

Practice SAT Essay Questions Suggested by *Demigods and Monsters*

Question #1

PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot—BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR.

- From Mark Twain's front matter to *Huckleberry Finn*

*One night I was doing an event with two other Authors, and one of them was explaining why he liked my book *The Devil Went Down to Austin*. "The structure is amazing," he told the audience. "It's a book about scuba diving, and as the characters go deeper into the dark murky water, the plot also gets darker and murkier. The symbolism is really clever." . . . After the event, when I confessed to the other author that I hadn't done the murky structure thing intentionally, that perhaps it was just the result of my faulty outlining, his jaw dropped. He'd studied my writing. He'd made brilliant insights. And I'd just been telling a story? Impossible!*

That doesn't mean his insights weren't valuable, or that the symbolism wasn't there. But this does raise an important point about the difference between writing a story and analyzing it.

The writer's job is to write the book. The careful reader's job is to find meaning in the book. Both jobs are important. The meanings you find can enlighten, fascinate, and surprise. They can even surprise the author.

- From Rick Riordan's "Introduction"

Are ideas still valid even if they aren't the ideas their authors intended to communicate? Where does the true meaning of something you read lie: in the writer's head, or in yours?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observation.

Question #2

The other convention Riordan draws on [in giving Percy Jackson a disability] is the idea that disability can be a gift of the gods. This belief goes a long way back into history. The Ancient Greeks called epilepsy “the sacred disease” because the sufferer was thought to be possessed by demons or gods; some truly impressive people throughout history were epileptic, including Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, St. Paul, Joan of Arc, and Napoleon Bonaparte.

- From Elizabeth E. Wein’s “Not Even the Gods Are Perfect”

They say that every cloud has a silver lining. Some qualities, like epilepsy, that are sometimes thought to be either a flaw or an advantage, depending on context. Is there any quality that is never a benefit, or never a drawback? Or does every apparent shortcoming have a potential upside?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observation.