incorrectly. However, the College Board does not expect an essay to be perfect. As long as the errors do not largely detract from the overall presentation, a few mistakes are acceptable.

ESSAY AT SCORING LEVEL 5

Success is achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted. However, just because an endeavor was unsuccessful does not mean it is without value. The failed Columbia mission and the Vietnam War are two such examples.

The goal of the Columbia space shuttle mission was to launch safely into space, perform scientific experiments, and to land safely on earth. This was what the crew and the people at the Houston space center attempted. This mission was successful until reentry, when the shuttle disintegrated without warning. The goal was not achieved; seven astronauts tragically lost their lives. This failure does not mean this tradgety was without value. It forced NASA to reexamine its contingencies. NASA was compelled to look carefully at its organization structure, independent contractors, and engineering practices. Congress demanded accountability, and was forced to reexamine its budget practices concerning space exploration.

The goal of the Vietnam War was to prevent Communism from taking hold in that country. Many at the time believed that if Vietnam became Communist, so too would the rest of the region. When we left, the country fell to the Communist party. However,

Misspelling

Body paragraphs are clear, but do not reconnect with the thesis explicitly.

advancements in military training came out of the conflict. We learned the value of "special forces" and developed new tactics to fight in environments where tanks were less efficient than air strikes. These lessons better prepared us for modern warfare.

It would be preferable if we did not have to pay such a high price to learn such lessons. The Columbia space tradgety and the Vietnam War both demonstrate how events perceived as failures can still have value. Misspelling

Evaluation for Essay at Scoring Level 5

As in the essay that receives a score of 6, the introduction does not merely restate the prompt but provides a good paraphrase of it.

This essay is effective, demonstrates variety in sentence structure, and shows a command of mechanics and grammar. It displays appropriate vocabulary throughout, and while there are some notable misspellings (*tradgety*), the intended words and meanings remain clear.

The primary difference between the top essay and this one is the impact of organization and cohesiveness on the reader. In this essay, the body paragraphs remain focused on the thesis without the digressions apparent in essays receiving a lower score. However, the essay doesn't link each body paragraph back to the thesis explicitly as was done in the top essay. Ensuring that each example is directly relevant to the thesis is essential to any good essay, and the more obvious this is to the readers, the more likely that you will receive a top score. Unofficially, length seems to be a factor as well. This essay is about 75 words shorter than the essay at scoring level 6.

ESSAY AT SCORING LEVEL 4

Some people would say that something that is not successful does not have any value. I would have to disagree with this statement. Sometimes, things that are not successful still have some value. For example, the Columbia space shuttle and the Vietnam War were not successful, but they had value. Thus, it is true that something not successful can still have value.

Sentence fragment

For instance, the Columbia disaster. Columbia was destroyed in an accident when the shuttle tried to reenter the atmosphere. This accident was a horrible failure and many people were very upset by it. The value, though, comes from the new way in which we now look at things. Because of Columbia, the space program now knows what is wrong. Hopefully, they will change it.

Does not relate back to thesis

Vietnam is also an example of something not successful. We went to Vietnam in an attempt to get rid of communists. The war went on for awhile, but we were not able to win. Many soldiers were killed and the public were very angry about the whole thing. Soon there were many protests across the country and college students especially became active against the war. By the time the war was ended the people were very upsets with their country. Misspelling

Repetitive

These two examples show that something not successful can still have value. As we have seen, both Columbia and the Vietnam War were not successful. Yet, we still got something of value out of them.

Evaluation for Essay at Scoring Level 4

A 4 essay demonstrates adequate competence but has lapses in organization or development. For example, this essay does contain an appropriate organizational structure, employing an introduction, two body paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, the essay does not consistently develop its examples.

The examples are appropriate, one from current events and one from history. The first example is adequately related back to the thesis, but the second example is not. Rather than demonstrate how the example supports the thesis, the essay digresses and presents examples not relevant to the thesis.

This essay also lacks variety in its sentence structure. Most of the sentences are short and simple, and many are repetitive. Vocabulary is limited and grammatical errors are also apparent, detracting from the overall presentation of the essay.

ESSAY AT SCORING LEVEL 3

Sometimes, things that are not successful still have some value. For example, the Columbia space shuttle was not successful but was valuable.

Grammatical error

Short, with inadequate relevant examples

The Columbia disaster it was really sad that the Columbia blew up and the astronauts died. I saw it on my tv and cried. They found pieces for days and days all over texas. But it was valuable like the Challenger that blew up a long time ago because it makes us want to get it right. We want to fix it so it doesn't happen again and so regular people can go to space like that kid from N*Synch tried to do. And so we will keep going to space and getting satellites for satellite tv and spying and stuff. And so NASA and the President are going to go to Mars next.

Spelling and punctuation errors

Poor sentence structure

So something not successful can still have value because we will still go to space even though the Columbia disaster happened.

Evaluation for Essay at Scoring Level 3

A 3 essay displays a limited vocabulary and little sentence variety, in addition to more serious flaws in grammar and mechanics that detract from its overall quality. In this essay, there is a clear point of view taken on the topic and some evidence is given to support the position. The overall organizational structure—including the introductory statement, a body paragraph, and conclusion—is adequate.

In the essay directions, the test writers occasionally state that a single, well-developed example is sufficient, but the development of this example would not qualify. It is somewhat incoherent, and its progression of ideas is limited. In the body paragraph, the writer loses focus on the thesis and brings in irrelevant or loosely related examples as support. Had these digressions been more organized and expressly linked to the thesis, this may have been a stronger essay.

ESSAY AT SCORING LEVEL 2

Spelling and
punctuation errors

Something that is not successful can still have some value. The Columbia mission was not successful because it blewed up. People dyea. So saying that this is true is wrong. Its not true its false. People dyea and there work blewed up and there is no value in that. Maybe it will make people not want to go to space anymore. But then maybe that is the value because its dangerous. But I dont think so.

Too short,
with limited
vocabulary and no
development of
ideas

Evaluation for Essay at Scoring Level 2

A 2 essay has very limited vocabulary and no sentence variety. The frequency of errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation seriously detract from what the writer is trying to say, often so badly as to obscure meaning. This essay demonstrates little mastery of grammar and written expression. There are examples of incorrect word choice, redundancy, and ambiguous pronouns. Although the example is relevant and is related back to the thesis, the essay lacks focus. Consisting of a single, poorly written paragraph, there is little development of ideas and organization is fundamentally deficient.

AND ABOUT SCORING LEVEL 1...

Do you really want to read an essay that would receive a 1? We are not even going there. In practice, readers will score very few essays as a 1. Besides, if you're reading this, you should already be well-prepared to surpass the lowest essay score—as long as you write *something*.

HOW SHOULD YOU SCORE YOUR ESSAY?

As objectively as possible. Yeah, we know that it's your writing and that you're in love with it, but when it comes to preparing for the SAT, you need to be brutally honest with yourself if you want to spot your weaknesses and improve on them. So that means you need to remove yourself from your essay as best you can and score it as though it were written by someone else, someone you've never met. Better yet, we recommend that you ask your mom or dad, brother or sister, teacher or most grammatically-overachieving friend to review the sample essays and our evaluations of them and apply them to your own essays.

After you've taken each sample test, you'll also be able to plug in various possible essay scores into your overall Writing score calculations to see how your overall score would change depending on your essay score. And for further advice on the new SAT essay, be sure to visit your online resources.

Congratulations. You're off to a great start. Now, on to the practice tests.