



101 IELTS

WRITING

ACADEMIC AND GENERAL

Task 2 | JAMES BRYANT



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101 IELTS Writing Academic and General Task 2 - 2016

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Shopping for Leisure

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Shopping is becoming more and more popular as a leisure activity.

Discuss the effects of this on individuals and society.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

In many societies people are shopping less out of the necessity of buying things they need and more as a leisure activity. This is probably a result of having more disposable income, the fact that many items are relatively cheap and that they are being encouraged to do so by advertising. This can have several

effects on individuals and on society.

One effect is that individuals buy many items they don't really need. They buy things because they are fashionable to have rather than because such items have a practical use. This has the effect of making people more materialistic. They often want items for the sake of it or because someone else has them. Second, people keep things that they buy for a shorter time. This is particularly true with clothes. People buy clothes, wear them a few times and then throw them away and buy new ones. Since many items of clothing are cheap, they can afford to do this. This creates an environmental problem, since more waste is being produced. It means items need to be recycled or disposed of by burning (creating pollution) or by burial at landfill sites.

Another effect is people spend more money. This is often greeted by economists since it helps the economy grow. Increased shopping creates business, increases trade and provides jobs in the retail industry. However, it can also cause people to save less for their futures, particularly for their retirements when they will almost certainly have lower incomes. It can also create trade deficits if the majority of items are imported rather than produced in the country where they are sold. This is the situation in Britain and the USA.

To conclude, shopping as a leisure activity affects society and individuals in many ways. Some of these are beneficial while others are not. I think that "moderation" is the key word. People should be given the freedom to shop if it is something they enjoy, but they should also be aware of the consequences of shopping on their financial status, the environment and the economy. (346 words)

Sport and Peace

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

International sporting events make an important contribution to international peace.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Many people believe that international sporting events contribute to a more peaceful world and better understanding between nations and their peoples. I think that they might make a small contribution, but that they do not make an important one.

When the Greeks held the ancient Olympics, it was understood that conflicts would cease for the duration of the Games. In the modern Olympics and other sporting events held nowadays, this is not the case.

The terrorist attacked during the Munich Olympics in 1972. The intensified security service evident during the world's major sporting events proves that there is still a threat even to these peaceful proceedings.

Many people maintain that international sporting events contribute to international peace and understanding indirectly, by allowing people from different countries to meet in a friendly atmosphere. I do not believe that it has such a marked effect as people claim. At major sporting events, people tend to become very supportive of their own team or country and this

dissuades people from becoming very friendly to fans from other countries. We see this in football in particular, but it also happens at the Olympics where the race for gold medals often overshadows the simple enjoyment of sport.

I think that international sporting events can be more effective promoters of international peace and understanding when the team members are not from a particular country but are from several different countries. We can see this in tennis, where doubles teams are almost always made up of two players from different countries, and in football, where leading teams such as Manchester United bring together players from Europe and South America.

To summarise, I think making most international sporting events vehicles for promoting international peace is unrealistic because of national pride, but that it is possible in some sports where the nationality of the players is not considered important. (310 words)

Global Trade

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Increasing global trade has led to the use of many items, including everyday items, produced in other countries which must be transported long distances.

To what extent do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Almost everyone is convinced of the advantages of international trade. There are, however, disadvantages. Nowadays, when the issue of environmental protection is high on the global agenda, some people are beginning to question whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages any longer.

The main advantages of international trade are that they allow people to purchase a wider variety of products than would otherwise be available to them and that these imported items are often cheaper than those produced domestically. International trade also allows countries to import and export technologies to other countries, facilitating the spread of human knowledge.

One of the key disadvantages of global trade is that items need to be transported thousands of miles around the world. Whether these items are transported by land, air or sea, their shipment requires substantial amounts of fuel. At present, this is almost always fossil fuel, either oil or coal. This produces large amounts of pollution, which damages the environment. Some people believe that this drawback outweighs the advantages of global trade, particularly those people who believe that the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels is responsible for global warming.

On the other hand, this massive business of global transportation of goods from one country to another is a major source of employment in most countries. It provides jobs not only for those who actually transport the goods, but also for those who load and unload them. It is also a major source of income for governments in the form of excise duties.

Overall, I think that the advantages of global trade outweigh the disadvantages of transporting goods over long distances. Whilst there are alternative sources of energy, these are not currently suitable for use in the transportation of goods in bulk internationally. Consequently, any restrictions on using these fuels for this purpose would inevitably mean a reduction in international trade. (315 words)

Advertising

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Advertising encourages consumers to buy in quantity rather than promoting quality.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Nowadays, many people are becoming convinced that advertising is more concerned with encouraging bulk purchases than with encouraging the production of quality goods through competition. In my opinion, it depends on the type of goods being advertised.

Advertising can be viewed from two standpoints. One is that it informs consumers and thereby promotes competition between producers and service providers. The other is that it is primarily concerned with getting people to purchase items that they would not otherwise buy. I believe that the truth lies somewhere between the two.

Some kinds of advertising clearly encourage bulk purchases, in particular through offering consumers “two for the price of one”, and offering large containers at a lower “per litre” or “per kilo” cost, or through offering substantial discounts for purchasing several of the same item at a time. Such

items could include everyday household items such as washing powder or items that are regularly consumed more than one at a time, such as cans of beer. In fact, many stores successfully specialise in supplying goods in bulk to individual consumers. The idea is that people will consume more quickly if they have many of the item at home rather than having to go out and buy the item singly every time they need it.

On the other hand, some products are not advertised for bulk purchase. This is especially true of items that are particularly expensive and/or items that a person is unlikely to need more than one. Examples of such products include watches and cars. Advertisements for such products are more likely to stress the quality of the product than its price. Advertisements for cars in a similar category are more likely to focus on the cars' qualities than their prices, since most people will not simply go for the cheapest car, but for one that meets their expectations in other ways.

In conclusion, I think that advertisers take into consideration the market for their products when advertising and decide accordingly whether they wish to focus on selling in bulk or on competing on the basis of the quality of their products. (351 words)

Studying at School or from the Internet

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Nowadays, schools are becoming unnecessary for children, since they can use the Internet to study at home.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The development of the Internet has certainly provided children with the opportunity to study online, but does it mean that schools are becoming unnecessary? I am of the opinion that this is not the case and that schools are still required even in the Internet age.

The Internet can provide children with almost all the information they need. Any information that they need, but cannot currently access, could easily be placed on websites by teachers. It would be cheaper and more convenient than operating schools. Children would be able to contact their teachers by email for advice.

However, I believe that this fails to take into account that most children are insufficiently mature to take full responsibility for their education. Schools provide children with an organised and reasonably strict environment in which they are to be educated. If children were left to their own devices it is likely that most would not utilise their time in an appropriate manner and would fall behind with their studies (or almost all would, given that their parents would probably be at work or otherwise engaged).

I also believe that a full education is not just about learning facts. It is also about learning how to interact with other people and how to cooperate. These are life skills that children might not develop outside a traditional school environment. At school, children learn to make presentations in front

of the whole class– something which can be useful in later life when they need to explain something such as a new product or how a system works.

To summarise, I think that the Internet cannot replace a traditional school education, even though it is able to provide children with the facts they need. The problems are that education and information are not the same things and that children are generally not mature enough to learn alone. (310 words)

Artistic Projects

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people say that it is not right for the government to spend so much money on artistic projects such as art galleries and sculptures.

What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Model Answer

Governments do not have unlimited budgets. They need to prioritise spending and ensure that the money they spend is used wisely and efficiently. At a time when hospitals and schools seem to require more money than ever, many people question whether the government really needs to spend much money on the arts. Personally, I think that the government should concentrate on other issues.

People who support government funding of the arts claim that the arts are part of our culture. I am not entirely sure how much of the art that the

government funds is part of our culture. Whilst some certainly is, much of the art on display in my country is not from Britain! Other items of art may be considered as such by experts and artists, but often ordinary people do not think they are artistic at all. Like the clothes we can see at top fashion shows, art is often all very nice, but not the kind of thing most people would have even if they could afford it. If you asked ordinary British people to brainstorm about British culture, you would probably get responses like “The Beatles”, sarcastic comedies, football, and fish and chips. I doubt that many people would mention Damien Hirst or Benjamin Britten.

To claim that we should fund the arts because they are part of our heritage is a good argument. The government should certainly preserve some of our history for future generations. We need to ensure that a variety of art is preserved, not only traditional artistic projects such as paintings in galleries. The government should not fund niche projects that very few people even regard as artistic, such as dead cows in formaldehyde, because the government needs to have the interests of the population at heart.

To reiterate, I believe that the government has higher priorities than art, though relatively small amounts of money should be spent on the arts in order to help preserve our cultural heritage. I believe that most funding for artistic projects should come from the people who go to see them and perhaps also from lottery money, as is done in Britain. (358 words)

Modern Methods of Food Production

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Nowadays, food can be produced much more cheaply and in greater quantities thanks to modern technology. Many people believe that these changes in the way we produce food may have harmful effects on consumers and communities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The dramatic increase in the global population means that food supplies also have to be increased. This has been achieved cheaply with the aid of modern technology. However, many people think that this achievement may have harmful effects on consumers and communities.

The benefits of using modern technology to produce food can be maximised by making farms larger. It doesn't make economic sense to use machines such as combine harvesters on small plots of land, but their use is of great benefit on extensive farms such as those found in Canada. Many people point out that this has had a negative effect on communities. Since fewer people are required to farm more land, many people have moved from rural communities to urban areas to find work, destroying rural communities that have existed for generations.

Those farming large areas also tend to use many chemicals, such as insecticides. Many people are worried that the chemicals used in modern farming are absorbed by agricultural products and then taken in by humans when we eat those products. Almost all countries have safety inspections to

ensure that the chemicals in foodstuffs do not exceed safe limits, but many people are still wary of this situation.

People are also sometimes wary of the new genetically modified foods that are becoming available. Although most scientists agree that these foodstuffs are perfectly safe, some point out that it is impossible to know the long-term effects of consuming large amounts of genetically modified food.

To conclude, I believe that the way in which we produce food nowadays has had an adverse effect on communities, but that it is a price worth paying for a greater and more reliable supply of food. That the harmful effects on consumers have not been proven and I think that there are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent poor quality food regularly being sold. (311 words)

Transactions Not Conducted Face-to-Face

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

People now perform many tasks such as shopping and banking, even business transactions, without meeting people face to face.

What effects could this development have on individuals and on society?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The fact that modern communication and technology mean that we do not need to conduct many tasks face to face is having several effects on both individuals and on society as a whole. In this essay, I would like to assess a few of them.

Most people would agree that using modern communication and technology makes conducting transactions more convenient. I believe that this is true to a certain extent. It certainly saves time if, for example, you can perform transactions online – such as banking and shopping. It also allows for trade over long distances, since businesspeople can communicate with each other using email, the telephone and video conferencing. The problem arises when the technology doesn't work as otherwise it should. Sometimes, Internet connections don't work well, e.g., the cables are broken as when there was an earthquake near Taiwan recently. In routine cases, such as when making complaints, people also tend to value face to face communication. The convenience of using technology isn't, therefore, an over-riding factor.

Many people are worried that, as we conduct an increasing number of transactions using machines rather than on a face to face basis, people will become more alienated from each other, leading to an increasingly impersonal society. I do not think that this will happen to the overwhelming majority of people. Almost all people value contact with other people and will continue to do things face to face with others. We can see this in our society now. Even though people can do their shopping online, most people still go to the shops themselves. Most business meetings take place face to face, with people flying around the world to attend them, even though these meetings can be held without the participants physically being in the same room.

To conclude, I think that modern communication and technology generally make our lives more convenient, but that we will continue to value face to face interaction, particularly in non-routine or unusual circumstances. I also do not believe that this modern way of doing things will alienate people from each other.

(345 words)

Technology and Creativity

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Many people believe that the increasing use of modern technology at work and in leisure is reducing people's creativity.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

In recent years, there has been a debate about whether the use of modern technology increases or decreases people's creativity. I believe that modern creativity has generally allowed people to become more creative.

I believe this firstly because technological developments allow people to produce further developments. The development of the telegraph and the telephone led to the development of radio and the mobile phone. Radio led many people to become creative – finding new uses for this medium and sharing music. Since the mobile phone developed, people have been looking

at ways of using it. We can now send text messages around the world and even use our mobile phones to pay for things.

This new-found creativity is not only limited to scientists and technicians. Computers allow people to express their creativity by writing books and articles to be published online. Other people have discovered their artistic talent though using relatively easy-to-use computer programmes such as Photoshop. We can even see this creativity in computer games. Games such as “World of Warcraft” enable people to develop online characters using their creativity to accomplish tasks.

However, there are people who use modern technology in ways that do not develop creativity. It is widely reported that students in many countries are using the Internet to plagiarise – to use other people’s work and present it as their own. It is often claimed that the ease with which music and films can be downloaded for free may dissuade producers from making them.

Other people do not use computers in creative ways. For example, they may play games that do not enhance creativity, knowledge, or skills. From what has been said, it is not necessary that we do everything for reasons other than simple pleasure. After all, the manufacturers of modern technologies constantly tell us that one of the main purposes of modern technology is to make our lives more pleasurable.

In conclusion, I believe that modern technology has given people the opportunity to be more creative. Most people have taken that chance, but there are some who have not. (344 words)

Water Shortage

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

In many countries all over the world there is a serious shortage of water. What are the causes of and possible solutions to the scarcity of water resources?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Water is a resource and like most resources it is finite and only readily accessible in certain places. Two thirds of our planet is covered with water that, in its natural form, is unsuitable for drinking and for agriculture. Water is one of the issues that stands in the way of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and looks set to be one of the major causes of conflict in the 21st century. Why is fresh water relatively scarce and what can be done to solve this problem?

The main reason for the scarcity of fresh water is that populations have increased significantly whilst supplies of fresh water have remained fairly constant. Use of water per head of population has also increased as people all over the world buy and utilise more water-consuming items, such as washing machines to do their housework and flush toilets for domestic waste disposal. Countries have also been developing their industries to provide wealth and agricultural systems to provide food, further increasing demand for water.

Solutions to this problem must focus either on reducing consumption or on increasing supply. Reducing consumption is possible. Many machines (such as washing machines) are now designed to use less water. Much water is wasted, particularly through leaking water pipes. Water companies need to take responsibility for this and can be encouraged to do so by the government, either through legislation or via taxation.

The two main proposals for increasing supply are the construction of desalination plants that convert seawater into fresh water and towing icebergs from the Arctic and Antarctic to places where fresh water is needed. The problem with both solutions is that they are extremely expensive. So far, most countries that use desalination plant extensively are the oil-rich Gulf States. For poorer African countries these solutions are too expensive and for some it is impossible since they have no coastline.

To conclude, the reasons for the scarcity of fresh water are to do with increased populations and the development of economies. Solutions are currently available, but the problem is that they are expensive. As a result, we can expect conflicts over supplies of fresh water to continue. (360 words)

Encouraging Young People to Become Teachers

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Nowadays there are fewer and fewer young people who are willing to pursue a career in teaching.

What do think are the causes of this phenomenon? What can the government do to encourage people to work in this profession?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

If fewer young people are moving into teaching as a profession, there could be several reasons for this trend and hence several ways to encourage them into it. In this essay, I will look at two of the possibilities.

When people are choosing a career, they understandably take into account the rates of pay of various jobs. Teachers in my country are reasonably well paid, but their salaries are still below those of many other professions. The simple way to solve this is to raise salaries for teachers, especially those just starting in the profession. However, there is a problem in that the state is usually the largest employer of teachers and budgetary limits mean that public sector workers generally get paid less than private sector ones.

Another reason could be the supposed difficulty of the job. Many newspapers in my country publish articles about the problems that teachers have maintaining discipline in the classroom and the criticism they receive from parents who believe teachers are doing a bad job of educating their children. Potential teachers reading such articles may well be put off the profession as a result. If the articles are correct, then the government (as the main employer) needs to look at ways of supporting teachers in their work. If the articles are only telling part of the story, perhaps teachers could be encouraged to contribute articles to newspapers highlighting the positive sides of their work and the satisfaction it brings.

To summarise, the government needs to discover why young people are not interested in a career of teaching. It is the government's responsibility

because it is the main employer of teachers. Once it has found out the reasons for this, it can support policies that encourage young people into the profession. In my opinion, higher pay rates might be hard to introduce given that governments usually have tight budgets, but portraying a more positive image of teaching need not to be so expensive. (327 words)

Suitability of Women for Certain Jobs

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

In some countries there are women taking positions in male dominated occupations such as police officers and soldiers. Some people believe that women are not suited to such work.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The issue of sex equality is one that has been debated increasingly over the past few decades. Most countries now offer women the same basic human rights as men and so the debate has shifted from that to the representation of women in various areas of employment, particularly those traditionally dominated by men. Some say that women are inherently unsuited to these jobs. Others, including myself, disagree.

People who think that women are unsuited for work as police officers and soldiers usually point out that women are not as physically strong as men. It

is true that the body mass of the average woman is lower than that of the average man, but there are many women who can hold their own in a physical fight with a man. Just as not all men are physically strong, not all women are physically weak.

Nowadays, much of the work of police officers and soldiers depends on their intellectual capabilities rather than their physical ones. In this area, women have consistently shown that they are equal to men. Skills such as leadership, the abilities to search for, find and interpret information are certainly not male preserves.

To conclude, the selection of a person for a job should not be based on whether that person is male or female. People should be selected according to their personal capabilities. When selecting police officers and soldiers, a person's physical fitness needs to be taken into account and this may result in more men being selected than women. (252 words)

A Smaller World

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

With the development of modern tourism, transportation and communication, the world is becoming smaller.

To what extent do the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

I am of the opinion that developments in tourism, transportation and communication are having more of a beneficial effect on the world and that these effects outweigh the drawbacks of these developments.

When we talk of the world becoming smaller, we are referring to the fact that it is now easier to travel around the world to visit places we would not otherwise have had much chance to visit and to the fact that it is now relatively easy to communicate with people in other parts of the world. These developments

have brought us enormous benefits. It is much easier to transport food cheaply, meaning that we can

feed the entire world as long as there are no man-made barriers to it such as war. We can also exchange technological developments, see how people in different countries live and even enjoy sports events that are taking place on the other side of the world. We can enrich our lives by travelling to foreign countries, if only for a short time each year.

Despite these great benefits brought to us by modern tourism, transportation and communication, there are problems. Too much tourism can damage historic sites and have negative effects on local cultures. For this reason, some countries, such as Bhutan, restrict tourism. Others restrict it at certain sites. For example, tourism is restricted at Stonehenge in Britain. Increased transportation brings us goods from abroad, but it also causes large amounts of pollution. This has a negative effect on our environment. As a result, governments tax the use of fuels partly to discourage waste. The speed of modern communication means that nowadays people often feel under pressure to react quickly. In such circumstances, they might not make the best decisions.

To summarise, I think that modern developments in these three areas have generally been far more beneficial than detrimental to the world. There are problems, but negative effects can usually be minimised. (321 words)

Public or Private Provision of Services

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

To what extent should the government provide services such as defence, infrastructure, and health, and to what extent should these services be provided by private companies and individuals?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The question of which services should be provided by the public sector and which should be provided by the private sector is one that has engaged politicians, economists and ordinary people for decades. I think that most services, such as infrastructure and health, can be provided by both sectors, whilst others need to be provided by the public sector alone, as in the case of defence.

The government is in the best position to provide nationwide services to entire populations, such as transportation systems and health services. This is because the government can pass legislation to, for example, compel people to sell land for new roads. The government also has large amounts of money

that it can use without worrying about profits or shareholders. However, companies can build bridges and then recoup the money from charging tolls to users. Companies and individuals can provide medical services, but since these are expensive, they tend to cater to those who are better off, leaving the less well-off to use government provided medical services. An important point to emphasise is that companies tend to be concerned with profits and therefore generally involve themselves with projects that result in financial benefits.

Defence is generally regarded as a service that needs to be provided by the government, since it would be impractical to have different parts of a country defended by private companies or individuals. In addition, defence is expensive and it is doubtful whether small communities would be able to adequately fund their own defences. We can see this in smaller countries around the world, which tend to rely on larger countries to help defend them. Furthermore, defence is seen as one of the indicators of sovereignty and governments are unlikely to allow it to pass into private hands. However, there is no reason why companies and individuals shouldn't be able to produce equipment for defence.

To conclude, most services can be provided by both the government and by companies and individuals. However, there are certain services which it is unrealistic to expect the private sector to provide. (344 words)

International Tourism: Tension or Understanding

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

International tourism has become one of the biggest industries in the world. Some people think it causes more tension than understanding among people from different cultures.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

With the increase in tourism around the world, some people are beginning to question whether it really helps create understanding between people or whether in fact it causes more tensions. I can see how tourism can create tensions, but still believe that it creates more understanding.

Tourism can cause tensions in different ways. One is by highlighting wealth differences between people from different countries. When people in a poorer country see many tourists from wealthier ones, they may question how those people come to have so much money that they can take time off work and travel abroad. There may also be cultural differences. For example, in Muslim countries women dress modestly, whilst in Western ones they tend not to cover themselves in hot weather. Some tourists might also offend local sensibilities by pointing out customs that they consider barbaric or unhygienic, such as the public slaughter of animals. For these reasons, it is important that tourists do a little background research of the countries they are visiting in order not to cause tensions and that tourists refrain from displaying their wealth.

Tourism aids understanding between people of different cultures by showing them that actually they are not so different after all. For example, people tend to eat similar kinds of foods, though these may be prepared in different ways, often they are not. People also have the opportunity to exchange ideas. These can develop into arguments, but if people are thoughtful about what they say, people from different cultures can learn a lot from one another. In particular, they might discover that preconceptions they had are in fact false.

To conclude, tourists need to be thoughtful and careful when they are visiting other countries. And this will encourage international understanding. People living in areas where there are tourists also need to be aware of cultural differences and politely make tourists aware of these, which will generally result in mutual respect.

(321 words)

Boarding Schools

Some people think that it is better for children to go to boarding school, whilst others think they should go to day schools.

What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Model Answer

Like most British children, I attended a day school. However, a minority of children do go to boarding schools, sometimes because parents believe the schools are better, sometimes because of their parents' occupations. Personally, I do not believe that either boarding schools or day schools offer

a significant overall advantage to children. In this essay, I would like to look at the advantages that each system offers.

Boarding schools are ideal for parents whose work takes them abroad or who are otherwise unable to offer their children a “normal” home life after school and at weekends. The children are looked after by professionals and the children learn to be independent from their parents from an early age. These same three reasons lead many parents to send their children to such schools even if they do not need to.

Another reason that boarding schools are an attractive option is that they offer a more disciplined atmosphere, with children’s time allotted to certain activities from the moment they rise in the morning until they rest at night. This is considered by the parents to be useful in later life.

Boarding schools are expensive, so they are usually limited to high income families. As they have more money, they can provide better facilities and attract better teachers with higher salaries. This leads to greater opportunities for personal development for pupils.

However, this “exclusivity” is often the basis of arguments against boarding schools. Some people feel that pupils from these schools will think themselves inherently superior to other pupils. This is one of the main benefits of going to a day school – the pupils are from various backgrounds. Day schools, unlike most boarding schools, are also mixed gender, giving boys and girls the chance to grow up together. Different genders and backgrounds teach the children how to interact with various people, not just those similar to them. Obviously, this skill is useful in later life.

To conclude, I believe that both types of school have advantages in different areas. Families should decide for themselves which type they prefer to send their children to. (349 words)

Space Research

It has been more than 30 years since man first landed on the moon. Some people think that space research is a waste of money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Space research is incredibly expensive. We have undoubtedly gained a lot from such research, but has it been worth the money? Would we have been better off spending the money on things that could more directly benefit more people? When answering this question, I think that we need to look beyond measuring purely in terms of money.

Space research has allowed us to make many technological developments. It has brought us advances in the natural sciences and in mathematics. However, many of the benefits are less tangible. We have gained immense knowledge about the universe and our place in it. We have learnt how our planet came into being and the forces in the universe that might result in its destruction. We have found answers to many of the superstitions associated with the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies. We have also begun to explore other worlds, in order to discover what they can tell us about our own world and in order to find out whether they can provide us with

resources. For me, the most important thing is intangible that we have discovered that we are not at the centre of the universe, and that we are an insignificant part of it.

If we had spent all the money on other projects, such as health and education, it is far from certain that we would have gained as much as some people claim. Although our government's supply of money is not limitless, more can be raised to fund health and education projects. Simply providing money for projects doesn't ensure that the money will be well spent. One example would be the money that developed countries have given to developing countries over the last 50 years. Another problem is that many (perhaps most) people prefer to have lower taxes rather than provide funding for such things.

In conclusion, I think that the money spent on space exploration has been worth the investment. There is little to suggest that we could have used that money more wisely on other projects. (341 words)

Family Closeness

It is generally acknowledged that families are now not as close as they used to be. What are the possible reasons for this and what can be done to reverse the trend?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Nowadays, it is common to see articles in newspapers about families that are not as close as they once were and even about the collapse of family structures. If these articles are correct, then there may be a variety of reasons and therefore a variety of possible solutions.

One common suggestion is that people nowadays have to work longer hours and work harder. This means that they have less time to spend with their families and that they have less energy to do things with their family members when they do have time. If this is true, then I think people need to reconsider their priorities. They need to decide whether they are “living to work” or “working to live”. People from a wide variety of professions and backgrounds do manage to find time for work and for their families, so I think that in most cases it is simply a question of people organising their time better in order to get their work done and have enough time to spend with their families.

Another reason that families are not as close as before is that people have become much more mobile. It is not unusual for a person to live in a different town or city (or even country!) away from their parents. This usually occurs as a result of the need to be mobile in order to find work or better work. Although people will obviously not be able to spend as much time with their families as when they live in the same home or neighbourhood, it is possible to keep in touch with family members relatively cheaply thanks to modern technology. Simply because a person lives far away from their family, it does not follow that they are not close to their family.

To conclude, work has a lot to do with the amount of time a person spends with their family, but if people are creative about using their time and

modern technology they can overcome these problems and be close to their families. (339 words)

Work time and free time

Many people think that nowadays people are being subjected to more and more pressure in their work, and thus have less and less time to relax.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Many people believe that they are working longer hours and are being subjected to more pressure at work and that this results in having less time to relax. I am not entirely convinced of this and believe that people have more free time to relax than ever.

In the past, people often worked on the land. This entailed working long days and working six or seven days a week. Farm workers rarely had holidays and these were generally unpaid. During the industrial revolution in Britain, it was common for people to work long shifts, six days a week with few holidays. It is true that there were people who worked far less and could take holidays, but that was for a minority of people rather than typical workers. Nowadays, most people in my country work eight or nine hours a day for five days a week. In addition, they have several weeks of paid holidays each year. They certainly have more time to relax. We can see this simply by noting how the leisure industry has grown in recent decades.

It is possible that many people are under more pressure at work, but I think that this depends a lot not only on what kind of work a person does but also how they approach their work. There are many people who have jobs that involve intense work, for example stock traders. Such people usually have to change jobs after a relatively short period of time because of the stress they are put under. Many other people simply do not work as efficiently as they could, often as a result of poor time management, and this results in increased stress, particularly when deadlines approach.

In summary, I believe that most workers have more free time than their predecessors and that most of the pressure that people feel at work can usually be attributed to poor efficiency on the part of the individual rather than the job itself.

(327 words)

Academic and Practical Subjects

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

It is often said that the subjects taught at schools are too academic in orientation and that it would be more useful for children to learn about practical matters such as home management, work and interpersonal skills.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

There has always been more to learn than what schools have time to teach, so inevitably some things and subjects that are considered to be less important must be left out. Has the education system become too focused on academic subjects, leaving our children without key practical skills?

Many people argue that schools should focus on teaching academic subjects whilst more practical, non- academic ones should be learnt outside school, especially at home from parents. I think that this ignores two things. The first is that many parents do not have sufficient practical skills themselves. Therefore, they cannot automatically be expected to pass these skills on to their children. The second thing is that there is not necessarily a clear division between academic subjects and practical skills. For example, the ability to make a presentation is an interpersonal skill that is useful both in the academic world and in the workplace. The ability to manage household finances is a practical skill that is reflected in an academic subject (mathematics).

Both practical skills and academic skills can be learnt outside school. However, academic subjects are less likely to be learnt outside the formal education system simply because most children do not want to spend their evenings and weekends just on learning what their teachers have told them about such topics. It should be noted that free time activities such as playing sports, listening to music and watching TV can help children learn about practical matters. Team sports encourage children to cooperate. Listening to music can inspire children to learn to play musical instruments. Many TV programmes teach people about real life and help them to develop practical skills, such as cooking and how to deal with money.

In conclusion, I believe that schools should focus more on academic subjects, but that the relevance of these to everyday life can be emphasised by teachers. It would help if we were more careful about making such a big distinction between academic subjects and practical abilities. (331 words)

Purpose of Schools/Education

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people think that the main purpose of schools is to turn children into good citizens and workers rather than benefit them as individuals.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Is it the purpose of schools to produce good citizens and workers or is it to benefit each individual? I believe that schools should do both. By producing good citizens and workers, schools are benefiting the students as individuals and vice versa.

The main aim of education is to transfer knowledge and skills to students, who can then use that knowledge and those skills to benefit themselves. I believe that this in turn benefits the whole society. When a person learns, it gives them more opportunities to lead a successful life. In countries where children receive little or no education, we can see that their future possibilities are limited. However, when we look at countries where children are educated, most of them become inspired to achieve something in their

lives. This has nothing to do with a person's intelligence. It is a demonstration of the power of education to broaden people's minds.

The process of individuals using their education to improve themselves leads to the benefits for the rest of society. When businesspeople start new companies, they provide opportunities for many people through employment. When scientists develop new technologies, they help make many people's lives better. New businesses pay taxes to fund government projects. New technologies attract investors.

Education also turns people into better members of society in other ways. Better educated people are more likely to raise better educated children. Better educated people are less likely to commit crime. Better educated people are more likely to act responsibly towards society and other citizens. In other words, schooling is likely to produce better citizens.

To conclude, I believe that the purpose of schools is to benefit both society as a whole and the individual. A better society helps create better individuals and better individuals help create a better society. (299 words)

Public and Private Health Care

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people think that good health is important to everyone, so medical services should not be run by profit-making companies.

Do the disadvantages of private health care outweigh the advantages?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

I believe that medical services can and should be provided by private, profit-making companies in addition to having medical services provided by the state. In this essay, I will outline my reasons and look at why some people believe that medical services should not be provided by profit-making companies.

In countries where there are both private and state health care facilities, it is almost always true that the private facilities are of better quality. This is because the people using those facilities tend to be wealthier and can therefore afford to pay for the best. Many people say that this is unfair, since it creates a two-tier system – one for the wealthy and one for the rest of the people. I understand this point, but I do not see any problem with allowing people to buy better health care if they can afford it. People often want to make money so that they can lead better lives. Part of this is having access to better health care.

Private health care facilities are generally better managed than state ones, since private health care companies are interested in making profits for their investors and therefore keep waste to a minimum. State health care facilities are not concerned with profits and are therefore less concerned about waste. This means that state health care facilities could often save money by emulating the practices of private ones. Some people say that private health care companies are so concerned with profits that they try to save money at the cost of the provision of quality health care. I doubt whether private health care companies would do this, since they are in competition with other companies, they cannot afford to let standards drop, which risks losing customers.

In conclusion, I believe that the advantages of private health care far outweigh its disadvantages and that private, profit-making companies should be encouraged to enter the health care market. (319 words)

Study International News

Some people think that secondary school students should study international news as a school subject, but others argue that it would be a waste of valuable school time.

What is your opinion on the issue?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

School time is valuable since it is limited. There is so much to learn, and simply not enough time to study everything. As a result, schools and governments have to make tough choices about which subjects are most important and useful. Some people believe that studying international news should be a school subject, whilst others disagree.

I think that the main advantage of studying international news as a school subject would be that students would gain a wider perspective of the world. Part of this wider view would come from the fact that international news draws together several different subjects – history, geography, science, economics, sociology and politics – and demonstrates how those subjects are relevant to the real world. It would show students how past events and developments have shaped our current world and how we might be able to shape our future world.

Another advantage is that it would give students a greater understanding of other societies and people from different countries. In the modern world, where trade, communication and travel are so much faster and more important than in the past, such knowledge would certainly be useful. It could also have other effects, such as breaking down barriers between countries, cultures and people. It might also increase the prestige of the country, since foreigners would see events that are happening around the world and take an interest in them.

Incorporating this new subject into the school timetable may be difficult, but I would encourage people to view it as a supplement to other subjects rather than a competitor. In this way, the study of international news might be accepted by more people. In conclusion, I think that studying international news would be advantageous to students and that it would not be a waste of school time to include it in the timetable. (303 words)

Male and Female Leaders

Throughout history, male leaders have often made societies more violent and conflicting. If women governed the world, it would be more peaceful.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

I once had a female history teacher who said privately that history was about men making a series of disastrous mistakes whilst women were oppressed and could only look on with incredulity. I believe there is some truth in this

statement, but would the world really be much more peaceful if women governed it? In this essay, I will look at both sides of the argument.

Men are generally more aggressive in seeking their goals than women and we can see that this often influences events in the world, particularly in the way that societies led by men have been more willing to use violence to achieve their ends. However, when we look at times when women were leaders, we can see that they were also prepared to use violence. Queen Elizabeth I raised an army to attack Scotland and also used her navy to defeat the Spanish Armada. More recently, Margaret Thatcher used force in the Falklands War against Argentina and in the First Gulf War against Iraq. It could be argued that these wars were defensive, but then isn't that what male leaders also usually claim?

I believe that the violence that has become the hallmark of human history has less to do with whether the leader is male or female but has much more to do with the fact that people who reach positions of leadership tend to be those who are particularly ambitious and determined – in other words, aggressive. When such people are engaged in dealings with other countries, they are likely to be stubborn rather than conciliatory, particularly if they feel that they are morally and/or militarily secure.

Overall, I agree that women are less likely to approach international politics with the possible use of violence in mind, but that the kind of women who reach the positions where key decisions are made are as likely as men to resort to violence.

(317 words)

Modern and Traditional Buildings

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Modern buildings are appearing in large numbers. Some people believe that we should build our buildings in traditional styles.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

In recent years, the amount of construction has increased significantly as new land is developed and as old buildings are demolished in favour of modern ones. Some people hold strong opinions about the particular style of the buildings that should be built. I am not one of these people and I think that it would be best if we had a variety of architectural styles.

It is inevitable that many old buildings will be demolished. One reason is simply that they are old and unsafe for use. Another is that the land they are on is valuable and can be better used for tall buildings that provide much more space whilst occupying relatively little land. Thirdly, the buildings may simply have outlived their usefulness. The architects who design buildings to replace these old ones need to take several factors into account. Two key ones are the purpose of the new building and whether the new building will fit in with its surroundings. If the architect places too much emphasis on the style of the building, it may not fulfill its purpose well. If the building is designed in a completely different style from surrounding ones, it may look out of place.

Old buildings were designed for different purposes other than those are required of buildings today. This means that the interior of modern buildings will almost inevitably be of a different style from traditional ones. However, architects are generally good at incorporating more traditional styles in the outside of modern buildings. For example, in China some modern office blocks have traditional Chinese style roofs. This mixes modern functionality with traditional style.

I think that architects are becoming more concerned with producing buildings that look distinctive and that this is generally a good thing. When I travel through a city, I don't want to see buildings all in one style.

I prefer to see a variety. I think that it makes the city look more vibrant and dynamic. In conclusion, I don't think that buildings should be constructed in a single style – traditional or modern – but that a mix of styles is more appealing.

(353 words)

Happiness and Economic Success

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people believe that personal happiness is directly related to economic success. Others believe that there are other factors. Discuss both viewpoints and give your own opinion.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

According to surveys, the happiest people are from Philippines, yet it is impossible to say that country has the most successful economy in the world. Therefore, there must be other factors involved.

The suggestion that people's happiness is directly related to their economic success appears reasonable, but it assumes that a person or a nation can only be happy with money. This doesn't take into account of non-monetary factors such as friendship and family relations. There are other factors involved in economic success at the national and individual levels.

One of the keys to economic success is a good education system. Education provides people with information they can use to achieve more in life. They can use this knowledge to set up businesses and conduct scientific research. Looking at countries around the world, we can see that those with the best education systems generally have good economies whilst those without such systems do not.

Another factor is the legislative environment and the rule of law. If the laws of country allow individuals to start and run businesses without undue interference, then people will be encouraged to invest in companies and thereby expand the economy. The issue of security is related to this. In places where crime is relatively low and there is no war, economic success is not difficult to achieve compared with places where violence and crime are rampant. An example of this is Northern Ireland, which has undergone an economic revival since terrorist campaigns there ended several years ago.

On the other hand, economic success does not automatically lead to happiness. Many Americans say they are not happy, despite the fact that their economy is in a relatively good shape. This may be because of

divisions in society, particularly great differences in income between rich and poor. Even many individuals who are extremely rich do not have entirely happy lives. Perhaps they concentrate too much on making money and not enough on enjoying life. Perhaps they suffer from the same problems as everyone else in their family lives and at work.

To conclude, I cannot see any direct relationship between happiness and economic success at the national or individual level.

(362 words)

Journalists

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

People receive a lot of information from news reports presented by journalists. However, some people claim that we cannot believe the news that we are presented with.

What is your opinion on the issue?

In addition, what qualities do you think journalists should have?

Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Model Answer

It has often been said that we live in an information age. Most people in the world can receive information about events far away from where they live, by radio, TV and the Internet. How much can we really trust this information and what qualities should the people who give us the information have?

The first thing people need to consider when deciding whether or not to believe news stories is the source. Certain news organisations enjoy reputations for presenting the news reasonably objectively, whereas others are obviously biased and/or under the control of governments or organisations which seek to manipulate the media. If a news organisation (almost) invariably supports or opposes a government or group, its objectivity should be called into question.

A more difficult thing that recipients of information need to do is not so much separate fact from fiction, but fact from opinion. In an age when people can easily take quality photographs with cheap cameras and spy satellites providing evidence from many miles above the earth, it has become hard to deny an accident has happened or other facts. Rather than deny clear facts, which would only reduce the credibility of journalists and news providers, these same journalists and news organisations seek to influence us with allegations and opinions. These allegations and opinions are often not clearly separated from the facts, which can lead to the spread of misinformation.

Therefore, journalists should be reasonably objective, though complete objectivity will be difficult to achieve, as everyone has his own opinions and standpoints. If a journalist clearly takes a side on an issue, and states this openly, people can decide whether to accept the ideas or not, knowing that the opinion is slanted. Journalists need to be investigative, seeking out information and opinions to present to readers, listeners, and viewers. They also need to be very good with words, expressing their exact meaning, often succinctly.

Generally, I think that we can believe the facts we are presented with, except when these facts become mixed with allegations and opinions, particularly when those allegations and opinions are not clearly identified and are presented as facts. (355 words)

Violence on TV and in Films

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

The government should control the amount of violence in films and on television in order to decrease the number of violent crimes in society.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Many people blame increased violence on television and in films for the increasing number of crimes in society. They believe that it is up to the government to take action to censor violence in television programmes and films. I generally agree that violence shown on television and in films could be one of the reasons for increasing violent crime and needs to be controlled, but that it is not only the responsibility of the government to do so. The problem with violence on television and in films is that it can have an adverse influence on some people. Some might think that violence is an acceptable way of getting what you want in modern society. This is true of adults, but children are far more impressionable. Therefore, I think that one thing that should be done is for violent programmes only to be shown at a certain time in the evening. Another thing that should be done is for the most

violent scenes to be taken out before the programmes are broadcast. The government also needs to be firmer about the ratings that films containing violence receive and thereby prevent young people going to see them at cinemas.

However, these measures will not solve the problem, since nowadays it is relatively easy for people to download films and television programmes from the Internet and to see them at home on DVD. This is where parents need to take more responsibility and make sure that they know what their children are watching. Adults can also be more responsible about what they watch and set an example for their children. If people become less interested in watching violent programmes, fewer will be produced.

To conclude, violence on television and in films may be partly responsible for increasing violent crime. Therefore, the government can and should take measures to reduce the amount of violence we can watch in films and on television. However, we need to take some responsibility ourselves and also stop placing all the blame on film and television programme producers and think about what we watch. We also need to remember that violent crime is the result of many factors, not only violence in films and on TV. (368 words)

Retirement Age

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some workers retire at the age of 50, while others work until they are 65. At the same time, we see some politicians enjoying power well into their eighties.

Until what age do you think people should be encouraged to remain in paid employment?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

As many countries have an increasing proportion of people over 50 years old, the question of when it is the right time to retire has become a major issue. Some people think that the retirement age should be lower. Others say it should be raised. Then there are people who think that it should be flexible. In this essay, I will look at the arguments these groups present.

People who think that the retirement age should be lower often claim that this will result in more jobs being available for younger people. However, this is not necessarily true. Many younger people are not qualified or experienced enough to take these jobs. There is also the problem that many people would like to retire at an earlier age but cannot afford to do so. Providing additional government support to allow them to retire would be prohibitively expensive.

Nowadays, most people are healthier and can quite easily continue working for longer than people did in the past. Many people enjoy working since it gives them the opportunity to meet people and allows them to feel useful. It would be unfair to deny these people the chance to keep working until they wish to retire. On the other hand, if older people prevent younger ones moving up the career ladder, this can cause resentment.

People who support the idea of a flexible retirement age point out that it would allow people to retire when they want to and with a reasonable

amount of money to live comfortably on. Unfortunately, flexible retirement is not for everyone, since many people will be forced to retire at a younger age because of the nature of their work and/or their state of health.

Overall, I think that a flexible retirement age is the most realistic. However, I think that we also need to change our attitudes to workers over the age of 50. Many face discrimination because of their age, which is unfair because they often have a breadth of experience and are also able to continue working for many years. (344 words)

Computer Games

With the wider use of computers, more and more children are spending too much time playing computer games.

Discuss the effects of playing computer games on children.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Many people are concerned about the fact that children are spending an increasing amount of time on computer games. I believe that they are right to be concerned, but that spending time on this activity is not entirely bad.

Computer games require a wide range of skills. Some games need good hand-eye co-ordination. This is true of games that require players to shoot at or position items. Others require the players to think about what effects their actions might have. This is the case with games where a player plays the role of a character or where a player needs to develop a business or city. Other games involve money and this can help teach children that money is not a limitless resource and needs to be used wisely.

The main problem with computer games is that they can become addictive. Some games are very complex and require the player to play for a long time. Others do not take a long time to play, but are such fun that people, especially children, play them over and over again, losing track of time and ignoring other things that need to be done, such as homework.

If a child plays computer games too often and/or for too long, it also reduces the amount of exercise that child is getting. In extreme cases, this can result in obesity and associated problems. Children need to be encouraged to get exercise. This is mainly the responsibility of the parents.

In conclusion, computer games can have both good and bad effects on the people who play them. The negative effects can be particularly strong with children since they might not have learnt to take time for other activities. If a child is playing computer games too much, then it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that this situation ends. Parents are often quick to blame the manufacturers of computer games, but slow to recognise how they can intervene. (325 words)

Community Work

Some people think that young adults should undertake unpaid work to help people in the community.

Do you think that this has more drawbacks than benefits?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Most countries around the world have, at some time, had compulsory military service for young men. This has fallen out of favour in recent years since many people object to military service, and young women were generally exempt from it because there is a trend towards fully professional armies. However, many people believe that an alternative is to have young people engaged in unpaid community service after leaving school. I believe that this is generally a good idea, but that it does have drawbacks.

The main advantage of community service, in my opinion, is that it teaches young people that they are part of a society and that people need to work as a whole. Community service could involve caring for the elderly, which would hopefully lead to greater respect for them as well as a greater understanding of young people by the elderly. Another form of community service could involve helping the homeless, showing young people how they can help those less fortunate than themselves.

Another key benefit would be that young people would hopefully learn skills that would be useful to them in later life. Community service could involve working on environmental protection projects, such as recycling waste and helping with wildlife protection. Given that more attention is being paid to the environment, these skills should be useful in the future.

The main disadvantages would be the cost of setting up such schemes and the fact that young people would enter full employment a year or two later than they otherwise would. The latter disadvantage is offset by the fact that the young people would learn skills useful to their future employment whilst undertaking community service. The financial cost could be balanced by the overall benefit to the economy of having better trained young people. Crime

rates amongst young people would be likely to fall and environmental projects would contribute to a better society.

In summary, I believe that the benefits of having young people undertake community service would far outweigh any of its disadvantages. (335 words)

Work at Home

Question

Many people work at home using modern technology. Some people think that the workers benefit from it whilst the employers do not. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Modern technology has enabled many people to work at home. Has this been a benefit to employees only or has it also benefited employers?

Many people will suggest that people working at home are far more likely to become distracted from work. There is a certain logic to this point. We can remember how as students we were easily drawn away from our homework to watch TV or play with our friends. However, there is a key difference with employees. Employers have the option of sacking people who do not accomplish given tasks. If an employee thinks that he/she can work at home and not get his/her work done, the employer can get rid of that person and find someone more productive – or possibly revoke the person's right to work at home.

Employees working at home might find that they get certain benefits. For example, they may avoid a lengthy commute to work or they may find they are able to spend more time with their families. Factors such as these could

well increase employee productivity. If an employee enjoys working at home, they may actually work harder to ensure that they do not lose this benefit. On the other hand, people may not like their home also being their office.

But do employers get any tangible benefits from this situation? One clear benefit is that they will not need to provide such large work areas for employees. If the company is located in a downtown area, this could be a major saving. Having workers dispersed could also help avoid problems of “office politics” to a great extent.

A key question for employers is whether people working at home are able to function well as a team. This could mean that regular face-to-face meetings are necessary to ensure that all employees are absolutely clear about their roles and their jobs. In addition, it is clear that not all jobs lend themselves to being done at home. Factory workers and receptionists need to be “on site” to do their jobs.

Generally, I think that both employers and employees can benefit from having a “work at home” policy, where this doesn’t impair results. However, many people may need or want their workplace and home to be separate.
(375 words)

Science and Technology Subjects

Question

Since science and technology are becoming more and more important in modern society, schools should spend more time on teaching these subjects than on arts and humanities. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Some people believe that science and technology subjects should receive more emphasis at schools, given the importance of these subjects in the modern world. However, others think that this is not a sufficient reason and that the emphasis on which subjects should depend on other factors.

There can be little doubt that science and technology have a great influence on modern society. It is not just the commonly cited example of the Internet – we use science and technology to wash our clothes, build our cars and cook our food. Given this reliance on science and technology, it is reasonable to suggest that our schools should focus on these areas. If we do not, there is the chance that other countries will develop technologies that are more advanced.

There are arguments against this, however. One point that needs to be made is that developments in science and technology rarely have nothing to do with other subjects. For example, economics is connected to science and technology, since we need to decide whether a scientific or technological development is economically viable and the effects it may have. Similarly, we need people trained in history to explain archaeological discoveries that may be of use to science.

Another point is that it might not be wise to make students study subjects that they have little or no interest in. People generally do better at things they find interesting. However, perhaps more students would be interested in studying science and technology subjects if the classes were more interesting and if the positive roles of science and technology were given more attention in society and the media.

In conclusion, I think that science and technology should be taught more at schools, though we should not do this to the exclusion of humanities subjects. We must also try to inspire students' interest in these subjects through more interesting classroom activities. (312 words)

Should University Students Pay the Full Cost of Their Studies or Not
Question

“It is right that university graduates should earn more than the less well-educated, but they should also pay the full cost of their studies.” To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

In my opinion, paying university graduates more (on average) than less educated people is right, but I do not agree that university students should pay the full cost of their university educations. In this essay, I will say why.

The amount of money that people earn depends on many factors, but the most important one is the level of education. Better-educated people are more prepared for work that relies chiefly on knowledge. Of course, this doesn't mean that all graduates should earn more than all non-graduates. In Britain, many plumbers earn larger salaries than the average university graduate since they have skills that society demands and is willing to pay more for.

The question of who should pay for university education is one that has been debated for a long time. Graduates clearly directly receive many benefits from having a university education, higher income being one of them. This means that they will almost certainly pay more income tax than non-graduates, contributing more to the education of the next generation.

Society also benefits from having university graduates, through higher productivity and the benefits of a knowledge-based economy. Companies also benefit from having better-educated workers and they will (hopefully) pay more tax for increased business that university-educated employees create. Part of these taxes can be used to pay for universities.

In addition, students from poorer backgrounds might find it more difficult to go to university if they have to pay. This could reduce social mobility and prevent talented people making the most of themselves. Student loans could help to overcome this problem, but many young people might not like the idea of graduating and having to worry about repaying large loans.

In conclusion, I believe that the costs of university education should be borne by the government and not by students and their families. After all, the students are likely to repay the costs through tax after graduation. (317 words)

Education and Medical Disparity

Question

In many countries, good schools and medical facilities are only available in cities. Some people think that new teachers and doctors should work in rural areas for a few years, but others think that everyone should be free to work where they like. Discuss both points of view and give your opinion.

Model Answer

Since, in some countries, there is a great disparity in the levels of education and health service facilities in cities and the countryside, it has been suggested that all new teachers and doctors should serve for a few years in the countryside immediately after graduation, in order to reduce the

disparity. On the other hand, people have pointed out that this interferes with freedom of choice. Let's look at both points of view.

In some countries (particularly less developed ones), if new doctors and teachers are permitted to work wherever they like, it is likely that they will be drawn to cities where the living conditions are considered better. This means that rural areas will likely to suffer from poorer education and health provisions. The question for governments is how to give rural areas better facilities. Forcing people to work in rural areas could cause resentment, but I think there are other ways that the objective can be achieved.

One possibility is to pay the rural doctors and teachers a higher salary than those in the cities. This would go some way to compensating them for working in the less developed environment. Another possibility is to ask student teachers and doctors to sign an agreement with the government. This agreement would state that the student would have a certain percentage of their education paid by the government if they agree to work for a given number of years in rural areas. Rather than forcing students into doing something they resent, this would provide an incentive. The indirect benefits should outweigh the direct costs of the education.

To conclude, I think that the idea of having new teachers and doctors work in poorer areas immediately after graduation is a good one, but that it is not necessary to coerce them into doing so. (302 words)

International Aid

Question

Many people think that countries have a moral obligation to help each other, whilst others argue that the money is misspent by the governments

that receive it. Discuss both points of view and give your opinion.

Model Answer

The issue of international aid has been discussed by experts for decades, yet there seems to be little consensus on the issue. Some people believe it is a moral obligation of countries to help each other, whilst others point out that the aid is often misused and doesn't help the people it is meant for. In this essay, I shall consider both viewpoints.

Personally, I think that countries do have a moral obligation to help each other. We are all human beings and it is distressing to most people to see others living in terrible conditions because of war or disasters. It can be uplifting to see people of different countries working together to help others who need food, clothing or shelter. Such international aid can even ease tensions between different countries and people of (for example) differing religious and/or political beliefs.

On the other hand, I also agree that money received by governments is often misspent. It is impossible to calculate precisely how much international aid is misspent, but judging by the large amounts given and the often minimal amounts reaching those in need, it is fair to estimate that the proportion is high. In my opinion, it is no coincidence that countries with immense corruption cases also have the greatest problems with poverty. Aid is often misspent in highly developed countries where there are good systems in place to track money. It can be of no surprise when many millions go missing in less developed countries where money is not tracked so diligently.

In conclusion, given this situation, I think that donors should consider providing money to people who need it in a more direct manner, rather than

through labyrinthine government bureaucracies where money quite literally disappears. Admittedly, the problem with this is that many governments would not permit it and thus there is the risk that people in need may not receive any money at all.

(319 words)

Gap Year

Question

“Students who go straight from secondary school to university benefit less and contribute less than those who work between secondary school and going to university.” To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

The advantages and disadvantages of taking a “gap year” (or longer) between secondary school and university have become a key question for many young people. There is no clear evidence to suggest that taking a break between secondary school and university is beneficial. Some believe it is and others disagree.

First, let’s look at the arguments for a break. Many people think that doing something other than studying for a year or so will give the young person a broader perspective of life. It seems to many people that young people do not know much about how “the real world” works. A gap year can help to deal with this lack of knowledge. The break also gives the young people a chance to discover what they are really interested in doing with their lives. Since many young people finish secondary school without a clear idea of what they want to study or what job they would like to do, the advantage is clear.

The main disadvantage that people mention is that taking a break can lead to a loss of study skills acquired whilst at secondary school. However, many people argue that it is not so difficult to recall these skills after a year out of full-time study. Another disadvantage is that young people may not have enough time to develop any real skills in a worthwhile job. Employers are very unlikely to give good jobs to people who will only be with the company for a relatively short period.

In all, I think that the costs and benefits of taking time away from study before going to university depend on the individual. If the person knows what they want to study, a break is less likely to be beneficial, unless they can get a job in that field during the break. A person who is less certain and feels the need to develop their knowledge of “the real world” is probably better off taking time out from studying.

(329 words)

Use of Computers at Schools

Question

“Computers do not help children learn effectively. The use of computers at schools has a negative effect on children’s physical and mental development.” To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Some people argue that the use of computers at schools has a detrimental effect on children. Whilst I can see that there may be problems with using computers at schools, I disagree very strongly that the overall effect has been negative.

Some people claim that computers do not help children learn effectively. Given the incredible range of things – from games to information – available

with the use of computers, I find this hard to believe. It is true that some children are likely to become distracted from their studies by other things they find on computers, but this is a question for teachers and discipline, not a problem with the use of computers in the classroom. At school, computers can help children develop their problem-solving, communication and mathematics skills, to name just three. The effect on their mental development is much more likely to be satisfying and enjoyable than tedious and ineffectual.

It is a similar situation when people say that computers have negative effects on children's physical development. Of course, if children are placed in front of computers for the entire school day, every school day, they are likely to suffer, but this is not how computers are used by teachers and schools in reality. Computers are most likely to be used where they provide the greatest benefits. If we truly think that teachers are so incompetent that they cannot reasonably judge when to use computers in class, we shouldn't send our children to schools at all!

Therefore, I see no reason for the discontinued use of computers at school. There are many useful, innovative ways that computers can benefit children by developing their skills and abilities. Of course, this is not to suggest that computers be used for every class!

(291 words)

International Tourism: Tension or Understanding

Question

“International tourism creates tension rather than understanding between people of different cultures.” To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Some people think that international tourism results in tension instead of understanding between people from various cultural backgrounds. In this essay, I shall examine their opinion and the opposing idea.

When people travel abroad, they have the opportunity to meet people of different cultures and will inevitably form opinions about them. One reason that tensions might arise is that most tourists do not speak the language(s) of the countries they visit. The inability to communicate can make people feel exasperated and ill disposed to the locals. There can be similar feelings from the locals towards the tourists. Particular problems are likely to arise over payment for services or goods. Tourists might not understand extra charges and locals could try to fleece wealthy looking foreigners.

Other problems might arise because of dress or even mannerisms. In some cultures, it is not normal for people to show much skin, but Westerners visiting hot countries might not be so discreet. People from Latin cultures have a tendency to gesticulate, which could make them appear somewhat manic to East Asians. When combined with a foreign tongue, it is easy to mistake normal (or even happy) gesticulations for angry or aggressive ones, leading to tension and misunderstanding.

Other people point out that international tourism allows people from different cultures to mix and get to know each other. I think that this is true only to a certain extent. It is something that is likely to happen if the people speak a common language. A Chinese person visiting Spain is likely to get a feeling for the country, but without speaking Spanish (or perhaps English), their experience is likely to be limited. However, despite the obstacles, most people travelling abroad appear to have good experiences – at least good enough that they travel abroad again, frequently to the same country.

In conclusion, I think that both tension and understanding arise from international tourism, though I believe that there is more understanding than tension. If people realise that there are likely to be problems, they may be better prepared to deal with them when they arise.

(348 words)

Spend Money on Defence or Other Needs

Question

Most countries spend a large amount of money on defence even though they are not at war. This money would be better spent on poor and disadvantaged citizens in those countries. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Since most countries are not at war and still use large amounts of money to fund defence purchases, it has been said that this money would be better spent on other needs, such as improving the living standards of the poor in those countries. I shall examine some of the arguments in this essay.

I think that the first point to bear in mind is that many countries do not maintain large national defences for the purpose of defending the country – they have them primarily to protect the leaders from their own people. In these cases, the money spent on the armed forces could certainly be better spent on the poor, but this is unlikely to happen since a leadership feels that secure comes into power. The other problem with this situation is that reducing the amount of money spent on the armed forces is often likely to provoke a rebellion by the military. In other words, the leadership essentially has to bribe the military not

to grab power for itself.

The second point I would like to make is that the military provides a way for a country to channel the “energy” of young men who would otherwise be unemployed. This is something that is a feature of many countries. In Britain, the army generally finds it harder to get suitable recruits in times of economic

upturns and easier when the economy is not in such great shape. In such a situation, spending money on the military might not be such a bad thing, since using the money in this way has indirect benefits such as reducing unemployment and probably crime. In poorer countries, it is likely that some of the money used to pay soldiers will go to parents and families.

Overall, I think that it is true that many countries spend too much on defence. However, I also think that there are economic benefits in some situations.

(320 words)

Road Safety

Question

The only way to improve road safety is to give much harsher punishments for driving offences.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Road safety is an issue in many countries. Road vehicles provide us with many benefits, but people are aware that many thousands of people die in road accidents every year. In this essay, I will look at how road safety could be improved.

Some people suggest that the only way to improve road safety is by having far stricter punishments for driving offences. I think that this is one way of reducing the problem, but not the only way. If we put more offenders in prison, this could lead to overcrowding. Since most drivers have jobs, it would also mean that they lose those jobs, which would be rather severe for some driving offences. Fining offenders more where appropriate might be a better solution.

Another possibility is to change the testing system for drivers. This could take two forms. First, the driving test could be made more difficult, making it more likely that poorer drivers fail. Second, drivers could be made to undergo a fresh test more often – perhaps every few years. For example, in Britain drivers currently only need to retake the test when they are elderly or under exceptional circumstances.

Another way of improving road safety is to focus not on the drivers but on others, such as cyclists and pedestrians. Having been in China for several years, I can honestly say that I am not impressed with the level of driving. However, it has to be said that many cyclists and pedestrians show surprisingly little regard for road safety. Many behave as if there were no cars on the roads – walking/cycling in front of cars without paying attention to other traffic.

In conclusion, I totally disagree with the idea that the only way to improve road safety is by punishing driving offences more harshly. However, it is certainly one thing that, in combination with other initiatives, could be effective.

(312 words)

Retirement Age

Question

Companies should encourage staff to retire when they are 55 years old in order to give more opportunities to young people. Do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Finding sufficient employment opportunities for young people is an issue in almost all countries. It has been suggested that one way of dealing with it should be by encouraging older staff to retire, making way for younger people. I shall look at some of the advantages and disadvantages of this.

The obvious advantage is that such a system would allow more young people to start work rather than be unemployed. They would be able to develop skills and abilities and hopefully develop a sense of responsibility and greater self-esteem through work. If companies combined this with an effective system for knowledge transfer from the older workers to the younger ones, it would be especially beneficial.

However, there are problems with this idea, too. Although it would only “encourage” older workers to retire earlier, the message being sent to workers over 55 could be construed as being that they are not needed or wanted any longer. It could also lead to better, older workers giving up their jobs to younger, less able people, which might not be desirable for the company or for the economy as a whole.

A further issue, particularly for European countries, is that retired workers would probably expect to receive social welfare payments from the age of 55, whereas these are currently paid when they are 60 or 65. It would also

come at time when governments are considering raising the retirement age, not lowering it, on the grounds of the excessive cost.

To conclude, I think that the current system used in Britain, whereby workers can retire early if they want to, is best. This allows flexibility for individuals and employers. I believe that there are other ways in which the government can get young people into work.

(292 words)

Internet

Question

Today, the Internet has found many applications in people's lives. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet?

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall briefly examine a few of the advantages and disadvantages the Internet has brought to people's lives.

The first thing that many people associate with the Internet is the ability to find, collate and use information from a broad spectrum of sources, many of which were difficult to access previously. Now, finding the information is often a matter of a few clicks of a mouse. However, sometimes, finding the required information can be more exasperating, though it is still usually faster than using more traditional means, such as books in a library. A key problem is ensuring that the information you get is reliable. One way of overcoming this is to get your information from a variety of different sources and cross check it.

Another advantage of the Internet is that it allows us to communicate using email, which is effectively a successor to traditional postal systems. Compared with the post, email is much faster and more reliable. With email, you can attach large files of documents and pictures at no extra cost and if you forget to include anything you simply send another email. Of course, email has disadvantages, too. Most people with email accounts are sick of receiving spam emails, though spam filters are getting better at detecting them. People also need to be careful when opening files sent to them by other people as they may contain viruses of various types. However, some email providers provide a facility for scanning emails and attachments for such viruses and there are some very good free detection systems available online.

One disadvantage that people often mention is that some people seem to spend too much time in front of their computers (or mobile phones, etc.) using the Internet. There is the potential for people to become so engrossed in the Internet that they neglect other aspects of their lives, such as getting sufficient exercise and getting out and meeting people face-to-face. The Internet certainly allows us to get to know people from all over the world (or just around the corner!), but it is up to us to develop personal relationships away from the computer screen.

To conclude, the Internet has, in my opinion, brought more advantages than disadvantages for people and society as a whole.

(380 words)

Music

Question

Why do we need music? Is the traditional music of a country more important than the “international” music that seems to be heard everywhere today?

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall outline why I think we need music and why I consider “international” music to be just as important as traditional music.

The main reason that I think we need music is that it influences and supports our emotions. If we feel happy, we can listen to music that makes us feel even happier. However, if we are not in the mood for that, then we have the option of listening to music with a melancholy effect. The choice is ours. Music can also help us to feel better when we are doing chores around the home. Many people like to listen to music to make them feel better while doing housework. Music is also valuable in films for setting the mood. Imagine a horror film without tense or scary music or an action film without energetic music. It wouldn't be the same. We also need music to dance. Without music, discos would lose their entertainment value. (Admittedly, some people might not consider this a bad thing!)

As for whether traditional music is more important than modern “international” music, I think that we should allow individuals to choose what they like. There are many genres of music and in recent years it has become common for musical people to fuse them in various ways. Without traditional forms of music, modern “international” styles may not have developed. Without “international” music, many people would not be aware that some traditional styles even exist.

To summarise, I think that we do need music and that it is not possible to claim that one style is more important than another. As for whether one style is better than another, that is purely a matter of personal choice.

(287 words)

Punishment of Children

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people think that it is necessary to punish children in order to teach them the difference between right and wrong.

Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.

If you agree, what kind of punishment do you think should be given to children by parents and teachers? Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Model Answer

Personally, I think it is evident that children sometimes need to be punished when they do something wrong. I believe that this helps them grow up, not only learn the difference between right and wrong. However, I do not believe that punishment is always the only alternative.

Some people believe that punishment is not necessary. They hold the view that if situations are explained to children, they will comprehend and act accordingly. There are certainly times when this works, particularly when

the child is mature enough to understand the mistake and not repeat the misdemeanour. However, if this condition is not met, punishment may prove necessary in order to reduce the chance of repetition.

I believe that parents should be responsible for assigning any physical punishment to their children. Teachers should only use physical punishments with the express permission of parents. Some people think that physical punishment should be illegal under all circumstances. Minor physical punishments, although they should be used sparingly, they do not affect the health of the child, therefore are not a problem in my view. However, physical punishments damaging the health of children should be dealt with according to laws regarding child abuse and physical assault.

One effective way to punish children is through the withdrawal of privileges. These can range from being allowed out later in the evenings to having chocolate cake for dessert. Some parents find it too hard to resist the pleading of their little angels not to be punished like this!

Rather than withdrawing privileges, many parents assign extra duties on their children as punishments. These extra duties can range from washing the car to taking out the trash. Some parents don't like to do this, because it implies that household chores are a punishment, rather than things people need to do as part of everyday life.

As I mentioned before, I believe that teachers should only have the right to use physical punishments with the permission of parents, whereas parents should be permitted to use them within reason. I believe that non-physical punishments can also be effective. They should be proportionate to the misdemeanour. Not punishing a child is always an option if it is clear that

the child understands the error and can demonstrate that the incident is unlikely to reoccur.

(381 words)

News on Television and in Newspaper

Question

News editors decide what to broadcast on television and what to print in newspapers. What factors do you think influence those decisions?

Model Answer

There are many factors that influence news editors when they select which news stories to print or broadcast. Here, I shall briefly examine those that I think are the most important.

I think that the main factor influencing news editors is the readership or audience. News editors of privately owned newspapers or TV stations in particular know that they need to ensure their news stories generate high interest. These higher ratings or larger distribution figures would result in more advertising revenue. News editors are therefore much more likely to choose news stories that they think will be popular. Often, this results in an increase in stories about disasters, celebrities, sports and human-interest stories.

On the other hand, news editors know that there are many people interested in other items, so they are likely to provide a mixture of stories that are popular with others and that may be less popular but are generally considered important, especially stories related to current affairs. These kinds of stories also help to deflect criticism that newspapers and TV news are becoming less concerned with quality and are only interested in making

money. It also allows for competition with state-owned newspapers and TV stations, which are more likely to focus on the more serious issues of the day.

Another factor is who is the news editors' boss or employer. Privately owned newspapers and TV stations are unlikely to make big criticisms of their owners while state-owned ones are unlikely to make major criticisms of the government. However, this may not be too bad if people know who owns the newspaper or TV station and if there are other channels of information and for the discussion of issues.

To summarise, news editors have quite a difficult job to decide which stories to print and broadcast and, of course, which to be given the greatest prominence to.

(310 words)

Career Path

Question

Some people say that the idea of having a career with one company is an old-fashioned one. To what extent do you think having several different jobs or careers is better than a career with one company?

Model Answer

In the past, it was much more common for people to have a single, simple career path, sometimes even with just one employer. Nowadays, there seems to be a trend for people to switch jobs and even switch career path much more frequently. Here, I shall look at the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Having a career with one company certainly has some benefits. First, the career path is likely to be much more stable. When people change jobs or careers, they often find the switch difficult, even if they end up enjoying their new job or career more than the old one. A second advantage is that a person can get used to working with the same people. If they have traits that you don't particularly like, you can try to develop ways of avoiding the problem. As a result, a strong team spirit can evolve. A third benefit is that a company is more likely to offer "extras" to longer serving employees. These could include stocks, accommodation, foreign travel, extra pay and longer holidays.

On the other hand, changing jobs and careers would not be so common if there were not major benefits in doing so. Though stability has advantages, many people feel that variety is more important. They want to experience different aspects of life. People tend to change somewhat over time and what a person found interesting after graduation from university might not be what grabs their attention when they are in their 40s or 50s. People are often not able to do what they would like, especially because of financial constraints, but people with higher incomes and useful skills have more options.

I believe that higher incomes have therefore contributed to people changing jobs and careers more. I also think that the wider availability of adult education has given people the means to retrain for a different career and that many people are choosing this path.

To conclude, I think that each individual needs to consider what kind of person they are and what they want from their working life. I cannot say that

one career path is better than another, only that each person has a career path that is right for them.

(369 words)

Health Budget

Question

“Prevention is better than cure.” Therefore, a large proportion of a country’s health budget should be diverted from treatment to preventative measures. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Model Answer

There is a saying that prevention is better than cure, so should governments spend more on preventative health measures or on treatment, as is the case now, and where should the money come from? I shall look at the issue from different standpoints and present my viewpoint.

Treating health problems is obviously important. If people become ill with diseases that can be transmitted to others, it is clearly in society’s interest to ensure that those people receive treatment as soon as possible. If people go untreated – even for non-communicable illness, that may well suggest that society has its priorities wrong. I would not only argue that it is morally wrong to allow people to die for lack of treatment (as opposed to people dying when nothing more can be done to help them), but I would say that it is also usually a poor use of resources. This is particularly the case when children are involved, as they have a lifetime of potential to offer society.

However, we must not forget that it is also a fact that spending money on preventative measures could lead to a reduction in health costs over the long term. To this end, many governments have engaged in projects to encourage

people to live healthier lifestyles. These include banning smoking, raising taxes on alcohol and advertising campaigns to get people to eat healthier diets. However, these projects are usually funded with extra money made available by the government through increased taxation or through spending less money on other areas, rather than diverting the money from treatment.

To conclude, I think that governments should spend more on preventative measures, but that they should not finance this at the expense of treatment. Instead, they should either raise taxes or cut expenditure elsewhere.

(295 words)

Population Control

Question

Some governments regulate how many children people may have or try to control the number of children people have through taxes. To what extent do you think it is necessary for governments to control population in this way?

Model Answer

I think governments should do their best to control the number of children people have. Here, I shall say why I strongly believe this.

Many people argue parents should decide how many children they bring into the world. The right to have children is a fundamental one recognised in every country. Whilst I agree parents should have the right to bear children and I think children are generally wonderful, I do not accept that parents alone should decide how many children they have.

The world is, in my opinion, overpopulated. The population of the planet is projected by the United Nations to grow by about 40% over the next 40-50 years. Since environmental degradation due to human activity is already so severe and the natural resources of the world are almost certainly insufficient for all of us to have the high standard of living so many people are aiming for, we have to make decisions on the issue of population growth.

We could continue as we have always done – to increase the human population and continue to use more resources per capita. Some would argue that this choice is perfectly reasonable. Throughout human history, we have been able to support larger human populations through technological advancements. We have also been able to migrate, from the first humans to leave Africa to the mass migration to the United States in more recent centuries.

However, relying on technological advancement is dangerous. If we suddenly discover that we are unable to solve overpopulation through technology, the results are likely to be catastrophic, especially given the range of weapons many governments have. Relying on migration is also something that could cause great problems. As the environment becomes degraded in some areas and populations become too large, people will try to get to better places, putting great strain on those countries that migrants head to.

The solution, it seems to me, is to limit population drastically. There will be difficulties such as male- female imbalance and a smaller future workforce. However, I feel that these are smaller problems than the one we are likely to face because of population growth.

(354 words)

Zoo

Question

Zoos are sometimes seen as a necessary but poor alternative to a natural environment. Do you think it is necessary to keep some animals in zoos?

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall outline why I feel that it is necessary to keep some animals in zoos and in similar facilities such as safari parks, even though I agree that they are a poor alternative to a natural environment.

The main reason that I think we need to keep some animals in zoos is that many zoos have expertise in breeding programmes that can be of great benefit to wild animals that are endangered or on the verge of extinction. Successful programmes include those for breeding elephants and pandas. Hopefully, the animals can then be released into the wild to live in natural environments rather than remain in the less satisfactory environments in captivity.

Another reason for keeping some animals in zoos is for research. I think that studying animals in their natural habitats is better, but this may not always be feasible. Zoos usually employ experts who are able to learn more about animals from their behaviour.

A third reason for keeping animals in zoos is that, in my opinion, it is useful for members of the general public to be able to see animals (and in certain cases even interact with them). I feel that this is especially important for children and particularly useful in more developed countries where people

often live in cities and have much less interaction with animals and the natural world than their forefathers.

Of course, there are objections to keeping animals in zoos. Many people argue that it deprives the animals of their natural environments and causes stress for them. I think this is most true of larger mammals such as gorillas, tigers and elephants, but not necessarily true of other animals often found in zoos, such as snakes, spiders and fish. I agree that, in many cases, zoos need to improve the environment for certain animals and particularly provide them with more space.

To conclude, I believe that zoos perform a useful function and that it is necessary to keep a limited number of animals there.

(336 words)

How to Reduce the Use of Cars

Question

Cars have greatly improved individual freedom of movement, yet they have also contributed to some of today's most serious problems. How can the use of cars be reduced?

Model Answer

Whilst most people appreciate the advantages of cars, many think it is time to reduce their use. Here, I shall look at some of the ways that this could be done.

A simple way of reducing car use is to increase the cost of cars and the cost of running them. This can be done through taxation. Most countries tax cars and fuel already, so raising those taxes would be easy. Many countries also

charge an annual fee on each car for it to be allowed on the roads. This could be raised as well.

Another possibility is to change cars to use certain roads at given times. In London, there is a so-called congestion charge for cars using central parts of the city. Another system is to charge cars tolls for using certain roads. This is already common around the world on bridges and some expressways, such as the airport expressway in Beijing. Again, these kinds of charges are relatively simple to implement.

The suggestions given above do not remove an individual's freedom to use a car. Instead they just require the individual to make a decision whether to pay more to use a car or whether to use public transport. However, there are ways of denying people of their opportunity to use a car.

In Singapore, the number of cars is limited by the government. People who want a car must wait. In Beijing, the local government recently introduced a system whereby cars with certain license plates cannot be used on given days. This latter method has the advantage of giving everyone roughly the same opportunity to use their cars, but doesn't raise any money.

Of course, another set of ways to reduce car use revolves around improving public transport.

However, the public transport in many cities is reasonably good, yet many people insist on using their cars.

To conclude, there are various ways of reducing car use, some of which also have the advantage of raising money for the national or local government.

(336 words)

A Balanced Diet

Question

A balanced diet is the key to a healthy life. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Model Answer

Whilst I agree that a balanced diet is usually necessary for a healthy life, I also think that there are two other factors that make substantial contributions to one. In this essay, I shall look at all three.

First of all, a balanced diet is generally considered to be a requirement for a healthy life. During my life, I have met some people who lead healthy lives despite not having a balanced diet, so I cannot say that such a diet is essential. However, for the vast majority of people it seems that eating a variety of foodstuffs, with more fruit and vegetables and less fatty and processed foods, is a sensible choice.

However, medical experts often point out that a healthy life is not just about what we eat, but how much we exercise. Exercise helps us to keep our weight down by burning off extra calories. According to the experts it also keeps our brains in good condition and mental health, in my opinion, is the third ingredient for a healthy life.

Most cultures recognise the value of inner, mental or spiritual health. Although it has different names, it basically amounts to feeling good. Exercise produces “feel good” chemicals in our brains. Happiness helps us to interact with people in a positive manner and to deal with life’s problems

effectively. Some believe in a god. Some have hobbies. Some do volunteer work. All contribute to our happiness and our health.

I therefore believe it is reasonable to say that there is no single key to a healthy life. I am of the opinion that for most people diet, exercise and mentality all contribute to a healthy life.

(278 words)

Old Buildings in Urban Development

Question

In the course of urban development, should a city preserve its old buildings or destroy them and replace them with modern buildings?

Model Answer

Many cities around the world are growing and have an urgent need for space. One possibility is to demolish old buildings, especially those that are low-rise or in city centres, and build new ones – usually tall buildings – in their place. Here, I shall say whether I think this is the best thing to do and why.

I do not believe that city governments should automatically demolish every old building, but I believe that in most cases demolition is the best option. Many old buildings have little historical value or other buildings with those values can be preserved without hindering development. In addition, these buildings frequently occupy spaces that are valuable and can be key parts of a regeneration scheme for a whole area. The financial benefits of demolishing old buildings can therefore be great.

There can also be social benefits. In less developed countries, the standard of living in old residential buildings is often not very high. In Beijing, the old courtyard houses are often without toilets and there are sometimes problems with gas and electricity. Many people were happy to move to modern flats. Demolishing old residential areas and moving people into flats also have the advantage of getting more people into an area of the same size. This is useful when (e.g. in Beijing) the population is growing due to migrants from rural areas.

However, there are certainly occasions when I do not think it is a good idea to destroy old buildings and replace them with new ones. I think it would be beneficial if cities could keep some examples of old buildings, perhaps using them as museums showing how people used to live. Furthermore, I don't think that cities look as nice when all the buildings are modern. One reason I like London is that there are so many architectural styles.

Generally, I am in favour of demolishing old buildings to make way for new ones, but I believe there should be a transparent system for ensuring that buildings of historical or cultural value are left in good condition for people to enjoy.

(347 words)

Radio

Question

Radio is out of date. There are many other ways of getting news and entertainment. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Whilst I agree that radio is generally not as good as other methods of getting news and entertainment, I believe that it still has a place. In this essay, I shall say why I think this.

There are many ways of getting news and entertainment other than by radio. The most obvious example is television. TV also has the great advantage of being visual and audio, unlike radio, and therefore is more interesting for the majority of people. Similarly, the advent of computers and mobile phones has provided us with the Internet. In addition, we do not need to get music from the radio since we can have our favourite tracks with us on iPods and the like.

However, I think that radio still has its place. First of all, not all people enjoy more advanced technologies such as computers and iPods. These things may seem everyday and reasonably cheap to us, but they are not so for most rural inhabitants of less developed countries. Secondly, there are times when using a radio to get news and entertainment is better than (or at least as good as) using other technologies, for example when people are driving. Then, visual information – such as that presented by a TV or a computer – would be a safety hazard. Consequently, even in more developed places, radio still has a place.

To conclude, I believe that – though there are many other ways of getting news and entertainment – radio is not completely outdated yet. Personally, I suspect that there will be people somewhere using radio for some reason for a long time to come. (267 words)

Gap between Cities and Countryside

Question

In many less developed countries, the gap in the standard of living between the cities and the countryside is very large. What are the reasons for this and how could the gap be reduced?

Model Answer

Many less developed countries are experiencing a wide difference in living standards between the cities and the rural areas. In this essay, I shall look at two reasons why this is happening and how the gap might be made smaller.

One reason that cities are much more developed than rural areas in less developed countries is that the governments have focused on making the cities look good for investment. In China, for example, the government has clearly focused on making Beijing and Shanghai particularly attractive to outside investment. This strategy has clearly worked, but also results in a great disparity in living standards.

Another reason is that the level of education in cities in less developed countries is generally much higher than in rural areas. Better teachers usually prefer to be where the living standards are higher and this leads to a situation where the schools in the countryside gradually fall further and further behind. In addition, the schools in cities tend to be better equipped and the students also have access to more information. For example, in China, it is normal for students to have access to computers in cities, but this is not so common in the countryside.

There are several ways in which the gap could be reduced. Some suggest having teachers from the cities go to work in the countryside for a while. However, I think that more investment in rural schools would be more

appropriate, as this would allow schools and teachers in rural areas to develop more independently. As for the issue of investment, if the government made it more advantageous for companies to locate in rural areas, perhaps through taxation and/or better infrastructure, it would provide more opportunities for those areas to catch up with the cities.

To summarise, there are many reasons why the living standards in rural and urban areas differ so much in developing countries and the government has a range of possibilities for reducing this gap.

(327 words)

Animal Experiments

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

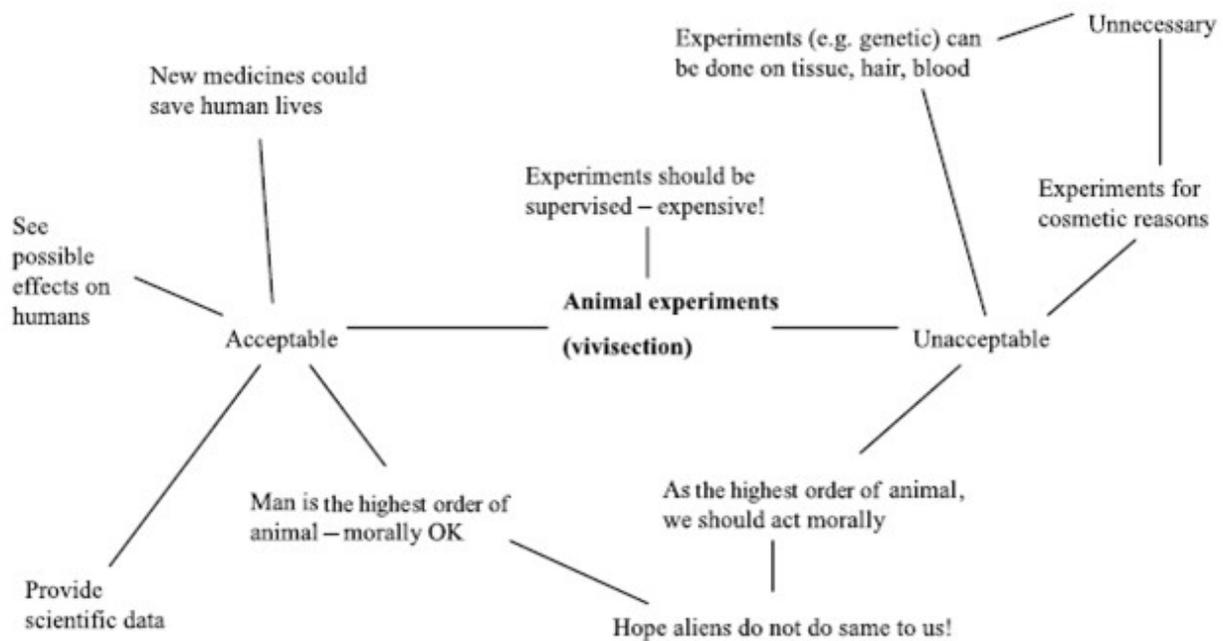
Some people argue that using animals in scientific experiments is cruel and unnecessary, whilst others insist that such experiments are necessary and have many advantages.

What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Issue: Animal Experiments



Model Answer

Discussions about humans and their relationship with animals occur on several different levels. One debate concerns the use of animals in scientific experiments. The animals are sometimes used in order to assess the effect of medicines and cosmetics on humans, but to what extent are they necessary?

The most common argument against such experiments is that they are cruel. Cruelty suggests that the animals used in the experiments undergo some kind of pain, discomfort or deformity. This is understandably upsetting to many, who imagine the rabbit, mouse or frog that they had and cared for as a child having to endure such things. Most experiments that were carried out on animals do not now require a live animal for realistic results. Results and conclusions can be arrived at using tissue grown from cells or, in the case of genetic experiments, using hair or blood samples, which can be gained with little or no discomfort.

Another argument used by opponents of animal experiments relates to the type of experiment. I find myself in complete agreement with them with regard to experiments for cosmetic purposes. I cannot think of a single item of toiletry which would justify pain or death of an animal. However, there are some medical experiments which need to be done on animals prior to being introduced for humans. In such cases, I do believe that the life of the human is more valuable than the life of a lab rat.

Personally, I am for experiments on animals only for medical reasons where alternative sources of material for the experiments are inappropriate or useless. Scientists should take care to conduct experiments with due care and regard for the animals they are using. Ideally, there should be a body to monitor such experiments, paid for by the companies and organizations conducting them. (302 words)

Governments' Role

Question

A government's role is only to provide defence and infrastructure such as roads. All other services (such as education, health and energy supplies) should be provided by private companies or individuals in the community. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

I think that it is necessary for governments to provide services such as education, health and energy supplies. However, I do not believe that the government has to do this alone and without private companies or individuals providing similar services. In this essay, I shall give my reasons.

I think that the government should provide these services because they are needed by the whole population and that there can be particularly serious consequences if one section of the population receives them and another does not, or if there are great imbalances in the provision of these services. If one part of a country has schools, hospitals and electricity, and other parts do not, there will be a great incentive for people to migrate. This has been most evident in China, where tens of millions of people have moved – or tried to move – to cities in search of better jobs and better services. The result can be a great strain on the provision of services. Therefore, I think that the government should provide these services.

If only private companies and individuals provide these services, there is a real risk that they will only focus on areas where they can make the most money, rather than providing services where they are most needed. However, I do not mind if such companies and individuals supplement government provision of these services. If people wish to pay extra for private schools and private hospitals, then they should have the right to. With the development of renewable energy sources that people can have at home (solar panels, small wind turbines), it is also possible for people to generate their own energy requirements and even sell the excess to others.

To conclude, if services such as education, health and energy were solely provided by private companies and individuals, there would be a risk of some areas being much better served than others, leading to problems. Therefore, in my view, private companies and individuals should only be allowed to provide supplementary services, not the only sources.

(338 words)

Museums and Art Galleries

Question

What are the purposes of places like museums and art galleries and how should they be funded?

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall explain what I think are the two main purposes of museums and art galleries and how such places should be funded.

I think that the main purpose of museums and art galleries is educational. If people visit them, they can learn about history, about culture and about art. I believe that these kinds of knowledge are useful, even in modern society with all our technology. In many countries, schools organise visits to museums and art galleries to help educate students. These kinds of places are also useful for scholars researching a variety of specialised subjects.

I think that the second important function of museums and art galleries is as a place to relax and develop an interest in the wider world. Many people go to museums and art galleries not to learn something for school or for university, but simply because they have an interest in history, culture or art and wish to spend time developing that interest.

As for funding, I think that, ideally, there should be money from three sources – the government, private enterprise and individuals. The government should support museums and art galleries because of the general educational value such places have. Private enterprise can sponsor certain exhibits and benefit from advertising. Individuals who go to museums and art galleries should also pay a fee to go there, since they benefit from visiting.

In conclusion, I believe that museums and art galleries have two main purposes – educational value and as free time activities – and that they should be funded by a combination of methods – public, private and individual. (266 words)

Smoking

Some people claim that using tobacco has brought severe social problems and smoking should be banned. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

Whilst I agree that smoking has brought social problems, I disagree with having it banned. Here, I shall outline my reasons for this.

The problems with smoking are now well known. It causes severe health problems for many people – particularly lung and heart disease. These problems are a cost to society in two ways. Firstly, there is the issue of paying for treatment of people who are ill and secondly there is the issue that people who are ill or die prematurely do not make a large contribution to society that they would have otherwise. Many people also point out that smoking can be a problem for non-smokers – through second-hand smoke, which could cause illness, and through the less destructive fact that the smell of tobacco tends to remain on clothing after a person has been in a room with smokers.

Many people therefore argue that smoking should be banned. However, on this point I disagree. It is my view that people should be allowed to smoke so long as it doesn't interfere with the rights of non-smokers. In Britain, smoking has been banned in public places like hospitals, government offices

and art galleries. I agree with this as it could affect non-smokers using those places. In Britain, smoking in pubs and restaurants has also been banned. In this case, I disagree with the ban. I think that pubs and restaurants should be made to clearly state whether various parts of their establishments are smoking or non-smoking. Then individuals can decide for themselves whether or not to go to those places to eat or drink. Similarly, I think that people should be free to smoke in the street or at their own homes.

To restate my position, I agree that smoking has caused social problems, but that banning it is the wrong approach. (303 words)

Telling Lies

Question

Some people say that telling the truth is not always essential. It is necessary to tell lies sometimes. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

I agree that it is necessary to tell lies on occasion and that sometimes it can be a good idea to tell lies rather than the truth. In this essay, I shall say why I believe this.

First, I think it is acceptable to lie when telling the truth could hurt someone or embarrass them. There are occasions when this can be tricky. If a friend asks you how they look in a new, expensive dress, you have a great incentive to tell them they look wonderful. You don't want to offend them and you don't want to harm your friendship. However, if your friend's dress looks terrible, they could face greater embarrassment if they wear it.

Another occasion where lying might be acceptable, in my opinion, is when you lie to prevent someone from being over concerned. For example, a friend might be worried about you seeing an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, so you tell them you are seeing another person instead. Again, there is a risk here – your friend could find out about your lie and the friendship may be harmed.

It is also acceptable, in my view, to lie so that people don't think you are moaning or grumpy. If people ask how you are and you reply with a list of things that are wrong with you, people are not likely to ask how you are in future. I think it's often (though not always) better to lie in these situations and seek the help of good friends or professionals instead.

Possibly one of the most common lies in English speaking countries is told around Christmas, when parents lie to their children about the existence of Santa Claus. This is all part of the harmless fun of Christmas and children soon realise the truth. Similarly, we lie to children when, for example, their pet fish dies and we secretly get a new one. Again, the lie is harmless.

Therefore, I think that telling the truth is not always essential. Whether lying is necessary sometimes depends a lot on the situation and also on how well the people involved know each other and trust each other to say what is right for the occasion.

(366 words)

Definitions of Happiness

Happiness is considered important to people, but most people have different definitions of happiness. What do you think are the main factors in achieving happiness?

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall outline what I believe are the main factors in achieving happiness. I do not claim that the list I present is exhaustive and I do not place the factors in any particular order.

One of the key factors in achieving happiness is a healthy attitude to life. A “healthy attitude” is a rather ethereal concept. To me, it means being positive in one’s outlook, but not to the extent whereby one thinks that everything will automatically work out well without any effort. It means making an effort to do what is right not just for yourself but for others too.

I think that another important factor is having a core group of people that you can trust, work with, socialise with and share interests with. In the past this group of people would most likely be family, but times have changed and nowadays this group could include colleagues, classmates and/or fellow members of a club or hobby group. Having such a group of people provides a person with support when they meet problems and with people simply to enjoy life with.

A third factor is good health. It is possible to achieve happiness without being fully healthy, but having health problems tends to make people less enthusiastic and positive about life. Think of the last time you had a cold – a minor illness. You probably didn’t really feel like socialising much and/ or your work probably wasn’t up to its usual standard. In addition to warding off illness, I think that an important factor in achieving happiness is keeping fit. Scientists have shown that exercising actually makes us feel happier.

In conclusion, I think that achieving happiness depends on many different factors, but these are the main three as far as I am concerned. (299 words)

Fashion

Question

Fashion is difficult to follow and some people say that fashion is just for selling clothes. We should not follow it and should dress what we like. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

I agree that following fashion is difficult and that we should dress what we like. However, I disagree that fashion is just for selling clothes. In this essay, I shall outline why I believe this.

Following fashion is difficult in my opinion for three inter-related reasons. First, fashion changes very quickly. If a person really kept completely up-to-date with fashion, their wardrobes would be full very quickly. Secondly, as a result of this, keeping up with fashion is expensive that only the richest in society are likely to be able to afford. Thirdly, what is in fashion is often a matter of opinion. In any given month, leading fashion magazines and fashion writers will offer differing views on what is in (and out of) fashion.

I therefore believe that people should wear what they like (whilst respecting social norm on decency, of course), following fashion if they wish or ignoring it if they think that it is in poor taste and/or not worth following. Fashion often depends on a person's age and lifestyle anyway, and we do not all have the same lifestyle, nor are we all of the same age or generation. Goths dress differently from punks. Retired people dress differently from teenagers. And of course, men dress differently from women. The different

styles, in my view, make life a little more colourful and interesting, as well as allowing people to express themselves through what they wear.

I think that fashion is more than just for selling clothes. I think that it is an opportunity for designers to show their creativity and ideas. Many of the leading designers put on fashion shows with clothes that the vast majority of people will never even see on the street. However, the clothes bring attention to the designers and possibly inspire others to come up with their own ideas.

To conclude, I think that people should wear what they like (within reason) and that following fashion is something that most people can only do to a limited extent. However, fashion is more than just about selling clothes – it is about ideas and creativity. (351 words)

Predicting Criminality

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some scientists now believe that they can predict if a 3-year-old child will grow up to become a criminal.

To what extent do you think such predictions can be reliably made?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Scientists have made remarkable discoveries in recent years. One area that has developed particularly quickly is genetics. Some scientists believe there

is a genetic basis for many human behaviours. Many people do not accept we can predict a person's behaviour on the basis of their genes.

Those who believe that predictions such as the one above cannot be reliably made tend to think people are influenced more by their environments than by their genes. I agree people are influenced by their environments. People are shaped by their experiences – by what they see, hear and feel. On the other hand, there is a case for the argument that people act in accordance with their genetic make-up. For example, if a short person and a tall person play basketball together, the tall person clearly has an advantage. This genetic difference – height generally accepted as being determined genetically – influences their ability to play basketball and hence their chances of being selected to play the game.

Some of the discoveries made by geneticists are astounding. A stamina gene has been discovered that influences whether a person is good at running long distances. Another gene has been found that is linked to a person's level of aggression. If some scientists believe that they have found a gene that could be related to a person's propensity towards criminality, I think that this needs to be taken seriously. However, I think that it would be unfair to label a person as a potential criminal simply on the basis of one of their genes, since that completely discounts the environmental influence. There may also be another gene which cancels out the effects of such a gene. Making definitive statements is unwise.

To conclude, I believe a person is influenced by their genetic make-up and by their environment. Since I am not a scientist and since more discoveries in the field of genetics are being made, I cannot give a proportion for each

influence. As more research is done, we will come to understand our genes and their effects much more.

(342 words)

Punishing Criminals

Question

Sending criminals to prison is not an effective way of dealing with them. Education and job training should be used instead.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The question of how to deal with criminals is one that has existed for thousands of years and has been dealt with in different ways by various societies and cultures. One commonly used method around the world has been to put the criminals in prison, but many people argue nowadays that it would be better to give criminals education and training for work so that they can become useful members of society.

A lot of crimes are committed because the criminal is poorly educated and/or has little money. In these cases, it is clear that providing him/her with an education and with training for work could help him/her to find a better path in life. This education and training could be provided in prison or outside it, depending on the level of the threat that the criminal poses to society.

On the other hand, some crimes are committed not because the criminal is poorly educated or lacks the skills required in the job market, but because

he/she acted incorrectly (perhaps violently) in a situation or because the criminal is greedy (consider such crimes as tax evasion and fraud). In these cases, the criminal does not need education in the academic sense, nor does he/she require job skills. Having said that, the question as to whether prison will be effective still remains.

Many people are in British prisons for drugs-related offences. In such cases, I believe that education and job training may help, but that the main question is how to stop the person from using illegal substances. If this cannot be done, then the person may find themselves back in prison regardless of the possible prison sentence and regardless of their education or work skills.

In conclusion, I think that we need to look carefully at the motive for committing the crime before deciding on which form of punishment to use. If it is likely that education and the provision of job training can help, then this is preferable to prison. However, there are cases where prison isn't the best alternative. (341 words)

Rising Crime Among Young People

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Recent figures suggest that the number of crimes committed by young people in major cities throughout the world is on the increase.

Discuss the possible reasons for this increase and suggest possible solutions. You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

If such figures are correct and there is a rising trend in crimes committed by young people in cities, then there are several possible reasons for this and consequently there are several solutions. It is unlikely that only one reason exists for such a trend and therefore it is equally unlikely that there is a single cure.

Many people suggest that a lack of discipline may be to blame. There has been a trend in many Western countries towards a culture of trying to explain and even excuse bad behaviour rather than actually dealing with it. It is the opinion of many that people who commit crimes are often provided with too much understanding and too little punishment to dissuade them from such behaviour in the future.

The fact that the higher crime rates amongst young people are most alarming in the cities suggests that there is a problem with the environment there. Perhaps it is because of the large numbers of people present in such small areas. It may also be due to the lack of facilities (e.g. sports facilities) for young people. Drug-taking is also spreading in a prevailing force in cities and this is a crime in itself as well as leading to other crimes, such as theft, in order to raise money to finance drug taking.

Solutions to these problems could include the provision of more facilities to provide alternative outlets for young people. This could be done as part of the education system, having clubs at schools for young people to join. It would be expensive and involve increased taxation. We could also bring back discipline into our homes and into our schools (which would cost little), or even reintroduce compulsory military or community service for young people.

In conclusion, we need to consider a diverse range of factors rather than just blaming one and we need to be open to measures that may add to our tax bills rather than only seeking the cheapest solution. (331 words)

Criticism of Teachers

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

To improve the quality of education, some people believe that students should be encouraged to evaluate and criticize their teachers. Others believe that this would lead to a lack of discipline in the classroom and a lack of respect for teachers.

Discuss both points of view and give your own opinion.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

Teachers are keen to improve the quality of education that they provide to students. Governments are eager to have a better educated population to help the economy. Parents want their children to receive the best possible education. Would the evaluation and criticism of teachers help these aims to be achieved or would such an exercise lead to a lack of classroom discipline and respect for teachers?

Students already have channels for evaluating and criticising teachers. They can approach their parents, other teachers or the head of the school if they believe that a particular teacher is providing a poor education or educational environment. Schools generally take such complaints seriously and

investigate them. However, if students were given the opportunity to evaluate and criticise teachers too much, then several dangers arise. The first is that students might abuse this right and try to get rid of teachers that they don't like for reasons unconnected with their teaching ability. Another is that teachers might become more concerned with getting a positive evaluation than with providing their students with an education.

These two factors could well lead to a reduction of respect that teachers get. Such a fall in respect would be natural if students felt that they could decide who would teach them. It would be disastrous if teachers gave up their primary task to focus on getting good reports from students. I am not sure whether such a system would lead to a breakdown in classroom discipline. I think that almost all teachers would enforce discipline even at the risk of getting poor students' reviews – the reason being that losing control of a class would be even worse than getting a few bad reports.

In conclusion, I think that there are already enough provisions for students to evaluate and criticise teachers and that any further encouragement in this area could lead to a reduction in the quality of education. (317 words)

Single Language

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people believe that a single language should be adopted globally to facilitate international communication and understanding. Others say that this would lead to a loss of culture and identity.

Discuss both points of view and give your own opinion.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

It has long been recognised that when people who speak different languages meet there can be misunderstandings. Clearly, a common language helps to make communication and understanding easier. However, many people believe that if a common language were used, this might lead to a loss of cultural identity, since language and culture are strongly connected.

I think that the first point of view is becoming outdated, in the sense that English is being adopted as a common international language. However, there is no reason why this should mean that other languages are not used. If people who speak different languages decide to use a common language other than English, that is their choice. The most important thing is that they agree on which language to use. Having said that, English is the most likely common language to be adopted since it is the native tongue of so many people and, more importantly, it is being learnt as a second language in almost every country.

I am not convinced by those who argue that the use of a common language, such as English, leads to a loss of culture and identity. Cultures are not things that remain constant over the years. They change. I do not see French culture disappearing as young French people use certain English words in their everyday lives. I do not see Chinese culture collapsing as an increasing number of Chinese people learn English.

In conclusion, the use of a single common language has advantages, but I do not think that it is necessary to impose one on everyone. I disagree with those who claim it leads to a loss of culture and identity. People have shown for centuries that they can use a common language other than their own without losing their cultural identity. (298 words)

Smoking

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some businesses now say that no one can smoke cigarettes in any of their offices. Some governments have banned smoking in all public places. This is a good idea but it takes away some of our freedom.

Do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

In more developed countries, there is increasing concern about previously unknown dangers to people's health, now that traditional killers (particularly contagious diseases) can usually be dealt with by modern medical science. One of these dangers is smoking, which is now generally accepted as being a leading cause of heart and lung disease, and hence of premature death. As a result, many countries have introduced legislation banning smoking in all public places. Is this a good idea? Does it take away some of our freedom? My answer to both questions is "yes".

The main problem with smoking is that it can be a danger not only to those who smoke, but also to those who do not. There is widespread evidence of second-hand smoking causing the deaths of numerous people, though admittedly this evidence is not accepted by everyone, especially smokers themselves and the tobacco industry.

Smoking can affect non-smokers in other ways. Many non-smokers dislike going to places where there are smokers because the smell of tobacco gets onto their clothes. The direct effect of this is having to have their clothes cleaned afterwards, but it has another result – non-smokers tend to stay away from places where there are smokers. The resultant loss of revenue can be a major problem for businesses in the leisure industry.

Smokers would argue that their freedom is being taken away by anti-smoking legislation. They are correct. Legislation usually results in loss of freedom for someone. The reason that people generally accept legislation is that people understand that legislation is designed to benefit them. Almost everyone dislikes paying taxes, but it is generally accepted that taxes are necessary since governments need to finance activities in such fields as education, administration and infrastructure. This is also the case with anti-smoking legislation. It is designed to protect the health of smokers and non-smokers alike.

To conclude, I accept that banning smoking in public places is a limit on freedom, but I believe that it is a necessary one to help protect the health of the general public.

(340 words)

Detailed Reporting of Crime

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Detailed reporting of crime has bad effects. Consequently, such details shouldn't be reported in the media.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

The media has long reported crime. The right of the media to do this is rarely disputed, but the way in which it does this often comes under criticism. One issue that has been discussed a lot recently is the amount of detail that should be publicised.

Those who believe that as many details as possible should be published point out the demand for such information of the public and the freedom of information. Many members of the public believe that the more information they have, the better they can protect themselves from criminals. Those who believe in the maximum possible freedom of information think that it is people's right to be told as much as possible.

I believe that the first assertion may be correct, but that the second one is not. There are two main reasons why the media should not be given many details of crimes. The first is that it may alert the criminal to what the police know and do not know. This could allow the criminal to adjust his/ her

behaviour and avoid detection or capture. The second reason is that giving the media certain details could cause difficulties for the victim, his/her friends and family, and any witnesses. If you were a witness against a particularly violent gang, you certainly wouldn't want your name and address publicized!

To conclude, I believe that the police should control the amount of information given to the media and that victims of, and witnesses to, crimes should think carefully when talking to the media. This is not to say that crimes should not be reported, only that there is insufficient reason for many details to be reported.

(280 words)

Will the Future Be Better or Worse

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Some people believe that the lives of people from their children's generation will be better than their own.

Others believe that lives of their children's generation will be worse.

Discuss both viewpoints and give your own opinion.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

People all over the world want the best for their children, naturally. However, many are pessimistic and believe that the lives of their children's

generation will be worse than theirs. Others are more optimistic. Both sides can draw on countless examples to support their cases.

The pessimists most often point to wars, the environment and loss of community spirit to support their argument. We are supposed to be more knowledgeable than our forefathers and we are supposed to learn from history, yet it seems that we cannot stop fighting wars that kill untold thousands of people every year, injure countless more and cause distress to an even larger number. As our economies develop, we cause more pollution and use up more of the world's finite resources. Many of the wars and power struggles going on in the world today are a direct or indirect result of the need for resources. The pessimists also point out that our societies and even our families have become less cohesive, as people struggle to cope with the challenges of life.

Those who are more optimistic point out that many problems that existed in the past have been reduced and further positive developments will surely take place in these fields. They point to medicine, which has provided cures for many diseases that would have killed numerous people only a few generations ago. The optimists also note that, although starvation still happens in certain parts of the world, it is nowhere near as common as it once was. Food supplies are generally stable and distribution systems are generally good, even in many remote areas.

Personally, I am optimistic that further developments in science and technology, as well as greater understanding on the part of people, will lead to a better future for our children's generation.

(299 words)

Better-Prepared Children

Question

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Children brought up in families with less money are better prepared for life than those from wealthy families.

To what extent do you agree or disagree?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

Model Answer

One of the main reasons that most parents aim to make money is to provide their children with the best possible start in life. However, many people question whether children raised in wealthier families are really much better than those brought up in less wealthy ones. I think that most parents' beliefs are well-founded and that children from better-off families are better prepared for life.

The main argument presented by those who think children from wealthier families might not be better prepared for life is that such children often have things provided for them without having to earn them. This encourages the children to believe that getting things in life is easy, which is often not the case. On the contrary, it is claimed children raised in less wealthy families learn that things need to be earned and that choices need to be made when there is not enough money for everything.

Whilst this may be true, it is clear that in most societies wealthier parents can buy better education for their children. It is hard to disagree with the suggestion that going to a better school gives a child a better chance at getting admitted to a better university and consequently provides them with a better chance of finding a top job in the future. A brief glance at the biographies of the world's business and political leaders is sufficient to prove this.

On the whole, I believe that children from wealthier families are indeed better prepared for life than those from less wealthy ones. Whilst there are examples of children from wealthy families that have not succeeded in life and cases of children from less well-off backgrounds becoming successful, these are still not the general rule. (288 words)

Machines

Machines such as robots are being widely applied to take the place of humans. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this and give your own opinion on this development.

Model Answer

Over the past few decades, the use of machines such as robots has multiplied and now machines seem poised to take over numerous jobs previously done by humans. In general, I think this is a good thing, but I can see some potential problems.

The key advantages of machines such as robots taking over work previously or currently done by humans are fairly obvious. First, many of the jobs, particularly in manufacturing, are considered boring by many people and

therefore using machines allows people to do more fulfilling work. Some factories produce

two lines of goods – one mass-produced by machines and the other produced by hand by skilled individuals. Second, some jobs are dangerous, so using machines to do them makes sense. One example is in the military, where machines are used (by remote control) in place of soldiers to disarm bombs. Third, using machines such as robots is often simply more efficient. They can do the work without getting tired and often more cheaply and better than humans. Fourth, if machines are used for housework, for example, they can lead to us having more free time.

However, I agree that the use of machines such as robots could cause problems. In some areas, using machines will result in people losing their jobs. This could clearly lead to social problems such as poverty. Therefore, I think it is necessary for governments to ensure that there are opportunities for people to retrain for jobs in other fields. Another issue is that many people might not feel comfortable with robots. For example, in Japan, a robot receptionist has been developed. The developers were careful to make sure that the robot had mannerisms that humans would feel comfortable with and they even made the robot much smaller than humans to emphasise that humans are the “masters”, not vice versa.

To summarise, I am in favour of machines such as robots taking over work done by humans, but I think that we simultaneously need to recognise and tackle the problems that will arise as we do this.

(343 words)

Time Children Spend on TV and Computer Games

Question

To what extent do you think parents should limit the amount of time their children spend watching TV and playing computer games?

Model Answer

Many parents are concerned that their children watch too much TV and play computer games for too long. So should parents impose a limit on how long their children can watch TV and play computer games? I believe that they should and will explain why in this essay.

First and foremost, if children spend too much time watching TV and playing computer games, they will inevitably spend less time on other activities, such as sport and learning that are more useful to them in the long term. If children spend too long sitting in front of a TV or a computer screen, they are more likely to become lethargic and put on weight, which is not healthy.

However, it is worth remembering that TV and computer games are not always bad for children. On TV there are many educational programmes, particularly in the fields of history, geography and science that are suitable for children and can inspire them to take an interest in the world around them and their school subjects. Some computer games teach children how to co-operate, how to think independently and help them to develop hand-eye co-ordination.

Secondly, if parents do not impose limits on how long their children can watch TV and play computer games, this can result in a lack of self-discipline on the part of the children. The children may start watching TV or playing computer games and simply continue as long as possible.

So, how long should parents allow their children to watch TV and play computer games? I am no expert, but I sense that a limit of around two hours a day is enough – perhaps longer when the children have a day free from school.

To conclude, I think that parents should impose limits on how long their children can play computer games and watch TV, for the good of the children.

(311 words)

Student behaviour

Some schools have severe problems with student behaviour. What are the causes of this and how could the situation be improved?

Model Answer

In Britain, the issue of poor student behaviour at school has become a big issue. Different people have different ideas about how this has happened and about how to deal with the problem. In this essay, I shall present my own opinions on these questions.

I think that the main reason for poor student behaviour is a lack of discipline at schools. In the past, students were disciplined quite strictly by teachers and each pupil knew what the rules were and what they could expect if they broke them. Of course, behavioural problems still existed, but they were much less severe than nowadays and there were clear ways of dealing with them. Nowadays, in the UK at least, the rules are unclear and enforcement of the rules is haphazard at best. This leads some pupils to believe that they can get away with anything – and frequently they are right in this belief.

The second reason for poor student behaviour, in my opinion, is a lack of discipline at home. It has become more common for parents in Britain to let their children do whatever they want, without proper guidance and, as at schools, without clear rules and without enforcing punishments for breaking those rules. In addition to this, parents are very often slow to see that their own children might be less than perfect. When their children's poor behaviour is pointed out to them, they blame society or others (e.g. teachers) rather than recognize their own role in the issue or blame their children.

I think that solving these problems will require great determination. Schools and parents need to re-establish discipline and ensure that poor behaviour is punished as necessary. Also, parents in particular need to promote a more disciplined lifestyle for their children and supervise their activities more. Finally, there needs to be a clear policy of making people take responsibility for their actions rather than be able to blame others.

In conclusion, a return to more traditional disciplinary procedures would be helpful in promoting better pupil behaviour, in my opinion.

(342 words)

International News

Question

Some people think that secondary school students should study international news at school. Others think it is a waste of valuable study time. Discuss both points of view and give your own opinion.

Model Answer

In this essay, I shall look at the question of whether secondary school students should study international news and present my own opinion.

Some people say that studying international news at secondary school distracts students from more important subjects such as science and languages. Obviously, there are only a certain number of lessons each day, so increasing the number of lessons for international news decreases the number for another subject or other subjects. The question therefore becomes one of importance. Is studying international news more important than studying other subjects?

Clearly, in the modern world, subjects such as economics, languages, science and mathematics are very useful for students. Knowledge of these subjects has a direct application in the job market. However, I do not think that this means that other subjects are useless. Very often, the new subjects are not directly associated with certain jobs, but nevertheless, they provide skills and insight that can be useful.

For example, studying international news helps us to understand how different people around the world are thinking and what the systems and cultures in their countries are like. Using knowledge gained from studying international news can give foreign people the impression that you are familiar with their countries and that you are interested in what happens there. This can be very useful if you wish to do business or study in a foreign country – as many people do nowadays and no doubt will do in the future.

In conclusion, I think that studying international news at secondary school is a good idea, even if it means studying other subjects less.

(266 words)

Nuclear technology

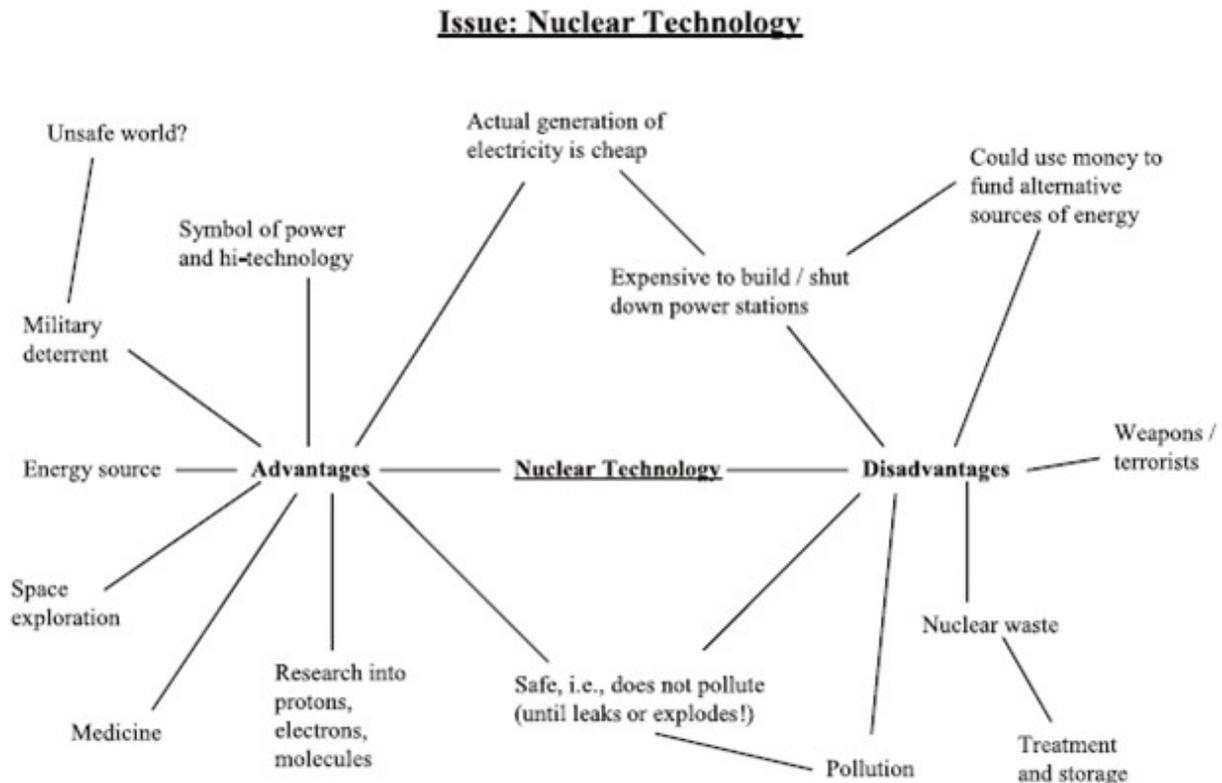
Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

Many people consider nuclear technology to be beneficial whilst others consider that its disadvantages far outweigh all of its advantages.

What is your opinion on the issue? Give reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.



Model Answer

The advent of nuclear technology is one of the most important developments in modern history. It was originally conceived as a source of energy and

military might. Since the end of World War II, there has been a debate as to whether the advantages of this technology outweigh its disadvantages.

Nuclear weapons formed the backbone of military power during the Cold War and helped prevent direct conflict between the two groups. Since the end of this ideological conflict, the number of such weapons has been greatly reduced. However, there is a fear of indiscriminate use of nuclear weapons by so-called “rogue states” or terrorists. Most of the world’s states have voluntarily agreed not to develop them or to help other countries do so, through signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Government agencies around the world monitor nuclear weapons and the special materials (e.g. uranium) needed to make them in order to prevent them being acquired.

The second area where nuclear technology has been used is in energy generation. It is cheap to generate and causes little damage to the environment. However, there are three main objections to this energy source. Firstly, though the cost of actual generation is lower, the cost grows enormously once you include the cost of constructing, safeguarding and decommissioning the power station. Secondly, if radioactive material leaks, it can cause irreparable damage. The accident at Chernobyl is the most obvious example. Thirdly, the waste radioactive material, including not only the uranium, but also water and even the clothes used by the power station personnel, must be disposed of. Many people suggest that we should shift the money we spend on nuclear energy to other, cleaner and renewable energy sources, such as wave power and wind power.

The development of nuclear technology has led to related developments in other scientific areas, the most obvious example being medicine. For example, radiation treatments are used in the fight against cancer. In the

future, we may need to rely on nuclear power for space exploration, as solar power may not be sufficient. Nuclear technology has also led to research into electrons, protons and molecules, which we are only just beginning to understand.

Personally, I am optimistic that the days of a global nuclear war have passed. The use of individual nuclear weapons by dictator or fanatics remains a threat and we must trust the major countries of the world to ensure that such incidents do not occur. This leaves the peaceful use of nuclear technology. I think that as an energy source it has proven too expensive, too risky, and indeed too controversial. Having said that, there may be situations where nuclear energy is the appropriate energy source, so a limited number of power stations may be necessary. We cannot guess at what applications nuclear technology may have in the future, so I do not believe we should stop its development.

(480 words)

Internet

The Internet has brought about a new freedom of information and so will reduce the gap between more developed and less developed countries. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Model Answer

I think that the Internet will reduce the gap between more developed and less developed countries. Here, I shall say why I think this will happen and also say why I think the gap may not be narrowed by the Internet as much as some people might like to think.

Many people point out that the Internet allows people from all over the world to access more information. As this information is available to all, it should provide an opportunity for less developed countries to narrow the gap with more developed ones. Theoretically, this is correct, but I do not think that the

situation is quite that simple. It is easy for people to think that because they have the same information as others, they have the same opportunities. This is not the case.

How people use information is an important factor. It requires education and experience to learn how to use information well. This is especially true when the Internet is involved, since there is so much information and a lot of it is contradictory. Siphoning off the relevant and correct information is not something that can be done by everyone. If people are not trained for this skill, they are less likely to be able to use the Internet as a useful source of information.

In addition, the people with the information also need the resources and environment to be able to use that information. For example, countries like the USA and Britain have financial environments that facilitate the provision of venture capital for people wishing to transform information into profitable business. In other countries, the level of government control and/or the level of corruption are so high that entrepreneurs have less incentive to use information to their advantage. Intellectual property rights are also important. Why start a business if it is going to be stifled or if someone else can simply steal your idea?

To summarise, I think that the availability of information on the Internet will reduce the gap between countries, but that it is not the only factor to

consider. Even if all information were available to everyone, other things would cause imbalances too.

(359 words)

Smoking

Smoking can cause serious illnesses and should be made illegal.

To what extent do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

There are clear arguments for banning smoking, based largely on health, but there is perhaps a stronger case to be made for maintaining the current situation, as will now be explained.

The most important factor for keeping smoking legal is that the decision to smoke is not something that should be controlled by the government, but by the individual. If a person decides to smoke, they do so of their own free will and this should be respected, as it is the government's role to advise against harmful practices, but ultimately not to make decisions for its citizens.

The other reason for allowing smoking is that by making laws against it is more likely to result in the sale of tobacco moving to the black market, and consequently increasing the level of associated crime. There will still be people who cannot overcome their addiction, and will search for any means available to access cigarettes. A clear example of this reaction can be seen in the illegal sale of other drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.

Of course, there is the fact that smoking is known to have adverse health effects on both the smoker and those around them who are affected by passive smoking. Yet there are other lifestyle choices that also have a negative impact, such as fast food and alcohol, and banning these items would restrict the choice available to the consumer.

In conclusion, the decision to ban smoking, although having some advantages, would be more likely to have an overall negative effect. It would therefore be better for the government to continue campaigns that educate people about the potential dangers of the habit.

(278 words)

Driving

Driving a car is a valuable skill and should therefore be taught in schools.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

There are many important life skills such as the ability to operate a vehicle that are developed both through childhood and early adulthood, but teaching these should not necessarily be left to education departments, as will now be argued.

The principal provider of knowledge to a child should be the parent, and although more academic subjects such as science and languages should be left to professionals, abilities like driving and swimming are best taught by parents, at least initially. If the parent feels they are not suited to the task, or

the law in that country does not allow parents to teach their children to drive, then a driving instructor should be sought, not a school.

In addition, it could be argued that although operating a car is a useful skill, it is not essential and should be something that each individual decides rather than being a compulsory part of their education. Other subjects which provide a more rounded education should be emphasised, as this will allow the student to be able to find a position of employment more easily once they graduate from school or further studies.

However, an argument could be made that the ability to drive could be required in an emergency situation, and therefore should be taught. Yet situations where this would actually be required would be rare, and less valuable than other skills such as first aid.

To conclude, it would be better for schools to focus on academic topics, leaving the parents or the student to decide when and how to learn other skills like driving.

(261 words)

Traveling overseas

Compared to previous generations, an increasing number of people are traveling overseas for holidays.

Why is this? Is this a positive or negative trend?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

There are a number of factors which explain the rising tendency for people to take trips overseas for pleasure, and this has both advantages and disadvantages as will now be discussed.

Innovations in technology have made overseas travel not only faster, but also more accessible for those on a limited budget, meaning that in some cases a family can holiday in a different country with less inconvenience and a better price than staying in their home country. A flight from the UK to Spain, for example, can be accomplished in less time than it takes to get from one side of England to the other.

One of the clearest advantages here is that it gives people the opportunity to experience different cultures and customs, giving a broader perspective of the world. By visiting other countries, people become more understanding and tolerant of other cultures, and can learn to appreciate the cultural differences that exist. There are also benefits for the holiday itself, as many people tend to holiday in destinations that have better weather.

However, there are disadvantages for the country, as citizens are spending their money overseas rather than in the domestic market. However, this is negated by the fact that although people leave their own country for a holiday, other people visit their country for the same reason. In New Zealand, for example, money spent overseas by people leaving the country is replaced by those who visit the country for their holiday.

To conclude, advances in technology have given the consumer more choice in overseas holidays, and this has both positive and negative ramifications.

(266 words)

Unemployed

In some countries, people who are unemployed receive a sum of money each week in the form of a benefit. While some support this, other people believe that this money should not be given.

Discuss both points of view and give you own point of view.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

The payment of a benefit for those who are out of work is a sensitive issue with strong opinions for and against. This essay will now examine both sides of the argument and present a final conclusion.

Those in favour of this financial support argue that in some cases, it is not the fault of the unemployed person, and that the assistance is needed for them to survive while they continue to look for work. Without this, there is the potential concern that crime would increase due to a lack of alternatives. To illustrate, if a parent with dependent children could not find work and had no other help, they would have little option but to resort to theft to prevent their children from going hungry.

On the other hand, there are those that argue that paying someone who does not work simply encourages people to remain unemployed, especially when the alternative could be a relatively low paid job. There are situations where people are simply not interested in finding a position of employment as it offers very little additional money compared to doing nothing at home and receiving free handouts. This situation could escalate as people who are on a

low income may resent paying a portion of their tax payments to support those who make little or no effort to find employment.

Considering both points of view, it seems that a compromise may be the best solution. Payment of the unemployment benefit should be limited to a short period of time, after which the amount received should be progressively reduced. This would encourage those receiving the benefit to be more proactive when looking for work.

(277 words)

Teenagers

Teenagers are spending an increasing amount of time on the Internet, and this is having a negative effect on their social skills.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

It is not uncommon these days for younger people to spend an hour or more a day online, and although this does detract from time spent talking to family members, it is not necessarily affecting their social development as will now be discussed.

The primary reason to disagree with the statement is that a considerable amount of time that youngsters are on the internet is actually spent on social networking sites such as Facebook. As these sites are specifically designed for social purposes, the argument that social skills are declining would appear to be invalid. It is only when the time online is spent playing single

player games or generally surfing for entertainment without interacting with others online that this could be considered unsociable.

In addition, an increasing dependence on the internet for a broad range of tasks from completing homework and studies to checking bank balances and searching for employment means that being online is often simply an alternative manner of working or completing necessary chores, and should not be considered related to social skills at all.

Admittedly, if too much time is spent online playing games or looking at websites, then there is the potential for surfers to become less able to interact with people directly. However, this can be negated by ensuring that time online is limited to a reasonable amount, and can even be controlled by using technology that actively records the amount of time online.

To sum up, it is not that the internet is causing us to become less sociable, it is simply that the nature of social interaction is changing.

(267 words)

Living in the family home

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having older people living in the family home?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

In many traditional cultures, members of the same family will live together from childhood to old age. In many cases, older family members living at home is a trend which has both positive and negative aspects.

A significant point in favour of this is that it provides a good support network for parents, both of whom may work outside of the home. Having grandparents on hand to look after the children can potentially provide a more stable environment as the child will have a familiar face at home until the parents have finished working.

Influence of the grandparents extends beyond simple babysitting, however. They are able to provide a source of advice and knowledge that can greatly benefit all members of the family on a range of subjects, especially for when there are new born babies in the home as this can be a stressful time for new parents.

There are, of course, also disadvantages in having older people at home. There is the issue of space, as the family home may not be big enough to accommodate everyone comfortably. There is also the issue of deciding which members of the family should live together, as both the husband and wife may both have surviving parents.

To conclude, there are clear positives and negatives to having older members of the family living in the same house. Although at times there may be frictions typical when people live together, this is arguably outweighed by the advantages of the support and knowledge older people are able to offer.

(256 words)

Medical procedures

Medical procedures for cosmetic purposes should not be allowed.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

There is a rising tendency for people of all ages to have surgery to improve their appearance, although there are a number of arguments against this as will now be examined.

The main reason that such procedures should be discouraged is that people should be more confident in themselves, and not be swayed by images in the media. People are constantly bombarded with pictures of people looking glamorous, but these photos have often been digitally altered for the best effect. Many young people, however, suffer from low self esteem and feel that through operations they could look like the celebrities they see.

Another argument against cosmetic procedures is that this diverts resources from more necessary surgeries, which in turn causes longer delays for those in desperate need. Even though such procedures may be done privately, it still requires the attendance of medical staff that would perhaps otherwise be available to the public health system. This can be seen in the waiting lists in the UK, for example, where it can take several months or longer to have a hip replacement operation.

However, there are situations when cosmetic surgery can vastly improve the patient's quality of life, such as those who have suffered significant burns or other disfigurements. There are many examples of people for whom surgical work has allowed them to rebuild their life in ways which would have been exceptionally difficult or impossible otherwise.

To conclude, it would perhaps be better if cosmetic surgery was discouraged unless it offered significant improvements to the patient's quality of life, and should perhaps also be limited to people between a certain age.

(270 words)

Traditional methods of food preparation

Traditional methods of food preparation are becoming less popular.

Why do you think this is?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Meals made in a time honoured fashion are not as common these days for a number of different reasons, as will now be explained.

The primary factor is that more modern variants of traditional dishes are often less time consuming to prepare. It is not uncommon for both parents to work outside of the home, meaning that there is less opportunity for people to spend the hours required in shopping, preparing and cooking, so opting for a quick and easy meal is often preferred.

Another significant cause for this decline is that the skills that in previous generations were handed down from parents to children are no longer considered as valuable, and as such, many younger people simply lack the required knowledge. Already many traditional skills such as bread making are no longer passed on, and this is illustrated in the rising consumption of convenience food among younger people.

A third contributor to the fall in traditional food preparation is also related to the modern global nature of most societies. Historically, traditional meals were common because the required ingredients were all that was available locally. These days, however, most large cities have shops and restaurants with food from all over the globe. A clear example of this influence is in the United Kingdom, where the most popular takeaway food is Indian cuisine.

Ultimately, there are many factors both societal and economic that are leading to the decline in traditional meals, and this is a trend that is likely to continue into the future.

(254 words)

Traffic problems

Traffic problems are increasing in most cities.

What can be done about this?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Increasing urban populations have led to a corresponding increase in the number of vehicles on the road, resulting in rising congestion in city centres. There are a number of potential solutions to the problem, as will now be discussed.

Perhaps the first step to take would be to improve the availability of public transport and install bus lanes throughout the city. Whilst this would, in the short term, increase the pressure on the roads, it is likely to result in more people using public transport and leaving their vehicle at home. One way of

encouraging people to adopt buses and trains is to lower the price and expand the timetable.

Following that, local councils or the government could make it more difficult for car drivers to use their car by either charging a levy or only allowing certain vehicles in city areas on certain days. A similar system has been running in London for some time, and has resulted in fewer vehicles on the roads.

An alternative idea, one which is more extreme than levies and selective use, is to simply prevent private passenger vehicles from entering the city at all. By having only public transport options, there would be no problem with congestion and would allow for more pedestrian areas in the metropolitan areas.

To sum up, there are a range of options available to reduce the number of cars in the centre of cities, but ultimately they all rely on an increased public transport system and encouraging drivers and their passengers to use it.

(256 words)

Studying business or science

Studying business or science related subjects at university level is more important than arts related courses like literature.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

When considering tertiary level education, there is a school of thought that believes that studying more concrete topics such as commerce, physics or biology is more valuable to society than spending time focussed on novels and other literary subjects. However, this argument is flawed for a number of reasons as will now be presented.

Although certain fields of study lead more directly into a position of employment, university education is valuable not only for the education learned but also as an indication that the person has the ability to learn, and as such it is irrelevant whether it is a career based course of study or something more intangible, like the arts. It suggests to potential employers that person can learn new skills, and this is often as important as what is already known.

Moreover, those that complete an arts related degree could potentially go on to be writers, poets or playwrights, for example, and thus contribute to society in a cultural form rather than financially or technologically. The opinion that the writer is of less worth than the scientist is very biased, especially when it comes to a contribution to society.

Admittedly, there is the point that science and business related education can financially benefit a country, whereas art and literature does not offer the same value economically. However, a country's wealth is not calculated in financial terms alone.

In sum, therefore, both types of education offer advantages to the country, so neither should be preference over the other as both have a degree of value to society.

(259 words)

University course

People who start a university course but do not complete it should be fined.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Of the number of undergraduates that begin a course of tertiary study, there is a percentage of those that do not finish the course, but the argument that they should therefore be financially penalised is riddled with potential problems.

It needs to be considered first of all what motivated the student to leave their studies before they have graduated. If the decision was made due to financial constraints, then clearly adding an additional fine is simply adding to the pressure. For example, there are many older people who decide to go back to university but may already have a mortgage and dependent children, and may consequently find that their income is insufficient to cover their needs.

Moreover, rather than attempting to make the student pay, it might be better to consider whether the student was actually given sufficient support during their studies. There are situations where the student may feel that they are not following the course and are unable complete the required assignments, and therefore leave the course. Retention rates may be improved if there were personal tutors on hand to offer advice to those students who are losing confidence in their ability to remain on the course.

On the other hand, there is an argument that the risk of a penalty would dissuade people from starting courses that they were not particularly motivated to complete in the first place.

In conclusion, therefore, although the idea of being charged for non completion of a course would perhaps reduce the number of uncommitted enrolments, it is not an advisable solution for genuine students.

(263 words)

Animals

We no longer need to have animals kept in zoos, so zoos should be closed.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

There has long been an argument against maintaining zoos in which animals are kept away from their natural habitat, and there is strong evidence to suggest that technology has developed to a point where such institutions are no longer needed, as will now be argued.

Traditionally, the principal argument voiced by those who wish to retain zoos was that it allowed children and adults to see animals which they more than likely would not have had a chance to do if this had required visiting the creature's natural environment. Yet there are now online videos and websites where these animals can be seen in high definition, therefore no longer needing to go to enclosures to see the animals. This is clearly evident by the declining number of visitors in recent years.

In addition, there are many cases in which animals held in captivity are not well cared for and are used solely to exploit them for profit. In some rare cases, the animals can suffer from neglect or malnutrition, and rather than being kept healthy are simply replaced when they are no longer of any value.

Granted, there are situations in which endangered species are protected and their numbers allowed to rebuild by housing them in the security of a zoo. However, in most cases the same effect is better achieved by using more open plan wildlife parks rather than traditional caged enclosures.

In sum, the factors which first led to the creation of zoos have been reduced by the ability of technology, so unless there is some advantage for the species itself, then the use of zoos should no longer be supported.

(273 words)

Computers

Computers have changed the way people study.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using computers as study aids?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Advancements in technology have made a significant difference to the way in which people are able to learn, and though this is mostly beneficial, there are also some negative aspects that will also be considered.

Beginning with the positive points, the ability to work on assessments and coursework on a computer means that work can be saved safely and

transported from place to place. Before the arrival of computers, students traditionally had files and folders with their course notes, and this took up a considerable amount of room and was difficult to keep track of; now, complete lecture notes and much more can be stored on a flash drive that can be easily put in a pocket or bag.

In addition, lectures and learning material can be made available online, allowing for a multimedia educational environment. This is likely to engage a wider range of students as it has the ability to cater for a wider range of learning styles. For example, some students study best by repeatedly listening to a teacher, and this can now be achieved more conveniently by having videos available.

On the downside, there are occasions where information stored digitally can be deleted, overwritten or corrupted, all situations that do not occur on traditional paper based work. There is also the concern that material can be garnered from the Internet and passed off as the students own work, making plagiarism a potential issue. However, the concept of plagiarism has long been a problem, and there are computer programs available today that will pinpoint the source of non original work.

In conclusion, although there are potential disadvantages, they are outweighed by the positives.

(276 words)

Recycle the rubbish

In many countries, people do not recycle their rubbish as much as they could.

Why do you think this is? What can be done to change this?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

With an increasing world population and subsequent environmental concerns, it is important to dispose of trash in an eco-friendly manner, yet there are a significant number of places around the world that fail to do so.

There are a number of reasons that mean that recycling is not done as effectively as it could, the primary problem being the attitude of the general public. Lethargy or lack of knowledge leads people to throw all of their rubbish into one place, meaning that material that could have been sorted and reused is buried in landfills. In the UK, for example, over 20 million tonnes of waste is buried whilst less than 1 per cent of that amount is actively recycled. There is also the matter of availability, as there are situations in which recycling facilities are either extremely limited or nonexistent.

In order to combat these issues, the first step would be educating the general public about the facts of waste disposal and recycling, perhaps even enforcing participation by levying a fine against those who do not separate their rubbish into different types. Hand in hand with this, making recycling centres more available would also help, or perhaps adopting a system used in some Asian countries where households are given a number of different containers into which to sort their rubbish for collection.

Overall, it seems that a change of attitude is needed as well as more resources to manage different recyclable materials. This can be achieved

through a combination of education and penalties, as well as ensuring better access to facilities.

(261 words)

Age

In some countries, people are forced to retire when they reach a certain age.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Compulsory retirement is common in many countries when members of the workforce reach 65 or 70, and this has both pros and cons as will now be considered.

The main advantage of requiring people to leave their job at a certain age is that it provides opportunities for younger members of staff to join the company, often meaning that the company benefits from having lower wages to pay for the new recruit and also having younger, potentially more dynamic employees. This in turn could well give the company the required boost to continue being profitable.

Another advantage is that some older people may choose to keep working more out of habit than enjoyment, and therefore a mandatory retirement may encourage them to enjoy their life more, having the free time to engage in hobbies and interests such as gardening, which they may not have previously had time for up to that point.

Yet there are significant disadvantages in forced retirement. Older staff members often have more experience, and may have no desire to leave their job. Requiring them to leave could mean a skill shortage for the company as well as a feeling of discontent from the employee. Added to that is the rising number of older people and the subsequent drain on resources if they are not working; if there are more elderly people on pensions or other benefits, the increased tax burden falls on the younger generation.

In conclusion, there are both social and economic benefits in allowing older people to remain in employment if so desired, so compulsory retirement would not be recommended.

(266 words)

Exam

In schools, most courses finish with a final exam to assess a student's ability. However, some people do not do well in exams. Therefore academic success should not be measured by exam performance but by an overall grade based on the whole period of study.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Formal testing has often relied on an end of year assessment of a candidate's knowledge, but in many respects this is perhaps unfair, as will now be explained.

The principle argument against using exams is that some students, although competent, simply do not respond well to formal testing. Exam nerves are common, and in extreme cases can cause a form of mental paralysis in which the student is unable to perform at all. In an average class of 20 or so students, there is statistically at least one or two students who do not manage the pressure of exams well, and fail to produce results that are a reflection of their true abilities.

Another strong argument is that some areas of study do not lend themselves to traditional exams. A clear example of this can be seen in certain trade-based courses, where a long written examination is not an accurate method of assessment, and a more practical approach would be preferred. Carpentry, for example, would be best assessed by what the trainee has made over the course of study, not what they can write about in a two or three hour exam at the end of the year.

Granted, there are some fields of study that are perhaps best tested in the traditional style. For example, science or medicine-based courses require a level of academic knowledge that can be evaluated through a formal assessment.

In conclusion, although certain subjects may be assessed in the traditional manner, it would perhaps be more balanced to assess a student's ability based on work they have completed over the whole period of study rather than a single written exam.

(276 words)