

Theme-Building Worksheet

Step 2 of the CollegeReadyParent essay process. Free to copy, print, and share.

Why a theme matters: if your student writes five essays, they shouldn't sound like five different people. One clear thread — what drives them, why they care, where they've already acted on it — makes every essay faster to write and more believable to read. This is a reflection tool, not a résumé. Encourage honest answers over impressive ones.

1. What academic subject or field excites you most — and why?

Examples: biology, because how the human eye works fascinates you; history, because you love uncovering hidden stories; math, because solving problems feels like a puzzle.

2. What motivates you to pursue it? What's the deeper reason?

Examples: a personal experience with vision loss; wanting to give back to your community; plain curiosity about how things work.

3. Where have you already made an impact — even without a title or award?

Examples: tutoring a younger student, organizing a club event, leading sectionals in band, carrying a group project no one else would.

4. What do people say you're naturally good at?

Examples: listening, problem-solving, explaining things clearly, staying calm under pressure, being the reliable one.

5. What do you want to study, build, or change — and how does your past connect to it?

Examples: neuroscience because of a family illness; accessible apps because of your tech skills and empathy; teaching because a mentor changed your path.

Now write the theme in one sentence

"I'm drawn to _____ because _____, and I've already shown it by _____." This sentence is the spine of every essay that follows.

Free Resources — No Account, No Cost, No Data Collection

Full essay toolkit for parents	collegereadyparent.org/essay-toolkit
Brag sheet builder + recommendation kit	collegereadyparent.org/brag-sheet-builder