

## **Essay Writing for the new SAT**

### **FORMAT I: the one-example essay**

Select one suitable illustrative example from your personal experience, or your reading, or knowledge of current affairs, history, science etc. and use this as the basis for a discussion of the topic. The example should be specific and ‘real’ rather than invented. It is best to avoid religion or politics or anything controversial.

There is no word limit but a limited space is provided. The space you have to fill is approximately one and a half sides of A4 paper. The space is sufficient to write a five-paragraph essay. You will have to write in pencil.

#### **Format of the essay:**

##### *Paragraph 1: Introduction*

- Try to create interest in the topic.  
The introduction can be general but must include a thesis statement to point the reader in the right direction.

##### *Paragraph 2: Part I of the example*

- Describe the situation and cover about half the “example” here.

##### *Paragraph 3: Part II of the example*

- Finish the “example”.

##### *Paragraph 4: Discussion/analysis*

- Explain what your example shows. Extract the conclusions/moral lessons to show how it supports your thesis.

##### *Paragraph 5: General conclusion*

- Show how the example leads to more general conclusions about the topic. (If possible, relate to material from the introduction to round the essay off.)

## **FORMAT II: the two-example essay**

### *Paragraph 1: Introduction*

- Explain, in your own words, what the issue is. Include a thesis statement, which is a clear statement of your point of view.

### *Paragraph 2: Point one in support of your thesis*

- Explain the point you are making with the aid of a specific example.

### *Paragraph 3: Point two in support of your thesis*

- Explain the point you are making with the aid of a specific example

### *Paragraph 4: Qualification*

- Explain that, under certain circumstances, the opposite point of view might be correct. (This is to show that you are aware of all aspects of the issue, even though you are 80-90% convinced of your thesis.) [Sometimes this paragraph is replaced by another point and/or further discussion or reasoning.]

### *Paragraph 5: Reinforcement of thesis*

- Show how your viewpoint, despite the qualification you have just made, is more persuasive under the present circumstances.

## **Specimen - one-example essay**

Time has a doomsday book, on whose pages he is continually recording illustrious names. But as often as a new name is written there, an old one disappears. Only a few stand in illuminated characters never to be effaced.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

Are there some heroes who will be remembered forever? Or are all heroes doomed to be forgotten one day? Plan your response, and then write an essay to explain your views on this issue. Be sure to support your position with specific points and examples. (You may use personal examples or examples from your reading, observations, or, knowledge of subjects such as history, literature, science.)

One of the memorable images from Eisenstein's classic silent film on the Russian Revolution is the toppling of a statue. The destruction of the statue symbolizes the throwing out of the old order along with its heroes and replacing it with a new. Considering this human tendency to 'ring out the old and ring in the new' it is surprising that any heroic figures from the past survive in the history books, but they do. There are some heroes who do not get erased from the pages.

One of my personal all-time heroes is Marie Curie, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize. At a time when women were not allowed to enter the University of Warsaw, her home city, Marie worked as a governess before getting the opportunity to enroll in the Sorbonne in Paris. She graduated at the top of her class and became the first woman to take a degree in physics from the Sorbonne.

But it is not simply for her breaking out of traditional molds that she is remembered. Her scientific work on radiation led to her two Nobel Prizes: the first joint with her husband, the second alone, after Pierre Curie's death. She nearly did not get the second prize because of rumors of 'misconduct' in her private life. But she bravely went to Stockholm, despite opposition, and said that she believed that there was no connection between her private life and her scientific work. She died of cancer caused by exposure to radium, one of the elements that she discovered.

Many great people from the past have had their reputations destroyed by exposure of their human frailties. But some, like Marie Curie, achieve such greatness that they will be remembered for their achievements. She symbolizes the human quest for knowledge and the capacity to sacrifice self for a higher goal. Women everywhere will gain strength from seeing one woman who could not be suppressed by outdated conventions.

We need our heroes for the inspiration they offer to us and to future generations. Names such as Curie should not, and in fact cannot, be erased from the History books: they tell us so much about the human capacity to strive for excellence.

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Every age, and every culture has its heroes. In some times and places the heroes have been gods or god-like creatures from mythology, or mortals apparently much above the mass of humanity. But today, sports stars, film stars, and political leaders with clay feet have replaced Ram, Achilles, Cleopatra, and Alexander. In fact there are almost no heroes of any age that can withstand our tendency to debunk. There are figures who will always be in the history books, but they won't always be regarded as heroes.

Let's consider Julius Caesar – a hero in his own time but regarded, thanks mainly to Shakespeare's play, as a man with mortal failings: vain, superstitious and arrogant. He can no longer be thought of as a hero – just a man who came to prominence for his actions at a certain point in history. He has his place in the history of the Western world and his face on ancient coins, but scarcely fits our need for a hero for all times whom we can revere.

Even Shakespeare himself, the writer of immortal plays and poetry cannot fit our need for a heroic figure. He created heroes but cannot qualify as one himself: we know too little about him. History will always try to heap accolades on the man who wrote such sublime words, but that doesn't stop critics from trying to take away his glory. There are those who claim that he didn't even write the plays.

Of course the history books are full of great men and women who are long gone, and no doubt we can all find our personal heroes from their pages. But the dead cannot defend their reputations and so every biography and every film chips away at their greatness. Alexander the Great will never seem so great once we have seen the film.

Finally, we must agree that very few 'heroes' will be revered for all time. The man who saves a child from a tsunami will find himself lauded in the newspapers for a few days, the sports superstars will last a little longer. But no modern human, except for a very few such as Mother Theresa, will be guaranteed a page in the book of all-time heroes.

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