

GP Notes

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This compilation of notes are meant to be used as a reference for the GCE "A"-level General Paper essay as well as an evidence database, typically presented in the form of essay question analysis and outlines. These notes are meant for free, public use, but at the reader's own risk.
Good luck with your exams.

Legend:

DYA = Do you agree

TWE = To what extent

D = Discuss

1 Media

1.1 Purpose and Value

Purpose and value are two very distinct sets of questions, but still govern the questions asking the whys of media. Purpose itself pertains to the idealistic use case of different forms of media and less so of how efficient they are at achieving goals, whereas value pertains to the worth of the existence and use of a form of media be it originating from the way it is conveyed to the content that is conveyed to the effectiveness of the form of media, typically alternating between different timeframes of past success and future potential of a form of media to argue for one's value or lack thereof.

1.1.1 Purpose

Consider the argument that the main purpose of television should be to educate than simply to entertain. (GCE-A/15) -

How far is the media responsible for promoting democracy in your society? (RJC/14) -

DYA that the mass media should pursue responsibility and not profit? (RJC/11) -

1.1.2 Value

Consider the view that spoken language is more important than the written form. (GCE-A/13) -

Do films offer anything more than an escape from reality? (GCE-A/14) -

Is there any value in horror films and books? (RJC/14) -

Are bookstores still relevant in today's world? (RJC/13) -

TWE does the media create mediocrity? (RJC/11) -

1.2 New Media

1.2.1 Impacts of New Media

Are we overdependent on digital technology? (RJC/15) -

To what extent has new media made us poor communicators? (RJC/14) -

TWE has new media changed the face of human interaction? (RJC/11) -

To what extent are young people in your society slaves to the mass media? (RJC/12) -

To what extent is social media a useful platform for change? (RJC/13) -

Discuss the impact of new media on social cohesion in your society. (RJC/12) -

TWE DYA that the media has been a liberating force? (RJC/110) -

'New media is a new evil.' Discuss. (RJC/12) -

Do you agree that the tools of social media have reinvented social activism? (RJC/12) -

'Social media has changed the face of politics.' TWE is this true? (RJC/11) -

1.2.2 New vs Old Media

'Books serve little purpose in education as technological developments become more sophisticated.' How far DYA? (GCE-A/15) -

In the digital age, do newspapers still have a role in your society? (GCE-A/11) -

1.3 Privacy

'Personal privacy and national security cannot co-exist.' Comment. (RJC/15) -

'There is no such thing as privacy today.' Comment. (RJC/15) -

To what extent have people given up their freedom for comfort? (RJC/14) -

'Freedom of speech should be a privilege, not an entitlement.' How far DYA? (RJC/15) -

1.4 Advertising

'Privacy is dead, thanks to new media.' TWE do you think this is detrimental to modern society? (RJC/12)

'There is no such thing as bad publicity.' TWE is this true? (GCE-A/15) -

TWE do advertisements have a negative impact on society? (RJC/13) -

'Public campaigns are rarely effective.' TWE is this true? (RJC/13) -

'Advertising reflects the values of society but does not influence them.' What are your views? (RJC/12) -

'Advertisements truly reflect what a society desires.' DYA? (RJC/11) -

1.5 Censorship and Free Speech

Censorship is defined as the suppression of speech, public communication or other forms of media which may be considered harmful, insensitive, politically incorrect or inconvenient as deemed by parties such as governing bodies and media outlets. Key examples of modern-day censorship include the Great Firewall of China and Singapore's Internal Security Act as well as the local system of OB markers

How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion? (GCE-A/13) -

With the rise of new media, censorship is needed now more than ever. DYA? (RJC/15) -

Analysis Need to make the distinction between privilege which suggests that it is provided and can be relinquished and entitlement which suggests that free speech is a right. Reduce the question to "should we be able to remove peoples rights to free speech"

For Points :

Abuse of free speech is a real possibility where undue libel and attacks of people can have external repercussions

Harmful Potential of free speech, especially in multicultural societies where strong beliefs and opinions are more than likely to clash and result in harm, as such having the power to remove freedom of speech enables people to be protected, right to comfort and safety of opinion and thoughts with regard to culture is preserved

Against Points :

Protection of Rights in that free speech is a guarantor of other rights and freedoms, where having the power to remove freedom of speech compounds into issues of preventing checks and balances on government, as well as checks and balances on the presence of other rights. Having the ability to restrict rights may also open doors to other rights being infringed upon.

'The media needs to exercise more responsibility.' DYA? (RJC/15) -

'Censorship is both harmful and futile in today's society.' Comment. (RJC/14) -

'With the emergence of new media, there is a greater need for censorship.' How true is this of your society? (RJC/13) -

'We should have the freedom to read and watch what we like.' Comment. (RJC/13) -

2 Social Issues

2.1 Family and Marriage

'Parents have no right to impose their own values and beliefs on their children.' Discuss. (GCE-A/15) -

'Traditional marriage is an outdated concept.' TWE is this true of your society? (GCE-A/15) -

Should people be allowed to have children by artificial means? (GCE-A/12) -

Discuss the view that marriage should be for life. (RJC/15) -

In the family, should the most important role of a man be that of a breadwinner? (RJC/15) -

'Good parenting has little to do with how children turn out.' Comment with reference to your society. (RJC/14) -

Is marriage still relevant in modern society? (RJC/13) -

'Modern life is not conducive to the survival of the family.' Comment. (RJC/13) -

'The traditional institution of marriage is in decline.' Is this a cause for concern? (RJC/12)

'The family has suffered at the expense of economic growth in Singapore.' Comment. (RJC/11) -

'An unhappy marriage is best resolved with a divorce.' Comment. (RJC/11) -

2.2 Gender (Inequalities)

2.2.1 Causes of Gender Inequality

'The media is to blame for gender inequalities.' DYA? (RJC/14) -

2.2.2 Gender Roles and Responsibilities

Consider the view that some careers are more suited to one gender than the other. (GCE-14) -

In the family, should the most important role of a man be that of a breadwinner? (RJC/15) -

'Women are a decorative sex.' How far is this still an issue today? (RJC/13) -

Does it matter that the leaders of most countries are men? (RJC/12) -

'Women are not suitable for politics.' TWE is this true? (RJC/12) -

2.2.3 The Current State of Affairs

'It is increasingly challenging to be a man today.' DYA? (RJC/11) -

'Women in the developed world have never had it so good.' DYA? (RJC/11) -

2.2.4 Fixing Inequality

The world would be a better place if women had a greater say in politics. TWE DYA? (GCE-A/11) -

'No country can really develop unless its women are educated.' DYA? (RJC/14) -

'The pursuit of gender inequality will do more harm than good.' Discuss. (RJC/12) -

'A nation cannot really progress until it empowers its women.' DYA? (RJC/11) -

2.3 Social Stratification

2.3.1 Equality for All

In your society, how far is equality for all a reality? (GCE-A/12) -

Is equality for all within your country a realistic and desirable aim? (RJC/13) -

2.3.2 A Caring Community

'Education has provided a population that is literate but not compassionate.' How far is this true of your country? (RJC/15) -

Has competition resulted in a less compassionate and caring society? Discuss this with reference to your country. (RJC/15) -

2.3.3 "Success" and its Process

To what extent can technology be a solution to social problems? (RJC/15) -

'Competition breeds success.' TWE is this true? (RJC/14) -

'Success is determined by one's intelligence.' Discuss. (RJC/12) -

2.4 Poverty and Social Mobility

2.4.1 Causes of Poverty

It is inevitable for technology to be more responsive to the problems of the rich than the poor. Discuss. (GCE-A/11) -

Technological advancement has worsened the problem of poverty.' DYA? (RJC/14) -

'People who are in poverty have only themselves to blame.' (RJC/12) -

2.4.2 Addressing Poverty: Whos and Hows

In times of economic hardship, should a country still be expected to provide financial or material aid to others? (GCE-A/14) -

'We do not do enough to help with the less fortunate.' Is this a fair assessment of your society? (RJC/14) -

Is your society doing enough to protect the rights of the disadvantaged? (RJC/15) -

Is it always the responsibility of the state to help the poor? (RJC/11) -

2.4.3 Does Mobility Exist?

'There are enough opportunities in your society to improve one's life.' DYA? (RJC/15) -

DYA that we can now do little to help the poor in our world? (RJC/12) -

How far is increased prosperity for all a realistic goal in your society? (GCE-A/13) -

2.5 Discrimination

Can prejudice ever be eliminated? (GCE-A/11) -

'Ours is a country of divided people.' Is this a valid comment on your society? (RJC/15) -

'Not in my backyard.' TWE is this a growing problem in your society? (RJC/12) -

'Increasingly, Singaporeans are feeling displaced in their own country.' To what extent do you think this is true? (RJC/09)

2.5.1 The Victims

Should society pay more attention to the needs of criminals? (RJC/15) -

'Foreign is always better than local.' To what extent does this reflect the attitude of the people in your society? (RJC/15) -

Examine the impact that foreigners have on your society. (RJC/14) -

Consider the view that multiculturalism inevitable leads to conflict. (RJC/14) -

2.5.2 Fixing Discrimination

'Laws are the most effective way to combat prejudice and discrimination.' How far would you accept this view? (RJC/15) -

Is it ever possible to eliminate stereotypes in your society? (RJC/12) -

2.6 Aging Population

2.6.1 Approaches to Aging

TWE is old age considered a burden to your society? (RJC/15) -

Is old age approached with horror in your society? (RJC/12) -

Is longer life expectancy a blessing or a curse? (RJC/11) -

'Retirement is a redundant word today.' TWE is this true? (RJC/11) -

2.6.2 Tackling an Aging Population

When a government's finances for social welfare are limited, should they be directed to the young or the old? (GCE-A/15) -

How far DYA that it is the responsibility of the young to take care of the elderly in your society? (RJC/12) -

TWE are the young in Singapore favored at the expense of the elderly? (GCE-A/04) -

2.7 Youth

2.7.1 Nurturing the Youth

'Parents have no right to impose their own values and beliefs on their children.' Discuss. (GCE-A/15) See section 2.1 Family and Marriage

When a government's finances for social welfare are limited, should they be directed to the young or the old? (GCE-A/15) See section 2.6 Aging Population

TWE are the young in Singapore favored at the expense of the elderly? (GCE-A/04) See section 2.6 Aging Population

Are the youth in Singapore prepared for future challenges? (RJC/12) -

2.7.2 Current State of Youth

'Young people today think of nothing but themselves.' Is this a fair description? (RJC/14) -

2.7.3 Youth and the Future

DYA that teenagers in your society have a bright future ahead of them? (RJC/14) -

With reference to the developments in the world today, TWE would you agree that the future holds much promise for young people? (RJC/13) -

'Always follow your dreams.' Is this good advice for young people today? (RJC/13) -

Is too much being expected of today's youth? (RJC/11) -

2.8 Education

2.8.1 Medium of Education

'Books serve little purpose in education as technological developments become more sophisticated.' How far DYA? (GCE-A/15) See section 1.2 New Media

Consider the argument that the main purpose of television should be to educate than simply to entertain. (GCE-A/15) See section 1.1 Purpose of Media

2.8.2 Manner of Education

'Only grades matter in education.' Discuss. (RJC/14) -

'Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.' Discuss. (RJC/13) -

TWE should schools use examinations to evaluate students? (RJC/12) -

2.8.3 Matter of Education

'Education should only be concerned with what is useful in life.' Discuss. (GCE-A/13) -

Is the study of history increasingly losing its relevance in today's world? (RJC/15) -

How important is the study of History for a nation's future? (RJC/15) -

Consider the view that the study of history is essential for mankind. (RJC/14) -

TWE do you think that creativity can be cultivated? (RJC/14) -

How relevant is the study of History in our world today? (RJC/14) -

'The teaching of literary classics should be made compulsory in schools.' Discuss. (RJC/13) -

'Singapore can do without the study of the humanities.' Discuss. (RJC/13) -

2.8.4 Impacts of Education

Does better education necessarily lead to a better standard of living? (GCE-A/11) -

'Education has produced a population that is literate but not compassionate.' How far is this true of your country? (RJC/15) See section 2.3 Social Stratification

'Qualified but not enlightened.' Is this a fair description of educated people today? (RJC/13) -

2.9 Activism

'Education has resulted in only more inequality.' DYA? (RJC/11)

How far is it important for people to be aware of current events in countries other than their own? (GCE-A/14)

Why should we be concerned with current affairs when most of them will soon be forgotten? (GCE-A/13) -

How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion? (GCE-A/13) See section 1.5 Censorship and Free Speech

Do you agree that the tools of social media have reinvented social activism? (RJC/12) See section 1.2 New Media

TWE does your country challenge the current state of affairs? (RJC/11) -

2.10 Title

3 Arts

3.1 Title

3.2 Language

3.3 Value of Language

Is there any value in preserving minority languages in the world? (GCE-A/12) -

4 Science

4.1 Title

4.2 Title

4.3 Research

'We should only fund scientific research which benefits our quality of life.' (RJC/15)

Analysis

For Points :

Pragmatism This opinion is suitable in situations where funding is scarce, and the most pressing form of research which is necessary is that which directly impacts quality of life rather than esoteric causes.

Stakeholders Funding of research ultimately needs to translate into returns, and from the standpoint of private economic entities or from governments, not creating a bar to re-

strict funding for research results in irresponsible management of funds.

Against Points :

Stepping-Stone Science where Science is a process which builds upon previous knowledge, and that certain facets of scientific study do not have any clear goal, motive or benefit to quality of life end up being the foundation for other knowledge that can improve quality of life, such as the theory of relativity and its applications in GPS and satellite building and x-rays to its medical applications.

For the Sake of Knowledge can also be brought up as a point, in that funding research to purely benefit understanding and knowledge is permissible.

Practicality in that creating this barrier to funding forces scientists into working with an end-product in mind and its implications to the rest of the field of science, such as when foreign talent Neal Copeland and Nancy Jenkins emigrated to Houston, Texas to conduct research and Lee Wei Ling criticizing local funding boards citing the fact that Biopolis and Fusionopolis overemphasized economic output.

4.4 Title

5 Politics

5.1 Title

5.2 Title

5.3 Title

6 Philosophy

6.1 The Human Condition

6.1.1 Immorality

To what extent is fame overrated? (RJC/14) -

7 Essay Technique

7.1 Question Analysis

Identify Extreme Positions: Extreme positions are hard to defend and most of the time students should aim to conclude with a more moderate view.

7.2 Question Prompts

DYA Thesis is a distinct stand

TWE Thesis contains qualifying criteria and then determines a slant. This is generally the most demanding question, consider all questions as a **TWE** question when revising to account for worst case scenario

Comment Thesis involves some synthesis / balancing of information to reach a conclusion

How far... Similar to **TWE**

7.3 Question Qualifiers

Only indicates an extreme position as well as usually indicating the presence of a criteria when making a decision. Consider other criteria that can satisfy a substitution test with this criteria when looking for points, where such a judgment is suitable as well as the dangers of having such a narrow view (think missed opportunity etc). Conclude with a compromise between the for and against of this opinion.

7.4 Question Triggers

Your Society implies that points need to pertain to the local, Singaporean situation. Hence, knowledge of the local culture, demographic, current affairs, politics and other matters are crucial to GP, especially once the application question comes into play. Key unique characteristics about Singapore that changes what points are applicable to us include:

Multiculturalism with multiple local races and religions as well as a open attitude towards inflows of foreigners and foreign talent

Asian Values which place much focus on conservatism as well as importance of family-oriented values of loyalty

Political System with one largely long-serving and dominant party, described as many as a benevolent dictatorship

Globalised implies that points should be applicable across physical and political boundaries, hence examples should either be applicable to many countries at once or should be sourced from multiple different countries, opposite that of **Your Society**. Pulling examples which directly involve increased cross-boundary flows of humans and knowl-

edge are best.

Modern/Today limits the key scope to the near past. Points need to have some involvement with recent global trends, specifically that of technology, globalization and so on. Points involving the internet, travel, economic growth, global trends are good to tap on.

Quality of life has the dictionary definition of the standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual or a group. Do note that when this phrase appears, distinct and solid links between actions and quality of life should be made.

7.5 Title