

Practice SAT Essay Questions Suggested by *Secrets of the Dragon Riders*

Question #1

The story [of the Inheritance Cycle] is one that has been both lauded and criticized as “not new.” . . . Paolini has drawn upon well-known and well-used archetypes for both character and plot. Paolini’s detractors claim that the work is therefore merely derivative, and brings nothing new to the world of fiction. But his advocates (of which I am one) maintain that he has simply done what all the great authors have done before him: retold the stories common to us all from a unique point of view. And it is a point of view that has been embraced by millions upon millions of readers around the world.

- From James A. Owen’s “Introduction”

A writer named Christopher Booker has argued that there are only seven basic story plots in the world, and that every story ever written uses one of those seven; therefore, there is nothing in storytelling that is ever new. Do you agree?

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

Older and wiser. Why do these words slide together like an unchangeable equation that always adds up? Where is it written in permanent, glittering magical letters that more years of age must equal more wisdom? . . . In the Oxford English Dictionary wisdom is defined as “Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct.” American Heritage notes that wisdom is “The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight.”

- From Susan Vaught’s “Older ≠ Wiser”

Does older always equal wiser? Or does wisdom come from something other than age?

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.