

SAT Reasoning Test Prompts

Additional prompts are available at onlinemathlearning.com. Most of the prompts from 2005–2009 have been collected here and formatted for easy reference and use in your classroom. There are many more available at this site if you would like additional prompts.

1. Does being ethical make it hard to be successful?
2. Is it sometimes necessary to be impolite?
3. Should we limit our use of the term "courage" to acts in which people risk their own well-being for the sake of others or to uphold a value?
4. Should we pay more attention to people who are older and more experienced than we are?
5. Should people let their feelings guide them when they make important decisions?
6. Has today's abundance of information only made it more difficult for us to understand the world around us?
7. Do we benefit from learning about the flaws of people we admire and respect?
8. Is it best for people to accept who they are and what they have, or should people always strive to better themselves?
9. Can common sense be trusted and accepted, or should it be questioned?
10. Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present?
11. Do people put too much emphasis on learning practical skills?
12. Should schools help students understand moral choices and social issues?
13. Do newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, the Internet, and other media determine what is important to most people?
14. Does a strong commitment to technological progress cause a society to neglect other values, such as education and the protection of the environment?
15. Are established rules too limited to guide people in real-life situations?
16. Is it sometimes better to take risks than to follow a more reasonable course of action?
17. Do we tend to accept the opinions of others instead of developing our own independent ideas?
18. Do people achieve more success by cooperation than by competition?
19. Is it important to question the ideas and decisions of people in positions of authority?
20. Does true learning only occur when we experience difficulties?
21. Can deception—pretending that something is true when it is not—sometimes have good results?
22. Do people achieve more success by cooperation than by competition?
23. Can books and stories about characters and events that are not real teach us anything useful?
24. Can people achieve success only if they aim to be perfect?
25. Do success and happiness depend on the choices people make rather than on factors beyond their control?
26. Are people more likely to be productive and successful when they ignore the opinions of others?
27. Is it better for people to be realistic or optimistic?
28. Is it important to try to understand people's motivations before judging their actions?
29. Is happiness something over which people have no control, or can people choose to be happy?
30. Should people take more responsibility for solving problems that affect their communities or the nation in general?
31. Is it more important to do work that one finds fulfilling or work that pays well?
32. Is education primarily the result of influences other than school?
33. Is it better to change one's attitude than to change one's circumstances?
34. Is persistence more important than ability in determining a person's success?
35. Is acting an essential part of everyday life?
36. Can people have too much enthusiasm?
37. Does planning interfere with creativity?
38. Do highly accomplished people achieve more than others mainly because they expect more of themselves?
39. Should people change their decisions when circumstances change, or is it best for them to stick with their original decisions?
40. Can a group of people function effectively without someone being in charge?

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

There are good reasons to pay attention to people who are older or more experienced than we are, even if their opinions on important issues are very different from ours. Of course, not every person older than us is worth learning from, while many young people are. But if the only people we listen to are our age and are likely to see things the same way we do, we will miss out on something important.

Assignment: Should we pay more attention to people who are older and more experienced than we are? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Good decision making generally requires people to think carefully and logically and to pay attention to practical details. However, people who depend on their feelings and emotions to make important decisions are not likely to spend hours gathering information, making lists, considering all possible outcomes, and so forth. When comparing the advantages or disadvantages of one course of action to another, these people ask themselves, "What do my feelings tell me?"

Assignment: Should people let their feelings guide them when they make important decisions? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Thanks to great advancements in technology, we live today in a world in which knowledge is more readily available to greater numbers of people than ever before in history. Having more and better technology, however, has not made people wiser or more understanding. Indeed, people are so overloaded with information today that they have become less, rather than more, able to make sense of the world around them than our ancestors ever were.

Assignment: Has today's abundance of information only made it more difficult for us to understand the world around us? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations..

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Many people believe that being honest and honorable limits their options, their opportunities, their very ability to succeed. Unfortunately, in today's me-first culture, ethics may be the *only* thing people choose to live without! They believe they have only two choices: (1) to win by doing whatever it takes, even if it is wrong, or (2) to be ethical and therefore lose. Few people set out to be dishonest, but nobody wants to lose. — Adapted from John C. Maxwell, *There's No Such Thing as "Business" Ethics*

Assignment: Does being ethical make it hard to be successful? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Whatever happened to good manners? Many books and articles have been written about the lack of common courtesy and old-fashioned politeness in today's society. From spoiled children acting out in restaurants to so-called experts yelling at each other on cable news shows, people seem less concerned with good manners and civilized behavior than ever before. On the other hand, if people really want to change the world for the better, they have to risk being seen as impolite or uncivil.

Assignment: Is it sometimes necessary to be impolite? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

We define "courage" too loosely. Real courage is conscious self-sacrifice, either for the sake of others or to uphold a value. But we typically identify a single aspect of courage—daring or honesty, for example—as the entire virtue. We even say it takes courage to differ from the mainstream in one's preferences in fashion or music or to speak out about certain wrongs. Such acts, though admirable, are not necessarily courageous. —
Adapted from John McCain with Mark Salter, *Why Courage Matters*

Assignment: Should we limit our use of the term "courage" to acts in which people risk their own well-being for the sake of others or to uphold a value? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

The discovery that someone we admire has done something wrong is always disappointing and disillusioning. Yet even when people we consider heroes have been tarnished by their faults, they are no less valuable than people who appear perfect. When we learn that an admired person, even one who is seemingly perfect, has behaved in less than admirable ways, we discover a complex truth: great ideas and great deeds come from imperfect people like ourselves.

Assignment: Do we benefit from learning about the flaws of people we admire and respect? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Some people say you should be content with what you have and accept who you are. But it is possible that too much self-acceptance can turn into self-satisfied lack of ambition. People should always strive to improve themselves and to have more in their lives—friends, things, opportunities. After all, where would we be if great people, both in history and in our own time, did not try to have more and to improve themselves?

Assignment: Is it best for people to accept who they are and what they have, or should people always strive to better themselves? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

So-called common sense determines what people should wear, whom they should respect, which rules they should follow, and what kind of life they should lead. Common sense is considered obvious and natural, too sensible to question. But people's common sense decisions may turn out to be wrong, even if they are thought to be correct according to the judgment of vast majorities of people.

—Adapted from Alain de Botton, *The Consolations of Philosophy*

Assignment: Can common sense be trusted and accepted, or should it be questioned? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Many persons believe that to move up the ladder of success and achievement, they must forget the past, repress it, and relinquish it. But others have just the opposite view. They see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present. —

Adapted from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

Assignment: Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

I cannot comprehend those who emphasize or recognize only what is useful. I am concerned that learning for learning's sake is no longer considered desirable, that everything we do and think must be directed toward the solution of a practical problem. More and more we seem to try to teach how to make a good living and not how to live a good life. —Adapted from Philip D. Jordan

Assignment: Do people put too much emphasis on learning practical skills? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Most of our schools are not facing up to their responsibilities. We must begin to ask ourselves whether educators should help students address the critical moral choices and social issues of our time. Schools have responsibilities beyond training people for jobs and getting students into college. —Adapted from Svi Shapiro

Assignment: Should schools help students understand moral choices and social issues? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

The media not only transmit information and culture, they also decide what information is important. In that way, they help to shape culture and values. —Adapted from Alison Bernstein

Assignment: Do newspapers, magazines, television, radio, movies, the Internet, and other media determine what is important to most people? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

We measure our progress as a civilization by what we see as advances in technology, which seem more significant than such concerns as education and the condition of the natural world. Still, I would prefer to be a part of a community that judged itself on the happiness of its members rather than on the development of new technology. —

Adapted from Thomas Moore

Assignment: Does a strong commitment to technological progress cause a society to neglect other values, such as education and the protection of the environment? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

People are often told to obey the rules. In reality, these rules are not permanent: what is right at a given point in time may be declared wrong at another time and vice versa. The world changes so rapidly that rules are out-of-date almost as soon as they are created. People cannot rely on established guidelines to determine what they should and should not do. —Adapted from Gregory D. Foster

Assignment: Are established rules too limited to guide people in real-life situations? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

I suspect that like many people who watch their diet, exercise regularly, and check the weather report before leaving the house, I am a little too concerned with controlling what can't be fully controlled. I know I am doing the sensible thing. But I sometimes think that the more reckless among us may have something to teach the rest of us about freedom. Perhaps there is something good about taking chances against our better judgments. —
Adapted from Melvin Konner

Assignment: Is it sometimes better to take risks than to follow a more reasonable course of action? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

It is rare to find an objective and independent viewpoint on style, literature, politics, or any other matter. Many people's opinions are formed through their associations with others. It is our nature to conform; conformity is a force that few can successfully resist. We give in to the human instinct to go along with the crowd and to have its approval.
—Adapted from Mark Twain

Assignment: Do we tend to accept the opinions of others instead of developing our own independent ideas? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. October 2006

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

While some people promote competition as the only way to achieve success, others emphasize the power of cooperation. Intense rivalry at work or play or engaging in competition involving ideas or skills may indeed drive people either to avoid failure or to achieve important victories. In a complex world, however, cooperation is much more likely to produce significant, lasting accomplishments.

Assignment: Do people achieve more success by cooperation than by competition? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Sometimes it is necessary to challenge what people in authority claim to be true. Although some respect for authority is, no doubt, necessary in order for any group or organization to function, questioning the people in charge—even if they are experts or leaders in their fields—makes us better thinkers. It forces all concerned to defend old ideas and decisions and to consider new ones. Sometimes it can even correct old errors in thought and put an end to wrong actions.

Assignment: Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Is it important to question the ideas and decisions of people in positions of authority? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

We don't really learn anything properly until there is a problem, until we make a mistake, until something fails to go as we had hoped. When everything is working well, with no problems or failures, what incentive do we have to try something new? We are only motivated to learn when we experience difficulties. —Adapted from Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life: Not a Novel*

Assignment: Does true learning only occur when we experience difficulties? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

There are two kinds of pretending. There is the bad kind, as when a person falsely promises to be your friend. But there is also a good kind, where the pretense eventually turns into the real thing. For example, when you are not feeling particularly friendly, the best thing you can do, very often, is to act in a friendly manner. In a few minutes, you may really be feeling friendlier. —Adapted from a book by C. S. Lewis

Assignment: Can deception—pretending that something is true when it is not—sometimes have good results? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

It is wrong to think of ourselves as indispensable. We would love to think that our contributions are essential, but we are mistaken if we think that any one person has made the world what it is today. The contributions of individual people are seldom as important or as necessary as we think they are.

Assignment: Do we put too much value on the ideas or actions of individual people? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Many people deny that stories about characters and events that are not real can teach us about ourselves or about the world around us. They claim that literature does not offer us worthwhile information about the real world. These people argue that the feelings and ideas we gain from books and stories obstruct, rather than contribute to, clear thought.

—Adapted from Jennifer L. McMahon, "The Function of Fiction"

Assignment: Can books and stories about characters and events that are not real teach us anything useful? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

"No one is perfect." There are few among us who would disagree with this familiar statement. Certain that perfection is an impossible goal, many people willingly accept flaws and shortcomings in themselves and others. Yet such behavior leads to failure. People can only succeed if they try to achieve perfection in everything they do.

Assignment: Can people achieve success only if they aim to be perfect? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Everybody has some choice. People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and, if they can't find them, make them. —Adapted from George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Assignment: Do success and happiness depend on the choices people make rather than on factors beyond their control? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

In order to be the most productive and successful people that we are capable of being, we must be willing to ignore the opinions of others. It is only when we are completely indifferent to others' opinions of us—when we are not concerned about how others think of us—that we can achieve our most important goals.

Assignment: Are people more likely to be productive and successful when they ignore the opinions of others? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

In many circumstances, optimism—the expectation that one's ideas and plans will always turn out for the best—is unwarranted. In these situations what is needed is not an upbeat view but a realistic one. There are times when people need to take a tough-minded view of the possibilities of success, give up, and invest their energies elsewhere rather than find reasons to continue to pursue the original project or idea. —Adapted from Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism*

Assignment: Is it better for people to be realistic or optimistic? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

It is easy to make judgments about people and their actions when we do not know anything about their circumstances or what motivated them to take those actions. But we should look beyond a person's actions. When people do things that we consider outrageous, inconsiderate, or harmful, we should try to understand why they acted as they did.

Assignment: Is it important to try to understand people's motivations before judging their actions? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Abraham Lincoln said, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." In other words, our personal level of satisfaction is entirely within our control. Otherwise, why would the same experience disappoint one person but delight another? Happiness is not an accident but a choice.

Assignment: Is happiness something over which people have no control, or can people choose to be happy? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Many people believe that our government should do more to solve our problems. After all, how can one individual create more jobs or make roads safer or improve the schools or help to provide any of the other benefits that we have come to enjoy? And yet expecting that the government—rather than individuals—should always come up with the solutions to society's ills may have made us less self-reliant, undermining our independence and self-sufficiency.

Assignment: Should people take more responsibility for solving problems that affect their communities or the nation in general? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Most human beings spend their lives doing work they hate and work that the world does not need. It is of prime importance that you learn early what you want to do and whether or not the world needs this service. The return from your work must be the satisfaction that work brings you and the world's need of that work. Income is not money, it is satisfaction; it is creation; it is beauty. —Adapted from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*

Assignment: Is it more important to do work that one finds fulfilling or work that pays well? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

The education people receive does not occur primarily in school. Young people are formed by their experiences with parents, teachers, peers, and even strangers on the street, and by the sports teams they play for, the shopping malls they frequent, the songs they hear, and the shows they watch. Schools, while certainly important, constitute only a relatively small part of education. —Adapted from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Education for the Twenty-First Century"

Assignment: Is education primarily the result of influences other than school? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

If we are dissatisfied with our circumstances, we think about changing them. But the most important and effective changes—in our attitude—hardly occur to us. In other words, we should worry not about how to alter the world around us for the better but about how to change ourselves in order to fit into that world. —Adapted from Michael Hymers, "Wittgenstein, Pessimism and Politics"

Assignment: Is it better to change one's attitude than to change one's circumstances? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

The biggest difference between people who succeed at any difficult undertaking and those who do not is not ability but persistence. Many extremely talented people give up when obstacles arise. After all, who wants to face failure? It is often said about highly successful people that they are just ordinary individuals who kept on trying, who did not give up. —Adapted from Tom Morris, *True Success: A New Philosophy of Excellence*

Assignment: Is persistence more important than ability in determining a person's success? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the **Assignment** below.

Whether it is a child pouting to get ice cream or a politician using emotionally charged language to influence potential supporters, all people use some form of acting to achieve whatever ends they seek. Public figures of all kinds would have short, unsuccessful careers without the aid of acting. Acting—consciously assuming a role in order to achieve some purpose—is a tool people use to protect their interests and gain advantages in every aspect of life. —Adapted from Marlon Brando, Foreword to *The Technique of Acting* by Stella Adler

Assignment: Is acting an essential part of everyday life? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the **Assignment** below.

When people are very enthusiastic—always willing and eager to meet new challenges or give undivided support to ideas or projects—they are likely to be rewarded. They often work harder and enjoy their work more than do those who are more restrained. But there are limits to how enthusiastic people should be. People should always question and doubt, since too much enthusiasm can prevent people from considering better ideas, goals, or courses of action.

Assignment: Can people have too much enthusiasm? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Planning lets people impose order on the chaotic processes of making or doing something new. Too much planning, however, can lead people to follow the same predetermined course of action, to do things the same way they were done before. Creative thinking is about breaking free from the way that things have always been. That is why it is vital for people to know the difference between good planning and too much planning. —
Adapted from Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit*

Assignment: Does planning interfere with creativity? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

Most people underestimate their own abilities. They tend to remember their failures more vividly than their successes, and for this reason they have unrealistically low expectations about what they are capable of. Those individuals who distinguish themselves through great accomplishments are usually no more talented than the average person: they simply set higher standards for themselves, since they have higher expectations about what they can do.

Assignment: Do highly accomplished people achieve more than others mainly because they expect more of themselves? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the Assignment below.

People are taught that they should not go back on their decisions. In fact, our society supports the notion that to change your mind is evidence of weakness and unreliability, leading many people to say, "Once I decide, I decide!" But why do people make such a statement? If factors, feelings, and ideas change, isn't the ability to make a new decision evidence of flexibility, adaptability, and strength?

—Adapted from Theodore I. Rubin, *Compassion and Self-Hate*

Assignment: Should people change their decisions when circumstances change, or is it best for them to stick with their original decisions? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample SAT Reasoning Test Prompt

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

It is unrealistic to think that any group of people—a family, a committee, a company, a city—can function peacefully and productively without some kind of authority. The needs and interests of the individuals who make up any group are too varied for its members to operate as a unit without having someone to make the final decisions. Somebody has to be in charge; somebody has to be ultimately responsible.

Assignment: Can a group of people function effectively without someone being in charge? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.