

Eunoia Junior College English Department, General Paper Unit

2021 EJC JC2 Preliminary Examinations Paper 1  
Examiners' Report and Suggested Answer Scheme

## 1. Is the modern world becoming a more charitable place to live in?

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The forces, trends and developments in the modern world and the prominence of both the spirit and behaviours of charity within it

**KEY TERMS:**

1. 'Is ... becoming' – requiring an assessment of a continuing and developing trend observable from past to present; a process of evolution and growing – an increasing presence or, a process of diminishing and being seen less and less
2. 'a more' – seen in a greater degree than before; increasingly so; more prominent
3. 'the modern world' – the modern context both in terms of time and place – today and globally; candidates could choose to analyse different contexts in the modern world (the developed modern world, less developed and developing countries)
4. 'charitable' – a state of generosity or giving, where people, either through obligation, compulsion or their own volition, give money, food, or help for free to those who are in need because they are ill, poor or disadvantaged; a *spirit* and attitude or disposition of being kind, and non-judgemental – not prone to regarding other people in a negative or severe way
5. 'place to live in' – an environment to exist in, whether there is a culture of charity experienced – both by actors and receivers of charity; an ecosystem of care and generosity; a context where people can thrive because of the positive and virtuous cycles of charity, in terms of approach, attitude and action.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

With the rising prevalence of global and national problems that necessitate a cultural shift in how we think about and uphold our duties of care to others, there have been increasing calls for more charity – both in thought and in action – to mitigate problems like deepening socioeconomic inequality and discrimination. With the advent of social media and various online advocacy movements, there is a sense that the world has become more charitable in spirit: in the rise of civic discourse on anti-racist, anti-sexist and various anti-prejudice movements. Also, because of greater awareness of the stark poverty that exists in people's own and other countries, there has been more institutionalisation for charitable acts, with the increased profile and work done by charitable organisations and non-profit and voluntary grassroots and international institutions. Lastly, the devastation wrecked by the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred greater acts of charity as shown in the findings of the World Giving Index for the years 2020 to 2021, lending credence to the position that the modern world has indeed become a more generous place to live in.

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. The earlier days of the modern world were ones where there was a lack of charity, necessitating greater calls for and concrete action to make the world a more charitable place.

2. The world being a more charitable place is an ideal state of affairs.
3. The increase in charity will potentially address some modern world problems societies are grappling with.
4. Acts of charity typically emanate from non-governmental sources, such as volunteer and non-profit organisations, and from social groups and individual acts of generosity and offer a needed complement to governmental efforts to address socioeconomic problems.

#### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

A coherent judgement of whether the modern world of today is indeed a more charitable place to survive or thrive in as compared to before. The response would need to draw from a range of examples across the world given the global scope of discussion and the examples must be contemporary ones. These illustrations must drive arguments that are comparative to furnish the assessment of 'more' or 'not more'. Candidates' conceptual understanding of 'charity' must also be sound and not slip into digressions of related concepts.

#### Thoughtful Responses:

- Present a complete, comprehensive and accurate conceptual understanding of 'charity' and what it comprises and entails.
- Negotiate key shifts and developments in the modern world that have precipitated or stymied the growth of charitable attitudes and behaviours.
- Present well-reasoned arguments that account and explain the deeper, underlying factors that could account for the emergence of more or less charity in the world today.
- Draw from a range of contemporary examples across the world to exemplify and support claims made about cause-and-effect – why the modern world is or is not becoming a more charitable place to live in.
- Attend to the key words, 'to live in', recognising that beyond attending to the rise or fall in charitable acts and the reasons accounting for this trend, the question calls for consideration of the experience of charity – either as a person living in a more charitable environment or witnessing others receiving more charity and the virtuous cycles created.

#### Limited Responses:

- Conflate 'charity' and being 'charitable' with other related but different concepts, and shift the focus from the concept in the question to a discussion that digresses, e.g. making 'empathy' or 'kindness' the focus of arguments.
- Omit attention to the key word 'more' and fail to establish a past to present comparison to argue a case for whether there is indeed a greater degree of charity in comparison to before.
- Only draw from a limited pool of examples, such as only being able to furnish local examples in response to a question that requires a global perspective.
- Engage in a listing exercise: citing examples of charitable acts, with no assessment of whether the modern world is becoming more charitable than before.
- Neglect engagement of the context of the modern world and its developments and problems, which is basis of the question.

**2. 'Too much pressure is placed on government leaders to solve the problems of their people.' How far do you agree?**

**SUBJECT MATTER:** Effective leadership and adequacy of government's intervention and management of citizen's problems, specifically, the pressure placed on government leaders in solving the problems of their people.

**KEY TERMS:**

1. 'too much pressure placed' – excessive use of persuasion, force, influence or intimidation to make someone do something. The term "too much" usually conveys a negative connotation to the idea of excess and demands a clear criteria of justification of excess.
2. 'on government leaders' – on the authorities / group of people who officially control a country
3. 'solve problems of their people' - to find an answer to the problems of its people / citizens. Candidates need to further unpack the different types of problems faced by citizens.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

Bounded by the Social Contract Theory, governments across the various systems in the world have the social obligation to care for its people, as well as to be responsible not just for the provision of public goods in the country, but also the problems faced by its people. Herein lies the question of how much government intervention is adequate or how much is considered 'too much' when it comes to authorities' role and obligation in solving some of the problems of its people. Are there differences in the types of problems faced by citizens that can be categorised as government's responsibility or the responsibility of individuals or other stakeholders? Is there a yardstick to determine the area and extent of intervention by the government? By extension, should there be a yardstick to measure how much pressure is considered excessive – how much is considered too much? What are some conditions attached to these measurements?

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. Government leaders have an obligation to solve the problems of the people.
2. Government leaders are pressured to solve the problems of the people.
3. The pressure placed on the government to solve the problems of the people is excessive and is not justified.

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates need to provide reasons to justify and evaluate whether or not too much pressure is placed on the authorities to solve the problems of its people and to also consider what degree of such pressure is considered enough or too much. Candidates need to also consider the different types of problems faced by citizens today and to provide reasons and/or criteria to justify if the pressure is too much or not too much at all (adequate, not enough).

**Thoughtful Responses:**

- Establishes very clearly the understanding of the issue of the question regarding the government's obligation to its people when it comes to solving their problems. Such responses also further present an acute, accurate, and complete understanding of whether too much pressure is placed on the authorities to solve the problems of its people and whether such pressure on the government's intervention to solve the problems of citizens is justified.
- Present well-reasoned arguments to support the stand taken while also demonstrating a balanced perspective. Arguments should demonstrate an understanding of the intricacies of the question in terms of addressing the government's obligation to solve citizen's problems and the sufficiency and adequacy of such pressure placed on them.

- Ensures key engagement with the contention of “excess” of the question – evaluating and justifying the extent of government’s intervention and its sufficiency. Clear yardsticks or measurements are used to determine the extent of the government’s intervention in solving problems of individuals and to justify his or her stand.
- Draws from a range of contemporary examples across the world and considered the characteristics of the modern world to further exemplify and support claims made.
- Attend to the important keywords such as ‘solve problems of their people’. Stronger responses would be able to demonstrate an understanding of the different types of problems faced by individuals and the nature of the problems that could support the criteria used for evaluation. For example, candidates can consider problems in term of personal problems, “Black Swan Problems” (problems that come as a surprise; unexpected and never seen before) or problems that that completely not within anyone’s control e.g. Nature. A strong response would be able to explore more contentious problems that could be debatable in terms of the responsibility that could be borne by individuals and/or governments and to link its evaluation using some criteria and yardsticks. E.g. Impact to self (private costs), Impact/costs to others (social costs), ability and resources.
- Attend to the important keywords such as ‘on government leaders’. Stronger responses should also establish the understanding of the role of the government in the different systems (Democratic, Socialist, Welfare State, Non-Welfare State) and the wide-ranging contemporary issues faced by citizens across different domains (Health, Finances, Standard of Living, Education, Unemployment, Discrimination, etc.). Stronger responses should highlight an understanding of the different intervention approaches undertaken by different structures and systems in the world and the underlying principle behind the approach in solving individual’s problems.

#### Limited Responses:

- Presents no clear treatment of the contention of excess (“too much”) or superficial treatment of the excess with mere assertions such as agreeing or disagreeing with the stand without giving adequate attention in addressing the contention of excess in the question. In such responses, usually, there are no or unclear criteria or yardsticks to determine the adequacy of the government’s intervention in solving the problems of individuals.
- Engage in a listing or description exercise: Narrowly focusing on describing or listing the problems faced by citizens simplistically and superficially without engaging with the central relationship of the question of the role of government in solving problems of citizens and the extent of sufficiency. For example, if a candidate only looks narrowly at individual problems in the sense of personal day-to-day decisions and problems, the responses would be deemed largely simplistic. Also, a simplistic response could look like a listing of different ranges of problems and identifying them in isolation as “too much pressure is placed” “or not too much pressure is placed” in each identification.
- Presents only a limited context and did not consider the range of global examples.

### 3. ‘While environmental sustainability is desirable, it is an unachievable goal.’ Discuss.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The desirability and achievability of environmental sustainability

#### KEY TERMS:

1. ‘desirable’ – advantageous, needed, worth having and wanted by most people as it has inherent value and/or tangible benefits; viewed as good for the sake of certain outcomes, goals and beneficial ends

2. 'environmental sustainability' – the ability of environmental resources able to be maintained or continued. According to the United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development, environmental sustainability is about acting in a way that ensures future generations have the natural resources available to live an equal, if not better, way of life as current generations
3. 'unachievable goal' – an unachievable task or objective is one that is impossible to achieve, to reach, or finished successfully; it can be pursued but with no real possibility of being achieved

### CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:

While there is increased awareness and education surrounding one's ecological footprint and its impact on the environment, conservation efforts through environmental sustainability have been questioned for its true effectiveness in mitigating the impact of our current environmental degradation. This begs the question of whether true environmental sustainability is indeed possible to achieve or if true environment sustainability will only remain as a mere goal that is impossible to carry out, let alone, impactful.

### ASSUMPTIONS:

1. Environmental sustainability has intrinsic value.
2. Environmental sustainability has positive benefits or impacts on our environment.
3. Environmental sustainability is unachievable and any efforts will not be able to mitigate the existing problems and impacts of our current environment.

### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

Candidates are required to provide a coherent evaluation of environmental sustainability as a goal. Candidates need to engage with the condition of the desirability of environmental sustainability and to discuss its worth, and to evaluate whether this is an achievable or unachievable goal by providing strong justifications and reasons to support their claim as well as the degree and extent of its achievability.

### Thoughtful Responses:

- Demonstrates a key engagement with the condition of the question consistently throughout every argument by discussing the desirability of environmental sustainability and evaluate whether the goal or the efforts at achieving this goal are achievable or not. A thoughtful response also reflects the perspective of "Ideal versus Reality"; reasons and factors that may hinder the goal from arriving at its idealistic outcomes are discussed, resulting in a key treatment of the contention "desirable, but unrealistic goal".
- Provides an accurate and complete understanding of the key terms in the question; the concept of 'environmental sustainability, as well as the contention of 'desirability' and 'achievability' of this concept is explained and evaluated against each other consistently and extensively. Candidates should be able to explain environmental sustainability in terms of the efforts taken by various stakeholders (Individuals, Society, Government, NGO, etc.) in ensuring the longevity of resources and ensuring that environmental degradation is kept to a minimum. The 'desirability' of environmental sustainability is explicitly discussed in terms of its inherent worth, value, significance, or benefits. The 'achievability' of a goal is also discussed through analysing the outcomes of the goal/objective, or the process of carrying out the objective. Candidates should have clear criteria in unpacking what 'achievability' entails. For example, candidates can employ the 6UC as a yardstick to measure 'achievability'.
- With that, a thoughtful response is able to differentiate between the purpose of setting a goal and what occurs in reality. For example, candidates can weigh the desirability against the outcomes of environmental sustainability in mitigating the impact of our current environmental problems and/ or weighing against the challenges in carrying out environmental sustainability practices.

- Considers the absolute perspective in the viewpoint provided, and can address the absolute nature of the term through providing a balanced and perceptive response. Candidates can engage the assumptions of this question for a nuanced response.
- Illustrations used to support the reasoning are usually aptly positioned and explained, original, and demonstrating contemporary knowledge or recent developments surrounding environmental sustainability. A significant response would also provide strong contextualisation of arguments within recent developments and trends or characteristics of today's world to show the significance of arguments, even when the context is not provided explicitly in the question.

#### Limited Responses:

- Demonstrates a superficial understanding of the demands of the question i.e. weak grasp of the issue and concept tested on environmental sustainability and a poor understanding of the contention tested ("desirable, but unrealistic goal").
- Reflects limited attention given to the condition, or neglect it entirely. Weaker responses usually demonstrate a weak attempt (or no attempt) at evaluating the achievability of the goal of environmental sustainability against the condition of desirability. Such responses usually do not show an understanding of the distinction between reality and goal setting.
- Candidates who have a limited response usually have illustrations that are superficial and narrow, often conflating "environmental sustainability" with "environmental degradation".

## 4. Should the study of literature be made compulsory in schools?

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The worth and social gains to be reaped from the more widespread study of literature, to the point of making it mandatory in public schools

#### KEY TERMS:

1. 'should' – a recommendation based on an analysis of current social (and global) realities; ought a course of action be adopted based on considerations such as feasibility, the achievement of long-term valuable goals in spite of challenges and push-back from people not in favour; whether making it mandatory will finally address some long-standing social and global problems at their root, and whether societies ought to if the country has every means to make the study compulsory.
2. 'be made compulsory' – to effect a change to make something mandatory for all or a select group; compulsion entails that rules and laws are put in place and that there is an enforcing authority to ensure compliance; generally, things that are made mandatory and a must for all or a select group of persons are seen as yielding beneficial and important outcomes for larger society.
3. 'in schools' – in public schools within a country – the idea of compulsion presupposes that there is an institution to enforce the study, such as a Ministry of Education and thus, private schools would be largely inconsequential in consideration.
4. 'the study of literature' – to be distinguished from the subject and field of literature; the key words, 'the study of' require attention to the discipline of literature, such as specific preoccupations, unique skills and development objectives entailed in the study of literature; 'the study of' can also be interpreted at different levels, ranging from cultivation of an appreciation of through just reading, to deep study and analysis.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

The benefits of studying literature, to individuals, societies and the world as a whole, are recognised by those who believe that reading literature is essential for human flourishing as fundamentally, it is about the search of meaning through the appreciation of narratives. All of mankind tells stories to make sense of the world, imagine alternatives and explore the human condition. Literature, both as an aesthetic art form or humanities study, is evocative and emotive, and through igniting readers' hearts and minds, is a powerful medium to build empathy and critical insight into what makes us human, themes of justice, fairness and beauty, and what better societies look like. Given its potential to yield such profound benefits, there are grounds to call for its institutionalisation in public schools as a mandatory subject.

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. The study of literature is essential for proper or good human life, in the same way the study of languages and mathematics is.
2. Currently, the study of literature is not compulsory in most or all contexts.
3. Making literature a mandatory study for all school-going children will yield benefits to them as they grow up, in adulthood and by extension, contribute to better outcomes in society.
4. Making the study of literature compulsory in schools will be fraught with challenges because not everyone agrees that the study of literature is worthwhile enough to require all or some segments of students to take it on. These people might have a narrow view of literature.
5. There are means to and it is feasible to make the study of literature compulsory in schools in some contexts.

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates must make recommendations with reasons and consistently argue a case for 'should' or 'should not'. These recommendations can be based on considerations of context – whether some countries have or are considering this course of action, and whether some countries have the means to make this study compulsory and therefore they should. The position for 'ought' or 'ought not', 'must' or 'must not' can also be based on analyses of the outcomes and ends that would be achieved should the study of this subject be made mandatory. Perspectives for and against must be engaged as the worth of the study of literature is not one that people have consensus on. The concept of 'literature' and what its study comprises must also be understood completely, accurately and precisely.

**Thoughtful Responses:**

- Make critical distinctions that are relevant to required judgment – a recommendation of *should*. If the study of literature were to entail very in-depth literary analysis, then it would not justifiable to make such higher-order study mandatory for all students. However, if the study were to simply involve cultivating an appreciation for the themes pertaining to the human condition, the skill of perspective-taking and the nurturing of the dispositions of empathy and emotional maturity, which a basic study in appreciation would entail, then there are legitimate reasons to ground the recommendation.
- Demonstrate an awareness that the study of literature need not involve only high-brow literary analysis. It could also just comprise the reading of literary works as key texts for character and citizenship growth, e.g. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a staple text many young American students read in their schools as part of their reading programme.
- Show nuance by recognising that it might not be possible to make the study of literature compulsory for all students because even the most basic literary text requires the reader to possess a level of literacy not all school-going children have. Consequently, uses this to specify which groups of students in schools should read literature as a compulsory study and to what objectives and ends.
- Furnish principles or clear reasons to justify the recommended course of action, e.g. pragmatic considerations, as a matter of moral imperative, allows societies to tackle problems at their root – the

lack of understanding of the human condition, logical possibility and feasibility, the intrinsic worth it has and how it is integral to human life.

- Understand what the study of literature comprises and the range of methods, approaches and techniques it entails – from basic appreciation to grasp ideas, to the search for interpretive meaning and being able to read between the lines, to higher-order analysis of literary devices.

#### Limited Responses:

- Neglect the critical key words 'the study of'; venture a response to a similar but different question – 'Should literature be made compulsory in schools?'
- Omit attention to the context specified – 'in schools' and expand on the study or appreciation of literature in general, failing to realise that the question invites consideration of when and how countries and their involved ministries decide to make the study of a subject mandatory within public institutions like schools

## 5. Can space travel be justified when there are such pressing issues in the world today?

**SUBJECT MATTER:** Investments in space travel in the context of urgent global problems

#### KEY TERMS:

1. 'such pressing issues in the world today' – modern world context riddled with urgent problems to address (e.g. environmental concerns, the global pandemic, rampant and entrenched poverty/inequality, international conflicts/terrorism)
2. 'justified' – rationalised based on moral, ethical and practical grounds; costs outweigh benefits
3. 'can' – is it ever possible to; are we able to?
4. 'space travel' – chiefly the investments in space travel in terms of money, time, manpower, space/land

#### CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:

Space travel has oft been lauded as a means of opening a wide variety of opportunities for humans in space that include scientific research, private tourism, and even the potential for off-world sustainable living. However, with many problems we face in our world today that require urgent attention, this has led people to question if resources should instead be diverted from costly space travel to prioritise resolving current world problems.

#### ASSUMPTIONS:

1. There are many pressing issues in the world today.
2. Space travel has little value as compared to pressing issues in the world today.
3. Benefits/outcomes of space travel cannot be used to solve the pressing issues in the world today.

#### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

Candidates are invited to consider if the pressing issues the modern world faces could impact the justification of space travel.

#### Thoughtful Responses:



- Provides a complete understanding of the concept tested on key terms, such as “space travel” and “such pressing issues”, addressing the various investments in space travel as well as the various pressing issues the modern world faces
- Engage with the condition “when there are such pressing issues in the world today” there consistently throughout the essay. Provide a good understanding of some of the pressing issues faced in the world today, engaging the condition and context of the condition consistently.
- Provide strong reasoned based arguments that engage the contention of justifiability clearly, evaluating whether space travel is justifiable based on moral, ethical and practical grounds using a on a cost-benefit analysis.
- Challenge the assumption that space travel is unable to resolve pressing world issues

#### Limited Responses:

- Does not show a good grasp and understanding of the necessary key terms in the question.
- Ignore the condition in the question and does not weigh the justifiability of space travel against pressing issues of the world. A limited response usually does give attention to the condition and does not unpack what are some of the pressing issues of the world.
- Consist of a stubborn preoccupation of the condition and not the point of contention where there is a need to evaluate against the development of space travel,
- Interpret space travel and the types of investment too narrowly (e.g., only interpreting it as financial investment)
- Interpret pressing issues in today’s world too narrowly (e.g. only focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Ignore the ‘justified’ aspect in the question, only addressing the costs and/or benefits of space travel

## 6. Consider the importance of nature in your society.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The protection and conservation of nature in Singapore.

#### KEY TERMS:

1. ‘importance’ – ideas of usefulness, impact, relevance, essential, role it plays
2. ‘nature’ – environment, surrounds, anything non-Manmade (important distinction)
3. ‘in your society’ – context is Singapore

#### CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:

While intuitively we know that nature is important for societies, we may take it for granted. By examining the roles and functions nature plays for Singapore and evaluate how big a part nature plays in the everyday Singaporeans’ lives, it forces us to examine if our belief in the importance of nature truly reflects in our actions towards preservation and conservation of nature here.

#### ASSUMPTIONS:

1. There is worth in nature.
2. Nature is important for Singapore.

#### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

Candidates are invited to examine the purposes and uses of nature in Singapore and evaluate the value and relevance of these purposes and uses to the average Singaporean. Candidates are required to examine the challenges that will cause Singapore to weigh the value and relevance of nature against other competing demands.

#### Thoughtful Responses:

- Considers the significance of nature in Singapore by looking at the impact from various levels of society (individuals, community and national). Candidates will need to go beyond listing what nature can or cannot do for Singapore by providing an analysis of the impact (good or bad) and come to a conclusion on whether do the impact justify the presence of nature in Singapore.
- Engages with the contention of worth consistently in the response while keenly relating the worth to the context. Candidates will be able to contextualise their arguments against specific Singapore characteristics and explain how these characteristics will impact Singaporeans' evaluation of the importance of nature.
- Consider the importance of nature in Singapore to cover areas that are intangible (emotional well-being, beauty etc.)
- Reflect that the importance of nature is ultimately one of the many pressing issues facing Singapore today; the importance of nature in Singapore's context can vary across time.
- Successfully evaluate whether the beliefs Singaporeans have regarding nature truly reflects in our actions towards protecting / conserving nature.

#### Limited Responses:

- Present a list of examples regarding how we are protecting the environment without considering the *importance* of nature; candidates are merely listing and regurgitating examples with little attempt to explain.
- Present counter-arguments merely explaining that there are other areas that are equally, or more important than nature *without* any attempt to compare against the functions of nature.

## 7. 'Given the cost of conflict, it should always be avoided.' Discuss.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The avoidance of conflict (could be between individuals, groups of people or even countries)

#### KEY TERMS:

1. 'should' – suggests a need to consider the obligation or correctness of these decisions
2. 'always' – in all circumstances / conditions (an absolute statement)
3. 'avoided' – to prevent from happening or to not allow yourself to do; also could translate into a lack of conflict resolution due to avoidance'
4. 'Given the cost of conflict' – condition of the question; setting the assumption that conflicts involve cost (price of any kind of dispute in terms of not only the deaths and casualties and the economic costs borne by the people involved, but also the mental, emotional, social, developmental, environmental and strategic costs).

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

Conflict is widely regarded as something that incurs some form of cost to all parties involved, especially for those wielding lesser power in the dispute. While it is oft assumed that these costs outweigh the potential benefits (if any) arising from the conflict and should thus be avoided, there could be situations where the cost is justified or where the conflict is unavoidable despite the potential cost incurred.

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. Conflict incurs cost
2. Avoiding the cost incurred by conflict is the right course of action in all situations

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates should determine if avoiding conflict is the right course of action in all situations, considering the condition provided (cost incurred).

**Thoughtful Responses:**

- Consistently acknowledge and take into account the condition of the cost of conflict in every argument when evaluating whether conflict should be avoided.
- Provide clear yardsticks or criteria for evaluating and weighing whether conflict should always be avoided or not, given the costs incurred.
- Consider the possibility that some conflicts may be unavoidable despite the potential cost.
- Consider the possibility that some conflicts may be the right course of action if the potential cost is outweighed by the potential benefits of conflicts. Candidates are able to discuss the worth and value of conflicts.

**Limited Responses:**

- Do not take into consideration the condition of cost incurred by conflict
- Do not take into consideration the normative aspect of 'should'
- Takes a simplistic absolute stand and agreeing with the question's perspective wholesale without having a balanced perspective, negating that sometimes, conflicts could have some worth and value.

## 8. 'As countries pursue development, heritage sites are losing their relevance.' How far do you agree?

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The relevance of heritage sites amidst development of countries.

**KEY TERMS:**

1. 'Losing... relevance' – declining, decreasing (not totally gone) purpose, use, meaning
2. 'Pursue' – going after, looking for, aspiration, aiming for
3. 'Development' – economic, social, political, cultural

4. 'Heritage sites' – places or locations of historical, cultural significance (physical locations)

### CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:

National development inevitably will result in some sacrifices be made. This question arises from the idea progress should not be held back by history. Some heritage sites carry significant cultural and historic symbolism for the community. However, when countries have to balance between progress and history, it is often inevitable that such sites are removed to make way for future development. When such sites are removed, the fear is that the memories and identity of the community will be lost.

### ASSUMPTIONS:

1. National development will always lead to the eventual loss of heritage sites.
2. National development is more important.
3. Heritage sites have little value.

### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

Candidates are invited to respond to the claim that heritage sites are losing their relevance based on their understanding regarding the pressures and demands that come from nations' pursuit of economic, social and political developments. Candidates will have to evaluate if the functions and purposes of heritage sites continue to keep their significance while nations develop.

### Thoughtful Responses:

- Pays close attention to the condition 'as countries pursue development' and contention of 'losing relevance'. Candidates are able to evaluate successfully how countries decide how and when heritage sites continue to remain relevant while balancing the needs of national development.
- Makes a keen distinction on the key contention of the question. Paying special attention that the contention is about "losing relevance" vis a vis "no relevance" or "lost relevance". Candidates need to justify that the question is referring to the process of having relevance lost.
- Examine the issue from multiple perspectives and explain the hard choices that many nations have to make about preservation of heritage sites.
- Explore successfully why some countries deliberately give up such sites due to historical baggage while using national development as an excuse.
- Provides a range of examples from the global context.

### Limited Responses:

- Conflates the key term "heritage sites" with "heritage". A limited response usually does not show a good understanding of the key concept tested, nor unpacked its meaning, characteristics of features.
- Largely ignores the given condition of national development and only focus the discussion on the reasons why heritage sites may lose their relevance.
- Provides only a historical narrative, focusing the discussion mainly on the historical significance or insignificance of heritage sites.
- Scope is limited; focusing the discussion on local examples while the question requires a global perspective.

## 9. Consider the view that more scientists than artists are needed in the world today.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The competition in purposes and functions between scientists and artists.

**KEY TERMS:**

- 1) 'more ...than' – comparative term that requires candidates to actively compare the functions and purposes of scientists and artists to see who should be deemed as superior.
- 2) 'need' – reference to the purpose and function, the roles played in society. 'Need' presupposes societies requires it because it has a role to play in society.
- 3) 'In the world today' – contextual statement the modern world. This determines the scope of discussion for the essay.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

The essay explores the comparative usefulness of scientists and artists in the modern world. Knowing that the world today depends heavily on the use of technology for survival, it is not surprising that scientists are seen to be more useful. Artists are considered to be inconsequential to the overall survival of societies as their usefulness is often too abstract to be understood by the laypeople.

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. Question assumes that scientists are more needful compared to artists due to their usefulness and skills compared to artists.
2. Question assumes the values and purposes represented by artists are largely irrelevant to the needs of societies today.

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates are invited to compare and contrast between the functions and purposes of scientists versus artists based on the modern world contexts. Candidates will have to explicit in their comparisons based on recognised criteria.

**Thoughtful Responses:**

- Successfully engage the comparison in this question; able to successfully evaluate the importance and relevance of scientist vs artists according to a set of criteria. Stronger candidates are able to observe that the ideal situation in every society is that both careers are important and needed. The question presents a false dichotomy on the importance when it is not necessarily true. However the reality is that societies often places one above the other according to prevailing social norms and beliefs with regard to the value of the scientist and artists. Candidates would need to be able to evaluate the importance based on the observations and characteristics of the world today.
- Successfully explains the presence of these norms when evaluating the importance of these two groups and how these norms influence social views towards scientists and artists.

**Limited Responses:**

- Engage in a simplistic listing exercise where candidate merely lists or describes the functions of scientists and artists separately without a concerted effort to compare consistently based on a set of criteria nor exploring the reasons why societies choose one group over the other.

- Response neglects the context of the question and did not situate the comparison within characteristics of the modern world.

## 10. Is complete self-sufficiency in countries ever possible?

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The possibility of countries' being completely self sufficient

**KEY TERMS:**

1. 'ever possible' – able to be done or achieved, or able to exist at any time: degree of possibility is usually tied to a set of criteria or rubrics that has to be delineated clearly.
2. 'Complete self-sufficiency' – very great or to the largest degree possible (an absolute term), the quality or state of being able to provide everything you need, without the help of other people or countries; able to maintain oneself or itself without outside aid: capable of providing for one's own needs. This term questions a viewpoint that is absolute and candidates are usually expected to disagree with the absolute perspective in the question. Candidates are required to showcase a range of areas for self-sufficiency that is tied predominantly to principles of self-interest and provision. E.g. Resources such as Water, Energy, Food, Economic, Defence and Security
3. 'in countries' – nations; an area of land that has usually has its own government, army etc.

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

The notion of complete self-sufficiency was often seen as a myth within the modern world as the contemporary developments of globalisation reveal the hyper-connected world we live in today, where countries are succumbed to the interdependent nature of the global economy. It is not surprising to see that countries across the world are increasingly dependent on one another for their resources and this is also regarded as the norm and trait of today's world. However, issues such as growing demand and potential import disruptions have surfaced recently, with the notable COVID-19 pandemic threatening many global supply chains and affecting the sufficiency and sustainability of resources within nations. This raises the question if countries should be pursuing complete self-sufficiency to minimise the threats from the external environment and to be able to maintain itself without outside aid or intervention. Even though some nations have pursued self-sufficiency to some degree and have adopted incremental progress over the past decade to provide for their own needs, in practice, self-sufficiency is arguably still viewed to be a relative concept along a continuum that is highly dependent on the global climate. This question raises the debate if complete self-sufficiency is even possible given the interdependent nature of our global economy today. Is there any interests or benefits to aim for complete self-dependency in countries? What are the factors that may influence, shape or limit such possibilities?

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. Countries strive to be completely self-sufficient.
2. The absolute perspective of complete self-sufficiency in countries may not be possible.
3. It is not in a countries interest to be self-sufficient.

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

Candidates should address the viewpoint of complete self-sufficiency in countries which is assumed to be possible. Candidates are required to challenge this absolute viewpoint and evaluate the contention of

possibility at all times. The degree of possibility at all times needs to be qualified with a set of criteria or rubrics that has to be delineated and evaluated clearly.

#### Thoughtful Responses:

- Engage the absolute perspective of the question “complete self-sufficiency” and provide strong and convincing well-reasoned arguments to defend the stand taken to justify the contention “ever possible”.
- Provide strong understanding of the debate behind the question. Candidates need to provide complete and apt understanding of the larger context of the interdependent nature of the modern world and to consider the crux of this question within such nature of the world we live in today. Candidates need to consider the underlying factors or contextual reasons to support the justification and extent of possibility or impossibility of complete self-sufficiency.
- Establishes clear understanding of the concept of complete self-sufficiency by demonstrating understanding of the different areas of self-sufficiency. E.g. Resources such as Water, Energy, Food, Economic, Defence and Security. A strong response would also be able to showcase an insightful and perceptive understanding of the principles and objectives of self-sufficiency e.g. self-interest, security, less exposure to vulnerabilities.
- Draws from a range of contemporary examples across the world and considered the characteristics of the modern world to further exemplify and support claims made.

#### Limited Responses:

- Negates the absolute perspective of the question and fail to consider the distinctions between the concept of self-sufficiency and complete self-sufficiency.
- Tend to adopt a superficial stand that simply agrees with the absolute perspectives of possibility, i.e. complete self-sufficiency in countries is possible or complete self-sufficiency in countries not possible, without a clear understanding of the underlying debate and nuances of the question.
- Demonstrates little and superficial understanding of the concept of self-sufficiency. Limit the concept of self-sufficiency to only a narrow area or domain, e.g. economic self-sufficiency or food self-sufficiency.

## 11. Examine the view that journalists should only report the facts and not share their opinions.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** The role of a journalist

#### KEY TERMS:

1. ‘should’ – suggests a need to consider the obligation or correctness of these decisions
2. ‘only...and not’ – either one or the other
3. ‘journalists’ – those who write news stories or articles for a newspaper or magazine or broadcasts them on radio or television
4. ‘report the facts’ – merely stating what happened without providing any other perspective

5. 'share their opinions' – providing their personal perspective on a news event/situation

#### CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:

There are news journalists who typically focus on reporting facts as well as opinion journalists who write opinion pieces or present commentaries. Traditionally in hardcopy newspapers, the creation of an "opposite the editorial page" (op-ed page) allowed for "a newspaper to most effectively fulfil its social and civic responsibilities by challenging authority, acting independently, and inviting dissent." As mentioned by John Oakes, the editorial page editor of The New York Times in 1970, who created the first op-ed page. This op-ed page was located across from – opposite – the editorial page in the print newspaper, so was easy for consumers to differentiate between the news and opinion pieces. However, the move online created a problem: Opinion stories no longer look clearly different from news stories. This resulted in readers at times reading an opinion piece and confusing it with a news report, causing them to be unwittingly influenced by what they had expected to be factual. Furthermore, with the burgeoning number of blogs and other online platforms (e.g. social media) providing the platform for the publication of opinion pieces, is there still a need for journalists to share their opinion?

#### ASSUMPTION(S):

1. Facts are important for the society.
2. The journalists only have one role, which is to report facts.
3. It is wrong for journalists to share their opinions in their professional capacity.

#### QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:

To determine and evaluate if the role of a journalist should be limited to simply reporting the facts and not sharing their opinions within the current modern world context.

#### Thoughtful Responses:

- Provide strong understanding of the debate behind the question and demonstrating complete and apt understanding of the roles of journalist. A thoughtful response would be able to consider both roles of journalists and evaluate under what circumstances each role should be exercised in the modern world context.
- Engage the perspective in the question by weighing the moral obligations of the need for objective journalism ('reporting facts) against the social and civic responsibilities of challenging authority and inviting dissent ('sharing opinions'). A thoughtful response also would be able to engage the contention of "should" and "only...not", recognising that while the question poses the two roles as a dichotomy, both need not be independent of each other.
- Provides a range of contemporary examples to support the claims made.

#### Limited Responses:

- Shows weak understanding of the debate of the question and does not show an understanding of the perspective of the question and why there is such perspective to begin with.
- Shows weak conceptual understanding of the roles of journalist. For example, a weak response defines the role of 'journalists' too narrowly, neglecting opinion journalists.
- Missing the 'should' key term resulting in a response that merely describes reality.

## 12. To what extent is obedience valued in your society?



**SUBJECT MATTER:** The extent of perceived worth and importance of obedience in one's home or local context

**KEY TERMS:**

1. 'is ... valued' – inviting a consideration of the current context and the present level or degree to which obedience is seen as important, valuable or of worth; past-to-present comparisons are relevant but primarily, the tense 'is' invites candidates to consider modern day realities
2. 'obedience' – to do as one is told and be willing to comply, to belong to a context that that is of jurisdiction and to dutifully obey and follow the prescribed rules, norms and laws; the concept of obedience connotes a desire to act in accordance with what the community, the state and figures of authority desire and prescribe
3. 'in your society' – local – candidate's context of residence or his or her own home country (here, taken to be Singapore)
4. 'To what extent' – extent can be calibrated by considering general trends, 'largely', 'highly', 'minimally', 'marginally', or by considering a limit to which or conditions under which, 'valued insofar as ...', 'valued as long as ...'; the extent of value can also be determined by considering the various stakeholders in one's context and determining the level of worth they attach to obedience

**CONTEXT AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE QUESTION:**

It is often said that Singapore is an Asian society that espouses Confucian or communitarian beliefs. The logical consequence of this is that it is often assumed that obedience and conformity to community norms are virtues and resistance to them is disobedient and anti-social behaviour. Singaporeans are also seen to be a compliant citizenry that does what its government tells them to do as seen in the general adherence to the rule of law and the many rules and legislations outlawing all manner of disobedient behaviour. In a country that is thus sometimes seen as paternalistic, increasing calls have been made for civil society to grow more robust and be less blindly compliant to the directions of the government. With that said, in many families in Singapore, to obey one's parents and elders is seen to be a demonstration of filial piety.

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

1. The extent of value accorded to obedience differs from social group to social group in Singapore.
2. Obedience is generally seen to be good for the individual and society.
3. There have been questions raised about the continued worth of obedience given the emergence of troubling trends in Singapore.
4. There are different ways to be obedient and conceptions of what obedience entails.

**QUESTION REQUIREMENTS:**

The extent to which obedience is valued, and by whom, and for what purposes and outcomes in mind, must be calibrated. The response must be contextualised to the candidate's country of residence or home society.

**Thoughtful Responses:**

- Understand the concept of obedience completely, accurately and precisely, noting that obedience connotes a certain willingness and volition to follow. The best responses will make a distinction between willing and wholehearted obedience, 'I will obey because the authority is right', and compliant obedience which is a choice made grudgingly, 'I will obey because you have told me to and I have no other choice but to comply.'

- Evaluate the reasons for why obedience, both as a spirit and behaviour, is accorded either high or low degrees of social value and/or delineate circumstances or conditions to calibrate the extent to which obedience is valued ('valued insofar as ...', 'tend to be valued when the context requires ...').
- Show an awareness of the range of obedient and disobedient behaviours – from obeying one's parents and elders because of beliefs about filial piety, to following the rule of law or community norms, to collectivist behaviour, to irreverence for or open disrespect for figures of authority (e.g. leaders), to the various and rare forms of civil disobedience.
- For responses contextualised to Singapore, an awareness that obedience in the form of giving up some rights for the greater good of society is seen as valued and important. This is seen as serving greater goals of security, stability and survival.

**Limited Responses:**

- Conflate obedience with related but different concepts, such as conformity and rule-following, shifting the focus away from the concept of obedience.
- List examples of obedience and disobedience occurring in the candidate's society with no attention to the value and significance accorded to obedience and why such levels of worth are attached.
- Are narrow in scope and treatment of the issues raised by the question, only managing to relate parent-child relationships of authority and obedience.