

SAT Essay Sample

People often confuse appearances with reality?

People are easily deceived by conventional appearances and because of this often miss subtle realities. Many people become satisfied with appearance alone and are influenced by it more than they are influenced by reality itself. People confusing appearances with reality has been repeated throughout history and literature.

The reaction of the American people to the incident called Seward's Folly demonstrates that people are often confused by appearances. William Seward was a former secretary of state from American history who was criticized for his policies and actions. When he accepted a deal from the Russians to purchase Alaska, people were aghast. Alaska was nothing more to them than a barren winter wasteland with no value. However, the following years justified the actions of the incident people dubbed Seward's Folly. What appeared to the nation as a useless plain of ice was actually a goldmine rich in oil and valuable resources.

The actions of Kino and his family in John Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl* are another example of how people confuse appearances with reality. In this story, Kino and his family think that a large pearl Kino has found is valuable because it is so large. However, when he tries to sell his treasure to merchants, the merchants say that while the pearl is large, it is of no special value. Kino and his family refuse to believe this because of how strongly they are fooled by the large appearance of the pearl. If they, like most people, were not so taken in by appearances they would have been able to see what the merchants tried to show them--that the pearl had little value.

Paul Baumer's initial expectations in the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* proves that people are led more by appearances than by reality. Paul Baumer is seduced by war when his professor lectures about how war is an epic adventure where all soldiers become heroes. Paul's entire class is deceived by the propaganda and many students enlist in the army. However, Paul soon discovers that though the appearance of war is luring in the abstract, the reality of war itself is a nightmare. Paul suffers intense trauma on the battlefield, watches many of his friends die, and ultimately goes insane. War is not the epic adventure he hopes for after all. Had he not been so deceived by appearances he would have been better prepared for the realities of war.

Initial appearances though relevant are not always what they seem. And unfortunately, because this human propensity to miss subtle realities is not recognized, people continue to try to fix such important social problems as war, hunger and violence in the same old ways. Ways which appear to work at first but fail in the long run because more profound problems have not yet been addressed. Only by learning to continually look deeper can we solve the worlds problems. And as Einstein once said, "You cannot solve a problem with the same level of thinking that produced it" so to can we not solve our problems until our level of thinking goes far deeper than initial appearances would allow.



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