

Two Sample TOK Essay Paragraphs

Organization:

- Sentence 1: Topic Sentence – What is the perspective that your evidence makes?
- Sentences 2-3: Two sentence introducing the evidence.
- Sentences 3-5: Quote, summarize, or paraphrase your evidence.
- Sentences 6-10: Tell me how the evidence & perspective applies.
- Sentence 11: One sentence explicit answering of the prompt.

Sample Prompt: If we conclude that there is some knowledge we should not pursue on ethical grounds, how can we determine the boundaries of acceptable investigation within an area of knowledge? Discuss with reference to **two** areas of knowledge.

In one of the most horrible scientific studies of all time, Nazi scientists performed experiments on Jewish prisoners, demonstrating that some might say that there are no boundaries of acceptable investigation within the AOK of the Natural Sciences. According to the Holocaust Encyclopedia, Nazi scientists experimented for many different reasons. Some Jews were frozen to death as the scientists explored the effects of hypothermia. Other scientists tested new and experimental drugs on unwilling prisoners. Werner Fischer even used science as an excuse to experiment with mass sterilization. Though no one in the modern world agrees with these boundaries (or seeming lack thereof), it is clear that the Nazis did not think that there was some knowledge that was not worth pursuing because of ethics. At first, it might seem that these scientists acted as if there were no boundaries to determine whether or not investigation is acceptable. But this would be an incorrect assumption. The Nazi's had a very explicit and clear boundary: all of these experiments were conducted on Jews. Not Germans. Additionally, the experiments were performed to benefit the German people at the expense of the Jews. They were not just trying to destroy bodies with drugs. Instead, many of the drugs (which killed innocent Jews) were tested in attempts to make better medicine to win World War II. The Nazi scientists drew the boundary of acceptable investigation based on their own biases and assumptions about the superiority of their own race. They believed that they were superior, so they experimented on those that were deemed inferior. They were guided by misinformation and racism and drew a boundary that virtually all of the modern world would label as evil. In the case of the Nazi scientists, the boundaries of acceptable investigation are determined by personal values, beliefs, and biases.

Sample Prompt: How can we distinguish between good and bad interpretations? Discuss with reference to the arts **and one other** area of knowledge.

Though the postmodern world believes that all art is up to interpretation, in music, there are well-defined rules that can determine whether or not an interpretation is good or bad. Last week I watched a video on YouTube called “Top 10 Worship Fails.” This video showed people playing music in churches and doing a terrible job of it. In one of the videos a man on the saxophone played a worship song called “Give Thanks With a Grateful Heart.” It was bad. It was awful. It was one of the worst things in the world. Why? Because it was horribly out of tune. If I was to interpret this artistic performance in a way that claimed that it was skillful and beautiful, this would be considered a bad interpretation. A foundation of music is that it has to be in tune. This is an agreed-upon rule that transcends cultures. Though western music has twelve notes and Arabic music, for example, has 24. Though these notes and half-tones may sound very different, it is still the goal of a musician to play these notes as written on the paper and as expected according to the key in which the song was written. If an artist wants to be creative in a genre such as Jazz, and play out of key, that would be an intentional decision. They play out of the key, but chose to play the correctly tuned notes in that new key. In the discipline of music in The Arts, the ability to play in tune directly contributes to the interpretation of whether or not a musician is playing with skill. There is not a circumstance in which a musician, *accidentally* playing out of tune, would be considered good by any knowledge authority. Any interpretation saying that this performance is good is therefore a bad interpretation, as it would ignore the expectations of all professional musicians.

