“Teenage Story” Themes Brainstormed in Class

for Essay Consideration & Development

Language Arts 7—Kaye

*Rebel Without a Cause*

NOTE: These are ideas to be individually developed—not just lifted & used

* **Family Unit / Relationships with parents**
* growing generation gap
* communication breakdown
* youth need structure & guidance, while at the same time crave autonomy
* parents want to protect, but need to support, not solve all troubles and worries; kids need to develop problem-solving skills & how to handle responsibilities
* What makes kids from “nice” homes do things like this?
* Transition from childhood to adulthood
* role of men & role of women (conditioned by society)
* emerging sexuality (and societal expectations)
* cry-out for attention and affection
* Does the American Dream still exist? Is it a construction of the media? The mansion & pool are symbolically empty—a vacant shell.
* parental abandonment & the consequences
* disillusionment
* parent expectations are based on “dated” experiences—they don’t jibe with what’s going down now.
* Life is like a museum: first you need a guide, which is your loved one.
* When parents fight all the time—and rarely see eye-to-eye—in front of their children, it’s ultimately the kids that suffer.
* Parents have the need to protect their children, but often times they fail to show it.
* Most parents strive for the best in us, but sometimes leave us—and them—in the dust.
* Love—from friends—might not be able to replace the love from family, but it can build character…and help us survive.
* Sometimes in a family there is a dominant parent that controls all aspects of family business; for everyone’s sake, there needs to be balance and compromise.
* Everyone needs a good adult role model to show right from wrong.
* Parents don’t always know what’s right for kids; some will let them run free and others will lock them up in a cage.
* It’s natural for kids to seek the approval of their parents. They want them to be proud.
* **Rebellion vs. Conformity**
* the need to fit in/conforming to society’s standards, norms, expectations
* It’s natural for youth to experiment with pushing boundaries, but how do we administer discipline when needed?
* Is it better to be a loner with morals or a follower lacking conviction?
* What people do to gain acceptance
* Why some deny approval/entry into a group
* Sometimes the words “fit in” require you to do certain things you know you shouldn’t do.
* The only thing that matters is how you perceive yourself—not how others do.
* **Peers (and Pressures)**
* trying to grow up too fast
* emergence of the power of peers, whom most kids spend more time with than family
* the quest for respect
* the use of alcohol and drugs (cigs & prescription) to cope/escape reality
* bullying
* The instigators of trouble are often the first to leave before it goes down
* Thoughtful & sensitive kids often make bad decisions in the interest of fitting in.
* Some kids seeking attention that are different from others often get scorned by society.
* You can tell a teenager to do or not do something, but whether they take the advice or not is another story.
* Everyone deserves the right to be accepted; people make assumptions who they want their friends to be, but they never know where they’ll end up.
* **What’s a Kid to Do?**
* disposable income & time to kill
* thrill seekers out to conquer boredom
* the emergence of juvenile delinquency(trouble as a sport?)
* How do we cope with pain & loss?
* How do we cope when our essential needs aren’t met?
* Can we run away from problems?
* How do we do the right thing when others deny the support & resources?
* the construction of fantasy worlds to deny truth/reality: coping mechanisms to deal with disappointment & frustration
* What are kids looking for? What drives them?
* While the drama can seem over the top, it reflects teen life perfectly: exaggerated
* Honor isn’t something you’re born with, it’s earned through your actions
* Grief is something everybody goes through, but we all handle it differently
* You should think twice before acting; some things can’t be taken back.
* “Just because it burns doesn’t mean you’re gonna die. You gotta get up and try.” (Pink)
* Teens make mistakes; those mistakes make them smarter, but if you don’t get in trouble and take the consequence then you won’t learn.
* There are people in life who are always looking for trouble—picking fights with whoever they can. Strength isn’t the force you could use to fight back; it’s the power you should use to walk away and stand up for what you know is right.
* Answers can come in a wide variety, but factors such as opinions, beliefs, and experiences can cause a major distortion in some answers, so in reality there is no true answer.
* Don’t blow troubles & problems out of proportion; be calm, think clearly, and make a rational decision.
* People often do stupid things to try to demonstrate courage, strength, and pride.