

1 How important is design in our world today?

Key words / phrases

how important	impact/significance in various areas, eg: economic, artistic/cultural, cognitive ability, quality of life, etc
design	creativity deliberately deployed to a specific end, usually focusing on aesthetic qualities
our world today	the needs and wants/characteristics of modern society that influence our demand for/access to design

**students should recognise that there is an implicit conflict between design and function, and address this apparent incompatibility.*

Basic Question Requirements

Students must discuss a variety of ways in which design has created significant impact in modern society, identifying and explaining the reasons for such an outcome.

Possible response

In today's world, the intersection of voracious consumers and rapacious corporations has more often than not led to mass-produced, 'one size fits all' products. While marketing materials croon sweetly about 'consumer experience', good design is still the exception rather than the rule. As such, when we do encounter it, whether in the form of consumer electronics, apparel, furniture, architecture or even vehicles, its impact is noticeable and influential, often producing a snowball effect in the areas of... *(see above elaboration of 'how important')*

Strong scripts will...

- demonstrate specific knowledge of areas where design has made significant impact, showing wide scope of understanding / perspective
- balance the response with an acknowledgement of the limitations of design in meeting today's needs/challenges (ie, it is not that important/significant)
- [a very good script might] challenge the assumption that design is more important today than it ever was

Weak scripts will...

- focus narrowly on only one or two areas of design without much depth or range of examples in either (eg focusing only on Apple products or fashion design)
- show insufficient understanding of what 'important' means in this Qn
- largely fail to link the discussion to 'our world today', giving only a general discussion of the functions of design

Possible arguments

Design is key to reinvigorating moribund industries in today's climate of greater competition for fewer consumer dollars (economic significance)

- key factor in differentiating products, creating new, exciting but most importantly, functionally-enhanced products (egs: consumer electronics, vehicles, etc → explain why it is not *just* about the aesthetic element)
- this is vital in a time where 'copycatting' is easy and lucrative

Design can help by making it easier to live up to our aspirations (indv. change, social change)

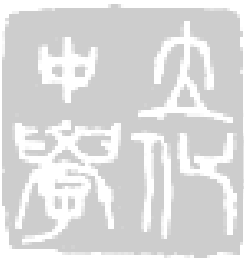
- By shaping the objects, interactions, and environments we live around and within, design literally changes the world. For eg, by making stairs a more accessible and enticing option than escalators, or creating open spaces where people want to gather instead of being trapped in their cubicles.

Good design challenges us conceptually/philosophically (cognitive ability)

- rethink the function / purpose of specific things or even basic concepts (a good reference: <http://aestheticsofjoy.com/2013/09/the-joy-of-living-in-the-present/>)

Good design addresses society's current concerns / needs and offers some solutions

- **Design can enhance functionality and consequently, quality of life**
 - ergonomics, green pdts, etc
 - design for the physically challenged, etc
- **Good industrial design also cuts costs and increases profit (economic impact), which is important in an era of scarcer (environmental impact) and more expensive resources**
 - green buildings, aircraft seating, furniture design for multiple functionality in small living spaces, etc



2 To what extent do you agree that changes in society must begin in school?

Key words / phrases

to what extent	requires candidates to discuss the degree and/or limit that certain outcomes can be attributed to a particular source
changes in society	deviation from the norm, from the conventional, from that which was historically consistent, a trend that was not present before
school	educational institutions that serve to fulfill a formal curriculum

Question requirements

Candidates are required to discuss the extent to which schools are able to effect changes in society by teaching the young how to behave, respond and/or adopt certain perspectives. Candidates should be aware of the powerful effect that educational institutions have on the young and the socialisation process that is carried out in a school environment that is often structured, multicultural and has clear guidelines to define what is acceptable and what is not. Candidates should also see that there are other institutions that can effect changes in society, such as legislation, the family and non-governmental organisations AND discuss the ability of schools to create changes RELATIVE to those other institutions.

Areas to consider

- The abilities and limitations of schools to lay a foundation that is sufficiently strong and enduring such that the students will exhibit the desired traits and attributes that can demonstrably change society.
- The types of changes that are intended. Shifts in mindsets and attitudes are often the (idealistic) objectives of educational institutions, but such lofty and often intangible outcomes are difficult to quantify and hence assess the efficacy of schools in fulfilling these goals. In contrast, changes that are very much aligned to formal educational goals are much easier to track, such as literacy levels, average educational qualifications and linguistic competence.
- Types of education systems – centralised systems like Singapore's can offer a more coordinated and consistent approach to change certain aspects of behaviour or outlook, such as National Education to inculcate a greater awareness of the country's key events, history and socio-economic issues. In contrast, a decentralised education system like that of the USA can have limited impact in attaining a particular outcome in society, such as the attempt to raise the arithmetic competence of the general population.

Possible responses

- Candidates may adopt the view that in order for any change to occur in society, schools must first take on the role of being the catalyst. This view will assume that the long process of educating a child brings about long term or permanent changes to the child's disposition that are in line with the intention of the school, which then lays the tracks for a new generation of the population that will bear the desired attributes or mindset.
- Candidates may adopt the view that schools have limited ability to shape society because the human condition and human nature are such that people will prioritise their needs and wants and hence their pragmatic attitude will have to be influenced by legislation, financial incentives and/or penalties.
- Candidates may take a balanced view of the role of schools; there are some things that schools can and have done to change society while other changes have to be created by legislation and policy or activism at the ground level.

Strong scripts will...

- demonstrate an awareness of the limitations of schools to conclusively shape society along with the ability of schools to inculcate values, showcase good deeds and define the limits of acceptable behaviour
- showcase a range of educational systems as well as their purported goals

- demonstrate a mature perspective that shows awareness of the difficulty to creating changes in society that are enduring enough to be noticed and in order to do so there would probably need to be legislation, media reinforcement and multiple levels of effort to change society

Weak scripts will...

- simply assume that simply by subjecting a child to a process of education there will be permanent changes that will eventually become evident in society when the students graduate from school
- fail to consider that human behaviour is dynamic and constantly changes
- fail to see the importance of the education working in conjunction with other institutions (law, family, government, NGOs) to create effective lasting changes in society
- only offer a limited range of examples that stem from one country or education system without an awareness of other systems or countries

Possible arguments

A - Yes, for any societal change to be effected, schools are often the key catalysts. After all, with compulsory education in many societies, there exists the opportunity to influence young minds which will eventually translate into a particular kind of society.

B - While schools serve to provide a structure with which the young of society can be taught certain values, skills and knowledge, for any effective change in society to occur, legislation must be present to ensure that the penalties would be imposed should there be any flouting of rules. This will create an awareness of what are desirable and undesirable behaviours.

C - Schools have always been highly regarded as places to acquire content, skills and attitudes in society; attributes that are desirable are encouraged while behaviour that is unwelcomed will be discouraged through a process of socialisation in school.



3 Is harsh punishment the answer to juvenile crime?

Key words / phrases

Harsh punishment severe punishment which may take the form of:

- (a) trying the juvenile as an adult
- (b) reducing the age of criminal responsibility
- (c) imposing life imprisonment/long sentences without parole
- (d) imposing the death penalty for juvenile offenders
- (e) imposing severe punishment which exceeds the gravity of the crime

the answer: the best way; the main solution; the key

juvenile crime: crime committed by young offenders

Basic Question Requirements

- make *consistent comparison* between harsh punishment and other solutions to determine if the former is the *most effective way* to reduce crime *amongst the young*

Possible Response

- No, harsh punishment is not the answer to juvenile crime
- Yes, harsh punishment is the answer to serious crime committed by young offenders who have little prospects for rehabilitation but it will be less efficacious for most other juvenile offenders

Strong scripts will...

- demonstrate specific knowledge (with examples) of what forms harsh punishment for juvenile offenders takes today
- examine the belief/philosophy that juvenile offenders should be treated differently from adult offenders
- show an understanding of the causes of different types of juvenile crime
- make a clear and convincing attempt to focus the Qn on juvenile offenders

Weak scripts will...

- discuss why the young should be treated more leniently without addressing the issue of what works best in reducing juvenile crime
- largely fail to provide specific knowledge of how juvenile offenders are currently treated in different societies and under different circumstances, relying instead on broad generalisations
- rely on listing different/discrete approaches to juvenile crime without making a systematic comparison of their merits/failings compared to harsh treatment; fail to suggest suitable basis/yardstick for such evaluation

Possible arguments

Is the answer:

1. Severe crimes call for severe punishment, whether committed by adults or by young people
 - Punishment should be proportionate to the crime and threat posed by the offender. Only then will the victim and family of the victim be appeased. Consider the case of the 23 year old physiotherapist student whose teenage attacker, the most violent in the gang that raped and murdered her, was only sentenced to three years in a reformatory for the crime committed. Pandemonium broke loose when people protested against the injustice of the criminal justice system. In this case, lenient punishment has led to the loss of faith in the system by a growing minority who feel harsh punishment for rape will reduce the incidence of such crimes in a country where rape against women occurs once every 22 minutes.

- It is erroneous to assume that these youth do not have the capacity to fully comprehend the extent of their criminal actions.
- The age of criminal responsibility should be lowered for dangerous offenders. In England, the age of criminal responsibility is 10 while that of Canada is 12, and 18 in Luxemburg. Juvenile offenders who pose a threat to society should be tried as adults in the eyes of the law.

2. Draconian punishments will reduce teenage violence

- Imprisoning violent and dangerous teenage criminals without parole will remove them from society, ensuring protection for the community
- It will send out a strong message to other juveniles contemplating violent acts that 'crime does not pay', deterring them from similar crimes.
- Lenient punishment will only embolden the young offenders who think they can commit crime with impunity by virtue of their age. They take advantage of the court's generosity, even for serious crimes that involve drugs, weapons or assault.

Is NOT the answer:

1. Harsh punishment for juvenile offenders may do more harm than good

- Numerous studies show that anti-social behaviour increases almost tenfold during adolescence and rapidly declines for most teens. Only a minority of adolescents who commit anti-social acts continue to do so in their adult life. For most teens, their deviant behaviour dissipates in late adolescence.
- Such findings raise the possibility that when youth experiment with crime under peer pressure and get caught and are subjected to harsh punishment, including incarceration with adult criminals, it will increase the probability of them continuing with deviant behaviour upon release.

2. Placing juvenile offenders in prison will not end the cycle of criminal behaviour

- Prisons may be a 'university of crime' from which the juvenile offenders graduate with enhanced knowledge of committing crime from interacting with seasoned and more experienced adult criminals
- The huge cost expended on incarceration can be better spent on counseling, education and job training
- The youth will be stigmatized by the criminal conviction, rendering re-integration into society and negotiating other aspects of life difficult. Labelling the youth so early in life for an action due to immaturity or peer pressure will prejudice their adulthood and prevent them from learning from their mistakes.
- Prisons yield few benefits apart from short term incapacitation
- Perhaps a better approach will be to reserve imprisonment of youth in adult facilities for the few juveniles who commit serious crimes and have little prospects for rehabilitation while the majority should be meted out punishment which is more forgiving.

3. An effective rehabilitation programme will reduce juvenile crime more than harsh punishment

- First offenders and non-violent offenders should ideally be sanctioned in a community and family setting. Alternatives like open custody, community service and probation have been found to be more effective when supported by programmes that work with the juvenile, the family and others in the community
 - The Functional Family Therapy that has been in existence for 25 years in the US is an example of a successful programme that has worked with youth between the ages of 11 to 18. This programme seeks to promote interaction and ties between parents and children, improve family problem-solving skills, and strengthen the parents' ability to provide structure, guidance and limits for the children. Specially trained therapists will assist in the guidance in the home setting.

- For youths who are placed in correctional facilities, programmes which focus on learning the goals of the juvenile offenders and helping them achieve their aspirations are more likely to reduce crime than severe punishment.
- On the contrary, excessively harsh punishment may breed resentment in the youth, causing them to be anti-establishment. Is it fair that they are presumed to have adult mental and emotional capacities for purposes of life imprisonment or capital punishment when they are conclusively not presumed to have these characteristics for purposes of voting, drinking or marrying?

4. Prevention, not punishment, should be the answer

- Programmes introduced for youth after the occurrence of deviant behaviour tend to be less successful than those before because anti-social habits have already been ingrained in them
- Early comprehensive intervention is more beneficial as it deals with the various aspects of a teenager's life, occurring even before birth, to early adolescence and before the onset of delinquent behaviour. If successful, it would alleviate the risk factors associated with delinquency and antisocial behaviour and have lasting effects on socially competent behaviour.
 - E.g. nurses in the US do home visitations to low income or high risk pregnant mothers to reduce environmental hazards, instruct them about nutrition for themselves and their infants as well as reduce instances of substance abuse by the mother under the Head Start programme. Low income families are also offered educational, health and social services to improve school readiness, school performance and greater family stability which would improve self-esteem and incidence of juvenile crime.
- In targeting risk factors which predict delinquent behaviour and dealing with them properly, they will decrease the chances of future negative behaviour.
- Compared to harsh punishment which deals with the symptoms of violent subcultures and deprivation leading to failure, early intervention of at-risk youth seeks to remove the causes which is more long term and comes at a lower cost in the long run.



4 How far should the government of your country involve itself in family matters?

Key words / phrases

Family matters	parenting, discipline of the child, household finances (basic idea is any event / activity that happens behind closed doors)
Involve	interference, intervention, encouragement, enforcement, legislation
Should	conveys the idea of <i>permission</i>

Question Requirements (basic requirements)

- The question requires students to examine the extent of government's intervention / interference in family matters within Singapore and *assess / make recommendations* on the legitimacy of its reach (basic question requirement).
- Students need to define what constitutes involvement (eg: Legislative/policy change? Social campaigns/grassroots efforts? Incentives/disincentives?) and be *specific* about *how* the SG government is involved.
- Students must also identify key issues in SG that fall under 'family matters', and discuss the varied perspectives of different stakeholders on the extent of govt. involvement in family matters.

Questions/Areas to Consider

- What are the responsibilities of the state to the people?
- Should the ends justify the means when it comes to government intervention?
- Where should we draw the line between privacy and greater good?

Possible Responses

- Our government should be involved in family matters in so far as it has a direct impact on the greater good of our country / involves national security. Otherwise, the individual should have the right to privacy on personal matters and choice. OR
- Our government should not be involved in family matters as they happen in private / behind closed doors. The government should not intrude into private matters.

Strong scripts will...

- demonstrate an informed perspective of what the SG government's responsibilities are, and how these must be weighed against the privacy of individuals/families, especially as SG becomes more politically aware (in other words, the conflicting interests of the state and the individual)
- explain how both state and society *constantly negotiate/compromise* on the degree of government intervention, since many private matters often have overlapping concerns with the country's development/interests
- avoid seeing everything in absolute terms, instead showing an understanding of current practice: all governments will intervene in personal matters
- identify the line most Singaporeans draw to separate the private/domestic sphere (e.g. religious practice, choice of life partner) from that of public concern (e.g. national security, economic development), noting and explaining why/how these boundaries may be different in different demographic groups
- provide relevant detailed examples, illustrating their arguments

Weak scripts will...

- present a largely one-sided argument – either as a rant against government’s perceived invasion of privacy, or as a tireless advocate for government intervention in all areas for the greater good
- fail to show understanding of the different needs of various communities/demographics in SG
- make recommendations on govt. involvement using an overly simplistic “right or wrong” binary without considering nuances, or worse, *not providing substantiated rationale* for their pronouncements
- show almost *no specific knowledge* of Singapore’s current policies/practices, only offering generalisations about Singapore’s challenges and platitudes/clichés about what the govt. should do

Possible Arguments

Our government should involve itself in family matters when doing so will help further national interest:

To maintain social order

1. Our government has to be involved in family matters, especially when individual choices pose a direct threat to social stability. The government’s first responsibility should be to guard and protect the social stability of the country against all threats as they are the only ones in Singapore that have the legal authority to do so. Our economy rests on providing a stable social platform for investors. While we do recognise the sanctity of personal freedom of choice, some choices made in private have dire consequences to the social stability especially if the choices made within the family are subversive in nature. (e.g. the Tudung Affair 2002 - <http://www.singapore-window.org/sw02/020327sb.htm>)
2. By encouraging / promoting a nuclear family unit (while at the same time putting restrictions on single-parent family units) through national-level policies in housing and education. This underlines the importance of the family unit in the eyes of the government so as to form the foundation of a stable country.
3. Through racial quotas in HDB estates, a multi-racial community is encouraged and enforced to avoid ghettoisation of neighbourhoods. Families of different racial groups are encouraged to live within the same district so as to increase chances of inter-racial interactions and communications, which helped to promote racial harmony within Singapore.

To alleviate poverty / to reduce income gap / to encourage social mobility

4. As part of the “inclusive society” ideal, our government has been active in implementing new policies and improving existing social safety nets (e.g. GST rebate vouchers) to help lower-income families cope with the rising costs of living. This active involvement has helped to alleviate some of the general concerns lower-income families have regarding the daily cost of living.
5. Recent changes in education policies helped to open up more entry pathways for parents to send their children to top / exclusive schools. This is part of the measures to improve social mobility among Singaporeans by giving the children better access to higher quality education that is provided in these top schools. It also helps to ensure that all Singaporean children have a chance to fully develop themselves into useful citizens by giving them multiple educational routes in the academics as well as vocational training.

To ensure economic interest

6. While it seems heavy-handed and paternalistic, the government’s active encouragement of marrying and having children by married couples is part of its efforts to ensure the long-time economic viability of Singapore. Faced with a greying population, Singapore has to raise her birthrates so as to have a sizable workforce to ensure that Singapore has enough locals to serve the economy as well as to reduce the dependence on foreign labour.

However, individual family units will resent any form of intervention by the government especially if it becomes/appears draconian.

1. Government efforts to get involved in perceived private family matters in Singapore (especially in the areas of childbearing and marriage) often raise the ire of citizens as it is seen to infringe on the right to personal choice. People often do not consider their personal choices could have a larger social impact if it becomes the norm. Our government currently lacks the public trust to push forward much needed social policies as they are unable to convince a highly educated and (in recent years) more politically-aware citizenry that these interventions are needed.
2. So long as any family decisions are made within the confines of the law, the government has no right to interfere with family matters. The government should not, and cannot dictate how a family should be organized and run as it would be seen as dictatorial and encourages the growth of a dictatorship as seen in the days of Soviet Union. Also, we have to recognise that people will choose to ignore the government especially if there is no hope of government's enforcement or if it runs counter to their way of life (e.g. the burning of incense during the Ghost festival. Despite attempts to get people to burn in communal bins, many Singaporean families continue to burn on pavements and grass patches)



5 The most divisive force in the modern world is new media. Do you agree?

Key words / phrases

The most... in the world

Divisive force

recognition that the statement is an *absolute* proposition

something that has the power to polarise, highlight differences, create differences in perspectives. Could be quite tangible – those who have access to new media, and those who do not. Could also be about the contentious material on new media – people are divided over what they see or hear or read about nowadays

Modern world

society that is integrated with technology, affected by globalisation and has a liberal perspective

New media

refers to *electronic communication* that relies on a data stream and computer-based technology, *characterised by almost instantaneous creation and/or access* (no need to define to this extent but must have a clear identification of what NM is)

Question requirements

Candidates are required to *demonstrate an awareness* of what new media is and its implication and impact. Candidates need to *take a stand* on the role and impact of new media – does it play the role of bringing people together or dividing them even further?

Areas to consider

- Who has access (i.e. has the right equipment) to new media – eg cost of ownership – the implication of not having access to new media, fuelling the digital divide and separating those who have different interpretations of the content material
- Who controls what is being uploaded on NM (for many of the platforms – nobody) and who controls the access to NM (in terms of reading, listening and viewing, NOT content creation)
- What is offered by NM – cheap access, speed, wide reach, self-expression, news, tips and tricks, social enterprise, crowdsourcing, communication tools, productivity tools, social networking, NGOs and even government presence
- What are the problems with NM – extremely fast, wide reach, inability to control the extent of distribution (going viral), inability to ensure appropriateness of content for audience, short-lived fame, increasing immunity to shock and hence rising shock value required to get attention, inability to 'retract' what has been uploaded or sent out

Possible responses

- Candidates should engage in a discussion of whether the penetration rate of NM is sufficient for the statement to be valid.** While it is true that NM can create differences in opinions regarding its content, the issue of whether the global population has access to NM in the first place is valid. About two-third of the global population has no access to the Internet, but 80% of the population has access to social media, which is part of NM. Hence, in numerical terms, NM has a high global outreach.
- Candidates should discuss whether NM is the MOST divisive force, comparing it to other divisive forces such as issues that concern religion, liberty, politics, warfare and/or poverty or wealth.** However, candidates should realise that all issues, even the issue of the effects of NM, are represented and discussed on NM. Hence, as a generic category of platforms that allow the most controversial expression, opinions, media creations and news to be disseminated, NM can be regarded as a divisive force.

Strong scripts will demonstrate an awareness of the dualistic nature of NM and its power. Such scripts will also be able to elicit key distinguishing features of NM and then explain how these features result in positive and negative outcomes in terms of creating or eradicating divisions. Excellent scripts will distinguish between long and short term impact, extent and permanence of influence, and specific examples of outcomes that have demonstrate the power of NM. Such scripts will be organised by the features/qualities of NM as opposed to the examples of NM. Strong scripts could also demonstrate awareness that the use of NM is by itself a divisive issue for a full range of opinions about the effects of NM have been, and continue to be, discussed.

Weak scripts will be driven by NM platforms and discuss the impact of NM (eg, the power of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Stomp) along those lines. Such scripts will tend to be repetitive and likely to generalise the effects of those NM platforms without consideration of the multi-tiered impact of those platforms. These scripts will be organised by the types of NM platforms or by the groups of people who use and are impacted by NM.

Very weak scripts will be organised around the preferences of NM users for particular platforms. These scripts would have taken a very literal interpretation of the quotation and hence limit the discussion of the divisive force to the choice of NM platforms, eg young people are divided in their preference for Facebook or Twitter to communicate. Such essays will be severely penalised for such a literal and narrow interpretation.

Possible arguments

- a) Yes, NM's key negative qualities (invasive, uncensored, inappropriate content, incendiary nature etc) result in division amongst different communities due to differences in perception and reception of views, opinions and stances. Denmark's series of cartoons that depicted the Prophet Mohammad created a furore when they were posted and reposted on NM but the editors who first allowed the publication justified that they wanted to raise awareness of the need for a free media.
- b) No, NM's positive qualities (openness, personal outlet, free expression, global reach) allow traditional restrictions and censorship to be subverted, giving a voice to the people especially in regimes such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and other Arab nations. NM allows barriers to communication to be broken down and hence creates opportunities for unison. The use of Twitter and YouTube to coordinate the protests as well as bring attention to the rest of the world displayed how empathy and sympathy could be created using NM. Additionally, this use of NM allowed the spirit of revolution to spread, for protests were conducted across Africa as people were inspired by the efforts of earlier protests in Tunisia and Egypt.
- c) It divides AND binds people. NM's very nature allows for people across national boundaries to express their solidarity (such as marginalised and disempowered or oppressed groups) and lend one another support. However, the oppression or prejudice could also be aligned across those same boundaries. Hence, the same qualities of NM re-groups people and also creates a concerted opinion globally.



6 Is immigration the best solution for an ageing society?

Key Words / Phrases

immigration	(in the context of this question) acceptance of people from other countries and regions ; a deliberate policy of attracting people from other countries to stay and work in the country
best solution	most effective solution, i.e. has the ability to tackle the problems posed by an ageing society at the root <i>as well as</i> symptom level
ageing society	a population that suffers from effects of low birth rates and ageing population – problems highlighted must in different areas, not just economic.

Question Requirements (basic requirements)

- Analyse the problems posed by an ageing society and evaluate how immigration can help to tackle them at the roots
- Compare immigration against **at least 2** other solutions (remember 'best' is a superlative)
- Weigh the benefits provided by immigration against its drawbacks and conclude whether immigration is the best solution to the ageing society
- Identify specific and relevant criteria/yardstick on which immigration is assessed as the best solution to an ageing society

Question Assumptions

- immigration is one of the solutions for an ageing society (question's contention is whether it is the *best* solution)
- an ageing society is undesirable/problematic (if it is not a problem, there is no contention)

Questions/Areas to Consider

- Does native status of populace matter, especially in light of today's developments (e.g. rapid globalisation)?
- Is there only one best solution to the problem of ageing population?
- Is the size of populace the most important consideration in an ageing society?
- Do stereotypes of the elderly still apply in today's world?

Possible Response/s

- While attracting people from other countries to bolster the local population is vital in the short run, the society must look to the development of its own resources in order to sustain itself in the future,.
- Even though immigration can help to blunt some of the problems faced by an ageing population, it must be augmented with other initiatives to ensure the problems are totally eradicated.
- A long as the ageing society is able to integrate its immigrants and mitigate the adverse consequences of immigration, immigration would prove essential to the society's continued development.

Strong scripts will...

- Be able to identify and evaluate the attendant problems of immigration which could worsen the problems faced by the ageing society.
- Provide a nuanced discussion of the *deliberate* exploration of immigration to tackle issues arising from an ageing society as opposed to the general movement of people from one country to another.
- Provide concrete and relevant examples from different societies that are facing the problem of an ageing population.

- Be able to see the disparity between what needs to be done (government's point of view) and what the people desire (public sentiment on foreigners), which could limit the effectiveness of immigration as a solution to an ageing society.
- Be able to provide insight into the issue by highlighting the opposing expectations of the ageing society's residents and the migrant population, which could worsen the problems of the ageing society further.
- Show flexibility of application, ie that immigration works to answer more than just an aging population (eg Dubai, Abu Dhabi)

Weak scripts will...

- Will list and describe the merits and dangers of immigration without providing a consistent yardstick/basis for comparison
- Draw examples only from the local context
- Not make a distinction between ageing society and a normal society
- Limit discussion to just the area of economics
- Offer the opposite view - that immigration is a problem rather than a solution (irrelevant)

Possible Arguments

1. Immigration is inadequate in ensuring the sustainable development of an ageing society.

The problem of ageing society is caused by twin problems of low birth rates and too many elderly in the society. While immigration can directly bolster the numbers of working population in the long run, it is not able to address the more deep-seated cause, low birth rates. The convenience of a ready source of manpower could, in fact, encourage the younger population to avoid having children. Thus, the problem will persist, even if it may not be as critical as before.

2. Productivity, not population growth is critical in tackling problems of ageing society.

An ageing society can sustain its growth as long as it is able to ensure long term productivity. While economists may insist that immigration does not preclude productivity, to merely rely on immigration as a panacea to the problems of ageing society is nevertheless risky, as it is akin to putting all our eggs in one basket. The governments of such societies need to ensure high productivity of its own populace through exploration of technological options, encouragement of innovation, skills-upgrading and extension of retirement age. This is due to the fact that with more countries having ageing population, there will be stiff competition for foreign talent. Indiscriminate immigration policy might result in heavier burden on the society, and not just in the economic sense.

3. Discriminating immigration policy can be effective in relieving the population pressures faced by ageing society.

While mass migration might further hurt Australia's economy and ageing society in the near future, as predicted by some experts, this can be averted by a more discriminating immigration policy that ensure only those whose expertise are needed are allowed to stay in the country.

However, resulting competition can lead to migrants adopting the same values and culture as the native dwellers, sharpening the problem of low birth rates further. Instead of producing more children, they might opt not to have children at all in order to be able to compete in the host country.

7 Developing countries bear the greater cost in an inter-connected world. Discuss.

Key words / phrases

Developing countries

- Countries with a low living standard, low GDP, underdeveloped industrial base, Low Human Development Index (HDI) relative to other countries
- The development of a country is measured with statistical indexes such as income per capita (per person), gross domestic product, life expectancy, literacy rates etc. The UN developed HDI, a compound indicator of the above statistics, to gauge the level of human development.

Greater cost

- Bigger impact/effect compared to developed countries
- Has a negative connotation
- A certain degree of unfairness/injustice implied
- Not equipped to handle/deal with the effects of an inter-connected world.

Inter-connected world

- World is interdependent
- Geographical borders have less meaning/significance
- A world characterised by constant exchanges of resources (people, ideas, etc)

Question requirements

Students need to examine if it is indeed true that the poorer / less well-off countries get the shorter end of the stick in the globalisation process.

Possible Response/s

- Current social, economic and political realities indicate that less well-off countries are not getting as much of the global economic pie compared to rich, developed countries.
- Developing countries are in fact better able to take advantage of an increasingly borderless world to attract investments (because of lower costs) hence they are not worse off than richer countries.

Strong scripts will...

- Demonstrate deep insight into the ramifications of an inter-connected world => *it is **not** just about the economic impact*; the impact is felt in terms of pressures on traditional cultures and practices (to do with gender roles, family structures etc) and also in terms of the movement of people (armed conflicts in an inter-connected world inevitably mean refugee movement from developing to developed countries which means the latter might actually be bearing a greater cost).
- Be able to show that developing countries enjoy many advantages that developed countries do not e.g. lower labour costs, lower costs of doing business (e.g. lower corporate taxes), are more open to attracting foreign investments and talent. Hence, they might not actually be suffering in the globalization process. If anything, developed countries might be suffering even more as their economies have plateaued/gone into recession and they might be losing their talented citizens to better job/investment opportunities in developing countries.
- Acknowledge that developing countries, even as they struggle with under-developed economies, do have access to aid from various global sources such as the IMF and World Bank, as well as aid from richer nations. This helps to mitigate the effects of globalization, hence disproving the absolute nature of the statement.

Weak scripts will...

- simply rehash oft-used examples to reinforce the idea that poor countries are exploited by rich countries, thus proving "greater cost"
- not go beyond a discussion of economic and perhaps environment issues. Too much focus on the problems faced by developing nations without much analysis of where they stand in comparison with developed countries

Possible arguments**The statement is true:**

- Developing countries which already have to deal with existing issues of low economic development face greater income inequality challenges when they compete in the inter-connected world.
 - While one might argue that opening up economies will result in huge capital inflows for developing countries, the truth is that much of this money is going towards either corrupt state officials or the foreign companies who have set up companies in the developing country.
 - Even if employment opportunities for the people in the developing country increases, one still has to ask if the wages they're being paid are fair => increased economic activity does inevitably lead to increases in cost of living and inflation. There is also a difference between the wages of those in urban and rural areas; newly created jobs in developing countries are likely to be in urban cities hence people living in rural areas (especially women and children) will be even worse off.
 - Often the people of the developed countries will be paid less compared to "foreign talent" who have come from developed countries. While it is true that the latter are likely to be more skilled/qualified, it worsens pre-existing income gaps especially when the poorer citizens of the country do not have access to the goods and services flowing into the country. China and India are excellent examples of this.
- An inter-connected world means that there is a movement of people between countries and they bring with them their cultures, ways of thinking etc.
 - This means that traditional practices in developing countries (for example to do with gender roles and expectations, or even traditional manufacturing methods) are threatened by more dominant ideas from developed countries. One example is when traditional languages begin to be less emphasized as more people in developing countries rush to learn more globally marketable languages such as English.
- Developing countries almost certainly see greater volatility in their financial markets
 - They tend to have less expertise in crafting sustainable fiscal and monetary policies and they have fewer reserves. So when they open up their economies, their fledgling stock markets compete with more established ones without the safety net of an established currency backed by strong reserves.
 - This in turn can cause the currencies of developing countries (already weaker relative to developed countries) to lose even more value, worsening existing inflation-related problems. This is happening in countries such as India.
- The physical environments of developing countries suffer even more negative impact compared to developed countries
 - Developing countries have to deal with immediate issues of poverty and are more likely to do anything it takes to attract foreign investment.
 - A lack of financial resources coupled with lax environmental regulation and enforcement means that the economic activities of TNCs (who set up bases of operation in developed countries) inevitably lead to greater pollution levels and quicker depletion of natural resources. This is very much the case in countries such as China and Ecuador.

The statement is not true:

- As the world becomes more connected, what we're seeing is that more developing countries (spurred on by the recommendation of the World Bank and the examples of richer developed nations) are taking steps to move towards an increasing reliance on a market economy.

- The opening of previously command economies in countries such as Vietnam and Kazakhstan has drawn many investors (both government and privately-run MNCs) to the new opportunities. Developed countries are able to offer lower costs of doing business which means they are attractive to developed countries.
 - Developed / better-off countries such as Singapore are flocking to get in on the ground as these countries seek to develop their infrastructure and economies. This means they are actually in a position to better grow their economies compared to developed countries which might already be seeing their economic development plateauing/dropping off into recession e.g. Spain, Italy and the UK. Hence, they are not suffering as implied by the statement. It is in fact developing countries who are seeing their global economic positions rising as compared to developed countries.
 - If anything, the eradication of borders and economic deregulation means that the people in developing countries potentially have access to greater quantities of goods and services.
- While many automatically assume that economic activity in an inter-connected world means that developing countries are exploited and taken advantage of, many fail to realise that developing countries are benefiting from technology transfers (their own labour force becomes increasingly skilled) as well as opportunities to learn from developed countries.
 - Even as Singapore, the US or Germany invests in Cambodia, Vietnam or India, there is a transfer of expertise and knowledge (a perennial feature of an inter-connected world).
 - This means they are able to learn how to build better quality schools and housing => it might take some time but there is a positive impact on their economy and standard of living. Cities such as Bangalore (India/s Silicon Valley) and Ho Chi Minh have thriving economies and an increasingly cosmopolitan citizenry drawn to the many job opportunities, the availability of good international schools and other fast-growing social infrastructure such as telecoms, roads and airports. This is the direct result of more and more foreign investment from developed countries.
 - Developed countries in fact might be the ones bearing a greater cost when there is an armed conflict or sustained lack of employment/opportunity in a developing region/country.
 - The lack of borders between countries (a feature of the inter-connected world) means that developed countries have to deal with huge numbers of refugees fleeing armed conflicts in their native countries.
 - People might also migrate/illegally enter developed countries in the hopes of fleeing persecution and gaining security/jobs.
 - This means it is the developed country's burden and dilemma to decide how much economic welfare to extend to them, how many places in schools to allot to the children of these migrants/refugees => this is a huge drain on the nation's resources, especially if their own economy has stagnated and there are pre-existing unemployment issues.

8. Science is a threat to humanity. Discuss.Key Words

science Scientific approach, theories and applications (definition must not be limited to scientific applications alone).

threat

- must be rooted in reality (existing scientific developments/practices) before extrapolating to potential problems
- must be clearly defined in terms of possibility of erosion of a virtue (compassion, sense of fraternity), literal danger to the survival of human race or compromise of traits which make us essentially human

must not be limited to physical/literal danger
=====

Important note: although 'threat' connotes possibility, must be rooted in reality

humanity Collective human race, the human condition and the virtue of kindness and benevolence

Question Requirements (basic requirements)

Clear, balanced (i.e. acknowledgment of counter-arguments) analysis of specific aspects of science that *might or are likely to* pose a danger to humanity based on present trends in this field.

Question Assumptions

- Science is antithetical to humanity. (Contention – if that is so, is it so serious that science could actually threaten humanity?)
- Science is not all good/science has its drawbacks. (Contention – but is it a threat to humanity?)
- Humanity must be protected. (Thus the criticism that science might pose a danger to it.)

Questions/Areas to Consider

Is the nature of science antithetical to that of humanity?

Possible Response/s

- While on the surface it might appear that science poses a danger to humanity, in actual fact, science reinforces it.
- As long as we persist in seeing science as being dichotomous to humanity, the former will always be seen as a threat to the latter.
- In and of itself, science is not a threat to humanity, but combined with other factors such as ignorance, greed and lax regulation, it can prove a formidable threat to humanity.

Strong scripts will

- Be able to distinguish that the threat posed by science depends not only on the nature of science but also humanity itself.
- Draw concrete and relevant examples from different aspects of science and parts of the world.
- Offer wider scope of discussion by addressing not just scientific applications but also scientific approach and knowledge as well as different interpretations of humanity.
- Provide a nuanced discussion that explores the threat of science will always be present as long as mankind fails to take precautionary or regulatory measures.

Weak scripts will...

- Merely list and describe the drawbacks of science
- Provide limited or generic examples to support the points raised (question requires focus on potential, not actual danger/harm)
- Have limited scope, i.e. focusing only on scientific applications
- Adopt a non-committal stand of subjectivity/relativity (e.g. its threats depends on how and why it is used and by whom)
- Focus on what harm science has inflicted on humanity (disregarding “threat”)

Possible Arguments

Against	For
<p><u>Developments in the field of Science can strengthen the sense of fraternity among humans rather than extinguish it.</u></p> <p>a. The objective of science is to pursue knowledge as far as possible for the benefit of the human race. Discoveries and inventions are made with this end in mind, regardless of how long it takes for the benefits to trickle down to everyone. Science’s effectiveness has also united the general collective in their reliance on science as both a source for answers and solutions to everyday problems.</p> <p>The feats of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were symbolic of humans triumphing over the unknown and the indomitable human spirit reverberated down the generations the world over.</p> <p><u>Science is knowledge, which makes it essentially neutral.</u></p> <p>As a form of knowledge, it provides humankind with a tool for progress and improvement of the well-being society. As a tool, it is limitless in its possibilities, which also makes it highly dangerous. However, with proper regulation and education, science can be harnessed for good (both ends and means). As societies wake up to this reality especially after the use of nuclear power in WWII, (as evident in the collective attempt to ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons) the outlook is increasingly positive.</p>	<p><u>Science threatens to tear human race apart by widening social divide in society.</u></p> <p>a. Language of science is not accessible to all in society - only those in the scientific fraternity are able to fully comprehend the potential and dangers of science. As science becomes a potent tool in the modern world, this lack of accessibility gives power to a small group of people. On a more general level, those who are unable to learn science and technology, are increasingly sidelined in society (digital divide).</p> <p>b. As new developments and discoveries in science become increasingly controversial, and morally ambiguous, the human race is becoming progressively divided. While those with strong affinity to science are driven by the prospects of desirable and practical ends, those outside that rarefied circle are most often fearful and disapproving of the morally questionable process and means used to attain the ends.</p> <p><u>Threat of dehumanisation</u></p> <p>It is no coincidence that man’s sense of hopelessness, alienation and impersonalisation grow in tandem with the ascendance of science and technology. With its focus on empirical evidence and data, humans are reduced to mere sum of their parts and their behavior mere statistics.</p> <p>Science has been so effective in solving problems that we become too reliant on it, so much so that we overlook the means used in order to enjoy the ends. The empirical approach of science proves detrimental to human well-being especially when it</p>

Science improves human condition

While it is tempting to focus on the negative effects of science, we cannot argue with the fact that science has vastly improved the human condition. Modern medicines have provided us longevity, enabled us to overcome limitations that nature has imposed on us, and technology has provided us with unimaginable ease as we traverse the world. As science grows exponentially, there is no telling what other improvements it would afford us in the future. Even though it is undeniable that science can pose threats to our society, it bears consideration that science inevitably provides us the antidote to its own problems.

dovetails with economics. Witness past disasters such as thalidomide, DDT, and the Love Canal. As more discoveries and inventions that are morally objectionable become acceptable, such as stem cell research, xenotransplantation and genetic engineering, there is a real threat of us sliding down a slippery slope that would make us sacrifice our humanity at the altar of expedience.

In such a free and unbridled environment of today, coupled with feeble political will and the collusion between scientists and corporations, science are hurtling us headlong towards a world devoid of humanity.

Science promotes hubris

Science unprecedented success in our world inevitably leads us to hubris, causing mankind to extend their reach beyond what is considered acceptable. This overweening confidence in science blinds us to its dangers and causes us to brook no opposition to its endeavours. This is clearly evident in the hue and cry raised by the scientific community to the European Courts' ruling to deny patents for products of human stem cell research. This arrogance blocks dialogue and consideration of other possible answers from other areas that make us essentially human, such as spirituality.



9 'The richer we are, the poorer we become.' Is this an accurate reflection of modern society?

Key words/ phrases

The richer we are

wealthy / financial status is very secure / materially well-off

the poorer we become

- "poor" in this context refers to non-material things / intangibles – our attitude towards others in society (eg. family, friends, members of community); our attitude towards issues (eg. inequality, justice); our behaviour (eg. kindness, moral courage, generosity)
- "poorer" means our attitudes and behaviour have become worse / objectionable / callous / damaging

an accurate reflection of modern society an honest / candid appraisal of the state of the world

Question Requirements

Students must:

- Evaluate the validity of the quote in context of current societal situation
- Take a stand about the condition of the world today as described in the quote
- Pay attention to the immediacy of "are" and "become" and the comparative "richer" and "poorer" – in order to tether discussion to the current situation while also looking at the comparison of the current situation with the not-too-distant past

Strong scripts will...

- Clearly define the key terms in order to lay the parameters for discussion
- Address the correlation between material well-being and paucity of human kindness as suggested in the quote
- Examine issues and polarised stereotypical views associated with wealth (eg. noblesse oblige: the moral obligation of those of high birth, powerful social position, etc., to act with honour, kindness, generosity, etc.; riches engenders poor behaviour like greed, callousness, etc.)

Weak scripts will...

- Merely describe various situations that show the quote's validity without attempting to analyse the relationship between wealth acquisition and behavioural change
- Be narrow in scope – how the rich are helping society, therefore there is little truth in the quote – without an in-depth look at the societal dynamics that is at work

Possible responses

As societies become richer across the world in the last few decades, said societies have benefitted greatly: standard of living and quality of life have risen accordingly.

This is possible because wealth can help direct resources towards helping those in need, thereby enabling help to reach those society or government have overlooked, and so build societal relationships between the haves and the have-nots.

AND / OR

However, wealth has also brought about an increasing level of paucity of emotional connections and human kindness, as well as a decreasing level of human decency.

Possible arguments

Societies have become richer, materially and otherwise

- Notion of noblesse oblige is still very evident in society – the moral obligation of the social betters to look after the less advantaged is still as vigorous as before – results in society that practices altruism in order that all may benefit (eg. various eponymous charitable foundations, like Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (USA), Wellcome Trust (UK), Li Ka Shing Foundation (HK))
- In addition, various aspects of life today is much better – eg. access to education / healthcare; treatment of minorities – making survival less onerous for those who need help – adapted idea of the economic effect – “a rising tide floats all boats” – to the social sphere (eg. programmes like microcredit; support for social enterprises)

Societies have become poorer in behaviour and attitude

- Wealth has encouraged the growth of individualistic behaviour – less time and effort are spent on building social connections within the community
- The result is that wealth – and the pursuit of wealth – has engendered a new kind of callousness towards others (eg. affluent second generation Chinese and their exploits; worker exploitation in developing countries like Bangladesh; food integrity issues in China)
- In addition, the elitist mentality – “us versus them” – also takes root, leading to a growing divide between the haves and the have-nots within a society, building anger and resentment (eg. uproar in blogosphere over Singapore’s Wee Shu Min’s post)

*useful reference:

<http://www.npr.org/2013/09/03/218627288/why-being-wealthy-doesnt-lead-to-more-giving>



10 We should always strive to extend our life expectancy. Comment.Key words

We/our	A distinction can be made between the first world and third world nations
Should	an obligatory or expedient action
Always	an absolute word which requires challenging or limiting the conditions under which the statement is true
Strive	aim to (through research and development, treatment, providing healthcare and sanitation, through medicine and a healthy lifestyle)

To extend: to prolong. What exactly do we mean by this? This may include:

- Merely radically increasing the number of years people can live e.g. to 120-130 years
- Radically increasing the number of years lived but ensuring the slowing of the ageing process (i.e. ageing will occur over a longer period so individuals will have more active years before any decline becomes evident)
- Radically increasing the number of years lived but ensuring reversal of the ageing process (i.e. there is a continuous repair of damage caused by metabolic processes and environmental factors which result in an indefinite maintenance of the function and postponement of ageing)
- increasing the average life span of people in the poor nations to be on par with those of their wealthier counterparts?

life expectancy: the number of years one is expected to live as determined by statistics (see statistics by WHO in <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.688>)

Question requirement

Question requires candidates to state reasons for life extension and circumstances under which this quest would not be prudent or moral.

Possible Responses

- We should always strive to extend our life expectancy so long as we can live longer and healthier lives (that is, if it is accompanied by decelerated or arrested ageing)
- We should not always strive to extend our life expectancy as it is not always expedient or moral to do so
- We should not try to extend the biological limits of our human life span radically but should aim at helping the poor in the third world nations increase their life expectancy

Strong scripts will:

Make a distinction between the four ways our life expectancy can be extended and show how these interpretations will affect their stance.

Weak scripts will:

confuse extending our lives and extending our life expectancy. They will thus focus on euthanasia and decision-making with regard to cures and treatments for illnesses.

Possible arguments**Should try to extend life expectancy:**

1. Life is good, death is bad
 - There is intrinsic value in living longer than we presently do

- Christians regard long life as a blessing as reflected in the biblical verse "Honour your father and mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."
 - People with goals for the future which they hope to materialise will desire a longer life; death will deny them such opportunities
 - Death will rob individuals of their loved ones and experiences, and societies of the wisdom of talented people
2. The prospect of achieving the age-old dream of living longer is becoming a reality
 - Functional artificial human organs produced with three-dimensional printers and cell cultures in laboratories can replace the aged and damaged organs without fear of rejection
 - Scientists are researching into substances that enable dying worms to live 60-70% longer than the norm and tampering with the genes in yeast or roundworms that increase their life span
 - The Human Genome Project has also provided new targets for pharmaceutical therapies that can slow ageing or prevent various age-related diseases
 - Advocates of life extension are optimistic as laboratory studies indicate that animals can not only live longer but more healthily
 3. A protracted life will lead to an increased stake in the future which bodes well for the future
 - Individuals with a longer life span will have a longer time to deal with the negative outcome of their actions and policies
 - Can no longer live for the here and now
 - The accumulated wisdom brought by extended life spans might increase their concern for the environment and the need for sustainability of development
 4. Contrary to the views of the pessimists, man will be able to counter problems associated with more people living longer:
 - A longer life will enable man to increase his intelligence and capacity for experience
 - History has shown that man's ingenuity has led him to overcome hurdles in the past and it will continue to aid in drastically reducing the carbon footprint, resolving environmental problems, managing potential psychological and physiological problems associated with life extension and ensuring a trickle-down effect to the third world nations
 5. Governments should raise the life expectancy of third world nations
 - Life expectancy is widely used as an indicator of Quality of Life by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and is reflective of good governance, so governments of poor nations should aspire to increase life expectancy
 - The rich world has an obligation to help the poor nations reduce the mortality rate as they have the means to do so.

Should NOT try to extend life expectancy:

1. An extension of life expectancy is only desirable if we can escape infirmity
 - Ageing research is not meant to enable us to be older longer but to be younger longer
 - Given the prevalence of people currently suffering from Alzheimer's disease, the situation is only expected to get worse with more people living longer
 - Neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease can potentially leave the long-lived elderly in misery
 - Tampering with the genes may result in unintended outcome as human traits borne of natural selection are more reliable
2. A longer lifespan may lead to undesirable psychological consequences

- Bill McKibben, an environmentalist and journalist, argues that a limited lifespan creates a sense of urgency which propels people to refine and exploit their best qualities. If the deadline for mortality is extended, people may waste their time away
- Living longer can also induce a condition of ennui, a state of listlessness and lack of interest, due to boredom and tiredness of living on earth. The thrill of living is lost and, with it, the motivation to pursue something worthwhile.

3. We should not attempt to prolong life expectancy to avert negative social consequences

- The looming graying population will only be exacerbated with more old people living longer
- An inverse population pyramid will place greater stress on the young who have to pay for improved infrastructure, healthcare, and other services which are cost prohibitive
- Unless the aged are healthier and can continue working, the brunt of the increased social security system will have to be borne by the young.
- Yet the elderly who are physically and psychologically vibrant will lead to the problem of incumbency where older workers hog positions in business and politics, rendering it difficult for the young to work their way into positions of authority and causing intergenerational conflict to be a real possibility.
- An increased population size also has social implications – environmentalist E.O. Wilson calculated that we need four planet Earths for every person in the world to reach the present US levels of consumption with the existing technology.

4. It is a matter of justice

- Is it fair to extend the lives of those who already have more? Should the rich nations with already longer life span devote limited resources and funds for radical life extension when the infant mortality rate in third world countries is high and the life expectancy is significantly shorter? E.g. in 2013, the country with the highest life expectancy is Monaco at 89.63 years and the country with the lowest life expectancy is Chad at just 49.07 years. (Source: CIA, *World Factbook*) Such a quest will only increase the gap between the rich and the poor.
- There are more pressing concerns for human civilisation than to feed the selfish, hubristic, narcissistic quest for life extension.



11 'Style, not substance, is the vital thing.' How far is this true of your society?Key words / phrases

Style, not substance	to think that outward appearances / image is valued / prized, instead of meaningful qualities (personal and otherwise)
the vital thing	most important / essential
How far is this true	degree or extent to which such an attitude is observed in Singapore society

Basic Question Requirements

- Assess how much of the quote is applicable to the Singapore context
- Discuss the differences inherent in the concepts – “style” and “substance” – in order to explain why one or the other is more prized than the other
- Take a stand

Strong scripts will

- Show balance when evaluating the emphasis Singaporeans place on style or substance
- Consider the implications of Singapore society paying attention to things that matter and things that appear to be superficial
- Be a nuanced look at the issues encapsulated in “style” and “substance”

Weak scripts will

Be example-driven without much analysis of the ideas

Possible response

Singaporeans tend to be a pragmatic lot. As a result, they are more likely to value things that are more tangible or have a meaningful quality, rather than things that seem superfluous. However, Singaporeans are also just as likely to pay more attention to inconsequential things when it suits them or when the occasion demands it.

Possible arguments*Style is the important thing...*

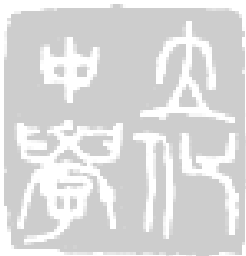
- When it is a matter of “face” – because societal or familial expectations demand that people pay attention to those things that make the latter look good / respectable or help maintain a semblance of social status (eg. lavish celebrations of milestones like weddings)
- When it is a matter of “expectations” – because certain industries or vocations demand that image be cultivated in order to boost consumer confidence (eg. Singapore Girl & her kebaya; bank employees and their uniforms)
- When it is both “face” & “expectations” – because posturing is a way of intimidating the opposition and presenting a certain image of the country to the rest of the world (eg. legal letters sent to discourage blatant challenge of the country’s leaders or policies; hosting F1 Night Race and peripheral events)

Substance is the important thing...

- When it is about livelihood – bread-and-butter issues are most Singaporeans’ priority, so they demand policies that deliver results and reject efforts that can negatively impact their future (eg. projections in 2013 Population

White Paper that prompted protests at Hong Lim Park; introduction and subsequent withdrawal of the Graduate Mothers' Scheme in the mid-1980s)

- When it is about authenticity – where the collective cultural and social experiences are concerned, efforts that merely whitewash the experiences are usually received with much scepticism and lukewarm responses, which sometimes lead to the eventual demise of such effort (eg. Tang Dynasty village; conserved and refurbished Chinatown / Little India / Kampong Glam; Malay Village in Geylang Serai)
- When it is about leadership – Singaporeans are accustomed to and expect their leaders to exude intellect and moral character – thanks to the ruling party's practice of fielding educated candidates and then placing them in key Cabinet positions – while the lack of such qualities and theatrics are usually frowned upon (eg. SDP's Chee Soon Juan). Such qualities continue to be important for the new generation of Singaporeans (eg. Punggol by-election: WP's Lee Li Lian versus PAP's Koh Poh Koon; popularity of NSP's Nicole Seah versus PAP's Tin Pei Ling)



12 Is modesty still a virtue?

Key Words

Modesty – simplicity, moderation, decency, humility

Virtue – an admirable quality

Basic Question Requirements

Students are required to evaluate if the qualities of humility and moderation are valued in today's societies.

Question Assumption

The assumption is that in the past, modesty was prized by society. But, the value that we place on modesty is being questioned today.

Questions/Areas to Consider

- How do we define modesty?
- Modesty at the various levels of society – individual to groups / organisation
- Why do we still value modesty in people today, despite the rise of individualism?

Possible Response/s

Humility and modesty are still values we hold dear today, despite increasing individualism and competition. The "Golden rule" is treating others as you would want to be treated, and the hold of traditions and culture continue to inculcate a sense of propriety and humility during interpersonal interactions.

Strong scripts

- Strong scripts should be able to demonstrate the multi-facet view of modesty and clearly define them in the introduction.
- Strong scripts should be able to trace the historical progression of how modesty has evolved through time.
- Strong scripts show great awareness that, despite the increase in individualism and fierce economic competition, modesty is a virtue prized by many. Students should be able to draw parallels between many of today's problems to a lack of humility and a strong sense of pride among people.
- Strong balance should also be made by demonstrating that false modesty is just as deadly to interpersonal interactions. False modesty can be used with ulterior motives to gain advantages in interpersonal relationships.

Weak scripts

- Failure to define what is modesty – seeing it as merely being shy, or attired in an old fashioned way.
- cursory treatment of the past. Students' scripts purely concentrate on the present, neglecting the comparison with the past.

Possible Arguments

Modesty is still very much prized in interpersonal relationships as it sees the other person as an equal, not a competitor to be conquered.

Social:

1. Within communities, modesty is still highly regarded among people as it is a healthy recognition of one's ability and the limits. This is not self-depreciation. This is an attitude of learning from others and cooperation, recognizing that there will always be gaps in our knowledge and skills. This sense of modesty could act as the foundation for greater learning as we are open to new knowledge from all quarters

- The sense of humility is the basis of cooperation, and this helps in the long run for our survival as a community and as a species. Much of our social ills come from a false sense of superiority and belief in our own abilities and infallibility. It is this sense of self and selfishness that prevents Mankind from working together to solve some of the most pressing problems today as many are gripped by the belief that they are better than others, and therefore their needs should take priority over all others. Modesty is recognizing that others' needs are just as important as ours. Modesty is also recognizing that we can fail. It is this lack of responsibility when mistakes happen that caused many conflicts.

Political:

- Governments today need to recognize that modesty and humbleness are keys to gain public trust. In an increasingly complex world, no one government leader can claim to have all solutions. Modesty means that a leader is willing to admit he is wrong and is willing to listen. Modesty should carry over into inter-governmental relationships as cooperation between countries is the only way that we can solve some of the world's problems today.

Economic:

- Modesty seems to be an archaic value among businesses today especially in this global completion. No doubt, being aggressive and competitive help to maintain an economic edge for many businesses. There is a constant need to push oneself into the forefront and be visible so that a business can be successful. While this is true, modesty is still very much needed as businessmen need to understand that their decisions can impact society at a far deeper and wider level today than ever before. The hubris of business successes need to be tempered by the strong belief that there are business cycles of boom and bust. They need to understand that they are not always right. Ability to admit that they can be wrong is essential to build up trust with customers.

Religious:

- In religion, modesty is a virtue as it symbolizes devotion to the teachings of religion. Personal piety is synonymous with holiness and most orthodox religions teach that believers should be modest in appearance and behavior so that they can reflect the true value of religious teachings to non-believers. Modesty also helps to facilitate interpersonal relationships with other fellow believers as it encourages fraternity and not dominance.

However, the demands of modern world make modesty an archaic value, especially if there is a constant desire to get ahead in life.

Economic:

- If we want to get ahead in life, modesty could be detrimental as it means that we are not making ourselves heard or known better by others. In an age where competition for promotions and rewards are extremely keen, we need to make sure that we are seen and heard by our peers and superiors so that we are able to obtain our due recognition. If one does not proclaim and claim our due recognition, it is easy for others to lay claim to your hard work. Modesty has no place in today's competitive world.

Social:

- Modesty prevents people from expressing who they truly are. In order to keep up the façade of decorum, many do not want to appear boastful or trumping their own successes in front of others, even if they have a genuine cause to do so. False modesty in this sense inhibits our expression of feelings and emotions, under the misguided attempt to preserve social niceties and interpersonal feelings. This actually encourages people to be dishonest with each other as we do not really want to say what we truly feel about ourselves and others.